
This is the **published version** of the bachelor thesis:

Hernández Ucero, Sandra; Martín Alegre, Sara, dir. (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Departament de Filologia Anglesa i de Germanística.). Victimization and Guilt as Two Sides of the Same Coin : Andrew 'Ender' Wiggin's Duality in Ender's Game. 2016. 24 pag. (801 Grau en Estudis Anglesos)

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/169515>

under the terms of the  license

**Victimization and Guilt as Two Sides of the Same
Coin: Andrew ‘Ender’ Wiggin’s Duality in *Ender’s
Game***

Treball de Fi de Grau

Grau en Estudis Anglesos

Supervisor: Dr Sara Martín Alegre

Sandra Hernández Ucero

June 2016

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
I. Introduction: The <i>Enderverse</i>	3
II. Socio-political Context and Andrew ‘Ender’ Wiggin.....	5
II.1. Socio-political Context.....	5
II.2. Andrew ‘Ender’ Wiggin.....	6
III. Ender’s Victimization.....	7
IV. Ender’s Guilt.....	13
V. Conclusions.....	18
Bibliography.....	20

Abstract

Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game* follows the journey of six-year-old Ender Wiggin, a gifted child in his way to be trained as a commander, and ultimately to become the next hero of mankind. His mission is to be ready to defeat the threatening and seemingly imminent Formics' Third Invasion, an enemy alien species. This dissertation is meant to explore the nature of the child soldier, a figure embodied by Ender, who has always been considered by the readership as an innocent child, a victim caught in a web of lies and manipulation. The aim of the present dissertation is to argue that not only is Ender a victim in the hands of the officers who run the military premises where he is been trained, but also that he bears certain responsibility for what he does during his stay in the training programme. Thus, Ender cannot be placed solely under one of the two mutually exclusive categories. On the contrary, Ender belongs at the same time to the two categories, therefore enabling Ender to be the victim and the victimizer.

Key Words: Science Fiction, Child Soldier, Childhood, Guilt, Victimization

I. Introduction: The *Enderverse*

Ender's Game, published in 1986, is the first novel in the *Ender* series written by Orson Scott Card, a series of books widely acclaimed in the science fiction literary world. A winner of a Nebula and Hugo awards in the years 1985 and 1986, respectively, *Ender's Game* was originally a short story published in 1977 in the August issue of *Analog* magazine. The short story, which is considered the foundation of the series, was later expanded and made into a novel.

Set in the 22nd century, the novel presents a world at war with an alien species, which look insect-like, called the Formics, also referred to with the pejorative term *Buggers*. Humans have already experienced two previous Formic invasions: the First Formic Invasion had the aim of simply exploring the Solar System; the Second Invasion was meant to colonize the Earth. It was during the latter invasion, in the year 2080, that the hero Mazer Rackham, led humanity to a great victory against the alien species.

Around 90 years after this devastating Second Invasion, the world is desperately looking for new soldiers – and for another great Mazer Rackham –, who could lead again Earth to victory when facing the seemingly imminent Third Formic Invasion. That is why the US military are drafting brilliant children who have been monitored since their birth so as to ensure their talent is blooming. These children, according to their skills and potential role in a future war, are sent into orbiting schools where they are trained for war from early childhood.

Andrew 'Ender' Wiggin is one of these gifted children. Aged only six, he is sent to Battle School to be taught academic subjects as well as military strategy and tactics. Yet, this is not the only academic focus at Battle School. Children are placed into different squadrons, mirroring the hierarchical structure of a combat unit in an army,

and made to play mock combats in zero gravity chambers. Military officials are in charge of the children, and Ender's mentor is Colonel Graff, who incessantly pushes him to his limits in terms of coexistence with his peers as well as in his very own military learning process, so as to make sure Ender becomes a true commander. They are also introduced to videogames, such as *The Giant's Game*, through which their psychological training is provided, as the games are manipulated to respond to the needs and personality of each child.

