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Analysis of American Exceptionalism and Cultural Imperialism through Starvin' Marvin in Space Series

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A B S T R A C T

Satirical animation can entertain and also shape ideas about power and race, South Park is a popular example in America. However, studies on South Park mostly focus on its criticism of America domestic issues and do not explain how Starvin' Marvin in Space shows American exceptionalism growing into cultural imperialism. This study analyses Starvin' Marvin in Space (Season 3, Episode 13) to fill that gap. Edward Said's Orientalism is used as the main theory, while John Winthrop's City upon a Hill supports the idea of American moral superiority. A qualitative descriptive method examines selected scenes through visuals, dialogue, character actions, and narrative structure. The findings show America as "Us" through Sister Hollis's mission and her claim that English is "God's language," while famine imagery makes Africa and Marvin "the Other." The CIA's takeover of Marvin's spaceship adds power domination. The study concludes that the episode criticizes American arrogance through satire, despite this still repeats colonial stereotypes.

Keywords: *American Exceptionalism, Cultural Imperialism, South Park, Postcolonialism, Western Gaze*

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INTRODUCTION

Satirical animation is a type of animation that uses humor, irony, and overstatement to give criticism about social, political, or cultural problems (Maritato, 2011). Unlike normal animation, which is made mainly for fun, satirical animation wants the audience to think about real problems. It often talks about hard topics, such as government rules, inequality, religion, and racism. These topics are shown in a funny or overstated way, so the audience can see the deeper meaning (Wells, 1998). This kind of animation helps creators share big ideas in a simple and entertaining way. Popular cartoon like South Park and The Simpsons are examples of satirical animation. They use simple pictures but give strong social messages. In this way, they make serious problems easier to follow while still asking doubt about society and behavior (Reeves, 2011).

South Park is an American animated television series created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone in 1997. It's different from other popular American animated series, such as The Simpsons and Family Guy. The show is known for its simple and rough style. The characters look like cut-out paper, and the 2D animation is made simple on purpose. This simple design is very different from the strong and sharp content. The series often gives social and political messages. (Komsa, 2018) explain that south park is created by American writers Trey Parker and Matt Stone, South Park was designed as an animated satire that responds to sociopolitical issues, primarily critiquing American society its institutions, moral claims, and cultural contradictions through exaggeration and deliberately offensive humor, and even when it addresses global topics, the narrative usually frames them through an American lens so that international conflicts and inequalities still function as reflections of U.S. power and ideology. It show in Starvin' Marvin in Space (1999) which satirizes American interventionism by

depicting Africa through stereotypes of poverty and dependency while presenting the U.S. as a moral savior.

Since its release, South Park has become a global popular culture phenomenon (Wilson, 2020). Even though it is often controversial because of vulgar humor and sensitive topics, the series has viewers from many countries and age groups, including children, teenagers, and adults (Nixon, 1999). The mix of satire, comedy, and social critique makes it special among other American animated series. Digital platforms, such as streaming services, YouTube, and internet memes, also help the show reach many people worldwide. These platforms let audiences join with the show in new ways, not only by watching but also by making and sharing content about the series.

Among its episodes, Starvin' Marvin in Space (1999) is an important. These episodes use satire to show big global problems. They show the famine in Ethiopia and compare it with the big consumption and wealth in the United States. The difference between the Global North and the Global South is shown in a strong and funny way. These episodes also show American Exceptionalism, where American characters act as if they are morally and culturally better. At the same time, Africa is shown as "the Other" which reflects Cultural Imperialism. With humor, the show criticizes American consumerism and the actions of Western countries in world problems. By mixing comedy with social messages, the Starvin' Marvin episodes show how popular media can give fun but also help people think about humanitarian problems, global inequality, and cultural power. This study uses John Winthrop's concept (Parker, 2013) of City upon a Hill and Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (Said, 1977) as a main theory. These theories help to see how South Park shows American Exceptionalism and Cultural Imperialism through satire, pictures, and stories. Past research mostly looks at South Park satire about American society, politics, and culture. Some research talks about issues like religion, media, and social rules. Other studies look at the show's global fame.

