

ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE MASTER'S PROGRAMME

**(IM)POSSIBILITY OF A UTOPIAN WORLD: *IN THE DAYS OF THE
COMET* BY H. G. WELLS AND *CHILDHOOD'S END* BY ARTHUR C.
CLARKE**

Master's Thesis

Büşra SEPİCİ

Ankara-2023

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Ankara-2023

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled “(Im)possibility of a Utopian World: *In the Days of the Comet* by H. G. Wells and *Childhood’s End* by Arthur C. Clarke” and prepared by Būşra SEPİCİ meets with the committee’s approval unanimously/by a majority vote as Master’s Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defense conducted on 10/01/2023.

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

I accept and acknowledge that I have prepared this thesis study, prepared in line with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences;

- within the framework of academic and ethical rules;
- presented the information, documents, evaluations, and results in a way that meets the rules of scientific ethics and morality,
- I have referenced each work from which I have benefited while preparing my thesis, and that
- I hereby present a unique study.

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Büşra SEPİCİ

ÖZ

SEPİCİ, Büşra. Ütopik Bir Dünyanın İmkanı/İmkansızlığı: H. G. Wells'in *Kuyruklu Yıldız Günleri* ve Arthur C. Clarke'ın *Çocukluğun Sonu*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2023.

Bu tezde, H. G. Wells ve Arthur C. Clarke tarafından kaleme alınan iki klasik İngiliz bilim kurgu eseri olan *Kuyruklu Yıldız Günleri* (1906) ve *Çocukluğun Sonu* (1953) kültürel materyalizm çerçevesinde incelenmekte ve tartışılmaktadır. Kültürel materyalistler; sosyal kurumlar, sınıf ve günlük yaşamla ilgili konulara odaklanarak, hükümet, kilise ve eğitim sistemi dahil olmak üzere mevcut iktidar yapılarının, ideolojileri yaymak için kullandıkları yöntemlere dikkat çekmeyi amaçlar. Bunu başarmak için kültürel materyalistler, ilk olarak bir eserin tarihsel ortamını ve siyasi etkilerini araştırırlar. Daha sonra, baskın hegemonik konumu belirlemek amacıyla onu yakından incelerler. Kültürel materyalistler bir görüşün göz ardı edilebileceği veya zayıflatılabileceği potansiyel yolları listelerler. *Kuyruklu Yıldız Günleri* (1906) ve *Çocukluğun Sonu* (1953) adlı eserler siyaset, ekonomi, sosyal hayat, din gibi kavramlar ışığında kültürel materyalist bir okumayla incelenerek, bu iki romanın tamamen ütopya olarak kabul edilip edilemeyeceği sorusuna yanıt aranacaktır. Dahası, bu romanlar ütopya olarak etiketlenseler de ütopya kavramını benzer bir şekilde, yani oldukça karamsar bileşenlerle bağdaştırarak ele almaları konusuna da değinmek mümkün olacaktır. Bir başka ifadeyle, bu iki romanın ütopyacı özelliklerinin, karamsar unsurlar tarafından nasıl bastırıldığı ve karanlıkta bırakıldığı sorusu tez boyunca sunulacaktır. *Kuyruklu Yıldız Günleri* (1906) ve *Çocukluğun Sonu* (1953) romanlarının, ütopyik nitelikleri ilk başta ağır basıyor gibi görünse de aslında her iki yazarın da ortak bir özelliği olan bu kesin çizgi bulanıktır; ne tam olarak ütopyik ne de tamamen distopik ama ikisinin arasındadır. Dolayısıyla bu tezin amacı, iki bilim kurgu yazarının farklı zaman dilimlerinde yazdığı romanları, kültürel materyalist bakış açısıyla incelemek ve bu romanların ütopyik özelliklerinin aslında daha karamsar yönlerine kıyasla belirsiz kaldığını göstermektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Kuyruklu Yıldız Günleri*, *Çocukluğun Sonu*, bilim kurgu, ütopya, kültürel materyalizm

ABSTRACT

SEPİCİ, Büşra. (Im)possibility of a Utopian World: *In the Days of the Comet* by H. G. Wells and *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2022.

In this thesis, *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) and *Childhood's End* (1953), two classic works of British science fiction written by H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke, are analysed and discussed in the framework of cultural materialism. By focusing on issues relating to social institutions, class, and daily life, cultural materialists aim to draw attention to the methods used by current power structures to spread ideologies, including the government, church, and educational system. To achieve this, cultural materialists first explore the historical setting and political implications of a work. They then examine it closely in order to identify the dominant hegemonic position. Cultural materialists list potential ways that an opinion could be disregarded or undermined. By examining *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) and *Childhood's End* (1953) in the light of such concepts as politics, economics, social life, and religion through a cultural materialist reading, an answer will be sought to the question of whether these two novels can be completely regarded to be utopias or not. Moreover, although these novels are labelled as utopia, it will be possible to mention that they deal with the concept of utopia in similar ways, that is, by combining it with rather pessimistic components. That is to say, the question of how the utopian features of these two novels are suppressed and left obscure by the pessimistic traits of the novels will be provided throughout the thesis. Although the utopian qualities of these two novels, *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) and *Childhood's End* (1953), seem to outweigh at first, in fact, the exact line is blurred as a common feature by both authors, being neither completely utopian nor completely dystopian, but in between. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the novels of two science fiction authors writing in different time periods in terms of cultural materialist view and to show that the utopian features of these novels actually remain uncertain when compared to their more pessimistic sides.

Keywords: *In the Days of the Comet*, *Childhood's End*, science fiction, utopia, cultural materialism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to many people without whose guidance and support, this thesis would not have been possible. I am extremely grateful to my advisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Sibel İzmir, for her understanding, constructive feedback, and encouragement throughout my studies. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Belgin Elbir and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nil Korkut Naykı who generously provided knowledge and expertise during my defence.

I especially would like to give my warmest thanks to Prof. Dr. Belgin Elbir, for her precious academic support and guidance. I am also grateful to my professors, Prof. Dr. Gülsen Canlı, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kuğu Tekin, Asst. Prof. Dr. Gökşen Aras and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lerzan Gültekin for their support and lectures during my undergraduate and graduate studies. I could not have undertaken this journey without the love of literature I received from them during my undergraduate years.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to my family for their unconditional support. I am grateful to my father, İbrahim Sepici, who has always supported me throughout my life; and to my mother, Mürüvet Sepici, whose love and presence have always made me feel strong. I would like to thank my brother, Ömer Faruk Sepici, for being thoughtful and loving. Last but not least, I am eternally grateful to my dearest and beloved sister, Esra Sepici, for not giving up on supporting me even at my most unbearable moments and for always being there for me. This thesis would not have been completed without her endless patience and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke, who respectively represent the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th century science-based writings, both discuss the political, sociocultural, and economic conditions of their era considering scientific developments, and challenge readers to think about the present and the future. In this thesis, *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) and *Childhood's End* (1953), two classic works of British science fiction written by H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke, are analysed and discussed in the framework of cultural materialism. By analysing the novels in the light of such concepts as politics, economics, social life, and religion through a cultural materialist reading, it will be possible to understand and find answers as to whether these two novels can be completely regarded as utopias or not, and that despite being labelled as utopia, they both share a similar point in the way they approach utopia by combining it with rather bleak components.

Even though both novels depict a utopian world and use various ways to incorporate scientific developments—Wells treats the Comet as a scientific entity, while Clarke depicts the Overlords as superior beings—in the novels both political, economic, and social situations are challenged, and they have a pessimistic tone. The dystopian vision, which is the counterpart of utopia, is closely intertwined with the concept of ideal order. Although the utopian qualities of these two novels, *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) and *Childhood's End* (1953), seem to outweigh at first, in fact, the exact line is blurred as a common feature by both authors, being neither completely utopian nor completely dystopian, but in between. Both are narrated with some elements that do not fit into utopia. Towards the end of *In the Days of the Comet* by Wells, a utopian world order is established, but the process up to that time, the description of the world, and the way that the narrative is transferred to the reader are more likely to create a pessimistic atmosphere. Similarly, in *Childhood's End*, the utopian order is achieved along with a process of time with the coming of the Overlords and their technology, yet there is constant obscurity and unrest among people due to the presence of the Overlords, which allows the novel to be viewed from an opposite perspective.

The combination of utopian and rather dystopian elements in these novels, which reflect the period in which they were written, will be examined with the aid of

a cultural materialist viewpoint, and it will be demonstrated how Wells and Clarke's considered utopian novels cannot be clearly distinguished as totally utopian fiction. Examining these two authors' chosen works in light of cultural materialist approach demonstrates that these novels emerged because of a critical historical incident at the time they were written. Although these two books were written in completely different periods—one in the early 1900s and the other in the 1950s—when analysed in terms of elements of cultural materialism such as religion, social life, economy, and politics, they actually touch on a common point, which is that both novels present utopias, but they intensely carry the pessimism and uncertainty of the period in which they were written.

Both novels have an external intruder aspect that is grounded in science. In *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End*, the intruders are respectively “the Comet” and “the Overlords”. And once they both arrive on Earth, the entire planet is dominated by utopian order. This order is set quicker in Wells’s world than in Clarke’s. The novels carry elements of utopia since they aim to create an ideal world. However, the way Wells and Clarke approach utopia follows a similar pattern. While dealing with utopia, both authors' writings show how the chaotic, pessimistic, and contradictory parts of the real world are prevalent. In addition, literature has an enduring impact on people's lives, both during and after its production. The authors convey their ideas by utilizing utopia, which is a more ideal environment, in their works because discussing the concerns of the day in which they live may be problematic. Existing social order and institutions in a society are portrayed in utopia. Based on this, *Childhood's End* and *In the Days of the Comet* both reflect this trait. Given the time in which these works were written, it is likely that the authors were influenced by the negative aspects of their day. These writings reflect such pessimism, and it is evident that utopia cannot be described as simply pure. In order to show the bleak conditions of the society in which they were written, *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End* both employ the idea of utopia. It can be seen that *Childhood's End* depicts this negativity by portraying a larger area, that is, all of mankind, whereas *In the Days of the Comet* concentrates on a more specific area. The fact that *Childhood's End* was written after the two global world wars, contributes to its heightened pessimism. As a result, the uncertainty and pessimism expressed in the novel have an influence on humanity as a whole. However, there were no such disastrous wars during the period that *In the Days*

of the Comet was published. Thus, *Childhood's End* is much bleaker than *In the Days of the Comet*. These novels reflect the times during which they were written, establishing a close connection between the authors' thoughts and the reader, and therefore, increasing the reader's understanding of the time period.

The following concerns are discussed throughout the thesis: How, why, and in what ways are those in authority portrayed by the subgroups they lead? By whom are people's thoughts about those in government formed and by what means are they communicated to society? Are people's perceptions of their leaders favourable or negative? What groups are involved in social life? Does any interaction exist between these groups? How do they interact with one another and in what circumstances? What can be said about the role that religion plays in the novel?

In addition to the introduction and conclusion chapters, this thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter will present the theoretical framework and provide information on the cultural materialism theory, concepts of utopia and dystopia, and cross-genre impact, respectively. The ceremonies, languages, religion, literature, artwork, architecture, and food that humanity has produced and developed throughout human history are all seen as being a component of its culture. Literature is also acknowledged as just one of many forms of cultural practices. Marxism is an approach to analysing class relations, social conflict, and social transformation that makes use of a materialist interpretation of historical evolution commonly referred to as historical materialism. Marxist historians pay special attention to Raymond Williams, who is recognized for coining the term "cultural materialism". It is defined by Raymond Williams as: "a theory of culture as a (social and material) 'productive process' and of specific practices, of 'arts', as social uses of material means of production (from language as material 'practical consciousness' to the specific technologies of writing and forms of writing, through to mechanical and electronic communications systems) (Williams 243). It can be claimed that culture is linked to the important historical transitions that democracy, industry, and class changes all depict in their own unique ways and that these changes are strongly connected with one another. The topics of utopia, dystopia and the blending of genres are covered in different sections.

In the second and third chapters, firstly, the literary lives of H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke, as well as the historical periods they lived in and significant events during those eras, will be provided as background information in these chapters. Then, a comprehensive understanding of society is analysed in the context of cultural materialism in *In the Days of the Comet* by H. G. Wells. The only way to comprehend culture is therefore by connecting it to historical events and social interactions as argued by cultural materialist critics. Therefore, the novel makes reference to a historical occasion. Later, the novel's treatment of politics is examined in light of the view of cultural materialism. Both the corruption and choices of the ruling class, as well as the society and working class that are affected by them will be discussed. Moreover, there will be a discussion of the concept of the masses, which critics of cultural materialism tend to concentrate on. Additionally, it will be discussed in this thesis how the media is used by those in positions of power to influence public opinion. The novel will link to the idea of "the subversion" discussed by cultural materialists and demonstrate the ways this subversion is created. Additionally, the novel will serve as an example of the cultural materialist issue of scrutinising those who are marginalised by society. In addition to all these, concepts such as economics, social life and religion will be exemplified from a cultural materialist perspective in the novel. And lastly, by taking a close look at all of these, it will become clear that the novel's bleak atmosphere predominates its utopian society aspect.

In the third chapter, Arthur C. Clarke's novel *Childhood's End* is examined in terms of the cultural materialism approach. The motivations behind a literary production are best comprehended by considering the historical context, as cultural materialism stresses. As a result, both the period in which *Childhood's End* was written and its effects can be seen in the novel. *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke effectively captures the mood of the era, particularly during the Cold War period. Politics is another subject that the cultural materialist critics in the works look at. From the cultural materialist viewpoint, the state's power and its ideologies have an impact on public perceptions, ideals, and lifestyles. Thus, examples of how the Overlords restrict humanity are examined in the novel. In *Childhood's End*, resistance movements against the prevailing power are analysed using instances from a cultural materialist perspective. These examples include the rise of some organisations that challenge people in positions of authority, and how they manifest their acts of resistance. Similar

to *In the Days of the Comet*, media is significant in *Childhood's End* as well. It is evident that in the caricatures, one can find representations of both the Overlords as the dominating political group and the opposition groups' viewpoints. Additionally, it is observed that some caricatures represent people's opinions who live in that society. Along with these discussions, examples related to socioeconomic class, education, religion, and social awareness will be provided.

Through the examination of cultural materialism's aspects in *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End*, two works that fall within the label of utopian fiction, the question of whether or not these works can be fully regarded as utopian fiction will be answered.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Cultural Materialism as a Theoretical Device

Throughout history, societies have formed and evolved their unique cultures as a consequence of the influence of multiple factors, including geography, trade, migration, war, religion, and tourism. As a result of their interactions with other civilizations, societies have also influenced one another's culture. Generally, cultures of nations that are economically and politically strong influence others. Culture can signify many things. The term "culture" covers a broad range of largely invisible aspects of social life. As stated by Andrew J. Milner: "In this most general of senses, then, 'culture' refers to the complex of institutions, artefacts and practices that make up our symbolic universe: to art and religion, science and sport, education and leisure, but not to the polity or the economy. As that which is neither work/class/exploitation nor war/power/oppression" (11). Everything that humanity produces and develops from the past to the present day on a material and spiritual level is considered a part of their culture, including their rituals, languages, religions, literature, arts, architecture, and cuisine. For instance, social values, assumptions and beliefs of any sort are related to spiritual culture. In terms of material culture, all kinds of artistic products created by society can be included.

The study of cultural processes and their historical roots is done through the interdisciplinary area of cultural studies. Cultural studies, as defined by Milner, "is the study of the production, distribution, exchange, and reception of textualised meaning" (17). Researchers that specialise in cultural studies tend to look into the connections between cultural practices and larger power structures that are connected to social phenomena. Along with this, literature is recognised as only one of many types of practices that signify culture in the field of cultural studies, which examines the factors that influence the creation, reception, and cultural importance of all kinds of institutions, practises, and products. In cultural studies, Abrams suggests, the functioning of the social, economic, and political processes and power structures that give rise to all kinds of cultural phenomena and give them their social "meanings," modes of discourse, and relative values and status are of utmost importance (53). Especially in Britain, cultural studies developed into a broad range of fields in the late nineteen fifties by British academics. At the University of Birmingham in 1964,

Richard Hoggart established the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which rose to prominence as a centre for cultural studies. Dennis Dworkin highlights the fact that the Centre aimed to utilise techniques of literary criticism to comprehend and analyse popular and mass culture, and thus to create standards for critically analysing texts. In his book *Cultural Materialism in Postwar Britain*, Dworkin mentions Richard Hoggart's defence for this method that it might help to provide answers to more inquiries regarding the nature of society (116-117). Hoggart clarifies his argument as follows: "in co-operation with other relevant disciplines, it can help to set the phenomena of mass communications in a fuller social and historical context than any of us, working alone, have so far managed" (286). Taking this into account, cultural studies are conducted to examine cultural phenomena over a range of societies and historical periods. These studies rely on a variety of critical approaches, including Marxism, postcolonialism, feminist theory, philosophy, political theory, history, literary theory, translation studies and many more. Among these approaches, the most prominent is Marxism.

Marxism encompasses a range of political and economic theories. In *The Communist Manifesto* by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, there are references to such ideas as class conflict and revolution. According to this view, the working class, or proletariat and the ruling class, or capitalists are the two main social groups in society and the ruling class exploits the power of the working class. So, the idea is that Marxism advocates a worker revolution to overturn capitalism and adopt communism instead. The nature of the power dynamics between capitalists and workers inevitably leads to class conflict. As a result of this conflict working-class people would eventually overcome the ruling class and take over economic dominance.

Marxism is a strategy for understanding class relations, social struggle, and social transformation from a dialectical perspective using a materialist analysis of historical development which is also known as historical materialism. Perry states that while some Marxists have innovated new ideas, others have succeeded at conducting a conventional historical study. He adds, providing the following explanation: "Marxist historians have examined history from above, the history of great men, as well as turning traditional history on its head and giving a voice to the common people. Marxist historians have scrutinised both long- and short-run historical developments

in addition to history at the macro- and the micro-level” (5). According to the Marxist theory of history, societies and cultural institutions such as religion, morality, and law developed as a result of economic activity. Hegel's approach greatly affected Marx's concept. Marx, however, disagreed with the assumption that abstract ideas were the driving force behind social development, even if he accepted Hegel's essential dialectical argument. Instead, he believed that the forces driving the dialectic of change were material and economic forces or our interactions with the physical world. More specifically, the basic contradictions in the system of material production form the foundation of history. Every “mode of production” or economic system includes contradictions which lead to failure. Eventually, it is replaced by a more developed social and economic system. The contradictions in feudalism led to capitalism, and capitalism with the overproduction of products finally results in communism (Perry 3-5).

Cultural theory was divided for the majority of the twentieth century between idealist theories, most notably those put forth by classic literary humanism, post-Weberian sociology, post-Durkheimian anthropology, and materialist explanations of the Marxist sort. While some scholars are motivated directly by Marx, others, from a variety of political perspectives, work with theories that are both rooted in Marx and influenced by materialism. Raymond Williams who is a socialist writer and critic contrasted such idealisms and materialisms and noted that each theory might be investigated in relation to "cultural" activities and other aspects of social life. As the second half of the twentieth century began, the sociology of culture was mostly composed of studies from these two perspectives. "Cultural practice" and "cultural production", as Williams points out, are fundamental components of social order. According to this perspective, culture is the "signifying framework through which “a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored” (qtd. Williams in Milner 17-18).

Given all of this, early in the 1980s, both the British version of the cultural studies known as “cultural materialism” and the American “new historicism” emerged (Milner 149). The term “cultural materialism” was coined by Raymond Williams who is closely followed by Marxist historians. His writings on literature, politics, culture, and the media influenced many other critics of arts and culture in the field of Marxist criticism. The term "cultural materialism" refers to a theoretical perspective that

combines Marxist analysis with leftist culturalism. Many definitions are made by scholars such as Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore, and John Higgins to describe what cultural materialism is. Prendergast defines culture as the creation of "meanings and values," as a "whole way of life," and, in the formulations of cultural materialism, as a "constitutive human process" inseparable from the totality of "social material activity" (Prendergast 4).

Originally employed in *New Left Review* and later in his *Marxism and Literature* and *Culture and Society*, then in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, the term "cultural materialism" is defined by Raymond Williams as: "a theory of culture as a (social and material) 'productive process' and of specific practices, of 'arts', as social uses of material means of production (from language as material 'practical consciousness' to the specific technologies of writing and forms of writing, through to mechanical and electronic communications systems)" (Williams 243). As explained by Milner, cultural materialism points towards a necessary decentring of both texts into the contexts of their production, reproduction and consumption, and literature into the culture, literary studies into cultural studies (145). In other words, cultural materialism aims to place the written work in the period in which it is produced and to analyse it in parallel with the period. In *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams suggests as follows:

It might be said, indeed, that the questions now concentrated in the meanings of the word *culture* are questions directly raised by the great historical changes which the changes in *industry*, *democracy* and *class*, in their own way, represent, and to which the changes in *art* are a closely related response. The development of the word *culture* is a record of a number of important and continuing reactions to these changes in our social, economic and political life, and may be seen, in itself, as a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored. (Williams xiv-xv)

As the statement above suggests, it could be argued that culture is connected to the significant historical shifts that the changes in democracy, industry and class portray in their own ways and these changes are closely related to one another. The evolution of culture is a record of several ongoing responses to these shifts in the economic, social, and political environment and can be viewed as a way for the exploration of culture. In addition, when speaking for literature, it provides an explanation of how a literary work is reproduced at the time being and how it is

perceived and consumed by readers of the period, and thus how literature is associated with culture and literary studies with cultural studies.

Raymond Williams' understanding of history is based on the exploration of man's struggle against boundaries. Williams is influenced by the humanistic ideas of struggle and hope found in societies and cultures (Prendergast x). One of his distinctive contributions to Marxist theory is that he re-examines the understanding of class conflict which is not identical to class struggle yet inseparable from it, by emphasising the ways in which social, cultural, or educational reforms enable the elimination of class conflict. Williams, like Italian Marxist philosopher Gramsci, adds concepts of conflict and integration to the notion of class conflict while keeping class struggle for the critical period in civilizations in which structural change becomes a deliberate interaction of forces. Once more, his goal is to evoke specific, verifiable actions to take for progressive activists and thinkers (Prendergast x).

Williams attempts his critical thinking on three major bases: ideological, academic and political. According to his historical materialist analysis, these two ideas are totally against Williams's socialist and democratic values: one of them is Stalinism which is based on dictatorial statism and suppression of civil society, and the other is Fabianism which is naïve thinking of the enemy as a simple party rather than an organised hostile social formation. These two ideas are totally against Williams's socialist and democratic values. In academic terms, by improving basic left-wing ideas on the relationship between culture and democracy, art and socialism, Williams aimed to challenge conservative modes of thinking about culture represented by T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis. Lastly, in political terms, Williams aimed to rethink revolution so that cultural practices were neither ignored nor dismissed in a simplistic way. The idea was to transform how culture, particularly popular culture, is perceived in capitalist societies and to see it as a significant area of struggle (Prendergast x-xi).

Williams does not ignore existential issues like death, despair, disempowerment, and disillusionment despite failures and obstacles. He deeply knows that revolutionary activity is both a question of sentiments and facts, of imagination and organisation, of agency and analysis. Consequently, he called attention to what most leftist philosophers usually disregard: the need for vision and the need of connecting vision to emotional forms of human connection. For instance, as seen in

Williams's interest in communities, ordinary people are empowered and capable of dealing with disappointments and failures since they have enduring neighbourhoods, and supportive networks (Prendergast x-xi).

Cultural materialism, which has its roots in Marxism, emphasises the relationship between literary works and their historical environment, which includes social, economic, and political factors. By extending Marxist concepts of class-based analysis, cultural materialism also focuses on "the marginalised", socially and economically disadvantaged groups of society. Cultural materialists work with certain historical sources to interpret and recreate the atmosphere of a specific historical period. To illustrate, in their work *Political Shakespeare, Essays in Cultural Materialism* Dollimore and Sinfield, who are two leading cultural-materialist critics, state that cultural materialism can be easily employed in Renaissance studies. They borrowed this term and expanded its definition by applying it to Renaissance drama studies. In order to establish particular ideas on cultural forces in a society, one can look at canonical and historically significant books like that of Shakespeare and study in them such processes as historical context, close textual analysis, political commitment and theoretical method.

By examining the historical setting and political implications of a work, the methods used by current power institutions such as the state, the academy, and the church to spread ideologies are uncovered. According to Dollimore and Sinfield, cultural and material aspects are important and by cultural they refer to social systems and to art and literature as forms of "high culture". As asserted in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* by pointing out material aspect of cultural materialism, they oppose both classical Marxism, which argues that politics and economics are more important than culture, and idealism, which claims that art transcends society and time (Makaryk 21). As Makaryk highlights Dollimore and Sinfield claim literature's power to interact with and change conventional practises and beliefs by arguing that: "literary texts 'represent' rather than 'transcend' or 'reflect' material reality". The political objective of cultural materialism is supported by the significant role of literature since the theory is based on "commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class" (21). Makaryk highlights the following: "Cultural materialists have contributed to literary criticism in their re-evaluation of the relationship between present and past. They remind readers

that texts do have a history and that knowing historical conditions can enrich one's understanding and appreciation of literature" (24).

Cultural materialism has significantly influenced literary studies, particularly in Britain, by emphasising the problems of class, sexuality, race, and gender. Contrary to traditional humanist readings that frequently avoid engaging with such groups, cultural materialists often take into account the writings about them.

In his essay "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" Williams explains the relationship between society and literature as follows:

what are the relations between art and society?, or literature and society?—in the light of the preceding discussion, we have to say first that there are no relations between literature and society in that abstracted way. The literature is there from the beginning as a practice in the society. Indeed, until it and other practices are present, the society cannot be said to have fully formed. (44)

Literature and art have quite distinct qualities, however, as Williams suggests they cannot be separated "from other kinds of social practice" (44). Regarding Williams's essay, one can say literature has always been a part of society as a practice, and it is impossible to say that society is fully formed until literature and other practices exist. Literature and art are strongly intertwined with other forms of social activity. Literature is a "mediated", a processed and framed reflection of reality, not a separate reality. Aronowitz states in his essay "Between Criticism and Ethnography" that Williams's writings, as well as those he studies, including the poetry of Goldsmith and Wordsworth, as well as the novels of George Eliot and Jane Austen, are interpretations that are studied within their historical context. Williams constantly claims that history is the subject of knowledge and that it must be examined as a "whole" along with economic and political institutions (324). According to Aronowitz Williams claims that beliefs, values, and particularly "feelings" are an undeniable part of history. Aronowitz also illustrates Williams's aim of studying the classical works of English literature as follows: "Rather, as a cultural historian, he plumbs the canonical works of English literature to reveal the ways in which, in Leavis's terms, they may provide "real knowledge" not only of the complexity of human nature but also of the density of everyday life, with which economic and political structures invariably intersect" (325). He explores these works to show how they may bring "actual knowledge" of both the richness of daily life and the complexity of human nature, with which economic and political structures ultimately collide. According to

Aronowitz, Williams also draws an explicit relationship between cultural study and educational policy, and therefore he is seen as the most significant figure in "English" cultural studies. Williams, however, did not view "education" as formal school. Instead, he had a political conception of education that gave rise to the term "cultural policy" with the study of communications media in all of its essential forms constituting its most critical part in the post-war era (326). Williams's analysis of the communications media—which includes not only television and movies but also advertisements, books and theatre—is framed in terms of the concept of permanent education (Aronowitz 326).