The aim of this dissertation is to discuss the representation of childhood in Card's novel, more specifically the representation of children as victims and victimizers, embodied in Ender himself. Brophy states that:

A commonsense interpretation, [...] has Ender as an innocent child, manipulated by the big, bad military into doing its dirty work. Certainly, [...] it's easy to see a child as an innocent pawn. Yet Ender may not be as innocent as we might think. [...] Ender allows himself to be deceived – that he lets himself be used as a weapon to save humanity. (Brophy, 2013: 74)

This begs the question of who Ender really is. *Two* Enders, hence, will be presented. I will argue here the idea that Ender himself is both at the same time: a defenseless victim in the hands of his adult mentors, as well as a guilty commander who bears at least certain responsibility for what happens to the Formics and for their extermination.

This dissertation will be divided into three sections. Firstly, I will present briefly the sociopolitical context in which the novel is set and I will introduce to the reader Ender in detail, since the present dissertation revolves around him. Secondly, I will deal with Ender's victimization, since he is the ultimate victim in the novel, the innocent child used to meet the adults' expectations, and in charge of doing the adults' dirty job. Thirdly, I will deal with Ender's feelings of guilt for the acts he commits during his stay in the military training compound. Despite Ender's mistreatment, he bears certain

responsibility in what he does throughout the novel, including the *xenocide* of the Formics. He eventually becomes a ‘willing tool’, and he allows the officers to use him in order to put an end to the war against the Formics.

II. Socio-political Context and Andrew ‘Ender’ Wiggin

II.1. Socio-political Context

Before carrying out the analysis regarding the figure of Ender, it is important for the reader to learn in detail two relevant issues regarding the novel. The first aspect has to do with the sociopolitical context in which the short story, and later the novel, was written. The second important issue is to present to the reader who Ender is.

The date of publication of the short story and the novel can be considered pertinent when placing Ender’s story within a sociopolitical context; and the historical circumstances we are referring to are those of the Cold War. The original short story was published in 1977, and the novel was published in 1986, only three years before the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall in Europe and the later dismemberment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Therefore, it should not surprise that these circumstances permeated the plot of the novel. The world of Ender is divided into two factions, much like our world after Second World War: on the one hand the League headed by the United States, on the other the Second Warsaw Pact headed by Russia. These factions have set aside their political differences to remain united and join forces, under American hegemony, for the sake of winning the next war against the Formics.

This world division becomes evident with Ender’s siblings, Peter and Valentine. Peter’s psychopathological tendency and delusions of grandeur push him to suggest that Valentine and he create two *alter egos*, one for each of them, and write op-eds on the

net “to insert ideas into the public mind” (*Ender’s Game*, 128)¹. The reason behind this is that Peter has tracked down for the last three months the movements of the Russian troops, and he states that “they’re getting ready for war” (*EG*, 125). Peter later explains “either they’ve found out the buggers aren’t a threat after all, or we’re about to have a big battle. One way or another, the bugger war is about to be over. They’re getting ready for after the war” (*EG*, 126). It is clearly deducible from this passage that the world of Ender is, roughly speaking, nothing else but an imitation of the political arena of its contemporary Cold War world in the years between the publications of the short story and the novel.

II.2. Andrew ‘Ender’ Wiggin

The second important aspect, as mentioned above, is to know in detail who Ender is. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Andrew ‘Ender’ Wiggin is one of the gifted children chosen to be prepared for war, as well as the protagonist of the novel. Nonetheless, the reader should be aware that the representation of the talented children in the novel, who range from six to fourteen years old, is not accurate. In other words, the children portrayed become adult-like children: their reactions to the events that surround them and their thoughts are not those an adult would expect from a child. They simply lack naïveté. As Peter states: “[...] we don’t *think* like other children, [...]. We don’t *talk* like other children” (*EG*, 127). One may think that these children do not act according to what is expected from them and to their age because they are brilliant minds. Apparently, this is what would make them less of a child, and more of an adult. After all, they are at the military training compound because they are excellent. Ender is

¹ I’m quoting from Orson S. Card, *Ender’s Game*. New York: Tor Books, 1994. Henceforth the initials EG will be used in the quotations.

no exception. Even though he is introduced at the age of six, it is very difficult to claim that he acts as the child he is supposed to be.