However, not many studies explain how the Starvin' Marvin episodes show both American Exceptionalism and Cultural Imperialism, especially with the famine in Africa and American consumption. Example like In Semiotic Analysis of South Park Cartoon Comedy Season I, (Shadiqi, 2014) studied the first season of South Park, which has 13 episodes, with a focus on semiotic analysis. The researcher used the concept of important sign from Arthur Asa Berger to choose the most important signs in the show, and then analyzed them with Chandler's method, including the three-part code model (social, textual, interpretative). Shadiqi also used Hjemslev's framework to explain meaning at two levels denotation and connotation. From the analysis, 21 important signs were found. These signs were grouped into three main codes: social code (such as social criticism, human rights, racial and ethnic tolerance), textual code (sarcastic humor and characterization), and interpretative code (especially social hypocrisy as the main view in interpreting the signs).

The results of Shadiqi's study show that South Park is not only entertainment but also a text with deep social messages and values. Through the analyzed signs, the series gives criticism about many aspects of society, such as injustice, social hypocrisy, and the importance of tolerance between races and ethnic groups. Even though the language and humor are often rude or sarcastic, this humor becomes an effective way to give moral and social views about cultural reality. The study shows that adult viewers can get ethical and social lessons from the episodes, even if the language and some content are not good for children.

And the study from (Komsa, 2018) studied how South Park uses controversial humor as a tool of social satire to show the habits, ideologies, and ways of thinking in American society. This study includes an analysis of satire values in selected episodes, especially about community issues, homosexuality, and racism. Komsa explains how South Park combines three types of classical satire Horatian (soft and playful satire), Juvenalian (sharper and harder criticism of injustice and hypocrisy), and Menippean (satire about abstract ideas and social thought) to give criticism toward social institutions and norms that people accept without question. Komsa also notes that viewers must have basic knowledge about American institutions and culture in order to understand the irony, satire, and jokes in the dialogues and absurd situations of the series.

From the study, Komsa found that South Park is not only for entertainment but also encourages critical reflection about social reality in the United States. For example, through caricature, exaggeration, and absurd situations, the series shows social hypocrisy such as when people reject stereotypes or prejudice in words, but still keep them in daily actions and how issues of tolerance, discrimination, and equality are put against the belief that American norms are universal. Komsa also points out that the type of satire depends on the target: if the target is a big institution or ideology, then Juvenalian satire is often used if the target is a small mistake or common social behavior that is "silly but normal," then Horatian satire is more common. This study gives a strong theoretical and analytical framework to understand how animated satire can work as cultural criticism inside America. It also provides a base that can be expanded in your research to highlight moral exceptionalism and cultural imperialism, especially when applied to the representation of "the outside" (such as Africa) and global crises.

This study wants to fill that gap. It has two main goals. First, it wants to show how American Exceptionalism is shown in the episodes, with American characters acting as if they are morally and culturally better. Second, it wants to see how Cultural Imperialism is shown in the satire. This is clear in how Africa is made "the Other" and how Western actions are criticized. By this approach, the study hopes to give new insights about how satirical animation can both entertain and share complex ideas. It also shows how American ideologies are represented and questioned in popular culture, especially in the context of global problems and media power.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research approach to analyze the representation of American Exceptionalism and Cultural Imperialism in the episode Starvin' Marvin in Space 1999 (Season 3 Episode 13). Qualitative research as (Creswell et al., 2007) explains allows for a detailed interpretation of cultural, visual, and ideological meanings in media texts. This method is chosen because it helps the researcher explore underlying themes, symbols, and social messages in a descriptive and interpretative way.

