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Honors Thesis

“THE RIGHT USE OF REASON”: FAIRY TALES, FANTASY,
AND MORAL EDUCATION IN *PETER PARLEY’S ANNUAL*

by
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ABSTRACT

“THE RIGHT USE OF REASON”: FAIRY TALES, FANTASY, AND MORAL EDUCATION IN *PETER PARLEY’S ANNUAL*

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Bachelor of Arts

This thesis discusses the relationship between the start of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature and the educational policy and philosophy changes that took place in mid- to late-19th century England. Some scholars have argued that the reasons for the rise in fantasy literature that characterized the Golden Age of Children’s Literature are primarily economic, while others find philosophical and cultural precedents for the movement toward fantasy. This paper presents the work of William Martin as an example of how fantasy literature emerged. Martin’s work reveals that he was proactively experimenting with the fantasy genre in response to debates about education policy and philosophy that surrounded the creation of the first public education system in England. To show this, it compares Martin’s writings with Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies*, a work that connects fantasy with moral development. The comparison reveals that both Martin and Kingsley worked to reconcile fantasy literature with rationalism, the advancement of science, and pedagogical theories. Ultimately, it argues that Martin’s work offers insights into the roots of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature because his work contributes to both the educational and literary conversations of the time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title.	i
Abstract.	ii
Table of Contents.	iii
I. Introduction.	1
II. William Martin and <i>Peter Parley's Annual</i>	4
III. The Philosophy of Moral Education and the 1862 Revised Code.	6
IV. Martin and Moral Education.	11
V. Martin and Charles Kingsley	15
VI. Moral Education Through Fantasy.	21
VII. The Limitations of Fantasy and Rationalism.	26
VIII. Conclusion.	29
Works Cited.	31

Introduction

What has been considered the Golden Age of Children's Literature began in England in the late 19th century with the growth in popularity of fantasy as a major genre of children's stories. For centuries, there had been debates between philosophers, writers, and others about the relative value of literature—especially imaginative literature—for children. The modern antecedents of the debate began with John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Though they disagreed about why, both Locke and Rousseau questioned the role of imaginative literature in children's lives and education (Locke 191, Lewis 323). A generation of writers and censors took that questioning to the extreme, producing a set of works that tried to remove, or at least water down, fantastic elements in stories (Levy and Mendlesohn 23-24). By the late 18th century, however, prominent Romantic thinkers and writers began to question this practice, reviving interest in traditional folk tales and fantastic stories (Richardson 114, Levy and Mendlesohn 24-26). Interestingly, these Romantics also pulled ideas from earlier philosophers—especially Rousseau. Both Locke and Rousseau had left room for plenty of imaginative literature, though disagreeing about many things. (For example, Locke believed Aesop's Fables to be helpful educational tools, Rousseau found them merely to be confusing for children and allowed for plenty of reading for older children). A new group of censors responded to the renewed interest in these tales and produced versions intended especially for families and children by removing any elements that might be considered questionable (Levy and Mendlesohn 21-24). This produced a response from writers in the mid-19th century, most famously Charles Dickens' essay "Frauds on the Fairies." As the debate continued and the pendulum continued to swing, writers and thinkers began to look for ways to merge these

divergent ideas of what kinds of literature were best for children. Later that same century, the Golden Age of Children's Literature began, producing such classics as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Jungle Book*, and *The Princess and the Goblin*.

At the exact same time as this literary movement was getting off the ground, England created its first public, standardized, compulsory education system through a series of policy changes that culminated in the Education Act of 1870. Many of these policy changes, especially the 1862 Revised Code of Education, prompted significant debates among educators, intellectuals, and policy makers about the role of standardization and imagination in childhood development and education, especially moral education. Thinkers such as Matthew Arnold, James Kay-Shuttleworth, and Herbert Spencer came to diverse conclusions about how education could best serve the needs of children and society. These debates would inform the development of the new school system as it attempted to standardize curriculum and negotiate the values of various areas of study.

Many scholars have argued that the rise of the education system and the movement towards fantasy literature are connected. That there is some connection is somewhat obvious, since Locke and Rousseau's original contributions to the literary debate both focused mainly on education. Scholars, however, disagree about how these two movements influenced one another. J. S. Bratton, for example, argues that the rise in fantasy and adventure fiction was mainly a result of a rapid increase in non-religious publishers of children's literature. This increase, he further argues, was caused by rising literacy rates among children due to greater educational opportunities afforded by the 1870 Act and changes leading up to it (Bratton, 191-193). Levy and Mendlesohn follow a

similar line of reasoning, arguing that “many of the new magazines...found in the older fairy tales—and in the new tales hastily written to well-understood formulae—copy to fill their pages” (Levy and Mendlesohn 29). Others, such as Jack Zipes, claim that the movement toward fantasy was less economically based, but perhaps based on shifting attitudes toward childhood and education. He writes that authors “began to experiment with the fairy tale in a manner that would make young readers question the world around them” (“Fairy Tales and Folk Tales” 5). Seth Lerer builds on Gillian Beer’s approach to Darwin’s effects on literature and argues that Darwin’s theories influenced the rise in fantasy by evoking a sense of scientific wonder at the world (Lerer 172-179). Recently, Jessica Straley has convincingly argued that this rise in fantasy literature is, in part, a response to a perceived over-emphasis on science in school curriculum and a subsequent devaluation of literature due to changes in ideas of childhood development that revolved around Herbert Spencer’s conception of Darwin’s theories (Straley 9).