However, I consider that three essential characteristics should be mentioned when describing Ender: his condition as a third son, his predestination, as well as his nickname. Ewing states about Ender that:

[he is] the youngest in a family of child geniuses. His older siblings, Peter and Valentine, had also been tested for Battle School. In a future when families are ordinarily kept to two children, and 'Thirds' are normally neither allowed nor respected, Andrew was allowed to be born because Peter was a vicious, heartless genius, while Valentine had exercised too much empathy. (Ewing, 2013: 32)

It is clear then that Ender was not born to be an ordinary child. Ender explains that his birth "was the government's idea, they were the ones who authorized it" (*EG*, 5). This is the only reason why he is alive. He indeed proves to be the only balanced sibling in the family with a perfect combination of ruthlessness and empathy, as Coronel Graff, who is in charge of selecting the children, explains: "[...] I tell you he's the one. Or at least as close as we're going to get" (*EG*, 1). His fate seems already written, despite his own aspirations and needs. Even his nickname, coined by Valentine due to her mispronunciation of her brother's name, is used by other and by Ender himself throughout the novel and can be considered as an integral part of the child's personality and fate, since it has a powerful meaning. As Mick, one of his peers at Battle School states: "Ender. Finisher" (*EG*, 42). These lines, then, show clearly that Ender is not only the last child in the family, but also that he has been burdened with the responsibility of putting an end to the Formics even before he is born.

III. Ender's Victimization

Ender is indeed a victim of the system he is born in, and feeling sympathy towards him is easy. Since the publication of the novel, the readership has been prone to portray the

protagonist of the novel as the victim. This is because of the many unbearable situations he is put through by the high ranks at Battle School, as well as because the alien species, who happen to die massacred by Ender himself, do not hold the child responsible for what he has done. It is certainly logical to sympathise with Ender considering, as I show here, diverse episodes in his victimization.

First of all, when Ender is introduced he is only a six-year-old boy, a child, and as Kessel describes accurately, a child is “our ultimate icon of vulnerability” (Kessel, 2004). The ethical and democratic standards of the Western world do not conceive the idea that a government would place their children in the middle of a war. Yet, this is what the League and the Second Warsaw Pact do. Moreover, Card, to paraphrase Kessel’s (2004) words again, subjects Ender to a continuous, and abusive torment. Ender is tortured by being pushed into extreme situations, both psychologically and physically, he is made to do things he does not agree with, the truth is concealed from him always, or if told at all, it is only half a truth. These mechanisms are used by Card to help the reader connect immediately with Ender, thus provoking sympathy from the readers towards Ender, as well as disdain for the officers who control the training program.

Ender’s very birth and presence is always considered unnatural by everybody surrounding him, with the only exception of his older sister Valentine. His older brother, Peter, always shows contempt towards him, and threatens to kill him without hesitation, and his parents feel a total disregard for him. He is bullied by his own peers at school as well as at Battle School, and he is even assaulted physically when he is most vulnerable by two of his colleagues. All of what has been mentioned above happens only because he is the third child, an anomaly in a possibly overpopulated world in which regulations are made to ensure the birth of only two children per couple.

He was *made* and *allowed* to be born with the only hope that he would contain the exact amount of both, Peter's ruthlessness and Valentine's compassion. Since he does, he is used with one purpose only, regardless of his own opinions. Stilson, one of Ender's bullies, states in few words how the world feels towards thirds: "We're *people*, not *Thirds*, turd face" (*EG*, 7). Ender, in short, is not considered a person; he is not entitled to be treated fairly and with dignity simply because he is the third son of a couple, an outcast.

