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**Childhood in British Literature of the Eighteenth  
Century**

**Bakalářská práce**

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## **Annotation**

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### **Abstract:**

This thesis explores major shifts in the view on childhood during the 18th century and examines the depiction of children in selected works of British juvenile literature of the period: Maria Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) and Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784). In addition, the books are analyzed as educational material presented to children in 18th-century England. The aim is to contextualize the literary works and subsequently, examine them as a reflection of the 18th-century childhood and study their significance in children's development.

**Key words:** childhood, British literature, children's literature, moral tales, animal narrative, 18th century, Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant*, Dorothy Kilner, *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*

## **Anotace**

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### **Abstrakt:**

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá zásadní změny v pohledu na dětství, které nastaly v průběhu 18. století. Následně analyzuje znázornění mladé generace ve vybrané britské literatuře pro děti, která byla napsána v dané době, a to ve sbírce povídek *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) od Marie Edgeworthové a v příběhu *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784) od Dorothy Kilnerové. Díla jsou dále zkoumána jako výukový materiál určený k morální výchově dětí v Anglii 18. století. Cílem je uvést historický kontext daných knih, a poté je analyzovat jako odraz dětství v 18. století a interpretovat jejich roli ve vývoji dětí.

**Klíčová slova:** dětství, britská literatura, dětská literatura, morální příběhy, zvířecí vyprávění, 18. století, Maria Edgeworthová, *The Parent's Assistant*, Dorothy Kilnerová, *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*

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## 1. Introduction

Emerging in the late 20th century, the field studying history of childhood is still evolving. Today, scholars continue to explore the conceptualization of childhood, as well as the effects of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution on education, and the emergence of children's literature. While the juvenile fiction is frequently studied for its morally didactic function, this thesis aims to analyze selected works for their portrayal of childhood, as they are written *for* as well as *about* children. Furthermore, the analysis will be conducted on Maria Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) and Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784, also referred to as *The Mouse*) – two distinct types of juvenile literature composed during the 18th century, a pivotal period in the development of childhood as a concept.

The works will be studied through the lens of New Historicism, which perceives “literary texts as absolutely inseparable from their historical context” (Bertens 2014, 155). Developed in the 1980s among American critics, as a response to New Criticism, the literary theory considers the relationship between literature and the political, social, and cultural environment in which it emerges. The new historicists stress the interconnectedness of history and literature, which functions as “a vehicle for the representation of history” (Brannigan 2001, 170) while also contributing to its development by constructing, reinforcing, or opposing the beliefs and ideologies of the period. As such, the selected literary works will be analyzed for their portrayal of history as well as their function in its development.

The thesis is divided into two main parts with an additional introductory chapter on terminology, which is frequently referred to throughout the study. The first section correlates the major figures, events, and developments, which contributed to the significant shifts in the view on childhood and the subsequent rising parental and social interest in the young generation. Furthermore, it provides a historical contextualization for the literary works analyzed in the following segment, which studies the portrayal of children and their presence in the public and private sphere. A subchapter of each section focusing on literary analysis is dedicated to the function distinguishing the two works as well as contextualizing them in the given era.

The research aims to answer the questions of how the view on childhood shifted in the 18th century, how children are depicted in British juvenile literature of the given period, and how the didactic function is expressed in the selected works. This is done through secondary research, literature review of some of the key scholars who contributed to development of the field concerned with history of childhood, including Philippe Ariès and Hugh Cunningham, the methods of close reading, and a historical contextualization and analysis of selected literary works.

The expected outcome is that the selected works will reflect the 18th-century English society's perception of childhood and provide a deeper understanding of the realities of children's lives during the period. Furthermore, the acquired knowledge of historical background will contextualize the contemporary juvenile literature in terms of its significance, function, and message, allowing for a complex interpretation of the 18th-century children through their depiction in literature and the material presented to them throughout their development.