Williams' definition of cultural materialism differs slightly from what is suggested by American new historicism (Milner 149). The main distinction between new historicism and cultural materialism is that the former emphasises the social oppression that must be fought in order to create change, whereas the latter concentrates on the methods by which such change is accomplished. New historicism is a literary and cultural critique movement, within which cultural studies originated in the United States. It is based on post-structural theorists like Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, as well as Clifford Geertz and other cultural anthropologists who treated culture as a series of signifying systems. Subverting the divisions made in conventional criticism between "high literature" and "high art" is a challenging task in cultural studies. Mainstream fiction, best-selling romances, journalism, advertising, and other forms of popular culture including film, television, and music tend to receive more attention in cultural studies than works from the traditional literary canon. Politically radical practitioners of cultural studies, like new historicist criticism, focus on transforming the existing power structures that they see as being dominated by a particular gender, race, or class. The analysis and interpretation of social practices outside the scope of literature is a prominent activity in cultural studies; these concepts are seen as possessed with meanings that are the result of social conventions and that may either demonstrate or oppose the dominant power structures in culture. As stated by Abrams:

In theory, there is no limit to the kinds of things and patterns of behavior to which such an analysis of cultural "texts" may be applied", that is, studies now being conducted cover a wide range of topics, including cross-dressing, urban street clothes, bodybuilding trends, and the social act of smoking cigarettes. (53-54)

Stanley Aronowitz states in his essay that Williams works more in historical ethnography than criticism and is more concerned with analysing how poetry and novels are constitutive of historical experience than judging their aesthetic value. Williams mostly uses experience in relation to his "structure of feeling" areas. His essay "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* has one of the best explanations of what he means by the concepts of cultural materialism, structure of feeling, and his differentiation between emergent, dominant, and residual cultures (Aronowitz 324). The established language and beliefs that are accepted as social standards and are commonly imposed by the majority of people are referred to as the dominant culture. There are various elements from the past within the dominant culture. According to Williams, residual cultural practices in current culture have an unconscious or conscious influence. Emergent culture is defined as the fresh cultural aspects and traditions that are continuously developing within a society. These aspects may prevail in society, or they may represent an opposing viewpoint. Williams claims that dominant cultures are affected by individual behaviours. This may indicate that individuals in a society can change the cultural environment (Williams 40-45). Williams further explains this by saying:

There is a simple theoretical distinction between alternative and oppositional, that is to say between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it, and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change the society in its light. This is usually the difference between individual and small-group solutions to social crisis and those solutions which properly belong to political and ultimately revolutionary practice. (Williams 41-42)

When analysing a piece of literature, it is important to consider how the work is produced during the time it is written and how the readers of that time period react to it. And in this way, it turns out that literature and literary studies can both be related to culture and cultural studies. With these considerations in mind, it is aimed to examine the novels that will be discussed in the thesis' main body, largely following Raymond Williams' argument that the literary work should be analysed in direct relation to the historical era in which it is produced. Since the main theory on which the thesis will be founded has been described in general terms above, it is now possible to continue discussing the key elements of the genre of the books to be examined under the following title, "Utopia-Dystopia and Cross-Genre Impact".

1.2 Utopia-Dystopia and Cross-Genre Impact

In his article named “Blurred Genres” which was published in 1980, Geertz states the fact that in recent years there has been a tremendous amount of genre mixing in social science and the blurring of genres is continuing constantly on the increase. In the article, he makes analogies of different kinds of genre-blurring by giving examples from well-known thinkers and writers. As he states genre-blurring is:

philosophical inquiries looking like literary criticism (think of Stanley Cavell on Beckett or Thoreau, Sartre on Flaubert), scientific discussions looking like belles *lettres morceaux* (Lewis Thomas, Loren Eiseley)... histories that consist of equations and tables or law court testimony (Fogel and Engerman, *Le Roi Ladurie*), documentaries that read like true confessions (Mailer)... theoretical treatises set out as travelogues (Lévi-Strauss), ideological arguments cast as historiographical inquiries (Edward Said), epistemological studies constructed like political tracts (Paul Feyerabend). (165)

As can be seen, by Geertz’s statement of genre-blurring, many different genres are put together in one work so that it becomes impossible to identify the work with one single genre. He further states that it is now impossible to identify writers or categorise works due to the current mix of a variety of discourses. He asks how to identify Foucault for instance, as a “historian, philosopher, political theorist?”. This way, by definition, it becomes hard to categorize (165-166).

Upon reading a novel or other literary fiction, one can say that it belongs to a genre. The idea of genre blending has many combinations. However, in the book *Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction*, editor P. L. Thomas mentions Paul Kincaid’s “Against a Definition of Science Fiction” in which it is suggested that a pure genre does not exist, and everything has the potential to be interpreted in a variety of ways as he argues: “[e]verything is capable of being read in different ways. So, the way we read a work, sometimes the way we choose to read a work, is crucial in determining how we identify it” (qtd. in Thomas 38-39).

Similar to what has been argued above, this time Luckhurst in his article “Science Fiction and Cultural History” states that he investigates science fiction literature which suggests “an approach that considered literary texts as part of a matrix open to, and intermixed with, many other discourses in a flat, non-hierarchical net” (10). That is to say, literary works are seen as a component of a network that is intermingled with a variety of different discourses in a broad net. As he remarks

science fiction is a literary genre that emerged in the nineteenth century as the final refuge of humanism in a rapidly industrializing world (Luckhurst 10).

Luckhurst mentions Stephen Shapin's "The History of Science and its Sociological Reconstructions". According to Shapin:

an empirical sociology of knowledge has to do more than *demonstrate* the underdetermination of scientific accounts and judgements; it has to go on to show why particular accounts were produced and why particular evaluations were rendered; and it has to do this by displaying the historically contingent connections between knowledge and the concerns of various social groups in their intellectual and social settings. (Shapin 164)

The scientific methods can be viewed as social and cultural practices since they have been historically dependent on the social settings of certain groups and their concerns. Luckhurst then, mentions Louis Pasteur's theory of disease transmission as an example. In this theory, it is revealed that by purposefully mixing subjects and objects, nature and culture, scientific, political, social, and cultural debates show how they are all inextricably linked (11). A cultural history of science fiction must also attempt to connect diverse aspects. As seen with Luckhurst's view of science fiction, Landon talks about the term "hybridity" as:

a concept that has steadily gained purchase in a wide range of critical discourses over the past twenty-five years, adding cultural and aesthetic dimensions to its initially largely biological meanings. In postcolonial studies, sociology, political science, art, and numerous other areas of critical inquiry, hybridity has been accorded more and more positive connotations as a transgressive or resistant phenomenon. (161)

Furthermore, Landon adds that Luckhurst's point of science fiction is intrinsically hybrid (Landon 161). According to Landon, Luckhurst attempts to analyse the impact of science fiction allegories on cultural formations because science fiction is more a voice of technological modernity's melancholy and trauma than a glorification of technological freedom. Luckhurst shows science fiction has consistently changed into Gothic or horror writing while the human subject is surrounded by technologies "that subvert, enslave, or ultimately destroy" (qtd. in Landon 162). This is one of the characteristics of science fiction's hybridity, as well as an indicator of the genre's ambivalence (162). Before getting into the specifics of what dystopian and utopian fiction are, it is important to look at the term science fiction, which encompasses both genres.

Prior to the expansion of science and technology, people used their senses to give meaning to their actions and surroundings. Later, however, with the advancements in science, everything is perceived through reasoning and experimentation. While some scholars believe that the origins of science fiction are rooted in works like the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, others argue that science fiction arose between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, during the times when science began to shine. Beginning in the seventeenth century, authors began producing science fiction texts that integrated new discoveries and technologies into existing genres and narrative structures while also speculating on how these scientific techniques will function in the future. Since then, the main elements of science fiction are represented in utopias, satires, accounts of both scientific advancement and speculation, aliens, "other" worlds, and space travel starting from the 1600s and continuing to this day.

The utopian fantasy, whose typical narrative form is the imaginary voyage, was a genre fitted to science fiction speculation. From Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1623) to Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), it had been acknowledged that technological advancement was crucial to social reform. The majority of later utopian fantasies considered scientific progress as a supporting concept while issues of social, political and religious transformation take the main concern. For writers like Jonathan Swift, science became a satirical target just as in his *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). However, as the century passed with developing scientific progress, cross-genre impact began to be seen in the works of science fiction as in the Gothic writing of Mary Shelley *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) (Thomas 21-23). The writings of Mary Shelley are widely mentioned by contemporary science fiction historians as the origin of British scientific romance, despite the fact that *The Last Man* (1826) is mostly a disaster story and *Frankenstein* (1818) which has strong Gothic implications. This can be considered an example of conflict in categorizing the genre of the book. Similarly, by the late 1800s as Thomas quotes Roberts science fiction had developed: "a dual or antithetical quality, between decay and evolution or utopia versus dystopia" (qtd. in Thomas 23). Although neither book had an instant impact, they both serve as defining models for science fiction.

Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*, which was established in 1926, was the first publication in English solely devoted to science fiction. At first, the genre was initially referred to as "scientifiction," but later began to refer to as "science fiction"

by 1929 (James and Mendelsohn 15-31). Thomas quotes the critic Darko Suvin's definition of science fiction as a literary genre: "whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (qtd. in Thomas 38). By the "empirical environment" he means the real world in which the author lives, and by the "imaginative framework" he means introducing something new. Here, Thomas mentions an important element of science fiction coined by critic Suvin which is "the novum" in Latin "new" or "new thing", referring to "the intrusion of something new into a world not unlike our own and validated by cognitive logic" (qtd. in Thomas 38). The novum may be a discovery, an alien, or a recent technology, but it has to be realistic, and it should enable one to make inferences from what is known about the science of that period. The element of novum, that is to say, the new material in the text, should challenge the ongoing notions of the time with its scientific credibility such as a discovery which provides a need to do further research. On the part of the reader, the basic societal beliefs are challenged, therefore the novum is seen as the source for speculations which provides curiosity for new ideas (Thomas 39). The scientific advancements of the historical period feed speculations and these speculations have a great effect on the developments in science in general.

Science fiction is grounded on a scientific basis and as a literary genre, it influences both the individual and society (Thomas 40). Science fiction writers deal with the social occasions of their times. From that, they imagine and build their own assumptions, criticisms and how the world can be changed, reaching towards other worlds and orders; "toward utopia or dystopia". Such issues as capitalism and economic inequality also affected writers to deal with social problems. In light of this, it appears that the "details of these worlds tell us quite a lot, in some general ways, about when they were imagined and by whom" (Thomas 60).

Another literary genre that science fiction writers often make use of is utopia. Utopia is a Greek word and pun that has both imaginary and positive meanings. It is a society or a world in which everything is perfect. The term "utopia" means both "no place" and "good place" since there is a reference to a place where everything is ideal which is in fact impossible because the ideal society seems unattainable. Utopian fiction writers portray a society similar to the society in which they live, but this society

is much better organized than their own. Moreover, they also provide a clear model for how to build such a society and how it may function. Utopia as a literary genre was established with Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and since then much of historians concentrated on the significance of this term by examining it as a concept and a genre. More's *Utopia* envisions a perfect society built on political and economic prosperity, equality, and the eradication of poverty and misery. Around 375 BC, Plato wrote *The Republic* discussing the order, justice, nature of the righteous city-state, and the qualities of the just man, is widely regarded as the first utopian text and serves as an inspiration for More's *Utopia*. Current issues of the period become even more obvious in utopias when authors prefer envisioning a better world, especially in the future. As Gordin et al. state in his *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*, "utopias and dystopias are histories of the present" (1), that is to say, dystopian and utopian histories are based on the present. In other words, it can be said that present-day issues become more apparent when a better future is imagined. A century or so after Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) was published, utopian works began to appear, but the genre did not completely develop until the 18th century. The genre was later used, starting with well-known utopian works of the 18th century like Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). W. H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887) might be given as an example when discussing utopias from the 19th century. Later utopian works include William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and *Equality* (1897), and Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872). In succeeding eras, utopian civilizations are depicted in H. G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and *Men Like Gods* (1923), Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953), Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962), and Ursula K. LeGuin's *Always Coming Home* (1985). The world in utopian literature is a better version of the real world. Such works usually focus on the problematic aspects of contemporary life. After that, it constructs imaginative worlds using improved reality. The subjects of utopias might range from ecological to feminist to technological concerns. Climate change and a lack of natural resources do not really exist in those worlds. In feminist utopias, equality between men and women is completely eliminated. Robotics, scientific advancements, and transportation technologies are portrayed in technological utopias. For the individuals who live in the real world of today's orders and the readers of these texts, all of these advancements are merely dreams. Therefore, the idea of an ideal, well-organized society has received

a lot of academic interest from Plato to science fiction, from historians, authors, scholars, and philosophers to many other fields. People from all fields are drawn to utopia because it has the following characteristics: “religious roots in paradise, political roots in socialism, economic roots in communes, and so on” (Gordin et al. 1). Intellectual freedom, individualism, the use of technology for the benefit of inhabitants, and peaceful, wealthy communities free from fear and conflict are typical traits of utopian fiction. Science fiction utopias typically include extremely realistic worlds with ideal technology, politics, economics, and social structures. Eventually, when all requirements are fulfilled, total harmony is established. The characteristics of utopian fiction are identified as follows: Propaganda and censorship are not mentioned. Individual liberty, freedom of expression, and creativity are encouraged. Most of the population does not experience anxiety or fear. Instead of controlling them, technology is employed to serve the people of that society, leading to a stable, peaceful and harmonious society. Also, nature is valued. Besides all characteristics, the question of whether a true utopia can exist and last has been hard to know.

Another term dystopia which is mentioned by Gordin et al. as the “twentieth-century doppelgänger” of utopia” (1), has flourished in the vast areas of science fiction and political literature, as seen in George Orwell's *1984* (1949) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) which are referred to as dystopia. Dystopian fiction expresses a pessimistic attitude, in that the idea that human beings are capable of perfection is rejected in dystopias, excluding the chance of ideal societies. The dystopian fiction employs a presentation of a bleak future to illustrate what will happen if specific existing systems prevail. Dystopias imply the potential for social change, however, unlike utopias, they do not provide any optimistic solutions. Authorities in dystopias are oppressive, and people who live in these societies do not think positively of them. As is previously noted, it is assumed that science and technology are used to improve better conditions in utopian narratives. Only the group in control has access to more advanced technology in dystopian fiction, which supports their domination. Dystopia is not merely the total opposite of utopia. As Gordin et al. argue dystopia “is a utopia that has gone wrong or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society” (1-2).

As Gordin et al. suggest every utopia is accompanied by an underlying dystopia. Many science fiction novels blend utopia and dystopia aspects in themselves.

And perhaps it is the writers' pessimistic or optimistic view of the world that leads them to compose dystopian and utopian texts. It is the dystopia of the established order, which the utopia is designed to rectify, or it is a dystopia where the utopia is distorted in practice. However, a dystopia does not have to be a complete opposite of a utopia. It can be interpreted that there are many more ways to create dystopia than utopia since in a universe where chaos is increasing, there are far more possibilities for things to go wrong than to go well. Dystopia, therefore, has the aspect of everyday experience simply because it is so much more widespread. People tend to see their surroundings in a dystopic manner. Unlike utopia, which brings the reader to the future and serves to denounce the present, dystopia immerses them in a gloomy dark reality, foreshadowing a dreadful future if people do not detect and correct its symptoms immediately at the present time. Thus, the rationale between the two terms, a place of dream place and a place of nightmare require integration together. The primary way to distinguish the two phenomena is to look at the consequences, as both have a wish for a better future (Gordin et al. 1-2).

A utopian world seldom takes place in real-time or real places, rather inhabiting an imaginary past, or present in a remote place of future or realm of fantasy. Often, creating such a setting helps in providing the reader with a sense of optimism. However, as stated by Vivienne Greene who wrote in her article "Utopia/Dystopia" that "the idea of utopia is frequently intertwined with notions of dystopia, an experiment that takes a tragic turn" (2). For instance, in his *Utopia* (1516), More creates a secluded island to represent a better future, but actually, it appears fascist as the modern reader can comprehend now since the 20th century has passed. Likewise, George Orwell's *1984* (1949) is a "utopia gone wrong" which is set in a bleak futuristic world. Both are dominated by oppressive authorities and the suppression of freedom of thought (Greene 2).

As James and Mendelsohn state science fiction and utopian literature share a great number of similarities with socialist and Marxist theory (113-114). Basically, science fiction and utopian literature have always focused on developing progressive alternatives to the current system, frequently indicating criticisms of the condition of the world at the present time or potential future consequences of existing social status. Science fiction depicts progress for the entire humanity, and these changes are frequently the outcome of scientific advancements. The utopian and

social vision of the Marxist movement likewise addresses these issues. Utopian fiction has featured idealised rational societies that are set up as opposed to exploitative modern cultures since its early times. He nevertheless maintained the ideal society that would follow the successful proletarian revolution's importance as a historical goal. Marx saw technology as an essential tool for achieving human liberty. Marx thought that technical advancements were both the tools of mass servitude in an exploitative system and the guarantees of human freedom from labour in a just world. These concepts were shaped by Marxist theory into a tale of social and technical freedom that bore unmistakable similarities to the fundamental science fiction tales (James and Mendelsohn 113-114). During the twentieth century, the horrors of dictatorship, war, and genocide diminished the writer's capacity to imagine a better future. The utopia genre faded along with idealism in the twentieth century due to pessimism and scepticism. However, as James and Mendelsohn assert: "utopia has not disappeared; it has merely mutated, within the field of sf, into something very different from the classic utopia" (219). In that, within the world of science fiction, utopia has not vanished; rather, it has changed into something completely different from the traditional utopia. For most of the nineteenth-century utopian writers, human beings are inherently good and once the distortions caused by capitalism were eliminated, their goodness would be seen.

The majority of utopias abolished money and private property, instantly eliminating greed, robbery, jealousy, and other causes of societal unrest. It was almost universally accepted by utopian writers that the parasitic profession of the lawyer must be eliminated. From the nineteenth century onward, it was common to view priests "as little better than lawyers" (220) because both claimed to bring peace but instead stimulated self-interest misinformation and disharmony. Authors provided creative solutions to encourage joy and peace in their utopias by permitting individual freedom and job satisfaction (James and Mendelsohn 220).

Utopias and dystopias are social critiques in which writers make use of an existing social state to construct a superior or distorted reflection of the original one while locating it in a different time and space. Wells's utopias, which are commonly situated in a distant place or time, are frequently accompanied by catastrophic world wars, deterioration, or uncertainty. Mankind comprehends that science is the foundation of a new world order. Utopia, on the other hand, recognises spiritual

requirements. There should be unity and harmony both in the individual body and soul and in the communal body and soul (Collins 356-357). With all these definitions and terms explained, it is possible now to evaluate two books by the major science fiction authors and whether these books, *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End*, fit the definition of utopia in the following chapters by analysing them in terms of cultural materialism. The two selected works by H. G. Wells and Arthur. C. Clarke have been classified as a utopia. However, both are narrated with some elements that do not fit the definition of utopia. Towards the end of *In the Days of the Comet* by Wells, a utopian world order is established, but the process up to that time, the description of the world, and the way that the narrative is transferred to the reader are more likely to create a dystopian atmosphere. Similarly, in *Childhood's End*, the utopian order is achieved along with a process of time with the coming of the Overlords and their technology, but there is constant obscurity and unrest among people due to the presence of the Overlords, which allows the book to be viewed from a dystopian perspective.

Examining these two authors' chosen works, who are among the major science fiction writers, demonstrates that these books emerged as a result of a critical perspective at the time they were written. Although these two books were written in completely different periods—one in the early 1900s and the other in the 1950s—when analysed in terms of elements of cultural materialism such as religion, social life, economy, and politics, they actually touch on a common point, which is that the two are utopias, but they intensely carry the pessimism and uncertainty of the period in which they were written.

Both books have an external intruder aspect that is grounded in science. In *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End*, the intruders are respectively “the Comet” and “the Overlords”. And once they both arrive on Earth, the entire planet is dominated by utopian order. This order is set more quickly in Wells’s world than in Clarke’s. The books are referred to be utopian fiction since they aim to create an ideal world. However, the way Wells and Clarke approach utopia follows a similar pattern. While dealing with utopia, both authors' writings show how the chaotic, pessimistic, and dilemma parts of the world are prevalent. This raises doubts in the reader's mind about whether or not these two books are completely utopian fiction or not.

CHAPTER 2: CHAOS TO HARMONY: H. G. WELLS'S *IN THE DAYS OF THE COMET*

The Industrial Revolution is where the contemporary understanding of culture and society starts. Technological advancements of all kinds have an influence on human existence, society, and ultimately culture. The people of society who are impacted by these changes also have an impact on culture in social, political, and economic ways, which results in cultural change. Despite the fact that *In the Days of the Comet* was written in the early 1900s, the events that impact Wells and his views while writing the novel occur far earlier. It is stated in *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* by Chris Williams that compared to other centuries, the 19th century saw a number of innovations and transformations. From a rural, agricultural nation to an urban, industrialised one, England witnessed significant social upheaval. Mass production, steam engines, railroads, gas and electric light, the telegraph, and other technological, scientific, and industrial advancements all contributed to the development of the country, which resulted in a massive increase in productivity, specifically through the factory system (Williams 1). In addition to this, there were significant societal costs, including dehumanisation of work, pollution, and the expansion of cities with high rates of illness, dirt, and poverty. Rural living, where working requires long hours and extremely little pay resulted in migration to bigger cities causing an enormous increase in the population. Additionally, in later years, legislation on child labour, worker safety, public health, the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, and educational reform were all significant changes. Although there was a tremendous social movement, society was hierarchical. Entrepreneurs utilized their new fortune to rise in society, building elaborate residences, sending their kids to private schools, and hiring domestic servants (Williams 1). Britain continuously added more land to its possessions around the world. The fact that Britain is an Empire contributed to its strong military power and economic hegemony over other European states. As Raymond Williams put it in his work called *Marxism and Literature*: "... 'art' and 'literature' (themselves newly generalized and abstracted), were seen as the deepest record, the deepest impulse, and the deepest resource of the 'human spirit'" (Williams 15). The social, cultural, economic, political, and religious systems of a society have the power to influence its citizens' characteristics, in accordance with the cultural materialist viewpoint (Higgins 62). According to materialist theory, people's

socioeconomic circumstances affect their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. That is to say, society divides people into several social groups according to how they live. This is also supported by the written works and the literature of the time. In their literary works, authors' emotions and thoughts leave traces of their daily lives. From these conditions of the late Victorian period, Wells is greatly affected.

H. G. Wells (1866-1946) is among the most prominent writers of science fiction of all times. Born in 1866, Wells contributed to the literature with his many different writings including short stories, history, satire, autobiography, biography, and novels. Many of his works included his views of social commentary in various manners. He is best known for his scientific romances, which particularly position him to be known as the father of science fiction. Alongside with Hugo Gernsback and Jules Verne, Wells's name is remembered by the writers of his time. His reputation has strong roots in his scientific romances, namely *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, *First Men in the Moon*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. As stated by Hammond “[Wells] is a writer of strange fantasies of the future” for those who have not even read his works of literature (Hammond 3). Wells's writings covered a broad range of topics including sociology, history, education, political and scientific opinions. His prophetic ideas of the future made him seen as a writer with opposing opinions for the morality of his time. This may be the reason why he had such a great impact on the intellectual and social circumstances of the twentieth-century Britain. To understand the motifs behind his being such a prolific writer covering a vast range of subjects, it is important to know that the period in which he lived was a turning point of a century-old process.

During his lifetime he read such books as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Plato's *Republic* and Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*- all of which are quite distinct texts that had a fermenting effect on his thoughts helping his imagination to create his own vision of the ideal community. As Hammond clarifies:

Under the stimulus of Plato's Utopianism he came to a vision of a world rebuilt: a world of free-living, free-loving rational beings, united in their knowledge that progress was inevitable and that the millennium was plainly ahead. He was, in fact, passing through that phase of intense idealism which many sensitive adolescents embrace on the way to maturity. (9)

He makes use of a didactic ambience in his novels to conduct a discussion of his own ideas (14). This way, Wells reaches the reconstructed ideal state of the existing

real world. Hammond describes Wells in this regard as: “he was the last of the great Utopists” (Hammond 3).

From the 1890s, it is also worth noting that with the pessimism that pervades so much of his later works he questions humanity’s optimism alongside with a pessimist atmosphere and vice versa. This was a recurring subject in his fifty-year production of literary works (14). Such kind of combination of pessimism and optimism is also utilised in *In the Days of the Comet* in terms of a utopian perspective.

Utopian fiction, as James and Mendlesohn suggest, was one of the existing narrative forms that were welcoming for the science fiction genre (James and Mendlesohn 15). Periodicals that had recently emerged made it easier for writers like H. G. Wells to explore and conduct experiments in their narratives. As James and Mendlesohn state, Wells was not writing to get the sympathy of the reader; instead, he was expecting his readers to take his works seriously because for him what he was writing had an actual possibility of becoming real (24). In the essay titled “H. G. Wells and the Prehistoric Man of the 1890s” Pearson states the fact that Wells considered himself a sociologist, yet he regarded sociology to be a creative field, not a scientific field. Although on the surface he draws attention to a scientific phenomenon in *In the Days of the Comet*, the Victorian period’s norms and concerns are portrayed successfully as well. The political and social representations of the Victorian era that Wells deals with in *In the Days of the Comet* reflects the time period.