These various explanations for the connections between the educational and literary trends each identify theories of what caused the growth of fantasy literature. The purpose of this paper is to present the work of William Martin, a writer of children’s fiction, as an example of how fantasy literature emerged from the philosophical debates that descended from Locke and Rousseau and shaped the English education system. Both Bratton and Levy and Mendlesohn argue that fantasy literature first got a foothold in periodicals because the increase of demand created more pages to fill. However, Martin’s periodical fantasy stories and non-fiction writings about fantasy reveal that he was engaging in debates about the value of fantasy for moral education. Indeed, much of his writing is influenced by the different strains of educational thought that were prevalent in

his time. This reveals that Martin, one of the periodical writers on the front end of the Golden Age of Children's Literature, was not just trying to fill pages, but was proactively experimenting with fantasy as a form of moral education. To show this, I compare Martin's work with Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, which both Lerer and Straley consider a major early fantasy work that connects fantasy with moral development. The comparison reveals that both Martin and Kingsley struggled to reconcile romantic views of literature and fantasy with rationalism, the advancement of science, and pedagogical theories. Ultimately, including Martin in this conversation reveals that the emergence of fantasy is not just a reaction against an overemphasis on science, as Straley posits, but it also emerged organically from the educational philosophies of Locke and Rousseau as they descended through the Romantics.

I first look at William Martin and education policy, tracing some of Martin's background and work as well as some of the educational debates surrounding the 1862 Revised Code of Education, and pointing out how specific pieces of Martin's writing speak to the issues surrounding the Revised Code. I then compare the work of Martin and Charles Kingsley, revealing how Kingsley attempted to reconcile ideas of rational and scientific education in his story *The Water-Babies*, and discussing areas of agreement and disagreement between him and Martin. Finally, I turn to Martin's views on achieving moral education through fantasy, describing what he sees as the limits of fantasy and realism and his own attempts to make them work together to the end of moral development.

William Martin and *Peter Parley's Annual*

Peter Parley's Annual, a periodical for children published around Christmas each

year, provides a perfect example of how children's fiction developed throughout this period. It ran annually from 1840 to 1892, and the content it contained changed dramatically over that time. The 1861 issue (published around Christmas of 1860) is a perfect example of how children's periodical fiction began to experiment with fantasy. Containing essays attacking imagination and fairy tales and a fantasy tale rewritten without fantastic elements, alongside two fantasy stories, detailed descriptions of magical creatures and fairy tales, plus a host of educational material and an essay critiquing the state of the education system, this issue of *Peter Parley's Annual* is a complex example of the difficult, conflicting philosophies of literature and education that would produce the modern genre of children's fantasy. Martin's writing in the 1861 issue of *Peter Parley's Annual* reveals how authors were proactively experimenting with the fantasy genre, rather than just relying on it to fill the empty pages created by the emerging market of children's fiction.

Peter Parley's Annual was a popular children's periodical in mid- and late-century Victorian England. It was written each year by William Martin from 1840 until Martin's death in 1867. After his death, the periodical continued, but was a compilation of many different writers' work, rather than solely Martin's (Kinnell 2). The name of Peter Parley had already been popularized in American periodicals by Samuel Goodrich before Martin took up the pseudonym. Several other writers in England also adopted the name, making it difficult to trace authorship in some cases, but the *Annuals* are certainly Martin's production (at least until 1867). Martin produced a complex and diverse set of works in his lifetime and was often concerned with educational themes. For example, one of his early works, entitled *The Early Educator, or, The Young Enquirer Answered*,

teaches basic facts about everything from catching fish to English law in a catechistic, question and answer format. As Martin neared the end of his life, his works grew more overtly moralistic, and his concern for education morphed into a concern for moral development in the young. Interestingly, as this shift happened, some “dissipated habits and loose morals” entered Martin’s own life, “giving his friends some anxiety” (Kinnell 3). *Peter Parley’s Annual* easily contains more educational material than stories and had certainly grown more moralistic by 1861. Of the 48 items included in the 1861 issue, nine can fully be considered stories. Three more are poems (often with an educational bent to them), and the rest are historical sketches of England, explanations of how to care for different kinds of animals, or didactic essays on one subject or another.

Among all the items in the 1861 issue, a few stand out for the statement they make on what Martin saw as the function of fantasy in society. These are: “King Arthur,” a story that claims to be “an authentic account of his life, death, burial, and resuscitation,” which drops all fantastic elements from the story of King Arthur, and aims to help young people “not be led astray by fable and romance”; “Distributing the Prizes at a Village School,” an essay about the woes of the education system in England; and “Curious and Funny Things,” a work that is divided into four sections: the first two are an essay condemning imagination in society (particularly in the form of fairy tales), while, ironically, the last two sections narrate an impressively imaginative fairy tale.

The Philosophy of Moral Education and the 1862 Revised Code

Throughout these three pieces, Martin wrestles—usually subtly, though in one case overtly—with many of the complex educational issues that arose in the latter half of the 19th century as England moved toward a free, compulsory, and standardized public

education system. The 1870 education act was “a watershed in the provision of universal instruction,” but many of the debates that produced this act were fought in the decades leading up to it and the decades after it (Boos 1). The Revised Code of Education, passed by the Committee of Council on Education in 1862, mainly through the efforts of Robert Lowe, was a controversial precursor to the 1870 act. First released in July of 1861, but not fully implemented until 1863, the Revised Code made “the payment of grants to schools by the central authority dependent upon a combination of inspection and individual examination of pupils in reading, writing, and arithmetic, instead of relying upon an inspector’s report on the conduct of the school in general” (Connell 208-209). This change was intended to reduce the cost to the government of the education system as a whole and remedy some of the inefficiencies and partialities in the system. It provoked a firestorm of criticism and outrage, “and letters, pamphlets, and resolutions were rained upon the heads of all members of parliament” (Connell 210). Two of the most well-known critics were Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, who had overseen the creation of the education code that was being revised, and Matthew Arnold, a poet and school inspector.