Coronel Graff and the other officials at Battle School also play the game of inciting hatred towards him in his peers. Ender is resented by others, not only because he is a third, but also because of jealousy. Ender is superior to them in skills and intellect, he is simply brilliant. Our protagonist becomes aware of the situation at the moment he boards the spaceship that will take him to Battle School. He is singled out as the only potential commander among the children. Ender explains that "Graff had deliberately caused it. [...] when the officer prefers you, the others hate you" (*EG*, 32). Innocently thinking that Graff had never lied to him before, the coronel bluntly explains to Ender that his job is not to make friends with the children, but "to produce the best soldiers in the world" (*EG*, 34). This means that Ender should not expect any compassion or help from the adults; they will only train him as a soldier, as well as a potential commander. The figure of Coronel Graff as an adult protector who has been honest with Ender dilutes at that moment. Graff himself explains to other officers that Ender can have friends, but not parents, and as Kessel (2004) states, these 'parents' Graff refers to are not Ender's biological parents, but any adult figure that might act protectively towards Ender. Graff is not willing to help Ender; his duty is to isolate the boy, since he believes that only under such circumstances will the boy improve his skills and imagination as a future leader.

When finally Ender gets promoted, and made a commander of the Dragon Squadron, he is put under extreme pressure. Graff explains to Ender that he should work harder than anyone else in the school, since the officers have “no intention of letting you [Ender] dominate unfairly” (*EG*, 157). Graff’s words are taken literally. The squadron is dragged into a frantic pace of battle simulations: the amateur team starts by playing one game at a day, the ordinary schedule at Battle School, but the number of battles, as well as the number of opponents in each battle, increases dramatically. All these tests, programmed without taking Ender into consideration, nor any other children in the squadron, are aimed at making out of Ender a true leader, or as Timm explains “[to] instruct Ender in the nuts and bolts of strategy and leadership. He had to be taught to discipline himself to think and behave like a soldier” (Timm, 2013: 41), all of this in spite of the fact that these tests might almost break Ender physiologically and physically.

It is important to mention that one of Ender’s most horrifying fears is that he may become one day like Peter. He is similar to his brother in some respects. For instance, since the beginning of the novel Ender is able of resorting to, and committing acts of violence. Yet, the motivations behind each child are different: Ender uses violence when he feels threatened, whereas Peter enjoys violence and fear. However, Ender’s level of violence increases exponentially throughout the novel, and the protagonist hates himself for being and acting just like Peter. Brophy states that: “Ender’s [...] triumphing over his enemies always leads him to self-deception about the murderous consequences of his actions. Yet these incidents still haunt him” (Brophy, 2013: 75). Ender hates the fact that he is able to inflict pain onto others, but he is never knowledgeable of the consequences of his beatings. Actually, Ender is responsible for having killed two boys, but their deaths are kept as a secret until the very last chapters.

This secrecy may be because the officers at Battle School realize how sensitive Ender is, and by concealing the final outcome of the incidents Ender is “shield[ed] [...] from the psychological trauma of war, which would otherwise debilitate him” (Brophy, 2013: 75). Kessel (2004) also explains that the mechanism used by Orson S. Card, that is avoiding disclosing the deaths, is useful so as to prevent the reader from making moral judgements about what Ender has done. This inevitably works: by not telling the truth to Ender, he is never aware of the damage he has caused. Explaining to him that his beatings have killed two boys may be a deterrent for any further action Ender needs to take, such as fighting the Formics.

Brophy argues that in order to be responsible for someone’s actions, one should be “free, rational, and informed about what she’s doing” (Brophy, 2013: 71). Ender only satisfies the first two conditions. He is indeed a free child, because when given the option of being part of the programme, he willingly accepts doing so; and he is a rational, sensible, and intelligent child, who always acts according to the information others have made available to him. That is why Ender should be given the benefit of doubt, and he should not be accounted responsible for the destruction of the Formics’ home planet, or any human or alien casualty. Schwab asks a relevant question, which he himself answers:

Is Ender innocent [...] when [he] orders the starships and fighters to aim the Little Doctor on the Buggers home planet [...]? [...] In the strictest sense we’d have to say, yes, he is innocent. He appears unaware that he orders the destruction of the Bugger home planet, and there’s a substantial difference between *hypothetically* wiping out a planet and *knowingly* wiping out a planet. (Schwab, 2013: 233)