## 2. Terminology

To understand the main focus of this thesis, it is important to first establish the meaning of the term ‘child’ and the scope of ‘children’s literature’. According to Crawford and Lewis (2008), the term ‘child’ remains vague due to its non-uniform use between and even within different fields. While the law differentiates children from adults primarily based on age, biology divides human life into stages according to physical growth and psychology adheres to cognitive development (Crawford and Lewis 2008, 6-7). This thesis follows the approach of historians, who primarily focus on the concept of ‘childhood’, which is regarded as culture dependent, being defined by the “experiences, attitudes, perceptions, expectations and provisions which are specific to the immature human” (Crawford and Lewis 2008, 7) and are juxtaposed against those of an adult individual. As such, the scope of reference of the term ‘child’ varies based on context. For instance, Cunningham (1990, 118) employs the term to refer to “anyone under fifteen, primarily because one can isolate this group in census figures” analyzed in his study, while others delimit ‘children’ for their lack of capacity for reason (O’Malley 2003, 15) or their dependency, and therefore utilize definitions from other scientific fields such as psychology or biology.

This thesis uses the term ‘children’ for referents in the initial stage of life. The period of infancy tends to be excluded, partly due to infants being either passively depicted, or fully omitted in the 18th-century British literature. Consequently, ‘child’ predominantly refers to individuals from approximately two or three years of age until their independence. The upper boundary will be further determined in the literary analysis, as the state of dependency is a variable and differs among societies, cultures, and even classes and families within a single social group.

Additionally, while ‘children’s literature’ might be used to refer to a wide range of materials of various forms, for the purposes of this thesis, its scope is delimited by the following aspects. First, the term refers to books in a written, physical form and is used interchangeably with ‘juvenile literature’ and ‘children’s books’. Second, the thesis focuses on the development of children’s literature which was written or published in Britain, more specifically in England. Furthermore, the books were originally intended for children and “to entertain [them] at least as

much as to instruct them” (Grenby 2014, 2). Literary texts which were read by children, but not specifically written for them, will be mentioned but not analyzed as examples of juvenile literature. Overall, the age of the target audience is not specified but the studied books “were designed especially for girls and boys, rather than young adults” (Grenby 2007, 277) or fully matured individuals.

### 3. Historical Background

This section introduces the events and people that prompted major shifts in the view on childhood during the studied period and preceding centuries. Attention is given to the influence of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, their effect on formal education, and the subsequent changes in child upbringing and parental methods. The primary goal is to demonstrate society's perception of children as well as their expected role within the household and in the public life, as this is critical for the understanding of depiction of children in the selected works. Furthermore, the 18th-century society's notion of childhood will be relevant for the literary analysis, which primarily focuses on the representation of childhood in the era's juvenile literature.

The second part of this section discusses the evolution of children's literature. First, the segment considers the reasons behind the rise in production of books and other items specifically designed for children and then it explores the objective of the 18th-century juvenile stories. The aim is to connect the function of literature with the contemporary society's understanding of childhood and with the analyzed children's books (i.e. Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant* and Kilner's *The Mouse*). Moreover, in chapter 4, this function will be further demonstrated on the two selected literary works.

#### 3.1. The Evolution of Childhood

To comprehend the major shifts happening throughout the 18th century, the following overview will be divided into four general sections. The first part offers background information on the society's view on childhood and the approach to education preceding the 18th century, more specifically in 17th-century England. The second section acknowledges the importance of Locke's work, which prompted a significant transition regarding behavior towards children. The following part discusses the situation throughout the 18th century, with attention given to Rousseau's ideology. Finally, the last section introduces the changes happening in Industrial England and at the dawn of Romanticism towards the end of the 18th century, which is the central interest of this thesis, and which gives foundation for a special type of children's literature as will be discussed in chapter 3.2.

For centuries before the early modern period (15th to 18th century), childhood was generally not recognized as a separate stage of human life and children were rather regarded as miniature adults. This is evident by the lack of record regarding children as well as their depiction in arts. Philippe Ariès, a French historian whose publication of *Centuries of Childhood* in 1960 raised interest in the history of childhood, concluded that children were regularly being portrayed as simply “men on a reduced scale” (Ariès 1962, 34). Furthermore, the modern understanding of childhood first started to appear during the 17th century when it began to be associated with the first stage of life among certain parts of society. “The idea of childhood [being] bound up with the idea of dependence” (Ariès 1962, 26), however, continued to be present, especially within the lower class – the more dependent.