The main data for this study is Starvin' Marvin in Space, which provide examples for analysis through visual element, dialogue, character actions, and narrative elements. For the data collection process, the study applies a documentation technique (Sugiyono, 2020). This means the researcher collects information from visual elements (character design, animation style, and setting), textual elements (dialogue and narration), and thematic content American Exceptionalism and Cultural Imperialism. The documentation method is selected because it allows an organized and detailed understanding of how these ideological and cultural elements appear in the episodes.

To analyze the data, this study uses John Winthrop's concept of the "City upon a Hill" (Parker, 2013). Winthrop's idea is considered one of the early roots of American Exceptionalism. In this study, American Exceptionalism refers to the belief that the United States has a unique and superior role compared to other nations. While Winthrop originally described a religious community meant to set a moral example, this idea later developed into a broader political and cultural narrative of a "chosen nation." In modern interpretations, exceptionalist beliefs are often connected to Western identity markers such as whiteness, English dominance, education, and a modern lifestyle which come to be seen as signs of being more advanced. These associations emerged later in history, not directly from Winthrop's original message.

These example of exceptionalist make of Western superiority become the bridge to Said's Orientalism, because they work in the same logic of dividing the world into "Us" and "the Other." Therefore, Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977) is applied as the main theory to explain how America's self image as the chosen and civilized "Us" is strengthened by constructing Africa and other non-Western societies as "the Other," inferior, backward, and dependent. Orientalism helps identify how this binary framing appears in the episode's satire,

visuals, and narrative, and how cultural domination is justified through representation. In short, exceptionalism provides the belief of superiority, while Orientalism explains the process that turns that belief into othering and cultural imperialism.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explains the meaning of the findings from the previous part. The discussion will connect the scenes from Starvin' Marvin in Space with John Winthrop concept (Parker, 2013) and Edward Said Orientalism theory as a main theory. The concept and theory help to understand how American feels there are feel as a chosen to be savior of the world and make African as the others. The analysis focuses on visuals, characters, and dialogues that show how Americans think they are special, chosen, better than others savior. The discussion also explains how culture and religion are used as tools to control or change other people. Each scene is studied to show how these ideas appear through language, action, and character behavior.

Analysis of American Exceptionalism Through Edward Said Orientalism

This sub heading explains the findings of this research and how they show American exceptionalism in Starvin' Marvin in Space (1999). The main theory used is Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977). Orientalism explains how the West often sees non-Western people as weak, poor, and needing guidance, while the West is seen as strong, moral, and civilized. This happens through Othering, which means making a clear difference between "us" and "them." In this episode, the United States is shown as "us," the powerful side, and Africa is shown as "them," the powerless side. Because of this orientalist view, American exceptionalism appears as a savior concept the America characters act like they have a duty to help, teach, and lead Africans, so America is represented as the global savior and Africa as the place that needs saving.

John Winthrop is used only as a supporting concept because his thought is a theological base of American exceptionalism. Winthrop believed that his people were chosen by God, and this "chosen" concept later evolved into the belief that America is special and has a mission to guide others. In the episode, this base helps explain why the US characters feel morally higher and act as saviors. The missionary scene shows the "chosen" feeling in religion, while other scenes show the same savior logic in culture and power. So, Orientalism stays as the main theory to read the episode, and Winthrop's "chosen" concept works only to support where the exceptionalist mindset comes from.

Religious Superiority as Mission to save the World

Figure 1. Sister Hollis come to Afrika for mission work

Sister Hollis : Hello everyone, I am Sister Hollis! I was chosen for my mission work to come here to africa and teach you all about the teachings of jesus.

In Figure 1, Sister Hollis stands in front of the African people. She wears a long black skirt, a clean white shirt, and a small black cross necklace. She has white skin, tidy hair, and she holds the Bible tightly in her hands. Her face looks calm and proud. Around her, the African people look tired, hungry, and weak. This visual contrast already shows power. The white missionary is presented as educated, pure, and holy, while the black Africans are shown as poor and powerless. Through Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977), this scene creates a binary opposition between "us" and "them." The West or America is shown as "us," the civilized and moral side, while Africa appears as "them," the helpless Other who needs

guidance. Because of this, Sister Hollis is framed as a savior figure. The phrase "I was chosen" does not only show faith, it shows moral authority. She speaks as if she has a divine right to lead and correct Africa. In Orientalism, this is part of Othering the West builds its identity as superior by imagining the non-West as dependent and unable to save itself.