One could think that Ender would have never killed or committed mass murder had he been informed and made aware of the likely consequences of his acts. The lies and the lack of information are the ones that finally push Ender to commit *xenocide*. As a side

note, it is relevant, for the sake of this dissertation, to point out at the term *xenocide* since it refers to the “deliberate and systematic extermination of an animal, plant or nonhuman extra-terrestrial species” (Martín, 2014: 156)². In Ender’s case, the term alludes to the extermination of the Formics who threaten the Earth. Precisely, this last event in the novel, the final annihilation of the alien species, convinces the reader that Ender is the ultimate victim in the novel. It might look as a macabre joke that a child that has committed mass murder is considered a victim, but he is. He never knew that he was killing aliens, as well as humans, while playing the simulations. He was told, and he always thought so, that the simulations were games. Brophy explains that using games in warfare is not uncommon, and their usage has a purpose, that is:

[by] placing individuals in what they see as a game neutralizes their sense of moral agency. People begin to view themselves and others as mere players of a game in which rules of objective morality don’t apply. This [...] can make someone more capable of torturing, and killing without feeling morally responsible. (Brophy, 2013: 71)

In other words, Ender can kill without feeling the burden of responsibility; since he believes that what he does in the game have no effects in real life. He commands his colleagues in every battle while thinking that the officers are only testing his skills as a leader, that the starships he is sending against the enemy are not piloted by human beings, and that the alien spaceships are mere graphic designs; he genuinely thinks that a computer is controlling and generating each battle. It is during the final battle when Ender, out of rebellion, breaks the laws of the game by using the Little Doctor Device, thus resulting in deadly and irrevocable consequences: the destruction the Formics and their planet. He thinks that by using the device the officers would have to think twice

² B. A. Freitas Jr’s article “Illegal Aliens” (1983) first introduced the word. Martín Alegre, Sara. “Facing Xenocidal Guilt: Atypical Masculinity in Orson Scott Card’s Ender’s Saga.” *Alternative Masculinities for a Changing World*, Àngels Carabí & Josep Maria Armengol (eds.). New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014. 145-157.

about their choice of Ender being the new International Fleet³ commander. He hopes that the officers realize that he is nothing else but a copy of Peter, a child without a mercy. Therefore, for Ender, this would mean his end in the training facilities, and the war would be over for him. Only when the battle is over is the truth revealed to Ender: by breaking the laws of warfare, and therefore doing what the officers really wanted him to do, our protagonist puts an end to an entire alien species without being aware of it.

The last confirmation the reader needs to call Ender a victim is when our protagonist finds the Formics' chrysalis, and accepts the Formics' mission; he will have then to take the pupa larvae and set in a journey to find the right planet for the new Formic queen to rebirth. Despite the fact that he has massacred the Formics, it is the alien species who decide to choose Ender as their saviour. The weight of the extermination falls onto Ender's shoulders, yet he never shirks his responsibilities. Ender says he has found "the answer," (*EG*, 321) to purge his sins. This altruistic and unselfish act is what convinces the readers that Ender is good at heart, and that he never meant to hurt anyone, least destroy an entire species.

IV. Ender's Guilt

Yet, despite his apparent innocence, Ender bears indeed certain responsibility for what he does. No full responsibility can be assigned to Ender; after all, he was never the one in charge of running the training programme in order to defeat the Formics. Yet Belluomini (2013) explains that Ender has always been an active participant in the training programme, and he always knew the reason why he had been chosen for. He becomes a 'willing tool', and he never "stands up to stop" his training (Belluomini,

³ The International Fleet, or the I.F. in short, is the organisation created by the world governments in order to represent a united front against the Formics. The organization is in charge of choosing and training the children who will defeat the Formics.

2013: 148). As mentioned before, Ender is seen by many readers as the ultimate iconic victim, but there are several instances in which one is surprised to find that some of Ender's horrible acts "indicate he intends to carry out precisely those acts" (Belluomini, 2013:147). Here I intend to present several of those instances and argue that Ender is partly guilty as well as a victim.