These two educational thinkers took exception to the reductive nature of the tests to be given by school inspectors. Arnold argued that whereas public education had been aiming “for discipline, for civilisation, for religious and moral training, for a superior instruction to clever and forward children,” it now aimed only “to obtain the greatest possible quantity of reading, writing, and arithmetic for the greatest number” (qtd. in Connell 212). As Dinah Birch points out, “Arnold is at his most engaging in his steadfast claims that education must satisfy both intellectual and imaginative needs” (Birch 28). By this, Arnold meant that education must be aimed at cultivating responsible citizens

through teaching them touchstones of classic literature. This aligned with Kay-Shuttleworth's view, who argued that the Revised Code was one of a series of "errors in the applications of doctrines of pure economy to questions in which moral elements greatly predominate" (Kay-Shuttleworth 173). This specific policy debate was rooted in a much broader philosophical disagreement about where true education, specifically moral education, comes from.

The philosophy represented by Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth held that the fundamental goal of education was moral in a quasi-religious sense of the word. Giving students a moral base that aligned with contemporary social values was the first and most important thing that should be done. They believed that a truly moral education could only be achieved through a broad curriculum that contained at least as much emphasis on literature, languages, and art as it did on scientific discoveries and methods. In this way, Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth's moral education teaches overarching moral concepts on which students should rely when making decisions and living their lives. The roots of this idea can be found among the writings of the earlier romantics. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in a letter to Thomas Poole, wrote, "from my early reading of fairy tales...my mind had been habituated to *the Vast*...I know of no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole. Those who have been led to the same truths step by step, through the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess. They contemplate nothing but *parts*, and all *parts* are necessarily little" (Coleridge 16). Coleridge's idea of the Vast corresponds with this idea of overarching moral concepts. The vastness of these concepts supersedes the "parts" which Coleridge claims people discover through experience. This idea, which I will call the romantic philosophy of

education, had hardened into a dogma about the moralizing power of literature and the arts for some of the Victorians. For example, Arnold consistently held that “the imaginative needs of a faltering generation could be addressed through the literature of the past,” making education a method of preserving the values and works of the past (Birch 26). A problem with this philosophy is it easily falls into elitism. Kay-Shuttleworth admitted that in his mind, the uneducated were, in a sense, “rescued, not by their own act, but by that of the State and the upper classes” (Kay-Shuttleworth 174).

Not everyone believed that perpetuating Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth’s values-based morality was the most important goal of education. Many believed almost the opposite: that a constant testimony of the senses was the only way to truly gain any kind of education, including a moral education. I will call this the rational philosophy of education. A major modern starting point for this concept came from some ideas expressed in John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, even though the rational education Locke sets forth there is not experiential in the modern sense. In his treatise, Locke suggests that children should learn to be careful with fire by touching it and being burnt, an idea oft-quoted by advocates of experiential learning (Locke 115). Many thinkers expanded on this concept, with Augustus De Morgan, for example, arguing that “all human knowledge...is based upon experiment” (qtd. in Straley 63). However, this argument reached its zenith in Herbert Spencer. In 1860, he published a compilation of essays arguing that the most worthwhile subject that could be taught in school (specifically in elementary schools) was the scientific method because it would provide greater daily utility to a greater proportion of the population than what was currently being taught (Spencer 44). Not only does he argue this, but he also claims that

the entire foundation of the classical education Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth championed is of relatively little worth (21-26). The argument that most contradicted the romantic philosophy, however, was this: “Not only, however, for intellectual discipline is science the best; but also for moral discipline” (88). The romantics and the rationalists differ not just in the means (experiential learning vs. conceptual learning) but in the ends of moral education. Spencer’s moral discipline is fundamentally different from the morality envisioned by Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth. Spencer’s moral discipline is individually-based, since it relies on the experiences of the learner. It does not imply that there are a specific set of socially developed principles that people should adhere to. Instead, he argues that individuals should discover the laws of nature for themselves and will adhere to them precisely because nature requires it, not because they are socially-supported ethical principles.

Lawmakers ultimately believed Spencer over Arnold and Kay-Shuttleworth, despite the fact that Spencer believed government intervention in school was detrimental (Straley 63). In creating the Revised Code of education, politicians argued that the system set up by Kay-Shuttleworth was wasting resources on outcomes that could not accurately be measured and that it was partial to certain kinds of students (Connell 204-206). Instead, the utilitarians in the government posited, education should focus on measurable outcomes and have a more scientific basis. Measurement can eliminate waste. Standardizing tests can reduce partiality. Focusing on science will better prepare students for working class jobs. Thus, education can achieve the greatest results for the greatest number of students, fulfilling the utilitarian dream of efficiency.

Even though lawmakers saw in Spencer’s ideas a way to maximize educational

efficiency and extend educational opportunity to those who did not already have access to it, Spencer's ideas themselves were just as elitist as Arnold's and Kay-Shuttleworth's. His conception of society was eventually named Social Darwinism, and taught that the most evolutionarily fit ruled society and therefore rightfully deserved access to more resources than those of more limited abilities. Spencer admits that his ideas of education would benefit the working class, but that his primary aim is to help the elite (Spencer 52-53).

Martin and Moral Education

William Martin clearly disagreed with the utilitarian lawmakers. In his essay in the 1861 issue of *Peter Parley's Annual* entitled "Distributing the Prizes at a Village School," he sets out his own philosophy of education carefully. While he is careful to tell parents to "take care that your children are taught to read well, that they are enabled to write a good hand, and that they are well acquainted with the fundamental rules of arithmetic," he goes on to argue that the most important thing lacking in the school system is the old kind of school mistress "and her 'moral influence,'" and claims that, as opposed to the prizes given at schools for good marks on exams, "the true prizes of our hearts are to have acquired truth and loving kindness, contentment, honour and honesty, humility, and above all, christian charity" ("Distributing the Prizes" 86-87). This emphasis on virtues instead of reason makes clear his stance on romanticism and rationalism.