This connected to John Winthrop's concept (Parker, 2013) of the City upon a Hill. In his sermon A Model of Christian Charity (1630), Winthrop said, "We shall be as a city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us." His words described how the Puritans believed they were chosen by God to be an example for others. The same concept is reflected in Sister Hollis belief that she must guide and teach those she sees as less developed. It can be suggested that her actions are influenced by the American concept of Mission to Save the World, where being chosen becomes a reason to change others. The concept of being chosen is closely tied to American exceptionalism, cause the word of chosen has evolved being exceptionalism, so America feels as morally superior and responsible for leading others. This belief gives moral justification to spread Western religion and culture. It has been observed that such missions often replace local wisdom with foreign beliefs. Sister Hollis's mission is seen as part of this tradition, where teaching becomes a way to control. It can be argued that her faith is used to maintain Western dominance while appearing as compassion.

According to (Sakupapa, 2023) in Mistakes of Western Christian Missions in Africa and Related Response, Western missions often had hidden goals of power and control. The study states that "missionaries went forth with the idea of changing others, their interaction entailed bids for influence and power." Similarly, Sakupapa explains that mission work should focus on including local voices rather than silencing them. This idea can be connected to the character of Sister Hollis, whose mission repeats the same colonial pattern described in these studies. Her belief in being chosen reflects a continuation of this long history of domination.

Despite this, the phrase "I was chosen" is more than a religious statement. It reflects a historical power structure where faith is used to support control. Through Orientalism, being "chosen" helps the West present itself as the savior, while Africa is placed as the Other who must be guided. John Winthrop's concept is used here as a supporting concept because it is the theological base of American exceptionalism. His belief about a chosen people later developed into the concept that America has a special mission to lead others. In this way, Sister Hollis's mission is shown not only as a spiritual calling, but also as a justification for influence over Africa. Therefore, being "chosen" is seen as a belief that can hide domination under the appearance of faith.

Language and Cultural Superiority

Figure 2. Marvin reading bible with native language

Figure 3. Sister Hollis argue that God language is English

Sister Hollis : Good, now who can read Mark 3:19, How about Marvin?
Marvin : Gu de bi gu du ba (speak in native language)
Sister Hollis : No, Marvin. In god language. English

This scene shows the moment when Sister Hollis asks Marvin to read Mark 3:19 in English. Marvin answers in his native language, "Gu de bi gu du ba," but Sister Hollis quickly corrects him and says, "No, Marvin. In God language… English." this looks like a simple correction, however it gives a strong message about power and value. Sister Hollis does not treat Marvin's language as equal or acceptable for reading the Bible. Instead, she places English above it, as if English is the only proper way to speak to God. Her words suggest that Western language and culture are cleaner, more correct, and closer to divine truth. At the same time, Marvin's native language is pushed into a lower position, as if it is not suitable for religion or knowledge. This makes the act of learning the Bible also become an act of learning Western cultural standards. According to (Cananau, 2024), American exceptionalism is built on a tension between being a unique nation and claiming universal values for the whole world.

Through Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977), this moment shows a clear division between "us" and "the Other." In Orientalism, "us" refers to the West, the side that is seen as educated, civilized, and able to define what is true. "The Other" refers to non-Western people who are often described as less developed and in need of guidance. In this scene, English becomes a symbol of "us," because it is treated not only as a correct language but as the language of God. Marvin's native language becomes a symbol of "the Other," because it is treated as wrong or incomplete. Sister Hollis therefore represents the educated "us" who claims authority over truth. She corrects Marvin with certainty, and her tone shows that the Western way is the only valid way. This fits Said's theory that the West often makes its culture look universal, while non-Western culture is seen as something that must change. The result is a savior hierarchy Marvin must move into English, and into Western meaning, in order to be seen as spiritually correct and "civilized."