The very first scene in the novel in which Ender is introduced, he is ganged up on by a group of classmates who aim at beating Ender because he is a brilliant third child; also, because the International Fleet seems no longer interested in him. This is a recurring circumstance used to victimize Ender, as I have argued before: he is alone and defenceless, and he alone should be the one in charge of facing and resolving the threat. Yet, Ender does not allow himself to be intimidated and attacks Stilson, one of the boys in the group. He finally wins Stilson, and what continues afterwards can only be defined as disturbing:

They were wondering if he was dead. Ender, however, was trying to figure out a way to forestall vengeance. To keep them from taking him in a pack tomorrow, I have to win this now, and for all time, or I'll fight it every day and it will get worse and worse.

Ender knew the unspoken rules of manly warfare, even though he was only six. It was forbidden to strike the opponent who lay helpless on the ground; only an animal would do that.

So Ender walked to Stilson's supine body and kicked him again, viciously, in the ribs. Stilson groaned and rolled away from him. Ender walked around him and kicked him again, in the crotch. [...]

Then Ender looked at the others coldly. [...] "But just remember what I do to people who try to hurt me. [...] He kicked Stilson in the face. [...] "It wouldn't be this bad," Ender said. "It would be worse." (*EG*, 7-8)

Ender knows he has already won the fight, but he aims at taking vengeance, and actually ends up killing Stilson due to the beating; as if it was not enough, he threatens the others with an even worse beating if they dare to bully him again. Similar to the

events taking place at the beginning of the novel, Ender ends up beating up and killing again another boy, this time Bonzo Madrid at Battle School. After both incidents, Ender cries and feels sorry for the boys and regrets having inflicted pain onto others. Ender is portrayed then as a child who never intended to hurt, and who was just acting in self-defence. Yet, violence cannot be entirely justified. Even though Ender explains that he never wanted to hurt or kill anyone, he uses excessive violence so as to harm others enough so that other children would never dare threatening him again. He even admits that he knows that men should not beat others if they are on the ground defenceless, this is a warfare rule. However, he beats others on the ground, he needs to take vengeance and make sure others will fear him. If Ender had never really meant to hurt others so badly, he could have simply kicked his bullies enough so that he could escape, yet he does not.

Ender can also be accounted partly responsible for the mass murder of the Formics. As I have argued before, he destroys the Formics' planet because he thinks that what he is doing is nothing more than playing a computer simulation. He is tricked into killing the Formics, and when he learns the truth he is horrified: "I didn't want to kill them all. I didn't want to kill anybody! I'm not a killer! [...] but you made me do it, you tricked me into it" (*EG*, 297-8). Are those statements enough for Ender? It is true, he was made do it, yet he had years before accepted being in the mission that would fight the alien species. He had been preparing for the day in which he would have to kill the Formics, and he had accepted Graff's proposal to join him and try to stop the Formics' attack. He could have simply said 'no', and continue living, a more than probably miserable life, on Earth. Yet, he accepts the proposal and sacrifices himself and his childhood for the sake of saving humanity, despite the fact that the honourable duty of saving humanity might also mean the end of the Formics. By accepting the

proposal he becomes a combatant, a commander, and Schwab explains that “his role renders irrelevant his ignorance about what he does; it only matters that he is an essential part of the war effort” (Schwab, 2013: 232). Indeed his ignorance does not matter anymore; we might say that he is not ignorant from that moment onwards of the reasons why he has been chosen. He does know that at some point in the future he would probably be in charge of defeating the alien species. At some point in the novel, when Ender is being taken to planet Eros, where the final stages of his training will take place, Graff tells the protagonist that if one of the two species fighting, whether humankind or the Formics, has to be destroyed, then:

[...] let's make damn sure we're the ones alive at the end. Individuals might be bred to sacrifice themselves, but the race as a whole can never decide to cease to exist. So if we can we'll kill every last one of the buggers, and if they can they'll kill every last one of us. (*EG*, 253)

It is clear, then, that the only possible way of ending the war is by one of the two species annihilating the other. Ender is being told for the first time how the war he is probably going to lead will take place. Ender declares then: “I'm in favour of surviving” (*EG*, 253), and Graff answers: “That's why you're here” (*EG*, 253). During this exchange, it is clear that Ender aims at finishing the war by defeating the Formics. He not only wants humanity to survive, but also he himself wants to survive; and the only way of doing so is through winning the war. Moreover, Graff admits that since the objective of the conflict is to make humankind win over another species, this is the reason why Ender was chosen, as well as the reason why he is traveling to planet Eros to continue his training.