A key way that Martin hopes to counteract the lack of moral education in the school system is by attempting to repurpose the genre of the fairy tale. In the 1861 issue of *Peter Parley's Annual*, he produces several works that explore different ways to merge

romantic imagination with moralist aims. His essay entitled “Curious Things” begins by claiming to teach “the right use of Reason” (37). The essay goes on to be incredibly self-contradictory, in one breath condemning imagination and in the other explaining the details of various kinds of magical creatures and telling fairy tales. For example, Martin writes at one moment that “the more imaginative and less matter of fact a nation happens to be, the more superstition, bigotry, and intolerance—the three great curses of the human race—in every age and nation” and at the next that “it will not be doing the rising generation any bad service for me to give a few illustrations” of these imaginative fairy tales (42-43, 41). It would be easy to brush these contradictions aside, reading the essay as meaningless chatter or as a somewhat-clever satire of either imaginative literature or rationalism. But, there is something deeper going on here. Martin makes a key distinction between what he calls “nursery tales” and “superstition” (41, 42). Martin paints these nursery tales as harmless entertainment “many of [which] are too good and pretty to be forgotten” (41).

Superstition, however, is totally different. For Martin, superstition is imagination run amok, becoming a force for evil in society, creating “bigotry and intolerance” (43). Interestingly, Martin does not note how imagination can be used for good in society; he here only describes it as either neutral or bad. This is because he is trying to introduce what he sees as a new kind of imaginative story, one that will definitely be an influence for good in society.

Of course, this idea was hardly new. John Locke, in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, wrote, “I think it inconvenient that [children’s] yet tender minds should receive early impressions of *goblins*, *spectres*, and *apparitions*, wherewith their

maids and those about them are apt to fright them into a compliance with their orders” (Locke 191). What Locke and Martin thus endorse is a highly rationalist idea. Based on Locke’s argument, plus religious critiques of imaginative literature, an entire culture had developed around sanitizing, editing, and rationalizing fairy tales for children by the late 18th century (Richardson 113-114). Richardson further points out that the Romantics revived some interest in common fairy tales, despite the rationalist and religious objections to them (113). At the same time, he argues that, “the stock opposition of fantasy and reason, imaginative and didactic literature should itself be called into question” (115). This is exactly what Martin does with his essays and fairy tales in *Peter Parley’s Annual*. By presenting an anti-imaginative argument in an introduction to a fairy tale, Martin sets up an opportunity to create a new kind of rational fairy tale where “it is not always clear where the moral tale leaves off and the fantasy begins” (Richardson 114).

Martin’s major fantasy story in the 1861 edition of *Peter Parley’s Annual* is a two-part narrative that follows the adventures of Edilswag, a boy from Norway who is the seventh son of his father, who was also the seventh son of his parents. This status as a double-seventh son means that Edilswag—though he does not know it—is able to give the evil goblins power over the industrious dwarfs. One day while Edilswag and his father are out chopping wood, the goblin queen, Yellow Eye, appears in disguise and promises Edilswag money if he follows her. Edilswag does not think this is a good idea, but his father uses rational arguments to convince him that obtaining the money will be worth it. Edilswag follows Yellow Eye, and she gives him a sword and promises to give him money if he uses it to kill two children who appear from nowhere. Edilswag is

tempted, but refuses. Yellow Eye summons a lion, which Edilswag quickly decapitates with the sword. A dragon then appears and threatens him. Edilswag befriends the dragon by offering him a cigar. The two smoke together for a while, and the dragon tells Edilswag that he was once a young boy just like Edilswag, but that he fell for Yellow Eye's temptations. As soon as he tried to kill anyone, however, he was transformed into a dragon. Just as the dragon finishes relating this story, Smalldody, the king of the dwarfs, appears and invites Edilswag and the dragon into his kingdom. They enter and are astonished at the wealth on display there. Smalldody and the dwarfs decide to show Edilswag "the true value of riches, and the real use of gold" ("The Old Dragon's Story" 226). Edilswag is assigned to Merlin, one of the king's councillors, to learn about wealth. Merlin shows Edilswag immense amounts of gold, and Edilswag comments on how happy he and his family would be with just a little of it. Merlin tells Edilswag that he is wrong, and shows him several different individuals who lusted after money and how miserable they are. In response to this, Edilswag cries to God to help him overcome his lust for riches. At that moment, Edilswag awakes out in the woods, as if from a dream. He goes about the rest of his life, having little money, but enjoying "domestic happiness, and a clear conscience, and the blessing of God [giving] him...perpetual peace" ("The Old Dragon's Story" 236).

This story is clearly concerned with teaching moral principles, and represents a major attempt by Martin to use fantasy stories to that end. Martin was definitely not the first to try his hand at turning fairy tales and fantasy literature into tools of moral development. Aesop's Fables is perhaps the earliest recorded example. However, Martin is here attempting to deal with debates about moral education which had arisen from

different understandings of what role literature should play. Many writers around the same time were dealing with these same issues. Charles Dickens famously criticized anyone who “alters [fairy tales] to suit his own opinions” (“Frauds on the Fairies” 2). He further argued that, “to preserve [fairy tales] in their usefulness, they must be as much preserved in their simplicity, and purity, and innocent extravagance, as if they were actual fact” (“Frauds on the Fairies” 2). Despite the doubts of purists such as Dickens, many began to play around with the conventions of the fairy tale genre, exploring new techniques and reinventing old stories. Martin, in his experiments, aligns more with Arnold than with Spencer, but is ultimately more completely Lockean than either of them. He finds reason to be incredibly important for children, and questions the value of some imaginative tales for children, but also believes there are many kinds of imaginative children’s literature that are beneficial. Indeed, in some ways, Martin seems intent on solving the debate by dealing with the disagreements in its sources: Locke and Rousseau. The incredibly explicit moral of his fairy tale about Edilswag may be addressing one of the concerns Rousseau had about Aesop’s Fables, namely that the moral lesson of the story is not obvious to children and will therefore not have the expected impact on a child’s development. Resolving these disagreements seems to be Martin’s primary aim as various pedagogical influences formed the English education system. Exploring Martin’s contribution to the educational conversation reveals how his writing was influenced by the educational thoughts and theories of the time. But he was not the only writer who was influenced by these ideas, and understanding how one of the more prominent fantasy writers tried to reconcile these philosophies will help clarify Martin’s positions.