This educated "us" position is also supported by John Winthrop's concept (Parker, 2013) as a theological base for American exceptionalism. Winthrop believed that his Puritan community was chosen by God and had a special covenant to carry God's mission in the New World. Because they felt chosen, they also believed their way of life was the best example for others to follow. Over time, this chosen people belief evolved into the concept that America is morally superior and has a duty to guide other nations. In Sister Hollis's case, the same mindset is visible. Her belief that English is "God's language" reflects the feeling that her culture is closest to God and therefore should lead others. In short, the sentence "In God language… English" is not only a religious correction, it is a statement that places the West at the center of truth. The scene shows how a mission that seems holy can also work as cultural domination. By teaching that God speaks through English, Sister Hollis makes the West appear as the educated savior "us," while Africa is framed as the Other that must follow Western standards to reach truth.

Moral Superiority

Figure 4. Sister Hollis angry to Marvin because he leave from class

Sister Hollis :Where are you going, back to your life of sin?! Don't you understand that unless you find Christ, you and all your people are doomed to eternal hellfire?

This scene shows Sister Hollis shout at Marvin after he leaves a Bible lesson. Her face is very tense, her eyes are wide open, her eyebrows look sharp, and her mouth is open as she

shouts. She says, "Where are you going, back to your life of sin?! Don't you understand that unless you find Christ, you and all your people are doomed to eternal hellfire?" The way she speaks shows strong anger and fear. Her words are not only directed at Marvin as a student, but also at "all your people," meaning Africans or the Ethiopia people as a whole. This shows that she is not treating Marvin as an individual with his own choice, but as a symbol of an entire group that she believes is morally wrong. She acts as if she already knows the truth and that Marvin's decision to leave is a sign of big sins. Because of this, her anger becomes a kind of moral weapon. She uses religion to warn, to judge, and to pressure Marvin into obedience. Using Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977), the scene can be read as a clear act of Othering. In Orientalism, the West often builds its identity as the "civilized" and "correct" side by describing non-Western people as the opposite. Sister Hollis represents "us" the West/America, who is shown as civilized, religiously right, and morally superior. Marvin represents "the Other," Africa, who is described through negative labels such as sinful, lost, and doomed, (Fuchsman, 1980) argues that the belief of being chosen by God made Americans see themselves as different and better than others, and this later developed into exceptionalism. By saying Africans live in "sin" and will go to "hellfire," this kind of word does not leave space for African beliefs or dignity. Instead, it places Africa in a weak position that must accept Western truth. In this way, Sister Hollis does not only teach religion she also controls meaning. She becomes the judge of morality, while Africans are treated as people who must be corrected. The scene also shows how the West's "civilized us" identity is connected to a savior role. Sister Hollis's anger comes from the belief that she has the right and duty to rescue Marvin from his "wrong" life. She assumes that Western Christianity is the only path to truth, so rejecting it is seen as betrayal or danger. This fits Orientalism because the West often sees itself as a guardian of civilization who must discipline the Other for their own good.

Political Power

Figure 5. CIA take the ship for claiming united states property

CIA : You'll do nothing of the kind. This ship is now property of the United States goverment

This scene shows the CIA arriving at the crashed spaceship and saying, "You'll do nothing of the kind. This ship is now property of the United States government." The agents look confident and fully in control, while Marvin is put in a weak and powerless position. Their black suits and dark sunglasses make them look official and untouchable. The important point is that they do not ask Marvin anything. They do not discuss, explain, or negotiate. They only give an order and take the ship. Even though the sentence sounds formal, the meaning is direct: the United States feels it has the right to claim something that is connected to a non-Western person. The CIA ignores Marvin's ownership and wishes. By doing this so quickly, the episode shows American power as something that works through assumption and entitlement. America is pictured as a force that can take control of what it wants without needing permission from the people who are affected.