H. G. Wells's novel *In the Days of the Comet*, published in 1906, is about how the comet elevates humanity once it enters into the atmosphere and releases the green gas it carries with it. The Prologue and Epilogue chapters of the novel are presented to the reader by an unnamed narrator. These brief passages contain conversations with an elderly man, soon to be revealed as William or Willie Leadford, who serves as first-person narrator and the story's protagonist, documenting his life both before and after "the Change." There are three books in which the old man's story is told: Book I, Book II and Book III are respectively titled as follows: “The Comet”, “The Green Vapours”, and “The New World”. Throughout the narrative, William compares the world before and after the comet falls into the Earth’s atmosphere, providing information on the current state of the British economy, the presence of war, the injustices of the class-based society, and gives accounts about the general social situation of the period. With

his detailed account, the reader is able to see the Victorian period from a similar perspective, as in *Culture and Society* Raymond Williams suggests:

The history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life. Our meaning of culture is a response to the events which our meanings of industry and democracy most evidently define. But the conditions were created and have been modified by men. Record of the events lies elsewhere, in our general history. The history of the idea of culture is a record of our meanings and our definitions, but these, in turn, are only to be understood within the context of our actions. (Williams 314)

As Raymond Williams' elaboration of culture suggests, culture is a collection of emotional and intellectual responses to the dynamic situations in which people live. Culture is a reaction to the occurrences in democracy and industry. However, people are responsible for creating and shaping these circumstances. Based on this, the term cultural materialism is defined as: "the study of historical material (which includes literary texts) within a politicised framework, this framework including the present which those literary texts have in some way helped to shape" (Barry 176). In his book *Marxism and Literature*, according to Raymond Williams: "'culture' as a general process of 'inner' development was extended to include a descriptive sense of the means and works of such-development: that is, 'culture' as a general classification of 'the arts', religion, and the institutions and practices of meanings and values" (Williams 14-15). The term 'culture' has been used to refer to a wide range of cultural phenomena, including the arts, religion, and the institutions and practices of meanings and values. Culture is defined as the study of human development in terms of the means and works of such development. Cultural materialists read literature to make readers understand the historical context from which the text originated. By doing so, supporting, or resisting state power, the oppression and the exploitation of poor people can be found in the historical setting. The socioeconomically working classes, women, and other underprivileged groups are often the focus of cultural materialists' concern.

In the Days of the Comet can be examined from a cultural materialist perspective based on all these social, cultural, and political phenomena because the novel describes a society that exists prior to the establishment of a utopian society as well as the condition of this society after the utopian order is established. Numerous critics have cited *In the Days of the Comet* as utopian fiction. However, the formation of a utopian order in the novel does not occur until towards the end of the novel, and the narrator's pessimistic word choice and the chaotic events that occur before the

establishment of utopia raise the question of whether or not the book can be entirely categorised as a utopia.

In the Days of the Comet starts with a Prologue in the form of frame narration. It is defined by Cuddon as a “story within a story”, a method used by storytellers in which the narrator in one environment relates a story set in another time and place. The method is alternatively known as a frame tale and is used in well-known texts such as the *Arabian Nights*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (Cuddon 330). The narrator describes the room of a tower, the orderly and beautiful furniture, and an old man with grey hair sitting on a desk and writing. As mentioned before, the frame narrative technique allows the story to begin at a point when events are over, and everything is settled. The narrator's seeing the old man writing his own story suggests that the following story has already happened in the past and now it is being written by the old man. The narrator cannot comprehend where he is and his confusion referring to the old man and the room is uttered by him with these words: “They were in no fashion I could name, and the simple costume the man wore suggested neither period nor country. It might, I thought, be the Happy Future, or Utopia, or the Land of Simple Dreams; an errant mote of memory, Henry James's phrase and story of "The Great Good Place," twinkled across my mind, and passed and left no light” (Wells 5). It is obvious that the frame tale is set in a utopian world. Then, the old, gloomy eras of humanity are revealed by recalling the past. The final chapters bring the reader back to the utopian world once more. As can be understood, the time told in the Prologue chapter of the book is depicted in the Utopian world and as the narrator describes the atmosphere as well as furniture in the room, and the old man's clothes are not familiar to him. Slowly it is understood that he establishes a kind of connection between what he sees, and the environment, reaching the correct connotation that this is the “Happy Future” or “Utopia”.

This chapter provides the reader with the description of an object, a “concave mirror”, which may be an indication of how bizarre the utopian environment seems to the narrator and perhaps indicates the impossibility of the idea of utopia both for the narrator and the reader of Wells's time in which he wrote *In the Days of the Comet*. In the reflections of this concave mirror, right above the desk where the old Willie Leadford is writing, a palace and a crowd of people walking are reflected. The concave mirror's effect magnifies and distorts what the narrator sees. When the narrator turns

his head to see these impossible-looking reflections for real, he realizes that they are too far away to be seen because he is on top of a tower. It can be said that the depiction of a "concave mirror" may be the representation of the perspective of people who lived in Wells's era and who read about a world of utopia. It can be deduced from the Prologue chapter, yet utopia is beautiful and plain, in reality, it represents a time quite different and remote from the time Wells and his readers live in. To this matter, Ferns highlight the fact that while earlier utopias tend to be totally isolated places in a chaotic world, recent utopias become more encompassing such as in the Wellsian world state. That is to say, the general tendency has been toward utopian fiction, where the more ideal society attempts to dominate the existing world rather than isolate itself from it (Ferns 2). Ferns adds:

In theorizing a more perfect world, the writer remains governed by the realities of his or her own society, extrapolating from its more positive aspects, reacting against its more negative ones, recasting it in the light of social and political theories generated by the imperfect reality from which utopia separates itself. Equally, in narrative terms, there has to be some link, some fictional mechanism to render plausible the transmission of information regarding utopia to the non-utopian reader (to whom utopian fiction is, after all, addressed). (2-3)

Cultural materialism's reliance on historical works can be used to support this claim. When imagining a more ideal society, the author is still constrained by the realities of his or her own culture. Authors draw conclusions from the existing culture's more admirable traits and react and reinterpret it in the context of social and political theories developed by the imperfect reality. To make the conveyance of information about utopia to the reader who is not living in utopia, there must also be some connection or fictitious process, such as an observer, space or time traveller, who may witness and afterwards speak to the beauties of the more ideal society. According to Hammond: "To satirise Victorian society, in addition to these utopian aims, the perception of a "visitant" as an external factor is prevalent in most of his writings" (Hammond 9). Utopia cannot be so far away and unreachable to the "visitant" who finally returns to speak of the excellence of the utopian system.

Cultural materialist critics emphasize that literature and history are always interacting with each other (Brannigan 24). Wells talks about the social circumstances of the late Victorian period. As Ferns mentions: "no matter how deeply buried in the text, the relation between utopia and reality is always a crucial aspect of utopian fiction" (2-3). The more one studies utopia, these "ambiguities" of it, as told by Ferns,

become more apparent. The utopian fiction of Wells, for instance, combines realistic descriptions of political reforms and their effects with fantastical plot elements to give the reader a stronger sense of the fictitious nature of what is being depicted. The unreal such as the narrator's century-long slumber in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and the gas that alters human nature in H.G. Wells's *In the Days of the Comet* coexists with realistic suggestions for social and political transformation (Ferns 3). As Ferns states:

In the utopias of Bellamy and Wells, of course, even the implication that utopia and reality are inimical all but vanishes. In *Looking Backward*, as we have seen, utopia supersedes the old order without so much as a hint of opposition; while *In the Days of the Comet* depicts humanity emerging from its slumber unanimously committed to the construction of a better world. (203)

In *In the Days of the Comet* and *Men Like Gods*, Wells's attempts to blend a portrait of a utopian society with novelistic elements and social satire, respectively, result in rather hybrid narratives, as Ferns puts it, whose non-utopian elements seem designed mostly to conceal the limitations of utopian narrative. He adds that: "For all its elaborate narrative framework and self-consciously speculative tone, the actual portrait of utopian society that emerges remains static, rather than kinetic; as in *Men Like Gods* and *In the Days of the Comet*, the impact of the narrative innovations is neutralized by the authoritarian implications of the utopian vision which they accompany" (22-23). Despite its sophisticated narrative framework and speculative tone, the actual portrayal of the utopian world is static rather than kinetic. In a modern atmosphere, the ambiguity that characterizes Renaissance utopias turn into giving a "sense of generic discontinuity" as Ferns states quoting Morson: "the double encoding of utopias as both fiction and non-fiction, literature and nonliterature" (71). The socio-political recommendations of Wells make the fantastic narrative structures become less evident. For this reason, according to Ferns: "The result is often a certain confusion as to how such hybrid fictions are meant to be read" (71). To oppose the current ruling class, another approach is used in *In the Days of the Comet*, which first provides a lengthy realistic narrative of the narrator's life of minor oppression and agonising sexual jealousy before the utopian vision is introduced (Ferns 89). Therefore, it can be said that although *In the Days of the Comet* is classified as a utopian work of literature by many critics, in fact, it is challenging to label the novel as utopian due to the pessimistic narrative of the novel, which portrays the specific process up until the construction of the utopian society. The utopian atmosphere of the

Prologue chapter disappears when the old Willie begins his narration in chapter one retrospectively narrating the old world. Adam Roberts states the fact that “most science fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was located in versions of its present day” (Roberts 58). Therefore, *In the Days of the Comet* begins in a Victorian time and society and the advances that occurred during this time period are represented in Wells's novel. Wells frequently discusses them from the beginning till the end. Also, Hammond suggests: “*In the Days of the Comet*... contrasts the freedom and happiness of an ideal world with the confusion and disorder of the present” (Hammond 25). Wells allows his readers to see all the events that occurred during this time period, from politics, economy, mass media and war to social life, from class conflict to worker issues, and from women’s questions to religious questionings. By looking at such issues within the historical context, the emergence of culture can be understood. As Raymond Williams focuses on the idea that culture is a process by saying: “in its modern meanings, marks the effort at total qualitative assessment, but what it indicates is a process, not a conclusion.” (Williams 314). Also, Hammond further explains Wells as: “the faithful observer of a particular period in time, recording with unforgettable clarity the social, political and intellectual forces of his day and portraying with warm compassion the lives and loves of inconspicuous folk” (Hammond 27). That is to say, Wells observes his cultural surroundings and then reflects on what he sees in his novel. Therefore, his novel becomes a cultural material which can be revisited anytime by readers. He frequently portrays ordinary people’s lives which is one of the main focuses of cultural materialist critics. The novel's portrayal of the connections and thoughts of common people is crucial to the construction of culture, according to the cultural materialist viewpoint. Since culture is a process, apart from the dominant groups in society, those with small social rights play a significant influence in the creation of culture as well.

The relationship between literary works and the political, social, and economic systems of the society in which they were created is highly valued by cultural materialism. At this point, *In the Days of the Comet* is analysed in light of its historical context, and it is emphasised that Wells critiques the political structure of his own era. The novel first shows how the power of authority plays an effective role in government, and how politicians manipulate people by reporting the war through newspapers. Two opposing parties of war, the Germans and the British, are subjected

to these manipulations in similar ways. The media is the most efficient tool for powerful individuals on both sides to control the nationalism of the population. In light of this, it can be observed that the people are controlled in the same manner on both sides of the conflict. After the comet falls to Earth, Leadford meets with Melmount, who is a powerful political figure. Melmount tells Leadford what he remembers is that in the battle between the Germans and the British, they lost a large warship worth two million pounds, named the *Lord Warden*, along with a thousand hundred soldiers. Melmount mentions another politician named Rigby who said that this loss was not a big deal. This illustrates how politicians have simplified and devalued a serious subject like war. Melmount himself once tried to reassure people that there was nothing to fear about the German ship's raid (257-260). His recollections serve as an example of how politicians disregarded human life and talked about war as something simple.

Cultural materialists stress the need of comprehending the ideas of individuals in positions of authority. *In the Days of the Comet* includes perspectives of both the working class and the upper class, such as the statesmen. With this approach, a variety of society's concealed aspects are exposed. Wells depicts a society where some social groups are subject to both governmental oppression and subordination as a result. Wells presents a social structure that incorporates the opinions of both the working class and the wealthier class. He even continues by describing how politicians and statesmen from the superior class criticise their own errors after the ideal society has been established. By way of William Leadford's observations and point of view as a member of the working class and Melmount's narrative as a prominent political leader, the reader is given an understanding of the personalities of political figures before the falling of the comet. Leadford comments on the personalities of statesmen before the Change. His impressions of them are a kind of mixture of what is portrayed in caricatures and newspapers. They do not have intellectual complexity, so he does not respect any of them (260-261). Melmount insists that the war could have been prevented if people chose to speak out frankly. To Melmount, both the German and the British sides are to blame. He refers to war as nonsense, a "stupidity" and underlines the fact that it could have ended earlier if one of the statesmen decided to end the war (263-266). While Leadford, dressed in cheap clothing, is a representation of the working class, whereas Melmount, wearing a fur coat, is a symbol of the war's provocateurs (268-269). Melmount knows that all of the soldiers are dead because of

the politicians' careless thoughts. People, especially warmongers, are likened to "a herd of swine" who runs into a beautiful garden and destroys it. On the one hand, there is the beauty of life, and on the other, there is humanity, which spoils the planet with jealousy, war, and prejudices. As a politician, he evaluates his whole life as filled with foolishness, shameful and unpleasant desires and now he feels grateful to be alive and is sure he will not continue to maintain the established order (271-272).

The interaction between literature and history is always highlighted by cultural materialist critics. Wells uses insights from his own era to illustrate examples of this issue for the reader. To better comprehend how the corruption of politicians is reflected in society, Wells provides a comparison of the renewed ideas of statesmen and the ideas of their former states. The statesmen assemble after the comet impacts Earth. As it entirely eradicates not humanity, but rather the negative qualities within them, strong political figures meet as a cabinet for the creation of a new world state. Leadford mentions that back then, a cabinet council used to be a private meeting. In the past, politicians were always keeping secrets from others, acting suspiciously, and misleading others—often for no apparent reason (301). In the cabinet, there are fifteen political figures who governed the British Empire before the Change and these English politicians and statesmen formed a peculiar class. It is mentioned in the novel that one can read Charles Dickens, Mrs Humphry Ward and Disraeli to see a hostile exaggeration and keen ridicule of this class (303-304). Wells provides the reader with the traits of statesmen from the caricatures drawn in newspapers. These caricatures portray people who control public life in ridiculous, vulgar and dishonourable ways which almost destroy all respect towards the state. Britain as a state is portrayed by a farmer with a large belly, a red face, and a purse full of pride, while the United States, is represented by a clever rascal wearing striped pants and a blue coat. The caricatures portray the prime ministers as follows: "The chief ministers of state were pickpockets, washerwomen, clowns, whales, asses, elephants, and what not, and issues that affected the welfare of millions of men were dressed and judged like a rally in some idiotic pantomime" (305). This passage clearly depicts the corruption of the statesmen. People in charge of the state are those who are portrayed in all these unfavourable ways. The caricatures also portray war participants. In one of them, the tragic South African war which leaves tens of thousands of men dead or disabled, is depicted as a light-hearted argument between two characters who are drawn in exaggerated ways (304-305). With

the drawings mentioned in this section, it is implied that Wells's audience is given the opportunity to evaluate their own circumstances through the public's exaggerated representation of the politicians in the novel. Thus, in order to increase awareness, as cultural materialists also believe, it is crucial to include the thoughts and viewpoints of characters from many backgrounds in literary works.

Politicians like the presidents are depicted in exaggerated heights, their faces covered by inhuman masks, and their voices are made in foolish public utterance, disguised like insane human beings. These politicians and their clownish conflicts sway the world to misery (306-307). Descriptions of some important politicians are made such as The Chancellor of the Duchy who is aware of his being “self-indulgent and presumptuous old man” and admitting he has given himself to “politics and intrigues”. Another politician the Lord Chancellor speaks: “We have to forgive... We have to forgive—even ourselves” (307-308). The Earl of Richover who spent all his time on politics, jockeys, and literary studies says that as statesmen they “have done nothing worth doing” and that he has been a fool. Also, an account of a Jewish politician is presented to the reader. The Chancellor of the Exchequer makes a confession of his race as a Jew. He claims that the world's system has been navigated by Jews who produced little, collected much, and destroyed much. It is stated that their racial arrogance has been horrible as they use their intelligence only to create and preserve property, turning life into a form of “mercantile chess”, and they turn everything into property (308-309). Such statesmen run the government and rule over a million armed men, great navies, nations, and people. However, they have no shared understanding of a unifying concept. These statesmen have no purpose and no plan. Not only the British Empire but also other large empires are in fact in a similar situation (310-311). They are all corrupt before the comet's arrival.

Cultural materialist critics look at the claim that works of literature created in a society reflect its beliefs, history, culture, and economic system. Furthermore, from a cultural materialist perspective, it might be said that Wells criticises Victorian culture throughout his novel. In the novel, he constantly reflects on the historical atmosphere of the period in which he lived, accompanied by many facts such as social, historical, political, and economic systems. For instance, as a constantly mentioned phrase, “The Great Change” in fact refers to the process of transitioning from a disordered and chaotic world order to a world full of harmony. This transition may be also an

indication of the new century as the world has experienced from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. From a utopian perspective, the narrator as an old man remembers his youth with retrospection. He distinguishes the time before and after “The Great Change”. The narrator stands as an evaluating device who is an observer and can compare both the world before the comet’s impact on Earth and after that, the world of utopia. He depicts his adolescence in a depressing manner, filled with gloomy words, thoughts, and events, and also, he gives the reader a utopian picture of the years after the comet. Following the formation of a utopian order, while he walks across the moor near the gloomy edges of Swathinglea the narrator stops by and recalls the following memory:

Was it here indeed that I crouched among the weeds and refuse and broken crockery and loaded my revolver ready for murder? Did ever such a thing happen in my life? Was such a mood and thought and intention ever possible to me? Rather, has not some queer nightmare spirit out of dreamland slipped a pseudomemory into the records of my vanished life? (11)

With these words expressed by Willie, one of the first to experience “The Great Change”, a harmonious and ideal future is compared with the previous order, which was full of restlessness. Similar to what is described in Wells’s narrative, the mystery surrounding Halley's Comet, which was expected to be visible from Earth in 1910, and the transition to a new century was portrayed in a dark atmosphere alongside with social realities and economic instability, reflecting the mood of the day. This element demonstrates the emphasis on the novel's link to its historical narrative from a cultural materialist standpoint. Willie is mostly intended to convey the author's own ideological assumptions. Wells’s realistic observations of the human condition can be seen in the novel from the very first descriptions of William Leadford’s memory of his youth with a disorganized image. Leadford’s perspective allows the reader to see the unpleasant conditions of life.

The opinions and experiences of the marginalised characters in the work of literature offer an understanding of the social structure when viewed in terms of cultural materialism. In the parts where Leadford describes his surroundings, Wells includes a detailed satire of 1900s England. There is a particularly heavy pessimistic expression in his words. To illustrate, while he describes a night with twilight, he says that the darkness brings a splendour over the entire region and the details of its dreadful image are concealed. The smell, smoke, and dust from the factory, pottery bank, and furnaces are transformed and absorbed in the darkness (35). He compares a rural

landscape with ugly factories with ill-nourished, ill-clothed, ill-taught workers whose little daily income is uncertain. Places such as churches, chapels and public houses seem to be growing with significant corruption alongside with wretched conditions of the labourers. On the other, the landlords and masters who own pot banks, farms, and mines live in peace, freedom, and dignity (37). The situation of Victorian society, especially the working class, is conveyed to the reader by the character of Leadford, who is also a member of the working class.

In light of the literary works of the time, cultural materialist critics seek to uncover details about the theories, conventions, historical, cultural organisation, and economic structure of the society. According to cultural materialism, as the economy affects people's lives and thoughts, it is important to investigate it in literary works. To illustrate in the novel, people of the old-world order feel anger due to their way of life. As Leadford explains, "Countless thousands there were so ill, so troubled, they agonize near to the very border-line of madness, each one the center of a universe darkened and lost. . ." (126). People are hopeless about their situation. He also explains, at that time, all the disorder and dissatisfaction of the world and the detail of his environment is "indeed obviously the outward visible manifestations of the old world disorder in our hearts" (16). Looking back, all the corruption of institutions, war, protests, social injustices, and his revenge seem to be a direct reflection of the unrest in the world before the comet impacts Earth. Adult Leadford keeps on comparing the world before it becomes a utopia. The world, he says, was a bleak world filled with avoidable instability, diseases, and agony, as well as foolish cruelties (20-21). Also, as he looks at the town in which he lives, he sees simply pessimism and unrest. Everything clashes with and neglects one another; iron furnaces damage pottery clay, railroad noise disturbs churchgoers, pubs spread the notion of corruption to schools, and dreary homes are trapped between industrial structures. Humanity becomes entrapped in its own creations, and all of this effort escalates the chaos (197-198).

In addition to these undesirable conditions, there is the problem of worker salary and class conflict in the novel. This indicates how, as cultural materialists have also focused on, the economy seems to have an impact on people and their activities at the time. Leadford asks his employer to increase his wages but is denied, leaving Leadford no choice but to quit his job at Clayton. Leadford has even more pessimistic ideas as a result of his problems with his beliefs, religion, career, and his girlfriend

Nettie that at some point in the novel pointing to the sky he wishes that the comet should really hit the Earth “and wipe us all away, strikes, wars, tumults, loves, jealousies, and all the wretchedness of life!” putting an end to all the matters of the world (32). In fact, Leadford’s wish foreshadows the future and the comet’s crashing into the world. After the comet hits the Earth, it cleans away all the undesirable conditions in which people had to live and this way, the familiar places and human matters become unrecognizable. Leadford's immature emotions, ideas, and rage reflect the viewpoint of the period's young generation. He sees those who do not think like him and those who criticise him as supporters of theft as he says: “It was a clear case of robbery, we held, visibly so; there in those great houses lurked the Landlord and the Capitalist, with his scoundrel the Lawyer, with his cheat the Priest, and we others were all the victims of their deliberate villainies” (Wells 38). All the while, the working class continues to suffer from ignorance and misery. To Leadford “The Working Man would arise—in the form of a Labor Party” and people like him and Parload would be the representatives of it (38). These injustices and inequalities between two social classes develop and cause malicious mindsets with severe violence in young people like Leadford. His adult self who is experiencing the utopian order perceives that he was an evil-tempered youth with a great potential for hatred. Yet, he justifies himself for his hatred as many other young people do (62).

Because the ruling class view individual persons as a member of the masses, they lead to the expansion of the idea of the masses. Whether for good or ill, the dominating group has an impact on the views of others. Therefore, the idea of the masses as it relates to cultural materialism shapes thoughts in the novel as well. In the novel, Leadford rages for a very long time over the hardships and misery of life, his employer’s scorn, Nettie's letter, his own inadequacy and insignificance, the things he finds intolerable, and the things he is powerless to change (51). Here, the concept of the masses as advocated by cultural materialism is once more highlighted. The ruling class imposes limitations on people's perspectives within a specific framework. It is considered immoral not to be satisfied with the things that existed. Therefore, in those days, only a few women and even fewer men can still come up with new ideas. Youths are the only ones to go against all human institutions which work improperly and collapse toward catastrophes. For people who are thinking and inquiring at the time, there are two important decisions to make such as: “either we must submit to our elders

and be stifled, or disregard them, disobey them, thrust them aside, and make our little step of progress before we too ossified and became obstructive in our turn.” (52).

As the comet comes closer to Earth, everybody talks about it as well. As a socialist young man, Leadford does not like Parload’s interest in the comet because he believes that they are about to experience the largest lockout in this rural area's history. Leadford mentions that unemployed people protest the system by throwing stones at factories. However, Parload does not pay attention to him and looks towards his spectroscope. Leadford believes that while people are starving on Earth, socialism—not science—is what he desires (56-60). This socialism versus science debate between Leadford and Parload is a brief account of the debates that were prevalent at the time.

In one part of the novel old Leadford guides his readers, who are already living in a utopian world, on how to grasp the condition of their former state. He describes:

In the first place you must get yourself out of health by unwise drinking and eating, and out of condition by neglecting your exercise, then you must contrive to be worried very much and made very anxious and uncomfortable, and then you must work very hard for four or five days and for long hours every day at something too petty to be interesting, too complex to be mechanical, and without any personal significance to you whatever. (40-41)

He says once this is done, one should immediately enter a room that is completely unventilated and already filled with nasty air and begin to think of a difficult problem. Soon the conditions of irritated, impatient human traits are revealed. He adds: “Try to play chess under such conditions and you will play stupidly and lose your temper. Try to do anything that taxes the brain or temper and you will fail” (40-41). If an attempt to play chess in these circumstances is made, then the consequences bring foolish moves and loss of temper. Anything that requires mental or emotional effort would fail. The entire world before the Change is as ill and feverish as described by Leadford. The former state of people is anxious, overworked, and puzzled by issues that cannot be resolved simply (41).

In addition to all these hardships, economic problems are also reflected in the novel. When Leadford wants to quit his job, angry at his employer's attitude and who contributes to the injustice of the industrial life, his friend Parload warns him that hard times are approaching. He tells Leadford that the iron trade will be shaken as a result of the Americans producing more than the demand and piling up the stocks. The pottery business Leadford works for will also suffer, and the employers will have to

make some cuts as a result of speculations (45). As a young socialist, Leadford believes that workers are in undesirable conditions due to the capitalists like his employer by stating: "This system has got to end, sooner or later. These capitalists with their speculation and corners and trusts make things go from bad to worse. Why should I cower in Rawdon's office, like a frightened dog, while hunger walks the streets? Hunger is the master revolutionary. When he comes, we ought to turn out and salute him" (46). His social status is intolerable to him. His work is dull and time-consuming. He has poor housing, food, clothing, and education, and his willpower is repressed to the point of being tortured. And moreover, there is the lockout reality affecting everybody's lives (63). During the lock-out, British employers try to get as much of their loss from their employees. As stated in the novel, it is such a world that while people are burning unsalable wheat in America, people in India are starving to death. With the optimism of youth, it seems to young people like him that the strikes, lockouts, and sufferings are "plots" against the poor (64-66).

By interpreting the text in light of historical, political, social and economic contexts, cultural materialists emphasise the concept of subversion. The idea of "subversion", which refers to overthrowing the present order of a society in order to establish a new one, is the major point of the cultural materialist theory. This allows one to recognize the resistance to the political establishment. Therefore, cultural materialists attempt to demonstrate these oppositions to political and economic systems in order to convey the cultural and historical life of that era. *In the Days of the Comet*, where the miners revolt against the mine owners, the concept of subversion is present. Workers begin to protest in front of the factory where they work. During the protest, the workers come face-to-face with Lord Redcar, the owner of one of the largest coal mines in Swathinglea. An instance of class injustice committed by police officers, a department of the administration, can be seen in this situation. On the one hand, there is the young nobility alone before the protestors, and on the other, there is the ugly-dressed, undereducated, under-fed, envious crowd of workers. The policemen stand on the side of this nobleman to protect him since it is known by everyone that everything including workers' belongings belongs to Lord Redcar and that therefore nobody can use violence against him (101-103).