Martin and Charles Kingsley

Jessica Straley has traced how Spencer's pedagogical views influenced many writers in the Golden Age of Children's literature. One of the foremost of those was Charles Kingsley. Kingsley felt that recent scientific discoveries proved that what was once thought fantasy could be real, and in his fiction created a strange merger between fantasy and scientific reason (Lerer 175-179). In Kingsley's oft-noted work, *The Water-Babies*, he establishes this mode of science-supported fantasy. When the protagonist Tom is transformed by fairies into a water-baby, the narrator of the story and an imagined child among the readership engage in a discussion about whether or not this transformation is possible. "But a water-baby is contrary to nature," the child says (Kingsley 66). In response, the narrator launches into a long-winded discussion about the fantastic things that can be found in nature, arguing, "You must not talk about 'ain't' and 'can't' when you speak of this great wonderful world round you, of which the wisest man knows only the very smallest corner...wise men are afraid to say that there is anything contrary to nature...the wiser men are, the less they talk about 'cannot'" (66-67). Interestingly, Kingsley specifically indicts children's periodical fiction for spreading this false view of nature, the narrator claiming "it is only children who read Aunt Agitate's Arguments, or Cousin Cramchild's Conversations...who talk about 'cannot exist,' and 'contrary to nature'" (67). These periodical titles are invented, but only just, with popular titles following the same naming conventions, such as *Aunt Judy's Magazine* and *Peter Parley's Annual*. *The Water-Babies* was published as a novel in 1863, though it was serialized throughout 1862 and 1863, just after the issue of *Peter Parley's Annual* discussed here. Kingsley likely had Martin and similar writers on his mind in these comments. Through this criticism, Kingsley reveals his belief that writers like Martin do

children an imaginative disservice because they specifically confine fantasy to other worlds (Martin's main fantasy story occurs within a dream). This disservice lies in implying that children should not imagine anything new in the world, by limiting fantasy to a dream or another world. Kingsley implicitly argues that limiting fantasy in this way teaches children that the world cannot hold anything they might consider fantastic, discouraging them from exploring the world and trying to make discoveries on their own. This kind of discouragement would lead to educational failure by Kingsley and Spencer's standards. Probably to Kingsley's dismay, the fantasy movement that gained steam throughout the next few decades more often than not confined fantasy to other worlds (Levy and Mendlesohn 32).

Spencer's influence on Kingsley is clear in much of Kingsley's writing. However, Kingsley is trying to do more than just write an allegory for Spencer's educational theories. Kingsley is trying to reconcile divergent strains of educational thought by making them fit Spencer's paradigms. And yet, that reconciliation is paradoxical at best. These paradoxes manifest themselves in contradictions in his advice to his readers. Despite implying that science is vindicating fantasy and imagination run wild, Kingsley ends *The Water-Babies* with this admonition: "Remember always, as I told you at first, that this is all a fairy-tale, and only fun in pretense; and, therefore, you are not to believe a word of it, even if it is true" (306). This reveals that Kingsley is still worried that children will take his imaginative tale at face value instead of simply enjoying the fantastic elements and extracting the moral lessons from it, which is a very Lockean (though not necessarily Spencerian) idea. What Kingsley means in telling his readers "not to believe" his story, "even if it is true" is that the truthfulness of it is conveyed in the

moral lessons it teaches, such as Tom's development, not in the faux-scientific explanations for the existence of water-babies. Children should not believe in the specific fantastic circumstances Kingsley has created for Tom (and the readers) to learn moral lessons, though they should believe in the sense of wonder that can come from the fantastic elements of the story. Ultimately, then, both Kingsley and Martin have the goal of advancing moral education through their fantasy. They differ in how they believe that should be accomplished.

As Jessica Straley argues, Kingsley follows Spencer's educational ideas (Straley 62-65). Tom's adventures help him learn according to Spencer's ideas of gaining knowledge through applying the scientific method of experimentation. As a water-baby, Tom is far outside the moralizing influence of society (Straley 68). The fairies he encounters teach him only by imposing consequences on his incorrect choices. Without someone else to teach him guiding principles before he makes mistakes, Tom must learn everything through his own trial and error. For Tom, this turns out much better than it might have for Edilswag, and he ultimately becomes "a great man of science" "all...from what he learnt when he was a water-baby underneath the sea" (Kingsley 306, 307).

That Tom's ultimate triumph is becoming "a great man of science" is another indication that Kingsley fits into the tradition of education that comes through Spencer, arguing that moral education and development comes primarily through scientific experimentation. Straley, however, argues that Kingsley ultimately disagrees with Spencer on the value of literature for moral education. Kingsley, she writes, "announces that literature...can provide commensurate occasions for the same self-directed cognitive progress that [Spencer's] pedagogy celebrated" (Straley 73). While this is fundamentally

different from Spencer's ideas of the utility of literature, it does not approach the educational value that Arnold and other romantics ascribe to literature. For Kingsley, literature has value in that it can imitate scientific inquiry by prompting children to search for their own answers rather than being overtly didactic. For Arnold, the moralizing power of literature is in its ability to preserve the great knowledge of the past and thus satisfy intellectual and imaginative needs, not in the literature's ability to simulate or stimulate scientific thinking.