Using Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977), the scene builds the West/America as "us" with superiority. In Orientalism, "us" means the West, which is often shown as advanced, rational, and more civilized. Because "us" believes it is superior, it also believes it has the right to control situations and make decisions for others. The CIA's claim shows this clearly. They act as if American authority is automatic and valid everywhere. Marvin is treated as "the

Other," meaning a non-Western person whose rights can be pushed aside. He is not seen as a subject who can own or decide. His voice is silenced, he is not invited to speak, and even if he wanted to speak, his opinion would not matter. The West speaks for him and over him. This is an important orientalist pattern, because the Other is kept powerless not only by force, but also by being denied a voice.

This superior attitude is supported by John Winthrop's City upon a Hill as a concept (Parker, 2013) base that later shapes an exceptionalist sense of power and superiority. John Winthrop framed his community as a moral model for others, and over time this concept evolved into American exceptionalism, which positions America as unique, authoritative, and entitled to guide the world. (Tilborghs, 2015) explains that exceptionalism strengthens the belief that America should act as a global guardian, and this role naturally produces a hierarchy where America stands above others. The CIA's action reflects this superior power. They take the ship from Marvin because they assume American authority has the right to control what matters, even when it belongs to someone else. At the same time, the episode presents this takeover as a critique: domination is hidden inside a "moral mission," showing how superiority can silence others. According to (Saghaye biria, 2018) American exceptionalism often treats U.S. values as universal and uses moral language to justify intervention. Marvin's position and voice are erased so that America becomes the only decision maker. Therefore, the scene shows how exceptionalism grows into real practices of superiority, where America places itself above the Other, takes control, and makes the Other invisible and unheard.

In short, South Park uses satire as a way to criticize the exceptional self image of American society by portraying its moral certainty and "savior" role. However, this criticism becomes clear only when that exceptional "Us" is placed against a contrasting figure outside America. For that reason, the episode's portrayal of Africa as "the Other" needs to be read through Orientalism, because the episode uses "Us" versus "the Other" view that makes Western dominance seem normal by showing Africans only as people who need saving which connects directly to the next discussion of othering.

Analysis of Cultural Imperialism Using Edward Said Orientalism Theory Through the Other Concept

This section addresses the second research question, which explores how cultural imperialism appears in the episode Starvin' Marvin in Space" (1999). It applies Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (Said, 1977), especially the concept of "The Other" to examine how Africa is represented by Western gaze. This approach helps explain how Western power and a sense of superiority continue to shape how non-Western regions are viewed. The finding shows that the episode expresses the pattern of The Other in several ways. First, it presents many negative stereotypes about Africa, such as being poor, lazy, and powerless. The satire also indirectly touches on race and slavery, suggesting racist ideas and portraying Africans as inferior. Second, Africa is portrayed as the opposite of the West while the West is shown as educated and civilized, Africa appears uneducated and uncivilized.

Stereotype African from Western Gaze

This subsection will discuss how Western representations of Africa as poor, lazy, and powerless serve to reinforce long standing racist stereotypes. Such portrayals not only dehumanize African communities but also implicitly recall the history of Black oppression and slavery. In this way, they reproduce the image of inferiority historically imposed upon African people. These depictions sustain a colonial narrative in which Africans are positioned as dependent subjects in need of rescue or guidance from the West, rather than as agents of their own destiny.

Figure 6.The Ethiopia people look hunger

The scene depicts an African village that is dry, barren, and devastated, inhabited by people with emaciated bodies who appear powerless and on the brink of death from starvation. Their houses are made of straw and mud, symbolizing "primitive" conditions, while the surrounding landscape is empty, filled with signs of drought and extreme poverty. The scene portrays the villagers as merely lying down or walking weakly without engaging in any productive activity, as if to emphasize that they are not only economically poor but also passive, lazy, and hopeless. Although the scene is intended as satire, its visual construction reinforces classical racist stereotypes about African societies namely, that poverty, suffering, and dependency are part of their "natural identity" rather than the result of global inequality, colonialism, or geopolitical intervention.