During the 17th century, children were most frequently said to be born sinful and the responsibility of the parents was to redirect them from their natural inclinations towards evil. This view was based on Calvinism, which strictly associated children with Adam and the original sin. According to Plumb (1975, 70), this widespread religious approach led parents to regard them as beings “whose wills had to be broke,” which prompted the use of autocratic (or authoritarian) parenting style within majority of the English society (Plumb 1975, 66). As such, the children were commonly subjected to harsh discipline and corporal punishment was to be expected in schools as well. Throughout this period, parents typically sent their offspring away for education, service, or employment, which shifted the children’s dependency to somebody different from their parents. According to King (2007, 389), this could be from such a young age as seven years old and while the children’s new teachers, masters, and employers had “the responsibility to feed and clothe them, [they also had] the power to discipline and abuse them” (King 2007, 389). Overall, the use of physical punishment was not unconventional, but rather widely expected, recommended, and sometimes even encouraged by the law (Plumb 1975, 65-66).

Towards the end of the 17th century, the concept of childhood as well as the approach to child rearing began to shift. The publication of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), written by John Locke, an English philosopher and one of the crucial figures of the Enlightenment era, majorly contributed to the way

that children are perceived in the modern age and helped develop the 18th-century society's understanding of childhood. Locke argued that humans were not innately evil (nor good), as had previously been believed, but rather entered the world as *tabula rasa* (Latin for "blank slate") and needed to be educated in order for their character to be shaped. As a result, Locke's work focused on education, which he claimed should "fit man for society, as well as equipping him with learning" (Plumb 1975, 68). While his instructions on the education of children maintained the 17th century's emphasis on morality, the approach shifted from religious education to a social one. As Locke's ideas spread throughout the society – and due to numerous translations not exclusively in England – the view of schools as institutions for the suppression of children's evil tendencies was quickly replaced with the belief that the education system should rather lead them to have a virtuous personal and social life (Ezell 1983-1984, 141), while also preparing them for a productive future employment. As such, Locke's publication was significant for the transformation of education, gradually developing throughout the first half of the 18th century.

Another contribution made by Locke was his critique of the widespread use of corporal punishment. He insisted on children being treated as rational beings and, as Ezell (1983-1984, 152) observes, often compared the 17th-century "educational systems based on corporal punishment as reducing children to the level of cattle" as, similar to animals, it had been believed that children could only be motivated through the infliction of physical pain (Ezell 1983-1984, 152). Locke was against demanding complete submission from students and argued that pain, and the resulting fear, should only be used in instances when any other means have failed. Additionally, the relationship between parents and children began to be altered as well. This was possible due to the children's nature no longer being perceived as evil (Plumb 1975, 70) and Locke's insistence on the plasticity of the child's character, which could be shaped by education and the will of the parents.

Finally, Locke recognized childhood as being a separate, developmental stage of life, which had not been a common belief in the 17th century. Ezell (1983-1984, 152) notes that while Locke referred to children as rational individuals – similar to adults, yet distinct from infants – he warned against treating them the same as fully matured men. Furthermore, Locke encouraged parents to allow their

offspring to remain playful and full of joy during this stage and spoke against “[forcing them] into adult patterns too early” (Ezell 1983-1984, 154). This appeal, along with the other ideas mentioned, would majorly influence the view on childhood as well as the approach to child-rearing and education in the upcoming 18th century.

Another major shift occurred in the second half of the 18th century, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a French philosopher and another significant educational theorist of the Enlightenment, further shaped the European society’s understanding of childhood with his influential book *Emile, or On Education* (1762, also known as *Emile*). In contrast to Locke, Rousseau believed that children were innately good, and it was necessary to “allow their predispositions to emerge and find their natural expression” (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 26). While Rousseau’s claims were radical, by directly opposing the Calvinist principle which saw the human soul as naturally evil, he preserved the idea of sin – by “[shifting it] from soul to society” (Oelkers 2002, 691). He warned against the corrupting influence of society on the character of children and suggested that the role of education is to shield them from harmful outside forces. As such, children should be educated away from society and close to nature, where they could learn freely, “independent from others and [observe] what is immediately around [them] without being disturbed” (Oelkers 2002, 683). The educational process should be adjusted based on the child’s immediate interests to encourage them to discover their own unique character, rather than lead them to be a “part of a national economic or political plan” (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 27), which seemed to be the aim of social education.

To “allow children to naturally develop” (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 26) and thrive in their childhood, Rousseau suggested postponing formal education to the age of twelve. Until then, he proposed a concept of negative education which, rather than instructing and forcing knowledge upon the child, should “prevent vice reaching the heart and errors filling the mind” (Oelkers 2002, 684) of the pupil. During this time, Rousseau emphasized individual learning through experience – children should “exercise their primary senses and directly experience the world around them” (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 26) with the aid, not instruction, of a tutor. As depicted in *Emile*, the primary

educator and protector should be the mother. Ultimately, Rousseau's continuous portrayal of Emile "as naïve and helpless without his mother or tutor" (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 24) introduced the Romantic image of the innocent child that needs to be protected from the dangers of the outside world – a view which has persisted in the modern understanding of childhood and established the expectations for parents' role in their children's upbringing.