Interestingly, despite many differences, Kingsley and Martin are both deeply against a certain kind of teaching: cramming children's heads with random facts. Martin writes, by way of criticism, that "in many schools the children are well up in a great variety of scientific and historical and philosophical jargon; but are at the same time very poor readers, very sad writers, and very sorry arithmeticians" ("Distributing the Prizes" 86). In *The Water-Babies*, Kingsley parodies this exact same problem with the school system when Tom visits the Isle of the Tomtoddies. This isle is supposed to be a renamed version of Swift's Isle of Laputa, but beyond a quick allusion to *Gulliver's Travels*, it more closely resembles parodies of the Victorian school system, such as Dickens' *Hard Times* (Kingsley 279). On this island, the Tomtoddies ceaselessly try to memorize random facts, such as the name of "Mutis Scævola's thirteenth cousin's grandmother's maid's cat" in order to pass an examination administered by school inspectors (Kingsley 281). Straley reads this as an indictment of the testing regime established by the 1862 Revised Code of Education (Straley 57). Indeed, the specific references to examination and school inspectors might be a reference to the Revised Code, but it is more probable that this scene is a parody of the education system as a whole. For example, the austerity

and lack of playthings on the Isle of the Tomtoddies is reminiscent of other criticisms of the education system that significantly predated the Revised Code, such as the description of Mr. Gradgrind's home in *Hard Times* (Dickens 12-13). In any case, both Martin and Kingsley thoroughly agree that the kind of education parodied by the Isle of the Tomtoddies is of little worth. Especially telling in Kingsley's description of the Tomtoddies is that they are vegetables: "turnips and radishes, beet and mangel-wurzel" (Kingsley 280). If, as Straley posits, this story is about the recapitulation of human evolutionary development in the growth and education of children, the Tomtoddies are some of the lowest creatures, because they are even less like humans than the animals, fairies, water-babies, and others that inhabit this story. This reveals that, for Kingsley, this kind of education is even worse than the ignorance and depravity Tom was subject to as a chimney sweep before becoming a water-baby. At the beginning of the story, he thinks himself an ape upon seeing his reflection for the first time (Kingsley 28-29). The imagined ape is much more anthropomorphic than the vegetables of the island of the Tomtoddies, and thus much closer to full development in a Spencerian sense, revealing that Kingsley finds ignorance to be a higher state of development than having a head of useless information. Though Kingsley and Martin agree on this point, they get there through very different means. Martin does not see evolutionary differences in the ignorant, the well-educated, and the poorly-educated. He sees education not as a race for evolutionary supremacy, but as the foundation for morality, which "will be prized by our Father who is in heaven" ("Distributing the Prizes" 87).

Ultimately, Kingsley and Martin disagree about what a moral education looks like and where it should lead. This can be seen in the final states of their protagonists. As

already mentioned, Tom becomes “a great man of science.” Edilswag, on the other hand, ends up just as poor and unknown as he was at the beginning of the story. Kingsley, then, connects morality with socioeconomic advancement, rationalism, and evolutionary perfection, just as Spencer does.

Moral Education through Fantasy

Martin’s stories construct morality in a very different way. The morality in them is not as much concerned with the material advancement of the individual or the species. This vision of morality falls right in line with some of the criticism levelled at the Romantics for their purveyance of fairy tales. Richardson notes that the romantic emphasis on imaginative morality through literature and not on economic advancement is a way for the literate and powerful to keep the newly literate from taking power, conserving the traditional power structure (Richardson 30-31). At the same time, though, the theories of evolutionary perfectibility advanced by Spencer eventually hardened into the dogma of Social Darwinism, which also reinforced class structures by claiming that the most evolutionarily fit ruled society (“Social Darwinism”). Both philosophies were used to justify class structures and oppression, meaning that it is not so much the possible effects of the philosophy that matter as the goal with which the philosophy is used.

Martin sides with the romantics and is clearly concerned with Edilswag’s moral development from the beginning. He sees this moral development as fundamentally different from—though not necessarily opposed to—socioeconomic progress. This is evidenced by the fact that the dwarfs, who have the greatest moral force in the story, have wealth in abundance, showing that wealth is not inherently bad from Martin’s perspective. However, Martin also presents Edilswag as living a moral life without

making significant gains in wealth, revealing that Martin sees wealth and morality as independent from one another. From the start, the whole story revolves around Edilswag's morality and his relationship with wealth. Martin introduces us to Edilswag by describing him as "possessing an untainted body and a pure and upright mind" (197). That he chooses to describe Edilswag in this way reveals his concern for morality. More interesting to the educational philosophy debate is how Edilswag's morality is challenged and changed throughout the story. Near the beginning, Edilswag and his father have a rational conversation about riches. Their conversation generally follows the model that Spencer sets forth as a scientific approach to teaching morals. Says Spencer, "by science, constant appeal is made to individual reason. Its truths are not accepted upon authority alone; but all are at liberty to test them—nay, in many cases, the pupil is required to think out his own conclusions. Every step in a scientific investigation is submitted to his judgment" (Spencer 89). So it goes with the conversation between Edilswag and his father. The father does not simply tell Edilswag that money is useful and good but presents rational arguments about how money can be used for good, such as to pay a doctor to help Edilswag's sick sister and mother, or to pay for food. In response to Edilswag's questions, his father produces more reasoning (198-199). Finally, when an enchantress shows up in the form of a bird promising money, Edilswag's father encourages him to go after it, fitting Spencer and Kingsley's ideal of experimentation: Edilswag is given the opportunity to experiment for himself to find out if money is worthwhile ("Funny Stories" 200). This is a mode of teaching that both Kingsley and Spencer would endorse. In *The Water-Babies*, Tom learns almost everything through his own experiences. The fairies give him formal lessons for only a short time and on a few

topics, then they send him out to “see with his own eyes, and smell with his own nose” (Kingsley 212).