But before this conversation takes place, Ender actually becomes aware earlier on in the novel of what Graff and the officers want from him: to make him a good commander, a leader. However, he knows that so far he has been lied to, and that the

truth is not being entirely told. There is a key moment in the novel when Ender's suspicions are verbalized by Dink, one of Ender's peers at Battle School. The boy explains that:

It's the teachers, they're the enemy. They get us to fight each other, to hate each other. The game is everything. Win win win. It amount to nothing. We kill ourselves, go crazy trying to beat each other, and all the time the old bastards are watching us, studying us, discovering our weak points, deciding whether we're *good enough* or not. Well, good enough for what? [...] They decided I was right for the program, but nobody ever asked me if the program was right for me. (EG, 108)

Dink also explains to Ender that children are not supposed to do what they are doing at Battle School, that children do not have to "be in armies, [be] commanders, they don't rule over forty other kids, it's more than anybody can take and not get crazy" (EG, 108). After the conversation, and the verbal realization of what Battle School is and what the officers are doing, Ender decides not to do anything, he does not put an end to his situation. One might think it is because of what Dink later confesses: "I can't give up the game. [...] I love this" (EG, 108).

Once it is obvious to Ender what Graff and the officers want, not only because he is aware of the situations he is made gone through and after hearing it from another peer, but also by the explicit remarks Graff makes when dealing with Ender, our protagonist vows not to be misguided anymore. He does not intend to fall into the web of lies, and decides that he will do what he sees fit: "I'll become exactly the tool you want me to be, said Ender silently, but at last I won't be fooled into it. I'll do it because I choose to, not because you tricked me" (EG, 252), yet, this is precisely what triggers the destruction of the Formics and their home planet. During the final battle, Ender does what he considers should be done because "If I break this rule, they'll never let me be a commander. It would be too dangerous. I'll never have to play a game again. And that is victory" (EG, 293). After having committed *xenocide*, Ender seems not to understand

why the many officers present during the ‘game simulation’ are so happy. Yet, Brophy explains that: “Ender’s confusion after the final battle smells suspicious” (Brophy, 2013: 76). It certainly does. After all, he is supposed to be the one in charge of understanding the enemy better than anyone else. He himself declares to Valentine that he is able to understand the enemy well. Ender explains that “In this moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand him well enough to defeat him, [...] I *destroy* them. I make it impossible for them to ever hurt me again. I grind them and grind them until they don’t *exist*” (EG, 238). If it was clear to Ender that the enemies were the officers, how come Ender had finally ended up deceived, precisely by the officers themselves, during the final battle? Brophy claims that “the only plausible explanation is that he allowed himself to be [...] used as a weapon to save humanity” (Brophy, 2013: 76). He, truthfully, never expected the simulations to be real or the final battle against the alien species to be disputed as if it was a game. Still, he knew for sure that he would have to face the Formics’ threat at some point, and he knew he had to be the one fighting them in order to save humankind. Then, one must understand that Ender never said ‘no’ to the authorities, or even questioned their commands because he knew that the future of mankind was his responsibility, and the only possible solution that could allow humans to continue living was that of annihilating the Formics.