A further instance of lawlessness and injustice is illustrated when Leadford asks the owner of their house whose name is Pettigrew, to repair the roof. Old

Pettigrew arrives to inspect the roof and claims that nothing is needed. Although there is a specific agreement, and legal obligations towards the landowner, he does not repair anything in the house. Also, there is a law, yet the common people are unaware of it, and its terms and procedures are difficult to establish in those days. Because of the uncertainties concerning not only the law but also the cost that proceedings would make, poor and overworked people are forced to continuously accept minor wrongs. For anyone who is too poor to receive the support of a skilled lawyer, there is in fact no justice. In particular, civil law is a tool of the ruling class. Leadford wants to talk to Lord Redcar who is the landowner and their feudal leader to inform him about the issue. However, Leadford is enraged with him because Lord Redcar develops a humiliating attitude toward him. He treats him as an inferior person (104-107). It can be understood that landowners are free to do anything with their lands: either damage it or let it rot. In the novel, this system of ownership, in which locals' control is given to employers who blindly ignore their obligations, also exists in many nations like the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand. Governments appoint tricky men to assess the existence of oil, coal, gold, fertile land, or a port area in a location and add that territory to the land of the aristocracy. Before the Change, it is agreed that this is “the natural order of the world” (313-315).

In his book *Culture and Society* (1958), Raymond Williams re-examines culture in a cultural field “as a theory of relations between elements in a whole way of life” (Williams vi). In light of this, culture and its processes as a developing term should be examined since culture is an expanding phenomenon. Therefore, its nature and conditions should be understood by making a significant revision of the accepted cultural past, particularly with regard to literacy, education levels, and the press (Williams vi). It is also required an in-depth analysis of the social and economic issues caused by the current cultural expansion. In *In the Days of the Comet*, the reader is provided with a framework of the hard conditions that ordinary people live in. A troubled atmosphere of anxiety about strikes, rumours and outrageous gatherings, and aggressive local newspaper headlines all reflect a chaotic world. In the novel, Leadford witnesses the revolts at Peacock Grove and the flooding of the coalmines in Swathinglea (108-109). A shout is heard and later, it is claimed that Lord Redcar, who is driving the car, purposefully ran over a young child who was blocking his way. It is also asserted that the boy was a man. The newspapers mention the same event in

different ways. Leadford states that reality is never discovered by anyone (116-121). Also, Raymond Williams highlights the manipulative feature of the press with these words:

We need to remember that the new institutions were not produced by the working people themselves. They were, rather, produced for them by others, often (as most notably with the cheap newspaper and commercial advertisement on a large scale) for conscious political or commercial advantage. (Williams 326)

The news about workers' protests is written in a very diverse variety. And it can be seen that the press of those last days manipulated the facts. It takes a few days before news of the workers' situation appears in the press, as if it were unimportant. Before the protests, a socialist miner named Jack Briscoe writes a letter about workers' issues to the country's leading socialist periodical, *The Clarion*. Immediately after this is published, he gets fired. So, the miners gather for a sort of unofficial strike in front of the coal mine (109-111). News about this and similar demonstrations are reported in the newspapers in many ways, so it is impossible to get precise information about how the event unfolded. The media reports several things, but nothing is reliable.

The importance of considering the ideas of groups whose opinions are not given much weight in society is emphasised by the cultural materialist approach. Wells, in his novel, provides his reader a perspective of the working-class member who criticises the idea of war. The novel presents a war approaching between Germany and England. Leadford says, war is irrational and has no effect other than the slaughter of a lot of people, and the destruction of enormous amounts of resources and energy. He argues that historical wars at least modified humanity. They were regarded as a demonstration of success and superiority. But modern wars only identify the colour of maps. He gives an example of the war in which the English defeated the South African Boers. He says they could have bought the whole nation with money spent on war instead (128-129). This news, like the others, is conveyed to the public as much as it writes in *New Paper* in the form of victorious headlines. During the global depression, politicians, books, and newspapers serve as the nation's intellectual centre. Just like with the war between the Germans and the British, it appears that these common means are actively encouraging the people of both sides to direct the British and Germans' limited material and moral energy toward a completely destructive and wasteful pursuit like war (130-131). Additionally, Leadford likens his country's rage to that of his hate as follows: "an enormous irrational obsession, it was, in the

microcosm of our nation, curiously parallel to the egotistical wrath and jealousy that swayed my individual microcosm” (132). Similar to how Leadford wanders to kill Nettie and Verrall with a loaded revolver, these two nations wander with loaded navies and armies that are always ready. However, there is one difference which in this case there is no Nettie to rationalise the war. On either side of England and Germany, there is just fictitious opposition. And the media plays a major role in keeping these two enormous crowds of people hostile toward one another (131-132).

An account of how vast the reading public in his period is given. Both men and women wait impatiently for the newspapers’ arrival to read “the hurried lie for the day” (135). Newspapers, especially the *New Paper*, publish the news that Germany insults the British flag when it is taken down by a drunk German officer. Then, a British subject shoot in the leg. The truth, however, is not clear. England asks for an apology, but Germany does not intend to apologise. The newspapers use headings like “HAS WAR COME AT LAST?” (136-137). Furthermore, mass media plays an important role in people’s behaviours and thoughts. Before the conflict with Germany turns into a crisis, the newspapers eliminate any chance of panic about the comet. It is published that most of the research is done about the comet’s arrival in advance, and it weighs no more than a few tons. There is expected to be a spectacular show and it is hoped that some meteorites would reach the ground and may be analysed (205-206).

The socioeconomic circumstances of members of a society affect how they perceive the world, as supported by cultural materialist thinking. Meanwhile, society establishes several social groups simply because of the way people live. As previously mentioned with all the examples from the novel, the influence of authority shapes public opinion through the mass media. First, the newspapers' sometimes unrealistic and sometimes provocative news with drastic headlines makes both the British and German populations—with whom they are at war—into being two more antagonistic nations. This creates the ideal conditions for war. The discourse of politicians and the ideas of news reported in newspapers both influence people's sense of nationalism. Again, the simplification of the war by the statesmen costs people's lives with the wars that take place. It is noted how the public perceives the statesmen, how they are shown in caricatures, and how absurd the outcomes of their decisions are for the nation's administration. These characteristics of them are conveyed to the reader both by Leadford, a member of the socialist working class and by Melmount, who is an

influential figure in politics. In addition, in the cabinet meeting, it is conveyed to the reader how the politicians who have reached awareness criticise their own actions. In newspapers and caricatures, these statesmen are also shown in exaggerated and humorous ways. This illustrates to the reader how none of these politicians has a unifying theory of how the state should be administered.

Similarly, the lack of this unifying aspect seen in politicians is also seen in the form of divisions in society. The social order of a society is formed by the political ideology of that society, based on the cultural materialist viewpoint, and has a major influence on the members of that society's lives. The novel presents class divisions as follows: "There were in England and America, and indeed throughout the world, two great informal divisions of human beings—the Secure and the Insecure" (157). In Britain, private property ownership emerges due to the neglect of feudal responsibilities, which leads large amounts of property to be artificially secured in the hands of a small minority. This small minority is a class without clearly defined boundaries; they use methods that are violent and questionable. The children of secure people would fall into a life of scarcity by marrying those from insecurity. Apart from the Secure and Insecure, as Wells states:

The rest of the population was landless and, except by working directly or indirectly for the Secure, had no legal right to exist. And such was the shallowness and insufficiency of our thought, such the stifled egotism of all our feelings before the Last Days, that very few indeed of the Secure could be found to doubt that this was the natural and only conceivable order of the world. (157-159)

Wells indicates that even secure people do not lead ideal lives of happiness because of the existence of insecure people. Seeing the ugliness of their houses, ugly dressed people, and the ugly marketing goods around them make them feel uneasy. They often feel anxious since their security is not absolute. They must maintain and strengthen their positions through undignified pursuits. Besides, Raymond Williams mentions how civilization produces "not only wealth, order, and refinement, but as part of the same process poverty, disorder, and degradation" (Williams 18). Similarly, Wells portrays wealthy people as arrogant and says they think their wealth comes from God. They see this as an unchangeable condition of life and believe that no one else has the right to have their prosperity.

As can be observed, Leadford, a working-class narrator, draws a parallel between the old system and the new order. His entire narrative reflects the chaos of the

new century and the anxiety of the unknown future. He frequently draws comparisons between the gloomy Victorian age and the ugliness, hunger, and suffering around him. He claims that he experiences a similar projection of his surroundings and that there is nothing to live for. He also talks about the economic distress of the society, the corruption of the environment and institutions in which they live, and how anger has evolved over his own mood. He mentions that this state of disorder has spread throughout society and shows that injustice between the classes causes undesirable conditions. He often speaks of the fact that workers' problems, protests, and class conflict are the crisis, and that young people like him are experiencing the same despair. His anger towards his employer widens and he refers to all the powerful "capitalists" of society. With the social class difference that he divides into two as the secure and insecure, he says that the control of the society lies with the secure people, that is, those who own private property.

Cultural materialists also draw attention to the minority in society and those who are viewed as minor members of society. The issue affecting women at the time from marriage to difficult social situations is another significant topic tackled in *In The Days of the Comet*. The novel also discusses women's questions at the time as another crucial topic. Leadford's mother has been intimidated into submission, like so many other women at the time, by the extreme harshness of the dominant institutions. The current system forces women into devotion which deforms them. The harshness of the system makes Leadford's mother look older, and has taken her sight away so that at age fifty-five she can only dimly see her son's face. Then, Leadford talks about her hands distorted from labour, cracked and coarsened (50-51). In another example, Wells conveys to the reader how marriage between different classes is perceived by society. Every girl of the insecure classes who has a relationship without marriage has a horrific fate similar to Nettie's scenario with young Verrall. People in this secure group are terribly afraid of marriages with the insecure. In particular, the women of the secure group being married to an "Insecure" man was considered a disastrous social crime. Raymond Williams highlights this issue as:

There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses. In an urban industrial society there are many opportunities for such ways of seeing. The point is not to reiterate the objective conditions but to consider, personally and collectively, what these have done to our thinking. The fact is, surely, that a way of seeing other people which has become characteristic of our kind of society, has been capitalized for the purposes of political or cultural

exploitation. What we see, neutrally, is other people, many others, people unknown to us. In practice, we mass them, and interpret them, according to some convenient formula. (319)

Similarly in the novel, wealthy women are also concerned about the abolition of the class distinction that has arisen as a result of marriage. Just like in Mrs Verrall's situation, the possibility of Mrs Verrall's son's marrying a lower-class girl and increasing her social status. After all the love letters and words for his lover, Leadford suspects that Nettie betrays him. Thinking of Nettie and her lover, he wants revenge. He thinks he must kill them both to stop Nettie's lover from having her. His suppressed passions turn into a rage as he says: "I would have accepted eternal torment that night without a second thought, to be certain of revenge" (97-98). It is obvious that he is ready to happily endure endless punishment in order to take his revenge. As can be seen in the following quotation, Leadford compares his own social status to Verrall's and speaks of Nettie's envy of the high class:

She was to be his pleasure until he chose to cast her aside, and the poison of our social system had so saturated her nature—his evening dress, his freedom and his money had seemed so fine to her and I so clothed in squalor—that to that prospect she had consented. And to resent the social conventions that created their situation, was called "class envy". (159-162)

Leadford thinks young Verrall would have fun with Nettie instead of marrying her. He believes that young Verrall's appearance, wealth and freedom are enough to impress her. The social system they live in is generally that the wealth of men is enough for young girls to like them. Moreover, to have resentment at the societal norms that lead to their condition is referred to as "class envy" which is also discussed by Raymond Williams: "The worker's envy of the middle-class man is not a desire to be that man, but to have the same kind of possessions." (Williams 343).

Leadford is determined to make his plan of killing both Nettie and Verrall come true in his words:

I would make my protest and die. I was going to kill Nettie—Nettie who had smiled and promised and given herself to another, and who stood now for all the conceivable delightfulnesses, the lost imaginations of the youthful heart, the unattainable joys in life; and Verrall who stood for all who profited by the incurable injustice of our social order. I would kill them both. And that being done I would blow my brains out and see what vengeance followed my blank refusal to live. (166-167)

Since he cannot reach his goal of killing Verrall and taking his revenge, being dishonoured he feels like a lost soul. Leadford dreams about Nettie "She, bodily, was my lost honor. It was not only loss but disgrace to lose her. She stood for life and all

that was denied; she mocked me as a creature of failure and defeat” (125-126). After Nettie’s elopement Nettie’s father Mr Stuart, and Leadford talks about the event. When Nettie’s elopement with Verrall is understood to be true by her letter, Nettie’s mother Mrs Stuart, wishes that Nettie be dead at her feet rather than living such a shameful day saying: “Gone! . . . Run away. . . . Run away from her home. Oh, Willie, Willie! The shame of it! The sin and shame of it!”. Leadford says Verrall should marry Nettie. However, Mr Stuart- Nettie’s father, is in despair thinking what if Verrall does not marry her (143-149). Since Verralls are their landowners, they have been living in the cottage for a long time and have no other occupation. Therefore, if they have to move they cannot find anywhere better than their present place. Leadford in anger urges Mr. Stuart to go after Nettie to make Verrall marry her. Leadford is enraged by his answer: "Where am I to go?"... "and what could I do? Even if I knew— How could I leave the gardens?". As a father, his carelessness is unbearable for Leadford as he cries: “not leave these gardens! It's your Honor, man! If she was my daughter—if she was my daughter—I'd tear the world to pieces!”... “Make him marry her! Horsewhip him! Horsewhip him, I say!—I'd strangle him!”. Implying clearly that being a father is overshadowed by the fact that he is the working class, he says: “People of our sort, Willie, can't do things like that”. Leadford feels furious and feels a sudden urge to punch him in the face (152-153). As previously stated, it is highlighted in the novel how the period oppresses women and how it shapes them. Examples of this are described in the novel, including Nettie's elopement with her lover, which is viewed as dishonourable, and Leadford's mother's oppressed life.

In the novel, the inequality of living standards is revealed as another indicator of class difference. When Leadford is close to finding Nettie and Verrall in a bungalow village, he sees that it is a bohemian place which is considered to be a fashionable location. However, contrary to what everyone thinks, Leadford does not see this place as peaceful and joyful. To him, being beautiful and clean is something that the poor are deprived of. However, according to Raymond Williams: “The working people, who have felt themselves long deprived of such means in any adequacy, intend to get them and to keep them if they can. It would need more evidence than this to show that they are becoming vulgar materialists, or that they are becoming “bourgeois” (344). Yet, Leadford says the poor observe happier people with bitter jealousy, and suspicions as they live lives filled with dirty desires (227-228). Also, the novel

presents an image of inequality in education. When Leadford sees Edward Verral, a clever handsome young man who represents the upper class, his intense hatred for his class reaches its peak. The father of Edward Verrall possesses a large estate in addition to more than half of Rawdon's pot bank, as well as other properties, including coal mines and rentals. Even though he is still quite young, there is talk of him running for parliament; he has achieved remarkable success at the university and is now being actively welcomed by society. Leadford believes that he himself would have to fight for the things that Verral already has in hand. He is, for Leadford, a concentrated representation of everything that makes him angry (89-90).

While all these events take place in social life, the comet gets bigger and bigger, and its light covers the sky. Leadford's narratives so far can be described as pessimistic, but he is amazed and positive when suddenly the presence of the comet adds awareness to him. Here is how his astonishment is expressed:

How beautiful it was! how still and beautiful! Peace! peace!—the peace that passeth understanding, robed in light descending! . . . My heart swelled, and suddenly I was weeping. There was something new and strange in my blood. It came to me that indeed I did not want to kill. I did not want to kill. (222-223)

These astonishing thoughts of Leadford do not last long as he knows that “the finite world again, the gray and growing harsh certainties of dawn” is soon to arrive. The night is a temporary rest for him like an “interlude”, and when the morning comes he will be William Leadford again, who is “ill-nourished, ill-dressed, ill-equipped and clumsy, a thief and shamed, a wound upon the face of life, a source of trouble” (223).

In accordance with cultural materialist theory, a society's religious ideology also influences and shapes the thoughts, values, and daily activities of its population. The novels make it clear that people's attitudes toward religion are greatly influenced by their society. Religious matters are also discussed throughout the novel. Leadford explains that the world in the past, thought is filled with ancient clichés, full of conventions, and plot twists. He says he is raised by his mother with archaic, “old-fashioned narrow faith” in certain theological doctrines, moral codes, and notions of social and political order that have little to do with the realities and demands of modern-day living describing:

...On Sundays she put away all the things of reality, the garments and even the furnishings of everyday, hid her hands, that were gnarled and sometimes chapped with scrubbing, in black, carefully mended gloves, assumed her old

black silk dress and bonnet and took me, unnaturally clean and sweet also, to church. (23-24)

Leadford believes that his mother covers reality because of her way of dogmatic thinking. She hides the daily furniture and clothes and replaces them with better ones to use just on Sundays. She tries to hide her hands, which are worn out from hard work, with a pair of gloves. According to Leadford, people who are religious are led to think that their suffering in this world will be made up for in the other world (24). He becomes less interested in religion and admits that he is a socialist. In fact, he “was soon ripe for blatant unbelief” after his acquaintance of Parload at the Young Men's Christian Association. Soon, Leadford begins reading a periodical named “The Clarion” which goes against the accepted religion. He questions his disbelief and is startled saying: “Have I believed THIS!” (26). Leadford's pessimism and ambiguity are reflected in his words: “There was no balm in the religion I had learnt, or in the irreligion I had adopted, for wounded self-love” (30).

The concept of the religion of the old system before utopia is criticised. Leadford thinks about the priest Mr Gabbitas, who lodges on their ground floor, as “Hireling Liar”, he adds “for was not he also part of the system, part of the scheme of robbery that made wages serfs of Parload and me?—though his share in the proceedings was certainly small” (48). He is also angry with his mother because her only social views are mindless obedience to the established order, which are laws, doctors, pastors, lawyers, and all other respectable people in positions of power over them. His mother is aware that Leadford's socialism rebels against the established system and makes him angry toward all she holds dear. He states that his mother always seemed to want to talk to him to say: “Dear, I know it's hard—but revolt is harder. Don't make war on it, dear—don't! Don't do anything to offend it. I'm sure it will hurt you if you do— it will hurt you if you do” (49-50).

While describing Mr Gabbitas as a religious figure, Leadford states that Mr Gabbitas accepts everything that comes his way without questioning, believes in everything and does nothing with great enthusiasm. And then, he adds that most people were that way back then. His rebellious spirit cannot help but start an argument with Reverent Gabbitas. He claims to be a follower of German author Friedrich Nietzsche, who was then quite popular and denounced Christianity as the ideology of slaves. Leadford has no doubt that the Rev. Gabbitas does not even know the name of

Nietzsche, a writer who has prominently waged war against Christianity. He declares “the Rev. Gabbitas was absolutely ignorant” (190-191). Another religious perspective is conveyed when Leadford hears a man preaching that the end of the world is near because the Comet is approaching. He thinks the preacher has combined prophecies from the Book of Daniel and world politics. The man refers to the comet as “the Star of Judgments, the Judgments of the most High God,” declaring that humanity has reached the end of all sins and evils and asserts that the comet is chosen to kill all people (98-99).

He expresses his rage and the pointlessness of his life by appealing to the Comet and, in a sense, substituting it for God. He asks why God has made him with an unsatisfied pride, and unstoppable desires. In a blasphemous manner he asks: “Is it a jest, this world—a joke you play on your guests? I—even I— have a better humor than that!” (168). Then, he keeps asking why God cannot learn mercy from Leadford’s deeds. He says he has never tormented a worm day by day, or “making filth for it to trail through, filth that disgusts it, starving it, bruising it, mocking it? Why should you? Your jokes are clumsy. Try —try some milder fun up there; do you hear? Something that doesn't hurt so infernally”. He compares human beings to worms and says that God makes human beings suffer, while Leadford does not do any harm even to a worm. He refers to religious teachings that human beings are on Earth to suffer and earn heaven with these words: “You say this is your purpose—your purpose with me. You are making something with me—birth pangs of a soul. Ah! How can I believe you? You forget I have eyes for other things. Let my own case go, but what of that frog beneath the cart-wheel, God?—and the bird the cat had torn?... Answer me that!” (168). He says that by suffering, God creates a better self of a human, but there is no explanation for a frog’s or a bird’s sufferings.

The ideas and lives of the people who live in culture are shaped by its religious beliefs according to the cultural materialist approach. It is clear that people adapt their conduct and live their lives in accordance with their religious beliefs in practically all cultures around the world. Over time, religion also has continued to influence that society and culture. Therefore, it is apparent that people's attitudes toward religion in their culture have a great impact. In the novel, as was previously mentioned, it is pointed out that during the old times, the idea of religion has a dark aspect that hides the truth. Leadford argues that engaging in religious activities actually serves to

conceal the social or political reality in which people are involved. The idea that one should not rebel against difficulties is instilled in society. Thus, the sufferings in this world will lead them to heaven in the next world. There is a religious point of view in society that completely rejects acts of questioning and rebellion. For this reason, clergy also display an "ignorant" attitude and are criticised for this reason. The comet's presence makes Leadford associate it with God, and he casts his anger, questioning, and rebellion by looking at the comet.

A society's expectations and historical events provide its religious, social, historical, and political structure, all of which have a significant impact on the members of that society. The society, which is affected by all these facts, is also affected by the history of that period and also affects the material culture. The historical events that took place in parallel with the period in which the novel was written have a significant impact on the literary work. With all these claims, *In the Days of the Comet* was written just before a significant scientific phenomenon, namely when Halley's Comet will be visible to everyone on Earth in 1910. This comet, which is named after the astronomer Edmond Halley, is estimated to be visible from Earth once in about 76 years. As stated in *Popular Astronomy* by John Candee Dean in 1908:

Halley's comet is again approaching us, and even now, is nearer to us than the planet Saturn. The return of this celebrated comet—the first known to move in a closed orbit—causes it to be an object of extraordinary attention. Its brilliancy, its sensational size, the records of its returns, extending back nearly two thousand years—the consternation spread throughout the world by the belief that it would destroy the Earth, make it the most famous comet in history. (331)

Attracting a great deal of interest, the world was alarmed by the rumour that it might destroy the Earth and the news about it began to spread long ago causing fear among people as it did two thousand years ago. In addition to shedding light on scientific research, it has led to the emergence of various questions in society. Since comets do not follow a certain path in their orbits but rather approach and move away from their main centre, the possibility of a collision with the Earth has sparked considerable curiosity. In fact, as Dean comments, if a massive comet were to impact the Earth, it would instantaneously plunge the planet into chaos and destroy practically all life on it. The intensity of light that would occur from the passage of such a comet over the atmosphere would likely cause blindness in any eyes that saw it, and the gases that would be produced would contaminate the air to the point that it would be unfit

for breathing. Comets indicate the existence of hydrocarbons in their tails, and when they go further closer to the Sun, metallic vapours start to appear. While approaching the Sun, its tail gets longer as the temperature rises, such metallic vapours as iron, magnesium, and others arise, and the hydrocarbons dissolve into smoke (345). The fact that such a celestial event will take place has led the authors to mention it in their own works. Comet as a subject matter was discussed in novels and stories long before Wells, as in works by authors including Edgar Allan Poe in 1839 and Jules Verne in 1877. Similarly, in *In the Days of the Comet*, when the comet is seen in the sky, a small amount of panic is caused in society by a variety of questions, unknowns, and curiosity. However, the comet's significance is diminished by international and everyday situations, and as a result, it is reduced to little more than a newspaper headline. As the comet gets closer to impacting Earth, humanity begins to be concerned about it. This situation was also of interest to astronomers when Wells wrote the book, but not to society until it gets closer to Earth in 1910.

As cultural materialists suggest, the author and his/her work are both motivated by the various scientific, literary, and scholarly texts about the concerns of the day. Wells puts the process of “change” in the novel brought about by the comet on a scientific basis. He explains as follows:

...in an hour, at the touch of this new gas in the comet, the shiver of catalytic change had passed about the globe. They say it was the nitrogen of the air, the old AZOTE, that in the twinkling of an eye was changed out of itself, and in an hour or so became a respirable gas, differing indeed from oxygen, but helping and sustaining its action, a bath of strength and healing for nerve and brain. (273)

Anyone who inhaled the new gas in the atmosphere instantly fell to their feet. All living creatures, including animals like birds, tigers, flies, spiders, and butterflies are affected by the comet, except the fish (277-278). The British submarine B94 is not affected by the atmosphere while working underwater. Observing other ships that have crashed and are on fire when they finally reach the surface, the fresh air does not make them pass out, but makes them only laugh. So, they save unconscious enemies from sinking and burning ships (279). When everything is over the soldiers gather by the roadside drinking coffee and discussing the causes of war. Feeling dignified they say the war is nonsense, they are the civilised man and they do not want to fight in this war. The understanding among the high-ranking soldiers disappears, and the officers are sincere to everyone regardless of rank.

In the novel, Wells also emphasizes how remarkably far machine autonomy has come in the section of the book that presents utopia. He states even after everyone falls asleep, the electric lights keep coming on and the printing press keeps printing dreadful newspapers about war. No one is in charge of the machinery as this is all taking place. While there is silence everywhere, only the church towers toll and clocks tick (284-285).

After the comet hits the world, Leadford wakes up experiencing a strong sense of bodily well-being and feeling light. Looking around, he perceives he is in a field that is inexplicably beautiful. He is filled with delight and remains fascinated by the view. As he remembers a day before how he was filled with anger and vengeance he says: "Poor little angry, miserable creature! Poor little angry, miserable world!" (243). He feels pity for himself, and for other people of the old world who are struggling creatures of agony and hope. He is sure that he was dead because no one could feel so good, strong and peaceful. He believes that the fields he sees then now "must be the barley fields of God!—the still and silent barley fields of God, full of unfading poppy flowers whose seeds bear peace" (243). From a chaotic world order, the world reaches harmony which is an indication of the utopian realm. Leadford's narration becomes full of peaceful expressions as he expresses: "How still everything was! Peace! The peace that passeth understanding. After all it had come to me!" (244). He believes that the world is recreated and in spite of his previous life of bitter passion and impatient misery, he feels the beautiful aspects of being, as though he were Adam newly created (247). The fact that *In the Days of the Comet* is neither a utopia nor a dystopia is made clear in Leadford's perplexity as he states: "This beautiful wonderland was the world, the same old world of my rage and death! But at least it was like meeting a familiar house-slut, washed and dignified, dressed in a queen's robes, worshipful and fine. . . ." (248-249).