Such representation aligns well with Edward Said's theory of Orientalism (Said, 1977), particularly his concept of the Other, which illustrates how the West constructs its own identity by defining the non-Western world as the Other portrayed as exotic, irrational, and inferior. Said writes, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences". This statement reveals that images of the non-Western world (Africa) are products of Western colonial imagination. Africa is not represented as it truly is but rather framed as an exotic space filled with suffering and backwardness a symbolic backdrop used to affirm the moral and civilizational superiority of the West.

Recent research by (Nwobodo, 2025) confirms that this pattern continues in Western mainstream media. The study describes it as an Afro-pessimistic narrative a mode of representation that consistently portrays Africa as "a lesser dark continent". Images of poverty, war, and political crisis are persistently used to create a cultural distance between the West, seen as rational and modern, and Africa, perceived as chaotic and underdeveloped. In the context of the analyzed scene the key finding is that satire functions as an ideological tool instead of criticizing stereotypes, it reinforces them under the guise of humor.

Thus, the representation of Africa in this scene not only reflects a Western perspective that positions the continent as a space of suffering but also introduces a new layer to colonial representational practices. The portrayal of poverty and helplessness serves as the foundation for another stereotype that Africans are people who must be saved, both physically and spiritually. In this context, Western domination manifests not only through visual imagery of deprivation but also through moral and spiritual discourse that reaffirms Western superiority. This pattern continues in the following scene, when Sister Hollis teaches that reading the Bible and accepting Jesus will bring food. This teaching symbolizes the transformation of Western power into a new form not physical exploitation as in colonial times, but ideological control disguised as humanitarian and religious missions. At this point, old stereotypes find new expression in the belief that salvation and prosperity can only come through Western values, a notion that becomes even clearer in the subsequent analysis.

Figure 7. Racism but shape into satire

Sister Hollis : Come on remember reading bible + accepting jesus = food

This scene portrays Sister Hollis teaching Ethiopia people while showing on the board, "Reading Bible + accepting Jesus = food." On the board, images of a Bible, a cross, and a plate of fried chicken are visible. At first glance, the scene appears simple and even humorous, but when read critically, it shows a complex ideological message. The connection between "reading the Bible" and "receiving food" represents the way the West constructs power relations through religious missions. In a colonial context, religion often served as a tool to justify intervention in non-Western societies, under the guise of compassion and moral duty. Beneath this facade, however, lies a mechanism of social and cultural control. The scene highlight that Western values specifically Christianity are positioned as the source of salvation and prosperity, while African communities are depicted as subjects who must submit in order to be "saved."

The symbol of fried chicken in this scene also carries deep historical and racial connotations. In the American context, this food is closely tied to the history of slavery, when enslaved Black people were often given inexpensive cuts of chicken as a primary food source. After the abolition of slavery, fried chicken became a recurring racist trope in American popular culture, portraying Black people as gluttonous, lazy, and uncivilized. According to (Varghese, 2019) this stereotype was circulated through minstrel performances and later popular media, turning fried chicken into a cultural sign used to mark African Americans as inferior. In line with this, (Kwate, 2019) explains that foods such as fried chicken have been used as symbolic instruments to mark racial inferiority and reinforce colonial narratives in American culture. In the context of the sister Hollis scene, the use of fried chicken as a "reward" for accepting Jesus reproduces this same logic it turns food into a tool of domestication and a reinforcement of Western dominance. Thus, this moment not only critiques the practice of religious missions but also reveals how long standing racial stereotypes persist through seemingly lighthearted and humorous symbols.