V. Conclusions

In order to bring this dissertation to an end, I consider it necessary to mention that the novel Card wrote, from the writer’s point of view, can have two possible readings. The novel can be read as a story with all the necessary ingredients to make it a page-turner and entertaining science fiction novel, both for an experienced SF readership as well as for an amateur one. It has aliens, spaceships, war, brilliant characters, and an unexpected plot twist. Yet, there exists the possibility of a deeper reading, one that

results in very thought-provoking questions about human nature, especially that of children, and about ‘the good war’. So far the readers might have found this dissertation rather paradoxical, since the same character is presented as both a victim, and as a victimizer. As Martín states, after all “most readers value positively Ender’s overwhelming guilt and his efforts to ensure the Formics’ rebirth. Others read Card’s story as a cynical apology for genocide and Ender himself as a monster” (Martín, 2014: 146).

Precisely here lies the virtue of the novel as well as, I might dare to say, the essence of Ender. According to the argumentation presented in the previous pages, it is extremely difficult to place Ender in only one side of the spectrum. Few people can claim being only the victim or only the victimizer. No well-developed character should entirely be good or evil. The world is made of lights and shadows, and so are people. That is, Ender cannot be only good or evil; Ender is, and has to be, both at the same time. Card writes once and again that Ender is good at heart, that he is clean. Indeed he is. But these facts do not imply that Ender acts always well, which is acceptable since all people make mistakes. Despite that fact, he understands his wrongdoings and decides to counterbalance it in the only possible way Ender has, that is, by helping the only surviving chrysalis, as a way of confirming that every cloud has a silver lining.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Card, Orson S. *Ender's Game*. New York: Tor Books, 1994.

Secondary Sources

Belluomini, L. ““I Destroy Them”: Ender, Good Intentions, and Moral Responsibility”.

In Decker, K. S. (ed.), *Ender's Game and Philosophy: The Logic Gate is Down*.

Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013. 139-150.

Brophy, M. “War Games as a Child's Play”. In Decker, K. S. (ed.), *Ender's Game and*

Philosophy: The Logic Gate is Down. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013. 66-77.

Day, Sara K. “Liars and Cheats: Crossing the Lines of Childhood, Adulthood, and

Morality in Ender's Game”. *English Studies in Canada*, 38.3-4, 2012: 207-225.

Decker, K. S. (ed.), *Ender's Game and Philosophy: The Logic Gate is Down*. Oxford:

Wiley Blackwell, 2013.

Doyle, C. “Orson Scott Card's Ender and Bean: The Exceptional Child as Hero”.

Children's Literature in Education, 35.4, December 2004: 301-318.

Ewing, J. “Xenocide's Paradox: The Virtue of Being Ender”. In Decker, K. S. (ed.),

Ender's Game and Philosophy: The Logic Gate is Down. Oxford: Wiley

Blackwell, 2013. 32-40.

Gross, M. “Prisoners of Childhood? Child Abuse and the Development of Heroes and

Monsters in *Ender's Game*”. *Children's Literature in Education*, 38, June 2007:

115-126.

Kessel, J. "Creating the Innocent Killer: Ender's Game, Intention, and Morality".

<http://johnjosephkessel.wix.com/kessel-website#!creating-the-innocent-killer/ce5s> , (Accessed 7th February 2016)

Martín Alegre, S. "Facing Xenocidal Guilt: Atypical Masculinity in Orson Scott Card's Ender's Saga." *Alternative Masculinities for a Changing World*, Carabí, A. and Armengol J. M. (eds.). New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014: 145-157.

Schwab, A. P. "Killing Children". In Wittkower, D.E. and Rush, L. (eds.) *Ender's Game and Philosophy: Genocide is Child's Play*. Chicago: Open Court Books, 2013. 231-239.

Singer, P. W. "Caution: Children at War". *Parameters*. Winter 2001-2002: 156-172.

Sorensen K. and Sorensen T. "Is Ender a Murderer?". In Wittkower, D.E. and Rush, L. (eds.) *Ender's Game and Philosophy: Genocide is Child's Play*. Chicago: Open Court Books, 2013. 223-230.

Timm, C. W. "Constructing the Identity of a Space Commander." In Decker, K. S. (ed.), *Ender's Game and Philosophy: The Logic Gate is Down*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013. 41-52.

Wittkower, D.E. and Rush, L. (eds.), *Ender's Game and Philosophy: Genocide is Child's Play*. Chicago: Open Court Books, 2013.