Finally, Rousseau expanded on Locke's recognition of childhood as a distinct stage of development. While he also perceived childhood as "a separate stage and unique phase in life which should be cherished and appreciated" (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 26), in contrast to Locke, Rousseau urged for a delay in the start of formal education in order for children to enjoy their first years of life. Furthermore, in addition to Locke's separation of infancy, childhood, and adulthood, Rousseau directly split Emile's growth into several levels, adding "preadolescence, adolescence, and young manhood" (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 26). Rousseau's division of the book into developmental stages, as well as his depiction of a naïve child that needs to be protected, contributed to the society's ultimate departure from the earlier idea of children being miniature adults.

While Rousseau's suggestions majorly affected the parents' approach towards their children, his thoughts on formal education had not been implemented into practice. In contrast, the work of his predecessor, John Locke, had led to an increased interest in education and a subsequent development of the school system in the course of the 18th century. Plumb (1975, 71) notes that between the years 1700 and 1770, there had been a consistent rise in the number of schools in England, and from then on, it accelerated. Evolving from Locke's ideas, the education was primarily social, and therefore, commercial subjects focusing on preparation for future employment were offered to boys, while girls were typically taught social etiquette and proper manners (Plumb 1975, 72). In addition to the regular courses, which included writing, mathematics, navigation, surveying, accounts, sewing, and languages, the schools frequently advertised extracurricular subjects such as dancing, music, and art (Plumb 1975, 72). Since Locke stressed practicality, the implementation of such activities might have been influenced by the past emphasis on classical and religious education, or by Rousseau's views on

the individuality and special interests of each child. Nonetheless, the goal was to target the newly present “affection and sentiment in the family,” (Ben-Amos 2000, 305) which impacted the decisions that parents made regarding their offspring, in hopes of persuading them into sending the children to a specific school. In the end, the changing attitude towards children – which grew within the 18th-century society based on Locke’s and Rousseau’s ideas – the shifting view on human nature and childhood, as well as the advertisement of extracurricular activities, all contributed to the rise of education in England.

It is important to note, however, that the availability of education varied based on the social class of the family and the household’s reliance on child labor. Before the Industrial Revolution (approx. 1760 to 1840), “child employment was perceived by those in authority to be desirable,” (Cunningham 1990, 150) as children were a great financial burden for the family. Additionally, there had been a growing concern about the idleness of children based on the common belief that “habits of work must be learned at an early age,” (Cunningham 1990, 127) present since before Locke’s work, in which he stressed education preparing the pupils for future employment. This concern was rooted in the lack of demand for child employment, especially in the early 18th-century towns. Although children would often be sent away for apprenticeship or service in husbandry, which trained them as well as “[relieved] the family from the burden of support” (Cunningham 1990, 125), typically, this did not occur before the age of fourteen. The gradual rise in education as well as industrialization in second half of the 18th century offered certain relief for some families. The increasingly positive attitude towards formal schooling and the spread of educational facilities created an opportunity for “removing the idle child from the street” (Cunningham 1990, 150) by presenting an alternative occupation for them. Bubíková (2008, 18) argues that the increased reliance on institutional education was also prompted by the growing industrialization, “complicated in terms of technologies,” which made parental home education more challenging and undesirable for a successful future employment of the children. Nonetheless, while an increasing number of middle-class (including the lower-middle class) families were able to pay the minor fee and send their children to school, “[a]mong the poor, the labor of children in their early teens, and the parental reliance on it” (Ben-Amos 2000, 300) persisted, and



even grew in the late 18th century. This continued into the 19th century, when the industrialization became more prevalent and “the gap between middle-class and working-class childhood widened” (Bubíková 2008, 18) even further.

To summarize, the works of Locke and Rousseau majorly contributed to the recognition of childhood as a separate developmental stage, with Locke’s notion of *tabula rasa* prompting a transformation and gradual spread of formal education, while Rousseau’s ideology led towards a significant shift in the parent-child relationship towards affection and protection. Nonetheless, throughout the century, the differences between the lives of children notably grew with the progressing industrialization and the rise of the middle class.