The Change happens as the comet collides with the earth. The nervous system and metabolism are affected by this transformation, which are the chemical processes that give life to organisms. The ambitious and uncertain feelings and thoughts of old times are replaced by virtuous and stable ones. Leadford describes his impression of The Change as "one of enormous release, of a vast substantial exaltation" (252). Leadford says that in the narration of his youth he tries to convey the narrowness, confusion and disorder of the old world. However, all of these aspects are all "over

and done” with the awakening after the comet. After people breathe the new air, they get feelings of forgiveness. What changes the old order of the world is a change in the material condition of the atmosphere. It is not the essence of man that has changed. However, “the Spirit of Man” which was in a dreary sleep, awoke with the change in the air (253). A change occurs not only physically but also spiritually, as described as follows: “And in a sense the Spirit came. The Great Revival sprang directly from the Change—the last, the deepest, widest, and most enduring of all the vast inundations of religious emotion that go by that name” (295). In many religious narratives, this idea is common. The previous revivals seem to be frightening, whereas this is significantly more peaceful, intellectual, and religious than any of the other revivals. Revivalism was a common stage in religious life in the past, particularly in Protestant nations where religious sentiments are openly expressed (295-296). Existing understandings of the old idea of the Resurrection eventually fade, but the Resurrection expressing Change is accepted around the world, even in most of Christendom. Many see this resurrection as the rebirth of Jesus.

According to cultural materialism, advances in industry, democracy, and class, all in their own unique ways, reflect major historical shifts, toward which shifts in the art are closely connected as a reaction. The evolution of culture is an account of several significant and ongoing responses to all of these changes in people's social, economic, and political environment. Therefore, it may also be thought of as “a special kind of map” (Williams xv) that can be used to investigate the nature of these shifts. Wells offers alternate changes to several institutions of society that he criticises in his own culture by depicting a utopian order. Just like with the issue in the system of ownership, there are many issues in other institutions and systems. The council speaks of a trading system which would be profitable for everyone. They speak of a system of industry in which the leaders do not seek out cheap advantages. And the old confusion of institutions like schools and universities, publications like books and traditions, confusing half-formal Church teaching, and a system of a perplexing suggestion all fade away. They agree that a new education system should be established for young people (315). The municipalities, nations, conflicting authorities, lawyers, officials, and employers all become subject to revision (316). The important cities of the world have disappeared together with the industrial areas that housed starvation, suffering, and inhumane industrial machinery. With the utopian order, all the negative conditions

from the smokes of chimneys to the hunger of children, the despair of women to brutal wars and pride have also vanished. New cities are constructed with theatres, universities, and peaceful resting spots. Before the utopia is established, the children would be “servile clerks and shopmen, plough drudges and servants” or “prostitutes, sluts, anxiety-racked mothers or sere, repining failures”. But in this utopian world, they are “glad and brave, learning, living, doing, happy and rejoicing, brave and free”. Right now, there are plenty of cities filled with the abundance and joy of life (318-320).

As stated before, cultural materialists also give importance to examining the concept of economy in literary texts. In the novel, the greed for money, which was a dominant feeling in the old order, becomes insignificant with utopia. While waiting for a meeting with Nettie and Verrall after the Change, Leadford speaks to a landlady who does not ask for him to pay saying “pay or not”. On the contrary to English inns of the past which charged extra fees, she does not care for the money since she wants to make people happy (329-331). This further proves that people's perceptions of life and behaviours toward others change when financial issues and concerns are no longer an issue.

As suggested by cultural materialists, people influence culture, and culture influences people in the same way. In his novel, Wells proposes a fresh concept that is uncommon in his culture. He might have applied this concept in light of his own experiences or to promote awareness and progressive thinking in his own culture. Nettie's words shed light on the new idea of love in a utopian world. She asks Leadford and Verrall: "Is there one love? I mean, only one love?" and turns to Verrall and says that she loves him. She describes how she feels about love as follows: “It was like having a very bright lamp with a thick shade— everything else in the room was hidden. But you take the shade off and there they are—it is the same light—still there! Only it lights every one!” (343-344). Nettie gives the following examples of how women are instructed about falling in love:

We're told—it's in books, in stories, in the way people look, in the way they behave—one day there will come a man. He will be everything, no one else will be anything. Leave everything else; live in him... Only men don't believe it!... By nature they don't believe it. But a woman believes nothing by nature. She goes into a mold hiding her secret thoughts almost from herself. (344-345)

Leadford explains to Nettie that he disagrees with her conception of love. By referring to the Darwinian theories of the time, he explains that emotions and impulses

are essentially animalistic. He cites what he read as follows: “our bodies you can find evidence of the lowliest ancestry; that about our inward ears—I think it is—and about our teeth, there remains still something of the fish, that there are bones that recall little—what is it?—marsupial forebears—and a hundred traces of the ape” (346-347). Edward Verrall agrees with Leadford stating that only one man may possess a woman and rivals must be eliminated (348-349). Nettie cannot accept their opinions thinking about why women are slaves for sex and whether is there nothing that this age of reason will change, including males. In her opinion, the instinct is merely a remnant of the ill customs of the past. She says she loves Edward Verrall because he is pleasant and she also likes Willie referring to him as a part of her, and her oldest friend. She asks: “Why must I not have both? Am I not a mind that you must think of me as nothing but a woman? imagine me always as a thing to struggle for?”. She wants the three of them to be together, to keep friends, and to meet and talk (349-350).

In brief, the above-mentioned details supported by a cultural materialist reading might be used to justify why the novel cannot be classified as a utopian work. First of all, although the novel starts as a utopia with the prologue chapter, the narrator describes the pre-utopia life in detail with retrospection and his narration is quite pessimistic. The cultural materialist idea that the text should be read in relation to the time it was written is apparent in this chapter. Wells offers the reader a detailed critique of Victorian life from a historical perspective. This is one of the most important features to be considered in a text in terms of cultural materialism. The reader can thereby experience what was going on at the time. In addition to a fragment from the Victorian period, a reflection of the tension, uncertainty and anxiety created by Halley's Comet, which was expected to fall into the world at that time, is also reflected in the novel.

Rather than aiming to reach a utopian order, the main focus of the novel actually shifts to the corruption of the politicians and institutions of that period. Even though the novel eventually reaches utopia, a dark and gloomy atmosphere predominates until the middle of the novel, making it challenging to get out of that mood. Any topic that has to do with society is considered to be a part of a culture, according to cultural materialism. To illustrate, war, the manipulation of public opinion by baseless and exaggerated news reports in the media, an intolerable social life, and the subordinate position of women in society are all covered in the novel.

Moreover, the conflict created by the concept of religion within the individual, as well as the inadequacy and wrong knowledge of the clergy are discussed. However, only towards the end of the novel, utopia is established and information about the utopian order is emphasized.

Due to its destructive effects and negative effects on people's lives, war is also examined from the perspective of cultural materialism. Before the creation of the utopian order, the war's existence plays a significant role in the narrative. Leadford can be seen in a representative position of the working-class people. His ideas sharply condemn the war from a working-class perspective. Leadford informs the reader about those involved in the war and the folly of their decisions. Cultural materialist critics indicate the necessity of examining the historical setting of the literary text, and as can be seen through this, Wells also criticises the political system of his own age in *In the Days of the Comet*. By reporting on the war between the Germans and the British through newspapers, the novel first demonstrates how the power of authority plays an active role in ruling society and how politicians influence people. Powerful figures on both the German and British sides most effectively manage the society's nationalism through the media. This makes it apparent that both sides of the war are controlling the people in the same way.

As cultural materialists underline, economics, as well as politics, greatly affect the lives of the people living in that society. In the novel, the social circumstances in which poor people live are far beyond hopeless. All of the chaos and unhappiness in the world, as well as the details of the Victorian era, are clear representations of the chaos in the outside world. Institutional corruption, ongoing conflicts, street demonstrations, societal inequities, and the desire for vengeance in Leadford's situation, all appear to be major consequences of the instability in the world. The world before it becomes a utopia, according to adult Leadford, is a gloomy place full of uncertainties, diseases, and cruelties. When Leadford looks around the town where he lives, he only notices negativity and disorder. Every industrial organisation has some level of corruption, and when mankind is bound by its own inventions, the chaos only gets worse.

As unprivileged people, problems concerning women are also important for cultural materialists. The "woman problem" in the novel can be analysed in the light

of cultural materialists' notion that individuals who are perceived as having less privilege in society also have ideas that are effective in forming culture. Three female characters in the novel who are instances of this situation can be given. Firstly, Leadford's mother is struggling with the social and financial consequences of poverty. Although she has a legal right, she cannot demand or hold her landlord responsible for her problems because they are of a higher social status than she is. Institutions in society, like religion, command her to obey. Therefore, she embraces the notion that one should not rebel against the challenges of life as a requirement of her religion. She does not rebel against her dreary life because of this. Another female character is Leadford's girlfriend, Nettie. Nettie is also of the lower class like Leadford. Despite this, she falls in love with Verrall, a wealthy upper-class man, and runs away. This situation is seen as dishonourable behaviour by society. In addition to Leadford's vengeful words, Nettie's mother's words after this incident are perceived as shameful behaviour for a woman in that society. Nettie's mother wishes her daughter dead rather than face this incident. However, Nettie's father worries about whether Verrall will marry his daughter. Also, the house they live in and the land they work on belong to the Verralls. That is why he does not accept the idea of leaving no matter what.

Cultural materialism asserts that religion has a cultural impact and Wells deals with this issue in his novel by mostly criticising and defining the stereotypes, rules and moral codes of religion as "old-fashioned narrow faith" and uses religion as a tool to hide poverty. Also, Leadford opposes his mother's unquestioning way of accepting religion. Similarly, Wells portrays a reverent who is just the same as Leadford's mother. Reverent Gabbitas also accept every religious doctrine without questioning. And also, Wells shows that this religious person has insufficient knowledge as a clergyman about the world.

As a consequence of analyses done in terms of cultural materialism, it is evident that all of these systems have an impact on culture, society, and the people that live there. All these ideas are also used to evaluate Wells's novel *In the Days of the Comet*. As can be seen, Wells uses a cultural materialist perspective to portray Victorian society in the most realistic way possible while also relying on a historical basis and giving the reader a sense of the uncertainty, pessimism, and uneasiness that existed at the time. In Wells's novel, utopia is established towards the end of the novel, but the influence of all these social facts, which are analysed from a cultural materialist point

of view, is heavily involved in the novel. Therefore, even if utopia is established, the effect of utopia is greatly diminished since most of the narrative covers the gloomy old-world order. The parts that take place with the fall of the comet to the world describe the formation of utopia by eliminating the negative emotions in people who cannot escape the pressure of the process leading from chaos to harmony. While creating the new world order, examples from the old order are given. That is, even when establishing a utopian society, the narrator often goes back to the past and talks about how the new order should or should not be, giving examples from the chaotic order in the past. The concept of subversion, which is only one of the focal points of cultural materialism, is seen in the novel in the formation of the new order and the destruction of the old order. In order to increase awareness, he illuminates his readers through his novel. Wells's readers, who have experienced similar situations, can compare and contrast with their own lives thanks to this novel written by him. It is now obvious that it is crucial to look closely at minority characters in the works, as noted by cultural materialist critics since these individuals help society become more politically and socially aware. As a result, it becomes clear that Wells's novel *In the Days of the Comet* cannot entirely be classified as a utopian work because these points dominate throughout the narrative and the aspect of utopia is only a relatively minor component in the novel.

CHAPTER 3: ILLUSION OF AN IDEAL WORLD: ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S *CHILDHOOD'S END*

Cultural materialists seek to draw attention to the strategies employed by present power structures, such as authority, education, and religion, to promote ideologies through an engagement with questions of social institutions, class, and social life. To do this, they first analyse a work's historical context and political consequences before carefully scrutinising it to determine the prevalent hegemonic perspective. They identify possibilities that might exist for that opinion's rejection or subversion. John Brannigan in his book *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* states that:

New historicist and cultural materialist critics tend to read literary texts as material products of specific historical conditions. Both theories approach the relationship between text and context with an urgent attention to the political ramifications of literary interpretation. In the eyes of new historicist and cultural materialist critics, texts of all kinds are the vehicles of politics insofar as texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations. (Brannigan 3)

Literature that is connected to each level of society demonstrates how that society develops. Additionally, the inhabitants of that culture are impacted by material circumstances. Only when literary and historical considerations are combined can literary works be fully understood. Thus, it is possible to consider literary productions as the concrete outcomes of that society. In *Childhood's End*, there are many diverse concepts to be analysed in light of the cultural materialist approach such as the historical context, system of government, the power of authority, technology, social life and religion. To begin with, it is crucial to understand the world of the twentieth century before analysing Clarke's *Childhood's End*.

The twentieth century is a period marked by intense international hostilities and two global wars. Therefore, war and conflicts are the main subjects to be analysed in order to fully understand the twentieth century. First of all, The Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), through which the British seized political and economic dominance over the Boer republics of South Africa, marks the beginning of Britain's modern political history. It was an imperial conflict that many British intellectuals opposed and that, in the end, the British were only mildly proud of having won. Queen Victoria, who passed away in 1901, and King Edward VII, who reigned from 1901 to 1910, both reigned

over the conflict (Greenblatt and Abrams 1830). Revolutions and nationalist movements were crucial, particularly during the post-World War II period. The early 1930s depression and unemployment, followed by the ascent of Hitler and the threat of Fascism and Nazism over Europe were known as the "red decade" since only the left, in the shapes of socialism, communism, and left liberalism, seemed to have any hope of providing a solution (Greenblatt and Abrams 1831). The red decade abruptly came to an end in 1939 with the start of World War II. The decline of British political strength and its secondary status with respect to the post-war period led to a painful revision of Britain's place in the world (Greenblatt and Abrams 1831-1832). According to Greenblatt and Abrams, Great Britain lost an empire by winning a war (Greenblatt and Abrams 1832).

The war altered people's views on progress and civilisation. When millions of people perished in the war, there was a feeling of utter social and political failure (Greenblatt and Abrams 1830). While the First World War pointed to the fragmentation of faith, the fragility of language and the human subject, and chaos, the Second World War led the English novel to record the social scene and historical events (Greenblatt and Abrams 1840). As stated by Greenblatt and Abrams the novel's form allows it to unite common matters "such as the construction of the self within society, the reproduction of the real world, and the temporality of human experience and of narrative" (1838). The fact that the novel includes all kinds of social elements such as reflecting the individual in society and the real world is an indicator of its flexibility. The way the novel is flexible, omnivorous and multivoiced allows authors to make use of the twentieth century's "global dislocation and mixture of peoples, while meeting the challenges to the imagination of mass death and world war, of the relentless and rapid mutations in modern cultures and societies, in evolving knowledge and belief" (Greenblatt and Abrams 1838). Many reasons, including the post-World War II changes in the workforce and in human rights as well as the quick development and industrialization, have contributed to the decline of conventional social institutions. Along with the emergence of mass culture based on new communications technologies like radio, television, and the Internet, globalisation in the economic and cultural realms also grew. Social frameworks evolved throughout the 20th century to include more rights for women and disadvantaged minorities. All these have sped up the changes brought on by the period's other major occurrences, such as the world

wars, the growth of human rights, and the interdependence of international trade. Meanwhile, traditional societal, religious, and cultural stabilities appeared to have deteriorated by the turn of the twentieth century. Modernity disrupted the established order, overturned moral and social norms, and brought into question previously unshakeable beliefs about oneself, the community, and the world due to the rapid pace of social and technological change, the mass population displacement caused by war and economic migration, and the mixing of cultures and classes in rapidly growing cities (Greenblatt and Abrams 1828). Numerous technological advancements occurred in the early twentieth century: The Wright Brothers made the first aeroplane flight in 1903, Henry Ford presented the first mass-produced vehicle in 1913, and the first radio connection over the Atlantic took place in 1901. With rapid technological advancements, the world population reached over seven billion people. However, not all writers of the period welcomed these developments (Greenblatt and Abrams 1829). Greenblatt and Abrams state that: “Because scientific materialism and positivism, according to which empirical explanations could be found for everything, were weakening the influence of organized religion, many writers looked to literature as an alternative” (1829). Writers expressed the impacts of constant change, loss, and instability, no matter how they accepted the end of tradition, habit, and stability in favour of the new (Greenblatt and Abrams 1829).

As cultural materialism highlights, by examining the historical setting in which literary narratives are created, the reasons behind their production might be better understood. Historical events can be seen in certain parts of the texts. This shows the idea that literary works should be studied in accordance with the period in which they are written, as supported by cultural materialists. Thus, the period in which *Childhood's End* was written and the effects of the period preceding it are also reflected in the novel. Possessing air dominance as well as land and sea dominance throughout the First and Second World Wars influenced the outcome of the conflict. Violent conflicts and brutal warfare prevailed during these times. Following this period, the threat of nuclear war prevented the major international powers from engaging in any direct combat. After this time, the conflict continued as an extra-terrestrial space race between the two newly emergent superpowers, the United States and Soviet Russia. Despite all these incidents, Clarke's novel *Childhood's End* captures the atmosphere

of the time, particularly the Cold War era. Dockrill et al. clarify what the Cold War means as follows:

The Cold War has been defined as a state of extreme tension between the superpowers, stopping short of all-out war but characterised by mutual hostility and involvement in covert warfare and war by proxy as a means of upholding the interests of one against the other. It might not have become a 'hot' war but it was a dangerous era. (Dockrill et al. 1)

In fact, it was "cold" because the invention of nuclear weapons had a disastrous effect and in such a situation, both parties would be completely destroyed. As a result, the two sides' conflict was pursued indirectly, and the tensions from both sides consistently maintained a high state of war preparation. Because of the conflicting ideologies of capitalism and communism, the Soviet Union's rejection of former Tsarist debts, and American involvement in the Russian Civil War, there was a climate of mistrust and hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union. Inevitably, the Soviet Union's 1939–1941 alliance with Nazi Germany further enraged the United States. Both the United States and the Soviet Union carried on their cooperation after the defeat of Germany and later Japan in 1945. In order to ensure world peace and stability, a new global organisation, the United Nations, was established. However, the news of the American atomic bomb explosion encouraged the American allies to reach an accord. The change in the balance and status quo in the world depended on the strategy that these two states will show each other. Relationships between the Soviet Union and the United States clearly grew more hostile in 1946. The 'Cold War,' which would define East-West relations for the next two decades started between the two superpower blocs, the United States and the Soviet Union. The reason for this tension and anxiety is due to ideas that are against some forms of government. The spread of Communism which is a type of social structure in which everyone participates in the public's ownership of all property and receives and supplies in accordance with their needs and capabilities was on the rise. Also, Totalitarianism, a system of government that is centralised and dictatorial, and requires complete subservience to the state, was disturbing the liberal democratic principles of the Western world. There have been an increasing number of totalitarian states, which created a constant sense of fear and worry all around the world. Totalitarianism commands all aspects of a person's life. Individual freedom is prohibited. However, the general cause of conflicts is also based on these ideas. The Soviet Union's communism had long caused American scepticism, and Joseph Stalin's brutal reign of his own nation had raised similar concerns. The

Soviets, on the other hand, blamed the Americans for delaying their participation in World War II, which resulted in the deaths of many Russians, and for their unwillingness to recognise the USSR as a legitimate member of the world community. These criticisms grew during the course of the conflict into a general feeling of mistrust and hostility between communities. As stated by Dockrill et al. “Russians were seeking to dominate Iran. Moreover, the United States was no longer self-sufficient in oil and insisted that the oil reserves of the Middle East must be kept out of hostile control” (35-36). The leaders of each side were forced to exercise some restraint in their interactions with one another due to the existence of the power of nuclear weapons and the horrifying consequences of their use. Even the smallest overreaction could have had disastrous results. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were hesitant to consider the use of the atomic bomb in cases of provocations (Dockrill et al. 30-33). Governments and people were affected by the tension and worry these events caused. As a result, writers often depict such unfavourable scenarios in their writings.

The second work to be examined in this thesis in terms of cultural materialism is *Childhood's End*. Born in 1917, Arthur Charles Clarke was the eldest of four children of a farming family. Clarke developed an early interest in science and astronomy while stargazing through a handmade telescope and reading science fiction stories from publications like *Astounding Stories*. Due to the financial difficulties his family was facing after his father passed away, he was unable to enrol in college. Clarke started working for the government as a bureaucrat in London. Soon after, he joined the British Interplanetary Society, an organisation that encouraged space travel. Clarke started writing science fiction and submitted articles to the group's newsletter. With the outbreak of World War II, he worked as a technician for the Royal Air Force from 1941 to the end of the war, and he was one of the pioneers in using radar data. His early writings were affected by his experiences in wartime. In his article “Extra-Terrestrial Relays” published in 1945's *Wireless World* magazine, Clarke posited a method for transmitting radio and television signals globally via geostationary satellites. His science fiction story “Rescue Party” was published in *Astounding Science Fiction* the following year.

Clarke continued his education at King's College in London after the war. Along with pursuing his literary pursuits, he re-established contact with the British

Interplanetary Society. He received honours in maths and physics at graduation in 1948, staying in the line between a scientist and an author. Clarke wrote the nonfiction book *Interplanetary Flight* (1950) to explore the potential of space travel. *Prelude to Space*, his first full-length book, was published in 1951. Two years later in 1953, *Against the Fall of Night* and *Childhood's End*—the latter of which was made into a TV miniseries and became Clarke's first real success—were also published. In 1956, for his short tale "The Star," he received his first Hugo Award.

With his writing, Clarke gained not just recognition as a novelist but also, he was considered a leading thinker in the field of revolution. The scientific community frequently sought his advice, and he collaborated with American experts to design spaceships and help create satellites for meteorological purposes. Clarke moved to Sri Lanka in 1956. Clarke spent the rest of his life in Sri Lanka and became an accomplished scuba diver as well as publishing writings about his diving adventures. The Franklin Institute awarded him with the Ballantine prize for his contributions to satellite technology in 1963. He released *Profiles of the Future* in 1962, which contained predictions regarding discoveries up to the year 2100. Clarke began working with director Stanley Kubrick in 1964. They collaborated on the iconic film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which is regarded as one of the best films ever produced. For their script, Clarke and Kubrick were nominated for an Academy Award. Nearly hundreds of Clarke's works were published, and many of his scientific theories were related to emerging technologies. Clarke passed away in Sri Lanka on March 19, 2008.

Childhood's End begins at a time when the twentieth century is almost over. A third person omniscient narrator tells the story. Both the Soviet Union and the United States prepare to launch nuclear-powered spacecraft into space. Enormous alien spaceships appear on Earth's biggest cities. In the following chapter of the book, five years have passed and the aliens, known as the Overlords, have complete authority over the entire planet. The Overlord in charge of matters concerning Earth is Karellen, also referred to as "the Supervisor". Karellen meets with Stormgren, the UN Secretary-General, within his spacecraft every couple of weeks to transfer his messages to human beings. Karellen tells Stormgren that the Overlords will come out in fifty years to show their true appearances.

The Earth has become a perfect utopian place. All these advantages are provided to humanity by the Overlords' higher technology and intelligence. The Overlords reveal their physical looks which resemble the Devil almost identically. Several years later, Rupert Boyce, an amateur supernatural researcher, hosts a party which was attended by George Greggson and Jean Morrel who are friends of Rupert Boyce and are members of a new generation growing up in a world dominated by the Overlords. Later, Boyce conducts a ritual during the party using a mechanical Ouija board which eventually reveals to them the location of the planet of the Overlords. With this information, a young astronomer named Jan hides on a ship and travels to the Overlords' homeland.

George and Jean get married and eventually decide to move to New Athens, an island-based utopian community, alongside their children. Their children start to experience weird nightmares and show supernatural abilities. An Overlord named Rashaverak tells George that his children are not human. Soon, unexpected mental abilities start to manifest in all of the world's children. In his final speech to humanity, Karellen informs humanity that the children go through an evolutionary process and soon they will unite with the Overmind, a strong being of energy. Many people decide to commit suicide as the Overlords collect the children. New Athens is destroyed in a nuclear explosion, killing everybody.

When Jan visits the Overlords' planet, he takes a brief tour of their settlements. But eventually, he is sent back to Earth. He finds that the Earth is empty. Children no longer exhibit characteristics that make them uniquely human, and they have been gradually gaining ability and power. The novel ends when Earth explodes as the children use all of its energy. The children then finally unite with the Overmind.

James and Mendlesohn suggest that *Childhood's End* (1953) was first published in *New Worlds* magazine as a story named "Guardian Angel" (1950). Clarke is able to combine American science fiction with Wells's social awareness and visionary abilities. As highlighted "part utopia, part comic variation of the alien-invasion story, *Childhood's End* finishes with a haunting image of the mutated children of Earth destroying their world as they leave material existence behind (James and Mendlesohn 42).

To begin with, works of literature use a variety of ideas to express the cultural materialism of the period. Any text is said to be based on a historical basis in terms of both its means and conditions of formation when the literary work is seen from a cultural materialist perspective. That is to say, *Childhood's End* can also be examined politically, culturally, and socially to uncover aspects that relate to the era in which it was written. The writing thus becomes a material product of its time. As Olander and Greenberg claim: "The catastrophes that occur in that novel, and even the initial absurdity of the Overlords in *Childhood's End*, spring from the social, political, and technological present: 1953-55. Hence the extension of the present into the predictable future may proceed clearly, precisely, and with a sharp sense of "being there" (Olander and Greenberg 84). The events in Clarke's 1953 novel *Childhood's End*, which he started writing in the 1950s, are set starting with a time period that is represented in a similar environment. The novel presents a short account of the Cold War period in which the U.S. and Russia are involved. The presence of such a tense environment had an impact on the writers' emotions and thoughts as well. The conflict between the United States and Russia that existed throughout the Cold War is described in the novel's opening as having already started and continued with the space race. Although most of the story is told on the American side, the perspective of the Russian side is also given in order to be a voice for both sides at the beginning. A description of the American spacecraft Columbus that will be sent into space opens the novel. On the part of the USA, Reinhold Hoffman keeps an eye on the personnel working on this project while looking at a ship named James Forrestal searching the gloomy waters for Russian submarines. On the part of Russia, Konrad Schneider recalls the spring of 1945. Konrad travels to Moscow following the division of Nazi Germany (Prussia) into East and West. Russia is believed to possess an atomic weapon, and on the shores of Lake Baikal, they have been developing a spacecraft. Russia and the USA are competing to be the first to land on the moon. Colonel Sandmeyer of the American side claims that democracy will be the first to set foot on the moon. Both parties believe the other is a genius. At the base where Russia is situated, there are more soldiers than technicians. This may be an implication that although the two world wars are over, the conflict continues on the scientific level. Russians hold photographs of America's ship, which are blurry but show it to be nearly finished. Right on the edge of such a tense rivalry and with the existence of the possibility of war, shouts are heard from outside

and both Reinhold and Sneider realise that both sides have lost the war as: "Reinhold watched, as all the world was watching, while the great ships descended in their overwhelming majesty —" (Clarke 4). Although human beings have struggled to get into space, instead the stars are at their feet as Reinhold thinks: "All that the past ages had achieved was as nothing now; only one thought echoed and re-echoed through Reinhold's brain: The human race was no longer alone" (5). So, as it is supported by the cultural materialists, literary texts should be read based on history, and the opening chapter of *In the Days of the Comet* provides a reading with a historical background. The heightened tension between two superpowers—the Americans and the Russians—during a chaotic time in history is reflected in the novel. In such a chaotic world where there are threats of nuclear war and other issues, the Overlords arrive and bring peace to the world.