From the perspective of Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1977), the scene demonstrates how the Other continues to be constructed through narratives of salvation and benevolence. Said writes, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences". This statement is applicable to the reading of the sister Hollis scene, as Africa is once again portrayed as an exotic space in need of Western moral intervention. In this context, the religious mission functions as a modern form of colonial discourse not through overt conquest, but through the intertwining of faith and basic necessity. By promising food to those who accept Western teachings, the scene exposes how symbolic power operates to sustain dependency between the "savior" and the "saved." Therefore, this scene not only comments on missionary practices but also exposes the irony within global relations between the West and Africa. Acts of aid, faith, and humanitarianism appear as gestures of compassion, yet they conceal an underlying structure of domination. This representation illustrates that racial stereotypes and colonial hierarchies continue to operate, even within the seemingly harmless medium of humor and popular animation.

Constructing the Binary

This subsection focuses on how Starvin' Marvin in Space portrays Africa as the opposite of the West. The West is depicted as advanced, rational, and intelligent, while Africa is presented as ignorant, backward, and uncivilized. This binary opposition reflects the classic colonial worldview that positions the West as the center of truth and progress, whereas Africa is reduced to "the Other," a figure that must be saved or taught.

Figure 8. Sister Hollis teaching how to read the bibles to Ethiopia people

Sister Hollis : Okay then, do we have our bibles that were handed out freely? ... No,no,no we dont eat the bibles, we read them

In this scene, Sister Hollis invites the Ethiopian people to read the Bibles that have been distributed to them. However, instead of reading, they appear confused and even treat the Bibles as if they were food. This scene illustrates that the Ethiopians' inability to understand how to handle the holy book is portrayed as a sign of ignorance and backwardness. When Sister Hollis then says, "We don't eat the Bibles, we read them," her words symbolize how she is positioned as an educated, rational figure who understands spiritual meaning traits consistently associated with Westerners. In contrast, the Ethiopian people are depicted as their opposite: ignorant, uneducated, and in need of guidance. This clearly reveals the binary opposition constructed within the scene, where the West is positioned as the center of rationality and intelligence, while Africa is portrayed as "the Other" ignorant and primitive.

This aligns with Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, which explains how the West constructs its identity and power by creating "the Other." Said writes, "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self". This statement shows that Western identity and sense of superiority are formed through the creation of an imagined opposite the non-Western world depicted as irrational, uneducated, and uncivilized. This principle is clearly reflected in the Sister Hollis scene, where she serves as a symbol of the educated and civilized West, while the Ethiopian people are portrayed as her inverse: foolish, confused, and in need of moral instruction. Through the simple line, "We don't eat the Bibles, we read them," the film underscores the hierarchical distinction between "the teacher" and "the taught," or between the Western subject and the African object.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study finds that Starvin' Marvin in Space (1999) represents American exceptionalism through an Orientalist worldview that divides the world into "Us" and "the Other" With Edward Said's Orientalism as the main theory, the episode positions America as "Us"civilized, educated, and morally legitimate while Africa and Marvin are framed as "the Other," weak, sinful, and dependent. This hierarchy is shown through Sister Hollis's missionary authority, her claim that English is "God's language" and her moral judgment toward Marvin, as well as through the CIA's political takeover that silences Marvin's ownership and voice. John Winthrop's City upon a Hill (Parker, 2013) is used as a supporting concept to explain how the "chosen nation" concept becomes the theological base of this exceptionalist mindset, which later authorizes savior behavior and cultural domination. Reflecting on these findings, the study highlights that satire in contemporary media works in a double way. On the one hand, South Park uses humor and portray to criticize American arrogance and interventionism. On the other hand, the satire still depends on familiar

stereotypes of African helplessness, which can unintentionally repeat colonial patterns. This implies that satirical texts should be read critically, because laughter may carry ideological messages that shape public understanding of race, poverty, and global inequality. Therefore, this research expects to contribute to postcolonial media studies by showing that animated satire is not only entertainment but also a cultural space where power is negotiated. For modern audiences, the episode becomes a reminder that "savior" narratives and Western superiority remain influential in popular culture, and that recognizing these patterns is necessary to resist their normalization in the contemporary global media environment.

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