### 3.2. Children’s Literature

To understand what led to the production of literature intended for children, it is necessary to acknowledge the major shifts happening in English society at the dawn of Industrial Revolution, and how it impacted the rise of morally didactic literature. Consequently, the following section starts by an account of the emergence of the middle class and an introduction to the areas of the subsequent demand for educational material intended for children. Finally, attention is given to the transformation of literature throughout the century, particularly towards moral tales and fictional biographies.

The late 18th century is prominent for the emergence of the middle class and a separation of home and family life from the outside world. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution and the rational-, individual- and progress-oriented ideology of the Enlightenment, new thoughts regarding the socioeconomic stratification of the English society started to develop. O’Malley (2003, 2) argues that the main reason for the rise of the heterogenous middle class is their shared ideology and “a desire to differentiate themselves from the classes above them [...] and below them.” The aim was to reform a society made of corrupted aristocracy with inherited fortune, indifferent to debt, and prone to excessive spendings and gambling addictions, and of the idle, immoral poor, who were also inclined to waste money as a way of relaxation in communal activities such as feast-day celebrations, often done in the tavern (O’Malley 2003, 9). In contrast, the middle class believed in a society where the most talented, industrious, self-disciplined,

and educated men will succeed “in the changing marketplace of the industrial revolution” (O’Malley 2003, 8) and improve their socioeconomic status. Additionally, an individual’s public and private life became separated as “a quieter, more moral and domestic form of recreation,” (O’Malley 2003, 9) in the form of spending spare time at home with the family, was promoted. This preference opposed the leisure activities of the working class, while enhancing affectionate familial relationships and setting the home to be “a shelter [and] a haven for family privacy” (Bubíková 2008, 20) for parents, but especially the middle-class children as their attendance of school became more common.

While the shift from agricultural to industrial economy presented new employment opportunities in manufacturing and trade, contributing to the rise of the middle class, it also elevated the production of commercial products, including items for children. According to Plumb (1975, 90), during the late 18th century, “children had become a trade, a field of commercial enterprise,” as the affectionate parents were now willing to invest into items and activities for their children’s enjoyment and entertainment, such as toys and games. The focus on children intensified as they were determined to have a decisive role in the realization of the middle-class ideology and the subsequent reform of society (O’Malley 2003, 5). The idea was to ingrain the virtues of industry, obedience, honesty, benevolence, and self-discipline (O’Malley 2003, 8) into the young generation through the means of education. During this period, education was notably separated into a public and private sphere, both of which sought to create the ideal child. Therefore, in addition to a rise of formal schooling, another form of education emerged, which was to be done at home with the aid of games, toys, and children’s literature, through “most of [which] ran the theme of self-improvement and self-education” (Plumb 1975, 87), encouraging children’s rational thinking and moral development.

The rising interest in children, their entertainment and education, as well as science, due to the progress of the Enlightenment, led to a surge in demand and production of educational toys, games, and books specifically designed for children. Plumb (1975, 87) mentions games such as playing cards presenting children as well as adults with historical, geographical, and classical material. Then, various types of puzzles, such as the jigsaw in the form of maps for

implanting geographical knowledge, or rebus, “popular for teaching spelling and extending the vocabulary” (Plumb 1975, 89). The toy producers, also aiming for usefulness, often put effort into recreating miniature versions of complex mechanical devices, including the watermills, or scientific apparatus. The majority reflected the advanced industrial world where “mechanical ingenuity, electricity and science in general played an active part,” (Plumb 1975, 86) and therefore, offered practical experience which would benefit children in the future.

Furthermore, extra activities became available for children as institutions resolved to provide entertainment and learning opportunities for the younger generations, stimulating their increased presence in public life as part of the newly foregrounded family. Museums, “[expressing] a keen sense of duty to education and children,” (Bickham 2021, 667) introduced family tickets for a reduced price as a way of enticing parents to take their children to visit the exhibitions. Other available attractions included animal zoos, circuses, theater plays, puppet shows, panoramas of cities, concerts, and art exhibitions – most of which provided entertainment, but mainly stressed their educational benefits. Moreover, traveling gained on popularity as a form of practical learning through visits of coal mines, ancient ruins, and sailing on the river or the sea (Plumb 1975, 87). Since this period, children became a part of public space, frequently accompanying their parents who guided them through the vast variety of educational experiences available to them (Bickham 2021, 667). The extent of the parents’ involvement in their children’s development also manifested in a new type of children’s literature which developed in the late 18th century.