Politics is another issue that cultural materialist critics look at in the texts. According to the cultural materialist viewpoint, state power and its ideologies influence the thoughts, beliefs, and way of life of the people who live in that society. In the novel, it is clear that society's views on politics influence how people lead their lives. In the novel, state power is mirrored by a mild dictatorial regime. Dictatorship is a system of government in which a single person or a small group is given ultimate power. As mentioned before, following World War II, dictators swiftly took power in the new states. Both by establishing their rule and repressing the opponents and by the army seizing control and imposing military dictatorships. The two most notable examples of such modern totalitarian dictatorships are Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. The political power in the novel is in the hands of the Overlords. Thus, the Overlords appear to be in control of everything. Human freedoms and restrictions are controlled by the Overlords. At the beginning of the novel, the individuals living in that society are completely unaware of the intentions of their new rulers, as can be seen: "No one knew their motives; and no one knew towards what future they were shepherding mankind" (Clarke 19). Despite this, the Overlords manage to dominate humanity.

As Leitch et al. suggest in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Gramsci studied the flexible means by which the ruling class maintained its dominance without using force or arbitrary rules but rather with the consent of the majority of the people (Leitch et al. 1336). Also, Raymond Williams adds his ideas similar to what

Gramsci has studied. As Leitch et al. suggest “For Williams, following Gramsci, culture plays a key role in gaining consent” (1336). In *Childhood's End*, the Overlords' dominance over humanity is not established through force, but rather through using their technology in their favour and also using a method of moderate authority. Yet despite this, some people accept the rule of the Overlords, while others do not.

Rivkin and Ryan highlight the idea of resistance as follows: “Culture is both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination, a way of articulating oppositional points of view to those in dominance” (Rivkin and Ryan 1233). Resistance refers to the subversion of authority and the dominant ideology. Since the Overlords' arrival, humanity seems to have accepted their dominion on Earth. However, the society in the novel is divided into two groups; those who welcome the Overlords' rule and those who do not submit to the Overlords' authority. To illustrate, nearly five million people oppose the rule of the Overlords and sign petitions. Also, a group of people close to this amount are extremely sceptical of the Federation Plan. Opposing organisations stage protests to challenge, subvert, and raise awareness of the dominant power among society's members.

The idea of “subversion” which refers to destroying an existing social structure in order to establish a new one, is the focus of cultural materialists. By reading the literature within the framework of historical, political, and social elements, cultural materialists refer to the notion of subversion. Cultural materialists, therefore, attempt to show these opposing views to political structures in order to present the cultural and historical reality of that time. People's uprisings against the Overlords' authority in *Childhood's End* illustrate the concept of subversion. They object to being dominated by the Overlords rather than exercising self-government. Contemporary readers who read the novel may assess their own situation in light of the demonstrations that are depicted in the novel. Those who intend to subvert the Overlords' authority start protests. Thus, a small group of people linked to the Freedom League, one of the most important of the groups that oppose the domination of the Overlords, walk towards the Secretariat Building, shouting angry slogans with banners in their hands. Their anger is not really against Rikki Stormgren, the Secretary-General of the United Nations who is in the position to represent the world's views, but against the Overlords' rule. Their purpose is to oppose the Federation Scheme and to warn the human race of the threat

they have been facing for several years. Human behaviour is constantly governed by the Overlords in the society described in the novel. Human actions are always subject to approval from the Overlords. In fact, even the protest of this small group depends on Karellen's permission, "for this meeting would never have taken place except at the Supervisor's instigation" (Clarke 7). Also, often the plans of the Overlords are accepted without question. For instance, Stormgren believes that his meeting with Alexander Wainwright, the leader of the Freedom League, is unquestionable because Karellen's plans would have been too subtle for human beings to grasp (Clarke 7).

For Raymond Williams, several roles exist in culture and are subject to change. As mentioned before, there are residual and emergent forms in addition to the dominant culture, which are sometimes accepted and other times not (Leitch et al. 1336). To illustrate, in the novel Wainwright and Stormgren argue about the limitations of Karellen's power, one of the Overlords, and what he can and cannot do. On the one hand, the idea of the European Union is perceived as a formation that could not have occurred in the past of humanity. Many people were against this idea at those times. However, over the years, this union is formed as a result of agreements and continued to exist in a regular way by people. Now the Overlords begin to rule the Earth, and the Overlords come up with the idea of establishing a World State. Again, as in the past, this idea is tried to be opposed by many individuals and groups as well. Wainwright, however, claims that this is something different because Europe is a cultural and geographical entity, but the Earth is not.

Moreover, in an attempt to illustrate the cultural and historical realities of the era, cultural materialists make an effort to show these competing viewpoints to political systems. In the novel, the reader is given information about how the Overlords' rule is viewed by people from two separate angles. Wainwright is not against the establishment of the Federation but against its intrusion from outside. This should be in line with the sincere unity of human beings. On the other hand, Stormgren finds their rule to be beneficial. He states that the Overlords bring prosperity, security, and peace to the Earth, but Wainwright adds, "But they have taken our liberty" (Clarke 9). For him, basic needs alone are not enough for man; he has other needs. Also, Wainwright believes that "freedom to control our own lives, under God's guidance" has been neglected, while Stormgren believes the true problem is religion (Clarke 9).

By dominating mankind, the Overlords possess power and control. Some of the powers that the Overlords have can be listed as follows: they are informed on every kind of daily human activities on earth by spying on humanity using their technological devices. They can change gravity and are able to cause pain without creating a wound. Also, in specific regions, they are able to block the sun. Moreover, they are able to travel at the speed of light in their ships. They impose benevolent, totalitarian authority through the use of such kind of powers of technology.

The following concepts emerge alongside one another with respect to cultural materialism: Mass gatherings are driven by urbanisation, factories are driven by worker issues and mass manufacturing, and the working class causes mass action. In *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams states: “The masses, on this evidence, formed the perpetual threat to culture. Mass-thinking, mass-suggestion, mass-prejudice would threaten to swamp considered individual thinking and feeling. Even democracy, which had both a classical and a liberal reputation, would lose its savour in becoming mass-democracy” (Williams 317). Therefore, it is seen in the novel that the Overlords try to hinder humanity from individual thinking by restricting creative thinking and inventing new technologies. Again, it is the Overlords who decide what is right and efficient. For this reason, no matter what the Overlords' goals for humanity are—whether good or evil—the reality that they hold the power and hence the authority over human beings does not change. The importance of power is described in the novel. In a conversation between Karellen and Stormgren, it is stated that: “All political problems...can be solved by the correct application of power” (Clarke 62). Also, with sufficient time a world and its people can be transformed almost completely and what is needed to achieve this is “a sound knowledge of social engineering, a clear sight of the intended goal — and power” (Clarke 62). The Overlords appear to be in complete power over humanity. In addition to this, Karellen distinguishes between two types of power: efficient and inefficient. Ineffective power uses its large weapons to tackle the problem at its root. Efficient power is the energy required for the radio transmitter and the ability to apply it. He adds “For it’s the application of the power, not its amount, that matters” (Clarke 62-63). The presence and quantity or multitude of the Overlord ships represented the power to humans, they are mere “symbols”. Even their existence was enough to change the history of humanity. The Overlords rarely leave their ships, even as they have revealed themselves to humans.

The narration, in flashbacks, refers to the events that happened after the Overlords' ships' arrival. It is mentioned that the ships stood over important cities for six days. Then, on the sixth day, Karellen introduces himself by making his speech on all radio and TV channels. When his speech is over "the nations of Earth knew that their days of precarious sovereignty had ended" (10), their weak domination is over, and it is no longer humanity that has the final word in international affairs (Clarke 10). The Overlords impose restrictions on people's freedoms, and there have always been groups that have been against these limitations since the narrative's very beginning. To illustrate, a state that opposes the restriction of its forces by the Overlords fires a missile at one of the Overlords' ships over the enemy city, but the missile is destroyed all of a sudden. As a form of punishment, however, nothing is done. In the end, internal strife causes the aggressive state's regime to fall. Similarly, those who resist realise that it affects their own interests. Moreover, as Karellen says, people regard him as a dictator. In fact, the Overlords impose very little pressure and little interference in people's lives during the first year. The majority of people eventually understand that their living conditions have increased and that the Overlords genuinely bring peace to human history. Unless governments are corrupted by oppression, the Overlords do not interfere with systems of government like democracy, monarchy, benevolent dictatorships, communism, and capitalism.

Also, the Overlords demand law and order. As cultural materialists highlight, in a society that values the masses over individuals, individual thought and behaviour are not accepted. In the fictional utopian society of *Childhood's End*, for example, all creative expression is restricted. Because the Overlords see people as the masses and material things as a consequence, the Overlords are able to enforce their laws and achieve their political and social goals in this way. The Overlords regularly receive statistics and summaries of the world media. They read that The World Constitution plan in Paris has caused disputes. As soon as they arrive the Overlords prohibit cruelty such as the mistreatment of animals, so it can be inferred that their intentions are good. "You may kill one another if you wish... and that is a matter between you and your own laws. But if you slay, except for food or in self-defence, the beasts that share your world with you — then you may be answerable to me" says Karellen (Clarke 35). The matador bullfight in Plaza del Toros is one instance of this. The entire world is filled with sound, and people cannot help but shout. Thus comes the end of the bullfight.

The Overlords have presented some technological advances to people based on their understanding of governance. The Industrial Revolution, according to the cultural materialist perspective, is where the understanding of culture and society begins. All types of technological developments affect people and their culture. The political, social, and economic consequences of these changes in individuals in society also have an effect on culture, which leads to transformation in culture. However, technological advances in the novel have caused people to become highly dependent. The Overlords aim to obtain all kinds of information about human beings. For this, fax machines and other devices are used to give some statistics flow such as census results, production statistics, and accounting records of the economy. It is also believed that using human-made weaponry and technologies against the Overlords' advanced technology is futile. The novel presents this futility as follows:

With the arrival of the Overlords, nations knew that they need no longer fear each other, and they guessed — even before the experiment was made — that their existing weapons were certainly impotent against a civilisation that could bridge the stars. So, at once the greatest single obstacle to the happiness of mankind had been removed. (Clarke 19)

Also, the Overlords do not interact with specific nations or governments; instead, they convey their ideas to humanity through a representative they choose from among people. The Overlords show humanity that it is unnecessary for nations to fear each other. Therefore, the borders of countries disappear and soldiers at the borders see each other with a sense of friendship. This makes politicians angry, but people are aware that a brutal chapter in history is about to end.

One of the emphases of cultural materialists is opposition to the status quo and resistance attitudes against hegemony and dominant ideologies. Raymond Williams claims that because literary works are byproducts of the social state of people, literary texts allow people to experience these completely contradictory thoughts and feelings. In the novel, the secrecy of the Overlords raises questions about their credibility. However, the fact that the Overlords physically hide themselves from humans causes their benefits to humanity to be quickly forgotten and it causes people to remain in doubt all the time, even Stormgren. Even though humanity is already accustomed to Karellen's invisible domination, some thoughts about enslaving people persist, as in the protests of the Freedom League. Besides the Freedom League, there are other organizations as well. Some view it from a religious point of view, while others protest

on feelings of superiority and inferiority. Their aim is unknown to humanity, so this creates uncertainty about them. As mentioned in the novel about the Overlords' intention: "The invaders had brought peace and prosperity to Earth — but who knew what the cost might be?" (Clarke 21).

Two alternative social group structures are depicted in the novel. While the first group accepts the mild dictatorial regime of the Overlords without question, the other group is sceptical. According to Raymond Williams in his book *Marxism and Literature*, there are three types of culture in a society: the "dominant," "residual," and "emergent" (Marxism and Literature 121). While the "dominant" is the powerful shaping force of society, "emergent" refers to new kinds of relationships that are being created" (Williams 123). The "emergent," according to Williams, is about their "alternative or oppositional" characteristics (123). Readers can comprehend the characteristics of the dominant world by looking at the evolving culture of a society. It is possible to view a civilization from several angles in this way. All of these cultural components should be taken into account when conducting a cultural materialist examination of a literary work. In the novel, the Overlords' goodness is unquestionably accepted by the public. "If, indeed, it was altruism. For there were still some who wondered if the policies of the Overlords would always coincide with the true welfare of humanity" (Clarke 68). Some people doubt whether the policies pursued by the Overlords will be purely for the benefit of humanity. As seen in history, even when racial harmony is desired, a typically inferior culture inevitably faces catastrophe. Even though the Overlords demonstrate their dominance by providing human beings with technological advancements, humanity in the lower state eventually experiences the catastrophic results of this great superiority.

The narration consistently conveys to the reader a sense of confusion and uncertainty regarding the Overlords' intentions toward mankind. As Jean expresses her fear of the Overlords because of the uncertainty of their purpose in her words: "I'm afraid of the Overlords, George. Oh, I don't mean they're evil, or anything foolish like that. I'm sure they mean well and are doing what they think is best for us. I wonder just what their plans really are?" (Clarke 98). From the standpoint of cultural materialism, Jean starts to have some doubts and scepticism about the Overlords' hegemony. It is dangerous for the dominant group to have such an opposing view in members of society. Because there might be a lot of people in society who think

similarly to Jean. Due to this, rebellious tendencies may develop, though not to the same extent as mass demonstrations.

According to cultural materialists, minority groups in society might replace the dominant power by using ways of resistance. In the novel, the dominant power is attempted to be subverted by the cooperation and opposition of the organizations allied with the Freedom League. The resistant groups disagree with The Overlords' position as the only authority with a say in how people are administered. They, therefore, seek to resist the Overlords by employing strategies other than protests. In order to resist the Overlords' dominion of humanity, a group connected to the Freedom League kidnaps the U.N. secretary. According to them, even though the Overlords are much more powerful than people, they still need human beings, as all orders are carried out through humans. This way, by abducting Stormgren, or by other minor means even if they cannot stop their superiority, they at least hope to slow down and make their work more difficult. Thus, they aim to complicate the work of the Overlords and to show a resistance movement. Protests and other similar acts are used by those who are opposed to the current form of governance to demonstrate their resistance. Stormgren's abduction and interrogation by high-ranking leaders of the resistance movement, as Stormgren mentions, carries an image of war against the Overlords. Stormgren can be regarded as a prisoner of war, and as a prisoner of war, he is asked for information. This extremist group thinks that sooner or later, everyone will wage a war of independence and that strategies like sabotage and disobedience can be used to win.

According to cultural materialism, besides social, religious, political, and economic phenomena, the power of the media has an impact on the formation of culture. In addition to the fact that technology is a power indicator of the Overlords, the prevailing power of the press in publications, radio, and television is depicted in the novel. The Overlords are caricatured in different ways by the media due to their unknown appearance. Those who oppose the dominant group, the Overlords, use the media as a tool to propagate their ideology. When examined in terms of cultural materialism, various ideas about the appearances of the Overlords that are widespread in society are supported by the media. And so, these thoughts get more and more widespread. Since these thoughts affect and shape society, media plays an important role in society. For instance, many fanciful drawings of the Overlords and their appearances have been caricatured and published. Additionally, many people believe

that because of their repulsive appearance, they are unable to stand before society. The Freedom League's news article has the following headline: "IS MAN RULED BY MONSTERS?" (Clarke 22). Moreover, world media is divided into two groups. The Western press supports Karellen's plans to make all human citizens of the world, while in the East, violent nationalist views dominate. The media are free to disrespect Karellen as much as they want because they face no consequences.

The idea of the masses is developed by the governing class, which only sees individuals as parts of the mass. People in powerful positions have an effect on how other members of society live and think. Critics of cultural materialism emphasise the concept of the masses in society. The Overlords are in control in *Childhood's End*. The Overlords' main goal when they enter a community where individuality is valued highly is to influence individuals to adopt a common way of thinking. As a result, they are not marginalized by society when they reveal their outlook. In the novel, the Overlords disguise themselves since they are perceived as having a demonic appearance by humanity's religious beliefs. Karellen claims that because people lack education, prejudices and superstitions will take a long time to dispel, which is why they will not manifest physically for fifty years. Since the new generation will be raised in a world where the Overlords are accepted and welcomed, their physical appearance will not be all that different for human beings. The following generation will be steadier in fifty years. By establishing order in the world and delivering civilisation to the human species, the Overlords are paving the way to their objectives as stated in the novel: "When the two races met again, the Overlords would have won the trust and friendship of mankind... They would go together into the future, and the unknown tragedy that must have darkened the past would be lost forever down the dim corridors of prehistoric time" (Clarke 55). But humanity's curiosity prevails over the rules, as it grows in Stormgren. He carries a tracking device that the Overlords placed. He meets with a trusted friend named Pierre Duval in an underground office to chat about his curiosity. There, he is able to freely discuss with him because the equipment does not function underground. Also, he talks about the idea that the screen through which he is seeing Karellen might actually be a one-sided mirror, not a screen. They run ideas about seeing the other side and think they can implement their purpose with something that fits in Stormgren's bag. This plan reminds Stormgren of "the time you were building illegal radio sets during the German occupation" (Clarke 44). When

Stormgren and Duval finally get together, they realise that a flashlight might allow them to see Karellen and the chamber he is in. Years pass and ninety-year-old Stormgren discusses the flashlight incident with a reporter. He says that Karellen tricked him and left the room before he saw anything.

Cultural materialists claim that the “idea of culture is a response to, and not just a reflection of, change, was crucial” (Higgins 57). That is to say, culture is both a reaction and reflection of the changes that take place in social life. In the novel, the Overlords seem to have manipulated society for a long time. By doing this, they aim to implement their own goals. As cultural materialists say, all kinds of social, historical, political, and economic activities cause changes in individuals in that society. As a result of these changes, culture is affected, shaped and changed. It can be seen that newspapers and radio stations all around the world report that the important day has arrived. The Overlords' ships that are supposedly positioned above the major capitals of the world turn out to be a deception; there is just one ship in New York. The fact that the ships, which were first positioned over numerous cities, are essentially illusions suggest that the Overlords placed them there in order to increase their power over the public. Also, when the Overlords gain the trust of the humans, the fact that they reduce their ships into a single one proves that they have achieved their purpose. The people watch what is happening both on the TV screens and in person while the cameras are recording. Karellen's voice says he can meet the children first. After meeting with the children, he physically shows himself to them by appearing in public. At last, everyone sees what the Overlords look like. Karellen resembles the devil and looks like a representation of evil. But unlike human beings' perception of the devil, he smiles. The following quotation describes the look of an Overlord as follows:

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. Yet now it stood smiling, in ebon majesty, with the sunlight gleaming upon its tremendous body, and with a human child resting trustfully on either arm. (Clarke 61)

The central aspect of cultural materialism is that literature should be analysed, which will reveal how the real world is represented via examining social behaviours. This makes it possible to comprehend the dominant system (Higgins 62). The cultural materialist theory asserts that a society's cultural, social, economic, political, and religious systems influence the characteristics of its members (Higgins 62). The

socioeconomic circumstances of a person affect how they feel and act in accordance with materialist philosophy. As the utopian order settles in the novel, it causes changes in social life. The Overlords completely change the way of life of humanity, thanks to the power and authority they have gained over time. The issues that once hindered human development are no longer present, as may be observed in the sentences that follow: “By the standards of all earlier ages, it was Utopia. Ignorance, disease, poverty and fear had virtually ceased to exist. The memory of the war was fading into the past as a nightmare vanishes with the dawn; soon it would lie outside the experience of all living men” (Clarke 64). With the helpful guidance provided by the Overlords to humanity, the planet takes on a new shape. Old towns have been rebuilt or transformed into museums. Given the condition of the cities, it is stated that London transformed after the arrival of the Overlords. The population of London has decreased and been replaced by machinery. The fact that it is a port city is no longer significant because, as evidence of how trade has changed, countries now produce their own supplies. The number of flights has risen. However, some things like the city's position as a centre for administration, art, and education, never change. The large, unclean train stations are no longer in use. Both Buckingham Palace and the Palace of Westminster remain the same. Moreover, the way industry and commerce operate has evolved, and as a result, production has also been automated. Consumer products are created continuously in facilities run by robots, and nearly everything required for human life is now available for free. To obtain the luxuries they desire, people work—or do not work at all. To facilitate communication, country names are left unchanged. Everyone has access to television, can read, write, and speak English, and can travel anywhere in the world within a day. These days, judging a person's socioeconomic level by the technologies they utilise is impossible. With the development of air travel, anyone can travel anywhere at any time. For instance, Rupert Boyce's party is attended by families from several nations who travel from afar. Many people from different nations come to the party by different air and land vehicles. With wingless planes, flying cars, and helicopters, this mimics America's achievement in the twenty-first century of “the great American achievement of putting a nation on wheels...It had given wings to the world” (Clarke 66). The elimination of ethnic discrimination in social life is another significant development depicted in the novel. Racial characteristics that used to cause great distress have no effect on people in the new world. For example, black

individuals formerly would have faced a lot of problems due to the colour of their skin. However, it is not a problem in the utopian world. The term "nigger" is no longer an offensive word, and anyone can use it without causing any insult.

People have access to everything, hence there are no crimes. Since there is no reason to lead people to commit a crime, committing a crime is perceived as meaningless and unnecessary. Also, the eyes of the Overlords are always on such potential criminals. While not entirely gone, crimes motivated by passion have declined. Even if murders happen, committing murder is no longer seen as a mysterious event because it is possible to witness the moment of the crime with one click of a device. People have become alarmed by these gadgets; therefore, it has been important to reassure them that they are not being used to spy on anyone, especially those who uphold the law. Because educated people have no interest in the lives or wrongdoings of others, serious crimes are rarely reported in the news. So, the crisis news that once dominated newspaper headlines has now vanished. People who have overcome their psychological issues have become healthy. Anciently deemed sinful behaviours are now only viewed as weird or disrespectful. Compared to the twenty-first century, life is quieter. Some find this unpleasant.

Cultural materialists explore the notion that individuals who live in a society are shaped by that society's structures and ideas. Also, as social conduct has an effect on cultural changes, education can be examined in terms of the cultural materialist approach. The educational system has grown and lasted longer. Most people do not graduate from college before the age of twenty, after which they travel, get experience, and broaden their perspectives before going back to school for three more years at the age of twenty-five. After that, students occasionally continue to take lessons in their areas of interest. The utopian order that started after the arrival of the Overlords continues. The human race enjoys the benefits of peace and prosperity for a long time. This utopian order and environment have been compared to warm summer days. Though it is difficult to foresee, it is unclear whether "winter," or the "end of peace," will arrive. "Would there ever be a winter again? It was unthinkable. The age of reason, prematurely welcomed by the leaders of the French Revolution two and a half centuries before, had now really arrived. This time, there was no mistake" (Clarke 103). Many people think that harmony and order dominate the whole world and that this ideal utopian atmosphere cannot come to an end. People work twenty hours a

week, and these are not mechanical works. The human mind is valued. Factories run by robots can operate for weeks, even without a single human being's visit. Therefore, problem-solving, making decisions, and developing new ideas is more of what the human mind is focused on. In the following quotation from the novel, the world prior to the creation of the utopian order is contrasted with the current perfect social structure:

The existence of so much leisure would have created tremendous problems a century before. Education had overcome most of these, for a well-stocked mind is safe from boredom. The general standard of culture was at a level which would once have seemed fantastic. There was no evidence that the intelligence of the human race had improved, but for the first time everyone was given the fullest opportunity of using what brains he had. (Clarke 104)

Social life is another point that cultural materialists aim to reveal in order to understand how it affects culture. In the novel, utopian order is gradually established and now people can use their brains at full capacity. Most people have two residences, and they prefer to live in the North and South poles now that the polar regions are available for settlement, especially during the long summer evenings when the sun never sets. People also inhabit deserts, oceans, and mountains. Around the world, science and technology give humanity a comfortable life. Yet, as stated by Clarke: "In the most perfectly ordered society there will always be accidents" (105). In certain extreme situations, people wait to be rescued from their homes because they reside in such extreme locations as a villa beneath Mount Everest or outside by Victoria Falls since they do not have time issues or financial constraints. The world's wealth doubles with the end of armed forces, and production and living standards increase. Everything is incredibly affordable, and basic necessities like water, electricity, and roads are all provided without a fee. People are free to move around and eat anything they choose. The majority of human activities involve sports, from the most sedentary to the most active. Deadly sports, such as parachuting in mountain valleys, cause professional athletes to decrease while amateur athletes multiply. After sports, the entertainment sector is the largest. Hollywood produces more works of intellectual art in 2050 than in the previous century. "There had been some progress; the box office was no longer lord of all it surveyed" (Clarke 105). Despite all of these attractions, some are unable to ignore the question: "Where do we go from here?" (105). Also, there are comments on monogamy and polygamy. "It was such a nuisance that men were fundamentally polygamous. On the other hand, if they weren't... Yes, perhaps it was better this way,

after all” (72). The fact that men were essentially polygamous is quite annoying for Jean Morrell.

From a cultural materialist perspective, a society's religious ideology, together with its educational, social, and economic views, also shapes and directs the ideas, beliefs, and lifestyles of the people who live there. One of the spheres of social life is religion. It is clear that people's attitudes toward religion are influenced by their society. In *Childhood's End*, religion loses its importance over time because of the technological innovations and tools that the Overlords provide to humans. This period is defined as “a completely secular age” in the novel (Clarke 66). Only one sect of Buddhism, the most modest of the religions, remains. Religious facts that people believe in, lose their status as sacred as a result of a device that allows a window to be opened depicting the history of religions and prophets, therefore, “and a window into the past was opened up. Almost the whole of human history for the past five thousand years became accessible in an instant” (Clarke 67). Thus, as noticed by very few, “the fall of religion had been paralleled by a decline in science” (67). Moreover, the power of reason is also emphasized in the novel. The Overlords stand for logic and knowledge. Because of this, people like Wainwright believe that science will refute religious beliefs. Many have questioned the Overlords' knowledge of the origin of religions and how long the Overlords have followed humanity. In Stormgren's portrayal, Wainwright is a clergyman, and the issue is basically related to a rigid attachment to religion. It is stated that a declaration supporting Karellen's scheme is signed by a number of bishops, rabbis, and cardinals. Wainwright, though, assures him that the Overlords mislead them. “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” (9) says Wainwright because he is not sure of their intentions. Similarly, when Jan Rodricks learns about the location of the Overlords' planet, he feels empowered because to him “knowledge was power” and he is the only person who knows the origin of the Overlords.