And yet, for Martin, this is nowhere near the best way to teach morality. Edilswag quickly becomes confused about what is right and wrong when he is on his own. He is lead straight into the temptation to kill children to get money (“Funny Stories” 204). The enchantress he has followed produces rational arguments as to why he should kill the children and why he should listen to her (204). Edilswag “hesitates” but ultimately decides not to kill the children (204-206). What Martin seems to be doing here is pointing out a flaw in Spencer’s theory: if Edilswag is expected to learn only from his own experience, it would be very easy for him to make the wrong choice in this situation, since he likely has not faced one like it before. If, as Spencer and Kingsley are fond of arguing, children must learn that fire is dangerous by burning themselves, the only way for Edilswag to fully know that killing the children is wrong is to kill them and suffer negative consequences for that action. Spencer might argue that such mistakes are acceptable because Edilswag will ultimately be able to learn the truth because “nature [will only justify] his conclusions when they are correctly drawn” (89). But Martin points out, through the difficult situation Edilswag is placed in, that moral education often has stakes too high to allow for unregulated experimentation. Interestingly, the way Edilswag ultimately overcomes this temptation is not by relying on his experiences. He says, “I cannot destroy so much heavenly beauty. They have done me no harm; I will not commit a murder” (“Funny Stories” 206). In rejecting Yellow Eye’s offer of riches on condition of murder, Edilswag cites no empirical evidence or experiential learning that has taught him that such action would be evil. Instead, he applies the socially loaded term “murder”

to justify his refusal. This implies that he has been told what murder is, has absorbed that definition, and has recognized it in this situation. This is the kind of regulation that Martin proposes should be placed on children's opportunities to learn by experience. Before being turned loose to learn for themselves, children ought to be given a foundational understanding of morality which teaches them that certain kinds of experiments (such as murder) are off-limits.

This is further reinforced by the story told by the dragon that Edilswag eventually meets. It turns out that the dragon was originally a boy just like Edilswag, who was faced with the same temptation, but failed. Upon attempting to commit murder, however, he was cursed and transformed into a dragon ("The Old Dragon's Story" 213-218). This transformation strikes at the heart of Spencer's argument. Spencer claimed that it was rational thinking that first made humans different from other animals and that only rational thinking would continue that evolutionary trajectory. Here, however, Martin makes rational (though mistaken) thinking the cause of a person reverting to a bestial state.

Finally, Edilswag has a very different kind of educational experience at the hands of the dwarfs at the end of the story. This experience follows what Spencer calls a classical education in literature, philosophy, and languages, and which he believes is only ornamental at best and detrimental at worst. Spencer writes that, in this kind of education, the "dicta are received as unquestionable. [The student's] attitude of mind is that of submission to dogmatic teaching" (Spencer 89). Edilswag is told over and over, by his guide Merlin and by the people they visit, that pursuing money will destroy his life. Finally, Edilswag shouts, "Give me not *gold*—give me not *riches*—give me not *wealth!*

Oh! Mighty One, who givest all, give me *contentment*—give me *peace!* fill my heart with *love*—fill my eyes with tears of *sympathy*—fill my mind with *faith and trust in Thee*—and give me a desire for cheerful *industry*, so that the labour of my hands may provide things honest in the sight of men” (“The Old Dragon’s Story” 227-236). And he does not depart from this desire for the rest of his life (236). This, Martin thus argues, is the truest form of moral education. Interestingly, he rejects not just the methods of Spencer’s moral development, but also the ends. Martin sees morality as something that is not inherent in an individual (and thus will be properly discovered by individual experimentation) but as something that must be enforced by society and a proper moral education. Because of this, he hopes not for a rational morality (like Spencer) but for a principled morality, like Kay-Shuttleworth and Arnold.

This form of education, which relies on understanding grand principles before experimenting in specific situations, clearly ties back into Coleridge’s idea of the Vast. Edilswag gains his moral education by getting first a sense of the vast, by seeing the big picture of wealth. When left only to the “constant testimony of [his] senses,” he is in danger of making horribly incorrect choices in the pursuit of wealth. However, once he has this sense of the vast, which the dwarfs and his magical encounters drive into him, he has the proper baseline from which to direct his future decisions.

Through his portrayal of Edilswag, Martin clearly articulates his stance on the power of imagination to drive moral education. This connects well with the educational policy debates that began during this time period. But, Martin was not just participating in an educational conversation with his forays into fantasy. He was also part of the front end of a literary movement that culminated in what some have called the first golden age

of children's literature.

Levy and Mendlesohn write that one of the hallmarks of the movement toward fantasy that characterized this age of children's literature was the writers' collective desire "to create convincing alternative worlds for a culture in which realism increasingly required a separation of spiritual and secular realms" (32). Martin's works in the 1861 edition of *Peter Parley's Annual* make important contributions in delineating what he saw as the realms of fantasy and realism. While Edilswag's story reveals the value of fantasy in inculcating moral values, Martin is careful to make sure that the reader understands that Edilswag's fantastic adventure takes place in a world other than our own—it is all a dream.

The Limitations of Fantasy and Rationalism

While Martin sees and defends the important role of fantasy and imagination in moral education, he also believes that such fantasy must be confined to other worlds, not released into the tangible, rational world we live in. This is how he reconciles emerging rationalism with the power of imagination: he divides them. Kingsley attempts to merge them into an amazing world of rational learning from and among fantastic elements, but Martin believes this is not how fantasy should work. He makes this clear with another piece from the same edition of *Peter Parley's Annual*. This one is entitled "King Arthur" and is purported to be an "authentic account of his life, death, burial, and resuscitation" ("King Arthur" 46). This short historical sketch is the story of King Arthur's life, with all the normal fantastic elements and myths removed from it. It is drawn—Martin claims—from "early British annals" and not from "ridiculous legends" (46). What is the point of rationalizing this popular story and denigrating the folk tales surrounding it? To illustrate

fantasy's proper place: outside of our world. This story stands in contrast to Edilswag's story, marking the limits to fantasy, rather than exploring its merits. That Martin is concerned with both of these things is revealed in the essay portions of "Curious Things," where he explicitly lays out the reasons that fantasy and imagination should not reign in our world, namely because they cause "bigotry and intolerance" (43). Martin's "King Arthur," then, is meant to establish the truth about King Arthur, to combat any bigotry or intolerance that might arise from more imaginative accounts. As Martin himself writes, "It is well for young people to know something authentic about this king, so as not to be led astray by fable and romance" (51).