As cultural materialists underline, when the utopian social life in the novel is studied, it is clearly seen that as the Overlords' control over people grows, both adverse effects and favourable effects seem to be present. In addition to the feeling of anxiety created by uncertainty, the feelings of purposelessness and emptiness that arise with the decrease in cultural activities are reflected in the novel. People acquire all they

need as scientific and technological advantages; they live a prosperous life without any worry about basic needs. However, as utopia prevails, all human productivity and progress related to technology, science and culture such as arts and literature stop in return. They reach a point where they do not show any progress in any field. As mentioned in the novel, “curiosity remained, and the leisure to indulge in it, but the heart had been taken out of fundamental scientific research. It seemed futile to spend a lifetime searching for secrets that the Overlords had probably uncovered ages before” (Clarke 67-68). This situation often creates a feeling of dissatisfaction in people. Reflecting views against the dominant power can be studied in terms of cultural materialism. Additionally, through a cultural materialist reading, it is possible to identify the mechanisms through which literature fosters social awareness in readers. This can be accomplished by introducing characters who are not members of the ruling class in society. Those who appear to have no voice in opposition to the prevailing government are considered minorities. For instance, Jan Rodricks challenges the space limitations imposed by the Overlords in the novel. Jan's ideas can make the reader aware when analysed in light of a cultural materialist perspective. To illustrate, Jan Rodricks is dissatisfied with his life despite not having any issues with money or school. His dream is to travel to unexplored regions of space. Therefore, he accordingly makes his career plans. He plans to choose astronomy as his second subject after earning a PhD in physics engineering, but the existence of the Overlords has an impact on his goals. With the exception of wars, people's lives are not greatly interfered with. But because of the Overlords' technology, space exploration and travel have all but ceased since they occupy the planet. Building a rocket is futile given that the Overlords have more advanced technological systems. Fearing that the Overlords could interfere with his plans, Jan meets with Professor Sullivan on a submarine and makes a request to him. Jan is determined to achieve the goal he has set in mind, that is, his desire to go to space, at the expense of being caught by the Overlords. He says he will be “the first man ever to leave the Solar System” (115). In a letter to his sister Maia, Jan mentions the intrusive side of the Overlords. According to Jan, humanity would have already reached Mars and Venus were it not for their prohibition of going to other planets. He explains that he wants humanity to have a chance to stand on its own feet. As can be seen in the excerpt below, it is understood that space exploration is restricted first and then comes to an end:

A few hundred men had visited the moon, for the purpose of establishing a lunar observatory. They had travelled as passengers in a small vessel loaned by the Overlords — and driven by rockets. It was obvious that little could be learned from a study of this primitive vehicle, even if its owners handed it over without reservation to inquisitive terrestrial scientists... Man was, therefore, still a prisoner on his own planet. It was a much fairer, but a much smaller, planet than it had been a century before. When the Overlords had abolished war and hunger and disease, they had also abolished adventure. (Clarke 85)

The human race is imprisoned on its own planet. Compared to a century earlier, the Earth is smaller and more colourful, however, the Overlords ended the spirit of adventure when they ended the war, starvation, and sickness. Jan is unable to control his curiosity and using the knowledge he has acquired; he designs a plan by opposing the Overlords' prohibitions about space. So, apart from the protests of the Freedom League, another example of resistance that is made to the power of the Overlords can be seen in this part of the novel. And therefore, he is able to accomplish his aim. He plans to travel to the Overlords' planet in one of their ships secretly. He explains the Theory of Relativity, which Einstein developed, to explain his calculations and plans, highlighting how time and the speed of light both advance at different rates. The way Jan will be travelling inside the ship is made with the use of narcosamine, which aids animals in hibernation. Jan puts himself to sleep. The drug's effect fades off after weeks, and the sleeping person awakens as a result of a slowing of critical functions and metabolism. Jan will have travelled for eighty years before he returns. Then, he uses the Trojan Horse Legend as an example, comparing his strategy to the Greek warriors' invasion of Troy. Once it is realised that Jan Rodricks left Earth despite the prohibition, Karellen calls a meeting. News reporters are not allowed to enter the meeting room with cameras or voice recorders, only paper and pen are allowed. This arises dissatisfaction. Then finally, Karellen lists the justifications for their decision to outlaw space travel. He claims that the human race finds it challenging to maintain even their own small planet and that, when they first arrived, they were so near to wiping each other out that, had the intervention not been made, the Earth may have become a radioactive wasteland. When discussing how vast the universe is, he asserts that “the stars are not for Man” (Clarke 129-130).

The definition of happiness given by humanity's limited knowledge actually encompasses the concepts of misery, sadness, and ending—which is a natural conclusion. According to the Overlords' understanding, this period of happiness, which

is known as the "Golden Age," ends in chaos. This topic is briefly discussed in the novel as follows:

For a lifetime mankind had achieved as much happiness as any race can ever know. It had been the Golden Age. But gold was also the colour of sunset, of autumn; and only Karellen's ears could catch the first wailings of the winter storms. And only Karellen knew with what inexorable swiftness the Golden Age was rushing to its close. (Clarke 130)

Karellen believes that people will never comprehend how fortunate humanity is. The greatest happiness and glorious days that humanity has ever known have arrived, yet gold is also the colour of autumn, sunsets, and winter storms. Thus, the meaning underlying the novel is reached: "No Utopia can ever give satisfaction to everyone, all the time" (Clarke 83). This means no utopia can grant everyone in society perpetual happiness. As mankind becomes increasingly materially prosperous, it becomes dissatisfied with what it has and desires more. Even if people have all they desire in their surroundings, their dissatisfaction always remains. In addition to all this, the end of conflicts and disagreements of all kinds leads to the end of creative art. In the arts of literature, music, painting, and sculpture, there are no notable works. They are so preoccupied with daily affairs that "no one worried except a few philosophers. The race was too intent upon savouring its new-found freedom to look beyond the pleasures of the present. Utopia was here at last; its novelty had not yet been assailed by the supreme enemy of all Utopias — boredom" (Clarke 68). The human species was consumed in its freedom and unable to look beyond the daily pleasures. They had finally achieved utopia; but they had not yet fallen into the grip of boredom, the archenemy of all utopias.

Cultural materialists claim that a form of union of those who are opposed to the ruling class but do not belong to the dominant group can subvert the dominant ideology. Another utopia created by those who are dissatisfied with the ideal utopian society established by the Overlords and their reign in the novel, can be used as an example of the idea of subversion. Even if the world order under the light dictatorial dominance of the Overlords is seen as a utopian dream, those who oppose this dominance form an alternative living space by establishing a new community. George intends to travel to the colony to learn more about it after the artistic activities have subsided. In the newspaper, George reads reviews of his performance that enrage him and believes that television is a medium that limits communication between the

performer and the audience. He receives a letter from New Athens, a community that excels at artistic expression. He decides to go and see them since he feels the colony here is performing art and operates in a wonderful way. In the colony, which is located in the Pacific, people live simple lives free from pointless extravagance. There is a channel between the two islands that make up the colony. These are the Athens and Sparta islands. The foundation of the colony is described as “to build up an independent, stable cultural group with its own artistic traditions” (Clarke 134). The size of the colony, the variety of people it can support, and the requirement for a stable constitution are all calculated by mathematical sociologists. An eight-member council is in charge of running the colony. Except for the council managers in charge of Energy, Production, Economy, Arts, Social Engineering, Sports, Science, and Philosophy, there is no permanent presidency. Each year, one of these directors takes the chair of the presidency. The independence of humanity and artistic traditions are tried to be preserved on the island. They wish to live their own lives, but they are not antagonistic to the Overlords. According to the purpose and motivations for the establishment of the island, the world is now “placid, featureless and culturally dead; nothing really new has been created since the Overlords came” (Clarke 135). Leitch et al. suggest Raymond Williams discusses the connection between art and society as a recurring theme and sees the relationship between art and society as interactive: society may be influenced by culture just as culture can be influenced by society, despite his belief that the ruling class and its interests shape society. Williams gives his strategy the name “cultural materialism” which incorporates both the Marxist interest in the material foundations of society and the dynamic ways that culture affects society (Leitch et al. 1336). In the novel, the world of cultural systems, “has become a soulless and ordinary place, since the old understanding of “nation” has been destroyed. It is crucial for people to understand that nothing is left worth fighting for. Individuals live daily lives, and entertainment programming is aired on several television and radio channels. As a result, people have become “passive sponges,” continuously absorbing but never producing. Soon no one will be living their own life because “it will be a full-time job keeping up with the various family serials on TV!” (Clarke 135).

While the idea of globalisation is dominant in the world ruled by the Overlords, individuality is at the forefront on the islands where the colony is established. All colony applicants must undergo psychological testing. People are able to join and then

leave at any time. George and Jean move to Athens. The fact that there is a kitchen in the home is unusual for Jean because normally, food is brought to homes by calling a centre called “the Food Center”. The dominant principle in the colony is individualism. George and Jean are together with their children Jeffrey and Jennifer Anne and their dog Fey. Except for vehicles like public ambulances and fire trucks, private vehicles are obviously illegal and unnecessary on the island; one can get everywhere by bicycle without dealing with traffic, and accidents do not happen. George and Jean both have their own thoughts about the colony in New Athens. George views New Athens favourably, however, Jean, who is so accustomed to the world governed by the Overlords, finds it challenging.

New Athens was established on an island in order to create a sense of isolation which is an element of utopia. Its geographical restriction is advantageous in reducing the population. The founders emphasize that people with similar interests should be acquainted. The New Athens colony's Jewish founder passes away before entering the promised land, just like Moses. Ben Solomon is the founder, and he was born in Israel, a brief-lived independent state. Solomon claims that corruption starts as soon as the Overlords arrived, and he observes a decline in the value of art. He discusses the technological development process and mathematicians like Weiner and Rashavesky. These individuals claim that mathematical methods could be used to examine the social balance, economic depression, and political elections. Besides, in the colony, positive changes have been made in the fields of film, music, literary criticism, sculpture, and painting. It is built on ongoing productivity, and dreams are unrestricted. As an alternative to the Overlords' rule, New Athens draws a perfect utopian state where free will is discussed. From the perspective of Charles Yan Sen who is a philosopher and has served as the president of the Athens council, it is understood that the aim is to demonstrate to the Overlords that people are capable of free will and are not enslaved. All work is done by a committee in Athens. Therefore, this becomes the most basic requirement of democracy. As known, democracy is a form of governance in which people either directly or indirectly exercise their authority through a representational system typically through conducting regular elections. Each person in the community has a voice because the population is relatively small.

Furthermore, this utopian society's goals in the field of education can also be read from a cultural materialist point of view. Education in this society aims to assist

individuals in developing their intellect and realising their potential. This information is given by Professor Chance in relation to the new University of Athens. The way of living in this colony and the outside world are contrasted. For example, people have everything they need outside of New Athens, but their perspectives are narrow. Every person on the island is driven by a specific goal and a passion, and they all strive to be always the best at that one thing. And also, the Overlords want to inspect the colony by sending a visitor whose name is Thanthateresco. He is referred to as the Inspector. Inspector engages in a variety of activities on the island, including painting, sculpting, music, and theatre, to name a few.

From the standpoint of cultural materialism, it is crucial to examine the novel while bearing in mind that it is a material product of the time it was written. Because the novel may be thoroughly understood in the context of both history and the economic, social, political, and other components that make up the culture. Additionally, it contains a feature that makes the reader more aware. That is to say, the reader's real-life experiences can be linked to how the utopia structure has changed throughout time. *Childhood's End* reflects Clarke's claim that no utopia can provide people with unending happiness. In the novel, the world shifts away from the idea of utopia towards a darker atmosphere as the concept of change begin to take place. As can be read from the excerpt below, all children are affected by this change inevitably: "Like an epidemic spreading swiftly from land to land, the metamorphosis infected the entire human race. It touched practically no one above the age of ten, and practically no one below that age escaped" (Clarke 173). Additionally, because children are the foundation of civilization, their impact eventually has a disastrous effect on all of humanity as stated in the following statement: "It was the end of civilisation, the end of all that men had striven for since the beginning of time. In the space of a few days, humanity had lost its future, for the heart of any race is destroyed, and its will to survive is utterly broken, when its children are taken from it" (173). A race's passions would all disappear if its children are taken away, and they would lose all remaining will to live. So, the world becomes a place in which "there was no panic, as there would have been a century before. The world was numbed, the great cities stilled and silent. Only the vital industries continued to function. It was as though the planet was in mourning, lamenting all that now could never be" (173).

Additionally, a similar situation occurs for the Overlords. Although they are a superior race, they have reached the end of evolution and are no longer able to make any further progress. The situation they are in is described in the novel as follows:

In that instant, George knew he was in the presence of a tragedy transcending his own. It was incredible — and yet somehow just. Despite all their powers and their brilliance, the Overlords were trapped in some evolutionary cul-de-sac. Here was a great and noble race, in almost every way superior to mankind; yet it had no future, and it was aware of it. (Clarke 169)

The novel depicts the conflict between science and metaphysics in terms of cultural materialism. Despite the advanced science and technology that the Overlords offer to humanity, they are also interested in supernatural phenomena. In the novel, for instance, Rupert Boyce has a huge library filled with several books on magic, metaphysics, telepathy, fortune telling, and psychic research. These writings are exceptional because it is now the age of science and rationality. Although Rashaverak is an Overlord, and despite his scientific understanding, he is interested in mysticism and reads books on this and similar topics from Rupert's library. And also, after Rupert Boyce's party, George, Jean, Boyce and some other guests have an experiment-style meeting where they attempt to communicate with a supernatural force using the question-and-answer method. Jean appears to genuinely believe that the world of telepathy and second sight holds some sort of value. When they learn NGS 549672 is the name of the Overlords' sun, Jean passes out. During his last speech to humanity, Karellen reveals why they have come to Earth. He claims that by restricting nuclear weapons, mankind is actually kept from annihilating itself, but the threat to humans and other races is quite different. Numerous civilizations have had similar circumstances. According to him, there have been many worlds that narrowly avoided nuclear war, attained peace, and built prosperous civilizations before being wiped off the face of the earth by an unidentified power. It is mentioned that the twentieth century has seen the first appearance of this power and in the past, the true religion of humanity was science, and all other beliefs were eliminated. In the novel, religious analogies are made to exemplify some similar situations. For instance, the Old Testament book's account of the Prophet Jonah is also brought up just as the prophet who is thrown overboard is taken by a whale and survives to land. According to Professor Sullivan, this tale is not irrational in terms of scientific methods. It was believed that science could explain everything. However, unusual occurrences have developed throughout history, including telepathy, poltergeists, and precognition. All of them have been

disregarded by science, but Karellen claims that some of them are real. Some scientists start looking into these incidents in the twentieth century. It is known by the Overlords that “the physicists could only have ruined the Earth; the paraphysicists could have spread havoc to the stars” (Clarke 176). Giving an example that if anyone develops a cancerous and evil mentality— psychic cancer—that might have contaminated other, more intelligent minds. Because of this, the Overlords stop progress in all spheres of culture. Karellen claims that an entity known as the Overmind which consumes and assimilates species after they have reached a certain level of development is superior to them. He tells people that they are the last generation of Homo sapiens and that they undergo a mental evolution that takes a much shorter time than the normal evolution of other species.

According to Raymond Williams, literature can serve as a social commentary on modern society and culture. He agrees that narratives can be influenced by cultural, social, economic, and political activities. Williams offers a means of interpreting culture as a material and historical formation. This part of the novel where the effects of evolution in children take place step by step may provide awareness in the reader that the future depends on the well-being of children. First, Jeffrey is saved from a tsunami by being guided by a voice. Concerning the occurrence his son described, George recalls the paranormal experience they had at Boyce's house years earlier. Believing this to be an intervention by the Overlords, he prays and expresses gratitude to Karellen. Every day, Jeff experiences more dreams, many of which feature images of various planets and stars in outer space. At the same time, Karellen and Rashaverak interpret Jeff's nightmares. In his dreams, he visits several planets, each with its distinct features such as atmospheric variations which are thought to be terrifying and incompatible with human life. Yet, it is asserted that life does really exist in these locations. Regarding Jeff's dreams, there is talk of a kind of "change", a change that has not yet begun. Rashaverak claims that the Overlords are still keeping an eye on the children of George and Jean despite their claims that they are no longer watching the human race removing the instruments. Thus, the idea arises that their children are not human, but may be another species. Under the right circumstances like telepathy, the concept of absolute change posits that minds can communicate with one another. However, ten years and older children do not undergo any change. Karellen also says he will evacuate the children from the world. The children's waiting for the Overlord

ships is likened to the children who left the cities by train during the first and second World Wars, but in the current situation, these children have been transformed and have no chance of returning to their families.

When Jan arrives on the Overlords' planet, it is considerably bigger than Earth. The Overlord, named Vindarten, is in charge of Jan. The city's architecture is straightforward and ornament-free. Cities are subterranean structures. Since the Overlords can fly, and there are no streets. Jan and his guide take a look around. Jan describes a mountain and thinks the mountain is alive since it changes form and moves. Vindarten forbids Jan from photographing this scene. Eighty years after leaving Earth, Jan Rodricks comes back to Earth. He is only six months older. The Earth appears to have gone back to its pre-human state. Jan is shown the beings that Karella previously claimed were human. They are depicted as naked, filth-covered kids between the ages of five and fifteen, and they appear to be savages performing rituals. They are awake and have expressionless faces that resemble those of the dead. For about a year, wild children all over the continent dance in the same pattern, thinking that the power they called the Overmind is training them. Thus, by incorporating each individual into its structure, it will come to exist as a single entity. They initially eat fruits and animals to fulfil their nutritional demands, but eventually, they no longer require food since they have access to a more abundant energy source. After three years, they all close their eyes and become motionless, as if they are in a trance. Further on the record, beautiful and fertile lands are replaced by a world without trees, grass, and no living things. For years, these figures never move from their places.

A darker atmosphere is depicted when Jan realizes humanity is coming to an end, how big and terrible the universe is, and that it is not suitable for humans to live. The path to the stars splits into two, one leading to the existence of the Overlords. They have a remarkably high level of intelligence, but like the position humanity has found itself in, this intelligence is ultimately meaningless. They are as helpless as humans. The Overmind, an immortal being with limitless potential, who unites all the races in the cosmos, is at the conclusion of the other way. Overlords serve as interpreters and mediators. Until the time comes, the Overmind permits the Overlords to serve as the protectors of civilizations like humanity. Jan wonders why when they originally arrived on Earth, people viewed them as representations of evil and fear. The Overlords assert that this has to do with the concept of time and that memory originates

in the future rather than the past. They are automatically associated with evil and the downfall of humanity simply because of their presence. Collective memory is the memory that races have in common regardless of time. Jan is the last human remaining. Those who do not commit suicide in the final days of humanity choose to forget their sorrows by engaging in deadly sports. Humanity has finally reached its desperate ending as the population has decreased. Jan, as he always wished to be, ironically, has become the best pianist in the world. One morning, Jan notices a difference in the sky and knows it is because children who have been in a trance are now waking out of it. There will be a significant issue if they interact with the Moon and the Sun. Jan decides to remain on Earth while the Overlords leave. He is asked by Karellen to describe everything he observes. He mentions a huge cloud, fainting stars, and little tremors. He notices a luminous web made of lines and circles. It seems alive. He believes that the Overmind speaks through colours and shapes. The Earth has dissolved, the houses, the ground, and the mountains are as transparent as glass, he claims after reporting that gravity is decreasing, and a storm is coming. From the centre of the Earth, light is released. The entire planet has vanished. Karellen feels sorrow for his own race, but he believes they will survive and face the end without giving up.

According to Hillegas, there have been a few instances in science fiction when the Wellsian utopian ideal has been expressed explicitly, such as in *Childhood's End*, and this is how *Childhood's End* depicts the utopian world: the Overlords create a single, just, and peaceful society where ignorance, hunger, and terror are no longer present. Earth becomes a technological utopia under their authority. The world's wealth is significantly increased by the absence of conflict and innovative industrial methods, particularly robot factories (Hillegas 153-154). Moreover, men have the strength, power, and energy to create a new human life once destructive unrest and pressures are removed. They can enhance entertainment activities, reconstruct cities, provide an endless educational experience, and, for the very first time, provide everyone with the chance to utilise their abilities to the utmost. As a result, humanity achieves previously unimaginable levels of civilization and culture. This golden age was facilitated by the Overlords, a very clear representation of science, who had reason and the scientific method introduced into everyday activities. According to Wells, science serves as a means to save humanity (Hillegas 154). Science and technology in the novel are used to make human life easier. In the novel, everything is provided for

free as a community service. Without spending any money, a man can go wherever he wants and eat anything he wants. When negative emotions and tensions are gone, a new kind of human life develops. Cities are rebuilt, people are provided with limitless access to education, and everyone utilises their skills to the maximum. This way, humanity achieves high levels of culture and civilization brought by the Overlords. The Overlords' incorporation of science and technology into daily life is relevant to Wells's theory of how science advances humanity.

James and Mendlesohn assert that as a feature of utopia, first a traditional ideal utopia is described, and its fatal flaws are subsequently revealed. Many critics assert that it has an apocalyptic ending where people are destroyed alongside the Earth, and the children of humanity turn into an evolutionary step. James and Mendlesohn state “In the course of the novel Clarke expounds one of the most detailed and attractive utopian futures to be found in the whole of the sf genre” however, it is a complete failure because boredom and the end of creativity and art both present alongside with such utopian features. Therefore, in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, it is stated that “the utopian end in the novel is not the creation of an ideal society on Earth, but humanity rising from its cradle on Earth, evolving into something else (James and Mendlesohn 221).

As stated by Olander and Greenberg the novel has so many subgenres with “the narrative movement from utopia and golden age to the utopia of New Athens to the Total Breakthrough by the children and the destruction of the old world, as well as by the contrast in the development of the characters of the Overlords and the humans” (Olander and Greenberg 162). Technology contributes to both the success and shortcomings of the utopian social structures suggested in this book. The establishment of a global "Golden Age" by technologically imposed law and order, freedom of movement, and sexuality, but not the elimination of genuine sorrow and agony. As can be clearly understood then, “combined with the humans' sense of inferiority, results in mild anxiety, resentment, and lethargy” (Olander and Greenberg 197).

As Olander and Greenberg suggest, *Childhood's End* is therefore not really utopian, but rather a critique of utopian ideals (Olander and Greenberg 198). Peace and wealth are insufficient such as for the people of New Athens who have more requests and purposes. They are not content with what they already have, but they ask

for more. Therefore, according to Olander and Greenberg, “this particular "utopia" is only a temporary stage in man's development” and they further provide the following details regarding Clarke’s stance to this matter:

Theoretically, he could go in the direction of enlarging his storehouse of empirical knowledge; this is the way of the Overlords, without whom man could not have defused his own self-destructive tendencies. Yet, paradoxically, the Overlords are present in order to cut man off from entering their "evolutionary cul de sac," to insure that he takes the other road, paralleling the mystical return of the soul to God. (Olander and Greenberg 198)

However, mainstream critics’ response to *Childhood's End* indicates a very different perception; for them, the eschatological subject, not the Overlords' tradition of systematic inquiry or the succeeding technological utopia—was what made the novel worthwhile (Olander and Greenberg 201).

In conclusion, the information provided above, which has a cultural materialist interpretation, may be used to demonstrate why the novel cannot be totally categorised as a utopian text. First of all, by engaging with issues of social institutions, class, and social life, cultural materialists aim to bring attention to the methods used by current power structures to spread ideas, including rules, religion, and education. To do this, they closely examine a work to find the dominant hegemonic perspective after first analysing its historical background and political implications. The full comprehension of literary works requires the integration of literary and historical factors. Therefore, it is possible to think of literary creations as the significant outcomes of that culture. The historical setting, governmental structure, credibility of authority, technology, social life, and religion are just a few of the many complex ideas in *Childhood's End* that can be examined through the lens of the cultural materialist framework.

As cultural materialism emphasises, the motivations underlying the development of literary narratives may be better understood by looking at the historical background in which they are produced. As a result, both the time that *Childhood's End* was written and the consequences of the time before it, are reflected in the novel. Throughout the First and Second World Wars, having control of the air, land, and sea had a considerable impact on the outcome of the wars. Following this, the war between the two superpowers, Soviet Russia and the United States, proceeded as an interstellar space race. Despite all of these happenings, Clarke's novel *Childhood's End* perfectly depicts the spirit of the time, specifically during the Cold War. A continuous feeling

of anxiety and fear pervaded the entire world due to the rise of totalitarian regimes. Totalitarianism has complete control over a person's life. Moreover, individual liberty is not permitted. Thus, the first chapter of the novel illustrates the notion that cultural materialists read literature that is built on history. The novel captures the heightened conflict between two superpowers—the Americans and the Russians—during a critical period in history. The Overlords appear and offer an apparent state of peace to a society that is so chaotic, in which there are fears of nuclear war and other problems.

Another topic that the cultural materialist critics in the texts examine is politics. The state's authority and its ideas have an impact on people's attitudes, values, and way of life, according to the cultural materialist perspective. It is obvious in the novel that social thoughts toward politics have an impact on how people live their lives. In the novel, a mild dictatorial system mirrors centralized power. The Overlords hold control over politics in the society. Thus, everything seems to be under the control of the Overlords. The Overlords have power over human liberties and limitations. In *Childhood's End*, the Overlords maintain their supremacy over humanity via the use of technology for their benefit and a strategy of benign authority instead of using physical force. However, despite all this, some people adopt, and others reject the Overlords' authority.

Cultural materialists make reference to the idea of subversion by viewing the literature within the context of historical, political, and social factors. Therefore, in an effort to illustrate the cultural and historical realities of the era, cultural materialists put forth an attempt to portray these competing viewpoints to political systems. In *Childhood's End*, rebellions against the Overlords' rule are exemplified by the people. They do not want to be ruled by the Overlords. While reading the novel, modern readers may evaluate their own circumstances in light of the examples that are presented.

The novel serves as an illustration of Raymond Williams' comment regarding the masses. As a result, it is clear that the Overlords want to prevent humanity from having independent thought by limiting innovation and the development of new technologies.

Opposition to the existing quo and resistance mindsets against hegemony and prevailing ideas are two points of emphasis for cultural materialists. According to

Raymond Williams, literary texts enable readers to have these utterly contradictory emotions and thoughts since they are the results of people's social states. The novel raises doubts about the Overlords' credibility due to their secrecy.