Indeed, Martin makes a point of disappointing any expectations of fantastic elements the story of King Arthur might naturally promise. The subtitle of Martin's "King Arthur" promises that it will be "an authentic account of his life, death, burial, and resuscitation" ("King Arthur" 46). The most interesting word in that subtitle is certainly "resuscitation." This word seems to promise some kind of miraculous occurrence, such as King Arthur rising from the grave or a promise that he will do so to save Britain someday. However, Martin offers none of this in this sketch. Instead, the "resuscitation" Martin describes is the supposed opening of Arthur's grave during the reign of Richard I for the purpose of putting his bones on display in a shrine. The message is clear, if implicit: the rational, scientific, modern world around us may occasionally seem to promise magic and fantasy, but it will ultimately disappoint. Through this, Martin cleanly separates the world of fantasy from the world we inhabit. This separation is intended to keep the problematic moral effects that Martin ascribes to fantasy from entering into our world while still taking advantage of the moral development that imagination and fantasy

can provide.

This idea—that fantasy literature is a purveyor of both moral development and moral decadence—seems paradoxical, but fits easily in the philosophies that Martin draws upon. Matthew Arnold viewed literature as creating culture through the power of imagination (Birch 28-29). Because fantasy places few, if any, limits on imagination, it follows that fantasy literature would have the greatest power to affect the cultural understanding, which for Arnold was synonymous with moral education. Interestingly, this ties back to the ideas of unregulated experimentation mentioned earlier. Martin feels that the stakes of moral education are too high to allow for unregulated experimentation, and the same applies to fantasy. Because it carries so much imaginative power, fantasy is able to lead to both moral enlightenment and moral confusion, depending upon how it is used. Thus, Martin can both condemn fantasy and use it for moral ends. Perhaps most interesting about this is that he never overtly praises fantasy or even assigns it a positive role. In his essay on the place of imagination in children's literature, the best thing he has to say about fantasy is that some kinds of it do not have adverse effects ("Curious and Funny Things" 39-41). It may only be inferred, based on the fairy tales he wrote, what his views on the positive effects of fairy tales are. Reviewing the fairy tale Martin appends to this essay reveals that he sees the fairy tale, properly conceived of, as an indispensable means for promoting moral education.

So, from which—the rational sketch or the fantastic tale—does Martin believe children will gain the best moral education? From both—as long as they both respect their limits. And it is those limits he hoped to set out in the essay and stories in "Curious Things." For example, in this sketch, Martin shows the difference between rational moral

education and imaginative moral education. Martin uses his rationalized sketch of King Arthur not only to teach historical fact, but also for moral education. For instance, he notes that Arthur, “was not the first good man that suffered from his goodness, nor will he be the last” (48). It is instructive to contrast this moral lesson with that drawn from the tale of Edilswag. The latter establishes a broad moral understanding about the destructiveness of greed. It has as its object a large principle—one Coleridge would likely term part of the Vast. The former, on the other hand, focuses on the real-world consequence of goodness. While its teaching is still a principle which can be applied broadly, it is a narrower, counter-intuitive, experience-based truth that it teaches. According to what Martin exemplifies here, it is only together—through what he calls “the right use of Reason,” accompanied by a broad sense of morality that only imagination and fantasy can create—that a child can be fully morally educated. It is only through this kind of interdependence yet separateness of imagination and reason that Martin believes children can finally acquire “the prizes we should endeavor to win in the great contention of life” (“Distributing the Prizes” 87).

Conclusion

Ultimately, Martin’s work sheds important light on the connections between the beginning of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature and the education reforms of late 19th-century England. Martin’s overt discussions of the education system alongside his wrestlings with both romantic fairy tales and rationalist criticisms of them reveal that for him, the educational and literary debates were about the same thing. By contributing to both conversations, Martin provides a unified way of understanding these educational and literary changes. His place on the front end of the movement towards fantasy makes his

work an interesting window into the various factors that caused, modulated, and enhanced the literary changes. In fact, Martin is an early example of the trend of separating fantastic events from our rational world, which Levy and Mendlesohn claim was a feature of many fantasy writers of the age, such as Lewis Carroll. Levy and Mendlesohn write that this urge toward separation came from the rise of science and secularism. Martin's work supports this, but also reveals how this division can also be connected with changing educational philosophies.

In any case, the fact that Martin is clearly dealing with educational philosophies as part of his fantasy writing strengthens the idea that writers were proactively experimenting with fairy tales and fantasy, and not just producing these stories to fill the empty pages of new magazines, though having empty pages certainly would have created opportunities for such experiments. Deeper research in the area of children's periodical fiction may help uncover a greater understanding of when and how such experimenting took place. As Janice Schroeder has noted, periodical studies can give a different view of how these educational trends developed (Schroeder 680). In this case, children's periodical fiction could offer a more real-time glance into how debates about education and fantasy played out. Exploring a broader range of writers and publications will give a better picture of the details of and relationships between these debates and changes. As understanding deepens, it will likely become clear that the various theses proposed about connections between educational reforms and the beginning of the Golden Age of Children's Literature do not necessarily contradict each other. Indeed, it seems that a variety of economic, cultural, philosophical, and political factors perfectly aligned to produce the literary and educational changes of the late 19th century.

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