In his book *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams claims that there are three different sorts of culture in a society: the "dominant," "residual," and "emergent." By examining the changing culture of a society, readers can understand the traits of the prevailing society. In this manner, one can look at a culture from several perspectives.

In the novel, the organisations connected with the Freedom League cooperate and fight against the dominating power in an effort to overthrow it. In addition to social, religious, political, and economic phenomena, media influence culture formation, according to cultural materialism. Due to their mysterious look, the media frequently caricatures the Overlords. Media is a tool used by those who differ from the Overlords, the ruling group, to spread their beliefs.

Cultural materialism critics emphasise the idea of the masses in society. In *Childhood's End*, society is governed under the power of the Overlords. When the Overlords join a society where individualism is strongly cherished, their major objective is to influence people to adopt a certain style of thinking. As a result, when they share their physical outlook, they are not treated harshly.

According to the materialist worldview, a person's socioeconomic situation has an impact on their feelings and behaviour. Throughout the novel, as the utopian system persists, social dynamics shift. With the influence they have collected over time, the Overlords radically alter humanity's way of living. The problems that once prevented human development have been resolved.

The idea that people who live in a society are shaped by its institutions and ideologies is explored by cultural materialists. Education can also be evaluated in terms of a cultural materialist perspective since it is a social behaviour that influences cultural development. In the novel, the system of education has expanded and lasted much longer. People travel, gain experience, and widen their horizons before returning to school.

Cultural materialists also seek to highlight social life in order to comprehend how it influences culture. In the novel, a utopian system is steadily constructed,

allowing people to fully utilise their intellectual capacity. With the dissolution of military forces, overall wealth increases, and production and living standards improve. Everything is reasonably priced, and free services are offered for all fundamental needs like electricity, water, and transportation.

According to a cultural materialist viewpoint, a society's educational, social, and economic conditions, along with its religious ideology, define and direct the thoughts, values, and behaviours of its residents. Religion is one aspect of everyday life. It is evident that society has an impact on how people feel about spirituality. In *Childhood's End*, religion gradually becomes less significant as a result of the technological advancements and equipment that the Overlords grant humanity. The Overlords embody reason and knowledge. For this, many people like Wainwright think science eventually contradicts religious ideas. The origin of religions has been a subject of intense controversy.

When the utopian social life in the novel is examined, it is evident that as the Overlords' power over people increases, both negative and positive impacts appear to be visible, as cultural materialists emphasise. The novel also captures the sense of meaninglessness and emptiness caused by decline in cultural activities, in addition to the uneasiness brought on by uncertainty. People are able to meet all of their demands thanks to scientific and technical advances, leading prosperous lives free from concern for necessities. However, as utopia persists, all human productivity, and growth in science, technology, and culture—including the arts and literature—also comes to an end. People eventually arrive at the stage where they create no more advancement in any area.

Cultural materialism aims to uncover the ways in which literature encourages readers' awareness. It is achieved by including characters that are not really part of society's dominant class. Minorities are people who appear to be lacking a role in a protest against the current system of government. As in the case of Jan Rodricks, he questions the Overlords' restrictions regarding space in the novel. When examined in the context of a cultural materialist viewpoint, Jan's thoughts have the potential to awaken the reader. It is essential to study the novel from the perspective of cultural materialism while taking into account that it is a material creation of the era in which it was written. In other words, the reader's actual lives can be connected to the

evolution of the utopia's development over time. Clarke's assertion that no paradise can bring humans eternal bliss is reflected in *Childhood's End*. In the context of both history and the economic, social, political, and other factors that form the culture, the novel may be fully understood. The changes eventually have an effect on all children. Since children are the basis of society, any negative effects they may have eventually spread to all of humanity. A cultural materialist can argue that the inclusion of this topic is done to raise awareness.

The confrontation between science and metaphysics is portrayed in the novel using the frame of cultural materialism. The Overlords provide humanity with science and technology, but people are equally fascinated by paranormal events. Rupert Boyce, for instance, has a massive library in the novel that is full of numerous works on magic, metaphysics, telepathy, fortune-telling, and psychic study. Because we live in an era of science and reason, these texts are exceptional.

Although utopian features predominate in *Childhood's End*, first of all, the atmosphere of uncertainty in the narrative of the novel, the Overlords hiding their appearance for a long time in the first place, and their domination over humanity, however mild, take the form of restrictions on the freedoms. Later, the utopian order that they have presented to humanity technologically develops, but people cannot trust the dominance of their rulers whose appearance they do not know, and questions always arise in their minds about who they are ruled by and what their intentions are for people. Then the Overlords reveal themselves. However, the Overlords' likeness to the devil—a representation of evil—is ironic since, in contrast to evil, they approach humans with reason and intelligence and give them the chance to progress. By abolishing international frontiers, the Overlords establish a World State. They also eradicate prejudice-causing religious and racial ideologies. However, there are Freedom League-style formations that have opposed them from the very first day they came. And they are warning humanity against the absolute domination of the Overlords with protests, newspaper reports and drawings. Although a utopian world is desired to be revealed, restrictions and obstacles have pushed humanity to seek different quests. Examples of this include the colony founded in New Athens and Jan Rodrick's secret departure from Earth in violation of the prohibition. Dissatisfaction drives people to adopt these mindsets. In New Athens, people create a small utopian world by their own means, opposing all possibilities provided by the Overlords.

Boredom emerges as the inevitable end of all utopias. Additionally, it is noted in the novel that the evolution of humanity has occurred and is progressing swiftly. The story concludes with a disaster because this development, which only occurs in children, signals the extinction of the human species. When all of the aforementioned factors are taken into account, it becomes clear that *Childhood's End* is not a pure utopia.

CONCLUSION

This thesis offers a cultural materialist study of the works of two well-known science fiction authors from the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke. Cultural materialism focuses on works of literature, the historical moment in which they were written, the political, economic, and social circumstances of the societies in which they were written, as well as the relationship and significance between them. Both Wells and Clarke had a keen interest in the scientific advancements of their times and offered insightful predictions about various scientific topics. History has demonstrated that these predictions have, in some way or another, come close to becoming true. Both H. G. Wells and Arthur C. Clarke made literary and scientific contributions. For this reason, in this thesis, a cultural materialist reading is used to demonstrate how Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* and H. G. Wells's *In the Days of the Comet* are both linked to significant historical events that occurred during the time periods in which they were written, as well as how those societies are criticised politically and socially. The structure of the society is also studied, including its political and sociocultural components. Additionally, issues like religion, power, authority, media, education and working-class experiences are examined. Given this evidence and study, it is argued that while *Childhood's End* and *In the Days of the Comet* feature the idea of a utopian society, they cannot be fully regarded as utopias because the specifics of narratives and conditions within these narratives have bleak components that contradict the qualities of utopia.

From the standpoint of cultural materialism, a vision of society from all angles is examined. The viewpoints of individuals whose lives are considered minor, as well as the visible and unseen realities that constitute society are included. As can be seen in the novels *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End* by Wells and Clarke, the critical level of narration moves away from a utopian world order with the reflection of the dark atmosphere, leaving its place to uncertainty. It has been questioned whether these novels can really be classified as utopian fiction or not. Moreover, even if they are, as this study shows, both writers deal with the notion of utopia in a similar manner. That is, as is seen in these novels which are examined in terms of cultural materialism in line with such concepts as politics, social life, cultural life, and religion, they both make use of utopia by combining it with pessimistic components.

First, *In the Days of the Comet*, written in 1906, takes the Comet as a scientific basis and refers to an event that actually existed in history—Halley's Comet. As mentioned earlier, according to the theory of cultural materialists, culture actually emerges by examining concepts such as democracy or industry since these concepts are recorded in history by societies and individuals in that society. For this reason, the only way to understand culture is by relating it to events in history and the actions of people. Also, the powerful authorities that are unable to effectively administer their own society find their place in history as well as the counter-resistance of the oppressed people who rebel against the authority. In H. G. Wells's *In the Days of the Comet*, the criticism is expressed from both sides; that is, it is clear that both the oppressed social classes and the politicians point out the shortcomings of those in management. As illustrated, both Melmount who is a political figure, and Leadford who is socially inferior, criticise the activities of statesmen. Thus, it is related to the concept of the masses that cultural materialism focuses on especially by Raymond Williams. It is known that the common values and ideas of the people contribute to the culture. At some point in the novel, it is seen that the working class is oppressed by the powerful people who criticise the authority and the politicians. Besides, the statesmen are also critical of their past actions and of themselves, that they have abused power. It can be clearly seen that these common thoughts about politics refer to the materialist component of that society. A number of society's hidden elements are revealed using this way. Wells creates a social system that takes into account the views of both the wealthy and the labouring classes.

It is evident that Wells depicts politics for the reader in *In the Days of the Comet* by fusing the idea of utopia with political reforms and their results. According to materialist theory, people's socioeconomic circumstances affect their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. In other words, society divides people into several social groups according to their way of life. The novel highlights the ways in which politicians influence the population via the press and other media. In other words, the upper class somehow maintains power over the lower class. *In the Days of the Comet*, it is demonstrated how the media, and those in power, shape societal tendencies like nationalism. As seen in the text, two at-war nations—the Germans and the British—direct their views of nationalism in their own societies through songs and heroism, giving the impression that their own nation is more powerful. In this way, as the

authority desires, the idea of war is presented to the general population as if it were a straightforward deed. This problem is related to the cultural materialists' emphasis on mass communication, as Raymond Williams notes that contemporary democracies have a variety of problems. And also, the existence of highly powerful mass communication is at the foundation of these problems; as a result, public perception has been openly influenced and directed, using problematic methods and for questionable aims. So, in the caricatures in *In the Days of the Comet*, politicians are mocked for their acts with exaggerated characters that reflect the viewpoints of the working class. This demonstrates to the reader how common people and workers perceive statesmen. Additionally, it is revealed that politicians frequently mislead people and behave suspiciously. This way, it can be seen that the public does not support their administration. Moreover, how the wealthy upper class enjoys their wealth at the expense of the poor people is also shown in the novel.

The idea that the literary creations of a society reflect its values, past, present and future is examined by cultural materialist critics. Wells's story reflects the spirit of the time by depicting the mystery surrounding Halley's Comet, and the dawn of a new century in a gloomy environment with social realities and economic instabilities. Wells's realistic views of the human experience are evident throughout the novel, especially in the speeches and life and memories of William Leadford's youth, which are depicted with a chaotic image. Due to Leadford's point of view, the reader can experience the unpleasant aspects of life in Victorian society. So, a cultural materialist approach also looks into the notions of societies. Mostly in passages where Leadford describes his circumstances, Wells offers a detailed critique of early 20th-century England. He speaks with a particular expression of misery.

Another area of emphasis for cultural materialists is the concept of "subversion," which denotes subverting an existing social order in order to form a new version. This framework makes it possible to understand the opposition between the political authorities. The idea of subversion is prevalent throughout the section of the novel where the miners protest against the mine owners. To protest their dismissal, the workers assemble in a crowd and march in front of the company owners. The demonstrations and their personal situations may be reconsidered by contemporary readers who read the novel at the time in the perspective of how they are presented in

the novel. These protests against the political systems could result in the subversion that is anticipated in a society.

Another issue that is emphasised by cultural materialists is marginalised members of society. For instance, in *In the Days of the Comet*, Leadford, a working-class young man, examines his miserable life, the state of the working class, his poverty, and those in positions of authority. Young people like Leadford develop an aggressive, angry worldview as a result of these socioeconomic disparities.

Cultural materialism focuses on the idea of the masses since it is generally accepted that the public's collective views and values have an impact on culture. The two social classes that comprise Well's society are the secure class and the insecure classes. Individualism based on willpower is not allowed in a culture where the concept of the masses is central. To illustrate, *In the Days of the Comet* imposes limits on all forms of creative skill. Those in positions of authority implement their rules and achieve their political and social objectives by controlling and dominating the masses because lower-class individuals are seen as members of the masses and materials.

Materialist theory states that a person's socioeconomic situation has an impact on his beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours. To put it another way, society creates a variety of social groups based on how individuals live their lives. Alongside all these challenges in the social situations, economic issues are also discussed in the novel's plot. According to Leadford, the poor working circumstances that people face result from capitalists like his employer. In addition to having poor access to food, shelter, clothing, and education, his social condition is unpleasant, and his willpower is severely constrained. Another example of lawlessness and injustice in society toward the lower class exists. Due to both financial concerns and legal ambiguity, poor people frequently tolerate minor misconduct. There is practically no justice for the poor because the law in particular is a mechanism of the ruling class.

In order to develop some kind of awareness, it is crucial to witness the lives of the marginalised individuals in a society. Cultural materialists emphasise the value of understanding minorities in society to raise consciousness. Leadford contrasts his hatred with the rage of his country in reference to the ongoing war and the status of his own country. Young people are in the same desperate circumstances as Leadford in

the novel, and there are still workers' protests and class struggles. All of these circumstances may lead to a kind of awareness in the reader.

Cultural materialists also draw attention to the minority in society and those who are viewed as unimportant members of society, who are considered marginalised. The issue affecting women at the time, from marriage to difficult social conditions, is another significant topic covered in *In the Days of the Comet*. Women are driven into obedience by the dominant system's oppression. Another problem impacting women is explored, although from a different perspective this time. Wealthy women are also concerned about the elimination of the class structure that has emerged as a result of marriage. As was already established, the instances from Leadford's mother and the way Nettie elopes with another man, acting in a way that is viewed as dishonourable, show the reader how the historical period oppresses women and shapes them.

Cultural materialist critics assert that religious institutions have an impact on social behaviour as well. Leadford's mother teaches him religion. However, he sees it as outmoded and "old-fashioned narrow faith" with standards of morality for preserving social and political order that has little to do with the requirements and reality of contemporary life. It is argued that engaging in religious activities actually serves as a means of disguising social or political realities. Additionally, clerics are criticised for taking an "ignorant" approach to social problems.

In conclusion, the information provided above, which has a cultural materialist interpretation, may be used to demonstrate why the novel cannot be totally categorised as a utopian text. First of all, by engaging with issues of social institutions, class, and social life, cultural materialists aim to bring attention to the methods used by current power structures to spread ideas, including rules, religion, and education. The historical setting, governmental structure, credibility of authority, technology, social life, and religion are just a few of the many complex ideas in *Childhood's End* that can be examined through the lens of the cultural materialist framework.

As cultural materialism emphasises, the motivations underlying the development of literary narratives may be better understood by looking at the historical background in which they are produced. As a result, the time that *Childhood's End* was written in and the consequences of the time before it, are reflected in the novel. Clarke's novel *Childhood's End* perfectly depicts the spirit of the time, specifically during the

Cold War. A continuous feeling of anxiety and fear pervaded the entire world due to the rise of totalitarian regimes. Totalitarianism has complete control over a person's life. Moreover, individual liberty is not permitted. Though dictatorial, the Overlords appear and offer an apparent state of peace to a society that is so chaotic, in which there are fears of nuclear war and other problems.

Another topic that the cultural materialist critics in the texts examine is politics. The state's authority and its ideas have an impact on people's attitudes, values, and way of life, according to the cultural materialist perspective. In the novel, a mild dictatorial system mirrors centralized power. The Overlords hold control over politics in the society. Thus, everything seems to be under the control of the Overlords. The Overlords have power over human liberties and limitations. The Overlords maintain their supremacy over humanity via the use of technology for their benefit and a strategy of benign authority instead of using physical force. However, despite all this, some people adopt, and others reject the Overlords' authority.

Cultural materialists make reference to the idea of subversion. Therefore, in an effort to illustrate the cultural and historical realities of the era, cultural materialists put forth an attempt to portray these competing viewpoints to political systems. In *Childhood's End*, rebellions against the Overlords' rule are exemplified. People do not want to be ruled by the Overlords. While reading the novel, modern readers may evaluate their own circumstances in light of the examples that are presented. The novel serves as an illustration of Raymond Williams' comment regarding the masses. It is clear that the Overlords want to prevent humanity from having independent thought by limiting innovation and the development of new technologies.

Opposition to the existing status quo and resistance mindsets against hegemony and prevailing ideas are two points of emphasis for cultural materialists. The novel raises doubts about the Overlords' credibility due to their secrecy. In his book *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams claims that there are three different sorts of culture in a society: the "dominant," "residual," and "emergent." By examining the changing culture of a society, readers can understand the traits of the prevailing society. In this manner, one can look at a culture from several perspectives.

In the novel, the organisations connected with the Freedom League cooperate against the dominating power to overthrow it. In addition to social, religious, political,

and economic phenomena, media influence culture formation, according to cultural materialism. Those who oppose The Overlords' rule use the media to broadcast headlines with anti-The Overlord news in an effort to propagate their ideas. Due to their mysterious look, the media frequently caricatures the Overlords. Media is a tool used by those who differ from the Overlords, the ruling group, to spread their beliefs.

Moreover, cultural materialist critics emphasise the idea of the masses in society. In *Childhood's End*, society is governed under the power of the Overlords. When the Overlords join a society where individualism is strongly cherished, their major objective is to influence people to adopt a certain style of thinking. They form similar-minded people by reducing individuality through education and prohibitions. Therefore, people do not react negatively when they show their physical appearance.

According to the materialist worldview, a person's socioeconomic situation has an impact on their feelings and behaviour. Throughout the novel, as the utopian system persists, social dynamics shift. With the influence they have collected over time, the Overlords radically alter humanity's way of living. The problems that once prevented human development have been resolved. Also, education can also be evaluated in terms of a cultural materialist perspective since it is a social behaviour that influences cultural development. In the novel, the system of education has expanded and lasted much longer. People travel, gain experience, and widen their horizons before returning to school.

Cultural materialists also seek to highlight social life in order to comprehend how it influences culture. In the novel, a utopian system is steadily constructed, allowing people to fully utilise their intellectual capacity. With the dissolution of military forces, overall wealth increases, and production and living standards improve. Everything is reasonably priced, and free services are offered for all fundamental needs like electricity, water, and transportation. According to a cultural materialist viewpoint, religion is one aspect of everyday life. It is evident that society has an impact on how people feel about spirituality. In *Childhood's End*, religion gradually becomes less significant as a result of the technological advancements and equipment that the Overlords grant humanity. The Overlords embody reason and knowledge. For this, many people like Wainwright think science eventually contradicts religious ideas. The origin of religions has been a subject of intense controversy. When the utopian

social life in the novel is examined, it is evident that as the Overlords' power over people increases, both negative and positive impacts appear to be visible, as cultural materialists emphasise. Moreover, the novel also captures the sense of meaninglessness and emptiness caused by a decline in cultural activities, in addition to the uneasiness brought on by uncertainty. People are able to meet all of their demands thanks to scientific and technical advances, leading prosperous lives free from concern for necessities. However, as utopia persists, all human productivity, and growth in science, technology, and culture—including the arts and literature—also comes to an end. People eventually arrive at the stage where they create no more advancement in any area.

Cultural materialism aims to uncover the ways in which literature encourages the readers' awareness. It is achieved by including characters that are not really part of society's dominant class. As in the case of Jan Rodricks, he questions the Overlords' restrictions regarding space in the novel. When examined in the context of a cultural materialist viewpoint, Jan's thoughts have the potential to awaken the reader. Clarke's assertion that no paradise can bring humans eternal bliss is reflected in *Childhood's End*. The changes eventually have an effect on all children. Since children are the basis of society, any negative effects they may have eventually spread to all of humanity. A cultural materialist can argue that the inclusion of this topic is done to raise awareness.

Similar to this, Arthur C. Clarke's 1953 novel *Childhood's End* is based on real-world scientific and historical incidents. Both this novel and *In the Days of the Comet* make use of a historical event as required for cultural materialist analysis. Given the time period in which the book was written, it is clear from the opening pages that it portrays the post-second world war era, in particular, the Cold War era. Since everyone in the world is aware of how catastrophic war can be, international disputes have resulted in fearful but careful investigations due to the presence of nuclear weapons. The reader is made aware of the significance of air control through *Childhood's End's* narrative, which alternates between Reinhold Hoffman and Konrad Sneider and is on both sides—the U.S. and Russia. In this chaotic environment, the Overlords appear to have given an order to the earth. All members of society agree that they are in positions of control and power, and that they are superior to humans. After accepting this, the Overlords start to supervise people in accordance with their own objectives, albeit with some restrictions and hindrances. There are certain caricatures of the Overlords'

physical appearance, but they are not depicted as absurd or humorous like the statesmen featured in *In the Days of the Comet*. Rather than governing the populace unfairly, the Overlords exhibit a more benign approach to the government. They are even considered to as the embodiment of intelligence and logic. In *Childhood's End*, as in *In the Days of the Comet*, media plays a significant part. Karellen uses radio and television to communicate with people all around the world. Caricatures of the Overlords are also created, similar to *In the Days of the Comet*, by persons who oppose the Overlords' rule, sometimes in monstrous and other times in humorous ways.

Wells treats the Comet as a scientific entity, while Clarke portrays the Overlords as superior beings. Despite the utopian societies that both novels portray and the various ways in which scientific developments are incorporated, the novels' political, economic, and social conditions are problematic when analysed from a cultural materialist perspective and both have a pessimistic and ambiguous tone in their narratives. The idea of ideal order is strongly intertwined with a bleak vision. Although *In the Days of the Comet* (1906) and *Childhood's End* (1953) both have utopian elements that initially appear to be dominating aspects, in reality, both authors blur the exact line between utopia and dystopia, with their works falling somewhere in the middle. Both stories contain details that do not belong in utopia. Although a utopian world order is eventually formed in Wells's *In the Days of the Comet*, the events leading up to that point, the way the world is described, and the manner the story is conveyed to the reader are more likely to produce an unpromising atmosphere. Similar to this, in Clarke's *Childhood's End*, the utopian order is established over time with the arrival of the Overlords and their technology, but because of the Overlords' existence, there is persistent obscurity and civil disorder among the people, enabling the novel to be read from a more pessimistic alternative viewpoint. It is illustrated how Wells and Clarke's supposedly utopian novels cannot be easily identified as entirely utopian literature by examining the combination of utopian and more contradictory components in these novels, which reflect the era in which they were written in. Through a cultural materialist reading, the chosen works of these two authors show that these novels are the result of a critical viewpoint at the time they were produced. When analysed in terms of cultural materialism's elements of religion, social life, economy, and politics, despite the fact that these two books were written in utterly different eras—one in the early 1900s and the other in the 1950s—they reach a similar

topic: both novels present utopias, but they strongly reflect the pessimism and uncertainty of the time in which they were written. Both novels feature a science-based external intrusion element. The intruders in *Childhood's End* and *In the Days of the Comet* are, respectively, "the Overlords" and "the Comet". And when they both get to Earth, a utopian state has taken over the entire world. Since the comet impacts and affects individuals within a few days, the ideal order is established more quickly in Wells's world than it is in Clarke's. Since the novels attempt to create a perfect world, they display utopian characteristics. But there is a common pattern in how Wells and Clarke approach utopia. Both authors' works, which deal with utopia, demonstrate how common the chaotic, pessimistic, and conflicting aspects of the real world are.

It is possible to say that Wells's novel *In the Days of the Comet* is a critique and commentary of his own society when read in the context of what the cultural materialism approach suggests. To put it briefly, the instances given above provide support for the notion that the novel is not an overall work of utopia. First off, despite the utopian beginning of the prologue chapter, the narrator's narration is bleak as he describes the pre-utopia world in detail. Because of the deeply depressing and gloomy atmosphere of the old system, the focus has actually been transferred to the greed of the politicians and institutions of that time. Other issues covered in this thesis include war, how false and exaggerated news in the media can distort the public's opinion, having a poor social life, and the lower status of women in society. Moreover, the contradiction resulting from each person's interpretation of religion, the ineffectiveness of the clergy, and the contradiction between socialism and science are all discussed. But it is not until the last few chapters of the novel that utopia is established, and details regarding the utopian society are emphasised.

Despite the fact that *Childhood's End* primarily focuses on a utopian order, as it is observed, the novel's plotline is filled with uncertainty because of the Overlords' prolonged concealment of their appearance and their mild dominance over mankind. Some of humanity's freedoms are restricted as a result of the Overlords' domination. Gradually, as technology advances, the utopian system that the Overlords have envisioned for humanity expands, but people continue to doubt their rulers' power and their motives for ruling them because they are unable to see them physically. The Overlords then reveal their bodily appearance. Paradoxically, the Overlords' resemblance to the devil, a symbol of evil, is ironic given that they approach humanity

with reason and intelligence and offer them the opportunity to advance, in contrast to evil. The Overlords create a World State by eradicating international borders. They also eliminate racial and religious beliefs that cause discrimination. However, they have encountered resistance from the moment they arrived by Freedom League and similar groupings. With demonstrations and press coverage, they also remind humanity of the Overlords' dominance. Although an ideal society is desired, limitations and challenges have forced humans to pursue other goals. Instances for this include the colony established in New Athens and Jan Rodrick's illegal escape from Earth. People take on such mindsets as a result of their dissatisfaction. Eventually, boredom appears to be the unavoidable fate of all utopias. In New Athens, individuals construct a new utopia, rejecting any opportunities brought by the Overlords. The narrative comes to a disastrous end since this phenomenon, which only affects children, predicts the end of the human race. Once the preceding elements are considered, it is obvious that *Childhood's End* cannot represent a pure utopia.

To conclude, by analysing these two novels, this study has illustrated that literary works influence people's lives both at the time they were written and after. Considering that it may be dangerous to talk about the problems of the period in which they live, the authors express their thoughts by employing the concept of utopia, which is a more suitable setting, in their works. Utopia as a genre is effective in portraying the social structure and institutions present in a certain society. Therefore, *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End* both feature this characteristic. Considering the period in which these works were written, the authors are actually under the influence of the negativities of their period. Since this pessimism is reflected in the works, it is seen that utopia cannot be mentioned as a pure concept. As a result, *In the Days of the Comet* and *Childhood's End* both make use of the notion of utopia to highlight the bleak conditions of the society in which they were written. As can be seen, while *In the Days of the Comet* views it as focusing on a more constrained area and highlighting the chaotic climate in the Victorian era, this condition is seen in *Childhood's End* to encompass a greater territory, in other words, all humanity. *Childhood's End's* greater pessimism can be attributed, in part, to the fact that it was written following the two major world wars. As a result, the novel's feelings of uncertainty and pessimism are reflected in a way that have an impact on all of humanity. However, the time in which *In the Days of the Comet* was written has not witnessed such devastating wars. This

means that compared to *In the Days of the Comet*, *Childhood's End* is far more pessimistic. The novels exhibit traces of the eras in which they were written, creating a deep connection and raising awareness between the reader and the period in numerous ways.

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TURNITIN REPORT

(Im)possibility of a Utopian World In the Days of the Comet by H. G. Wells and Childhood's End by Arthur C. Clarke

ORIJINALLIK RAPORU

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