Before the rise of the middle-class family and its growing interest in children, their education, and the recognition of childhood as a separate stage of life with distinct needs and inclinations, the English society had not been concerned with producing books specifically designed for children. While literature which could be enjoyed by children or used for their education “had existed from the first days of printing,” (Plumb 1975, 80) books written with the aim to be appealing for young readers and in a way that would hold child’s attention, which is more sporadic than that of an adult and therefore requires the use of a different composition style, first appeared in the middle of the 18th century. According to Grenby (2014, 4), during the late 17th century, Puritan writers unprecedentedly

acknowledged children to be within the target audience of their literary works, as they understood “how effective it could be in furthering their campaign to reform the personal piety of all individuals,” referring to adults as well as the younger generation. Puritan books such as James Janeway’s *A Token for Children: Being An Exact Account Of The Conversion, Holy And Exemplary Lives, And Joyful Deaths Of Several Young Children*, published in 1671, already depicted stories of children as central characters. Other authors often printed the text, written in large letters with wide margins and in a simple language, onto small pages to avoid overwhelming children with too much text (Plumb 1975, 81). However, as the previously mentioned title suggests, rather than being composed for the entertainment of children, the purpose of the books was to teach religious principles and morals, and therefore, would often be used by adults as a tool for the instruction of children. Other types of texts available to children, yet not specifically designed for them, included educational works such as alphabets and grammar books, fables, and chapbooks – an inexpensive form of popular literature.

In 1744, John Newbery revolutionized the book industry when he published *The Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, which came to be known as the first children’s book, and prompted a market that specialized in juvenile literature. As expressed in the extended title, the work aimed to amuse rather than explicitly instruct as Newbery’s books had been influenced by Locke and Rousseau, who both promoted “making education more appealing to children” (Pickering Jr. 1977, 2) and encouraging them to learn through play. This would allow for a subconscious learning, which is more effective and easier for them. Correspondingly, Newbery implemented interactive books which were full of illustrations, rhymes, games, moral tales, behavioral rules, alphabets, and fables (Pickering Jr. 1977, 3) to keep children’s wandering minds interested by offering a wide range of materials. Newbery’s literature became progressively more popular throughout the latter part of the century and the market for juvenile educational works prospered. Books focusing on mathematics, reading, writing, history, geography, science, and natural history (Plumb 1975, 82), while also teaching religion and morals, were constantly being published, resulting in “there [being] no subject, scientific or

literary, that had not its specialized literature” (Plumb 1975, 83-84) depicted in a way suitable for young readers by the year 1780.

During the 1780s, as children’s literature developed into a merged form of entertainment and education, its moral function intensified and grew more prevalent. Although the growing book industry targeted children through text, the publishers aimed to entice parents into purchasing specific works by “[projecting] an image of [...] virtues which [they] wished to inculcate in their offspring” (Plumb 1975, 81). This coincided with the middle-class ideology that committed the late 18th-century parents to raising the new generation into productive, religious, and moral individuals – a goal which the moral juvenile stories helped to achieve as they taught values such as industry, obedience, benevolence, “kindness to animals, and an appreciation of the natural world” (O’Malley 2003, 11). The desired behavior was demonstrated through characters, who frequently represented the archetype of an ideal child, or the contrasting naughty one. The penalty for misbehavior, such as disobedience, indulgence, idleness, or the abuse of animals, was based on Locke who advocated for “critiquing children and instilling a sense of shame of their irrationality” (O’Malley 2003, 14) as a substitution for corporal punishment. This would inculcate a fear of being shamed and rejected for deviating from the norm, discouraging children from participating in socially unacceptable behavior.

Structurally, the late 18th-century moral tales implemented the form of fictional biographies as an individual case study of children, animals, or inanimate objects. While the characters of earlier works typically appeared as adults, with children rarely being mentioned or referred to other than an insignificant initial state of being prior to adulthood, literature addressing children recognized the importance of the division between adult narrator and a childlike protagonist for the moral lessons to be relatable and therefore effective. Since “children, [...] being ‘inherently’ egocentric, can only identify with figures who are like themselves,” (O’Malley 2012, 94) they would not be able to empathize with adult characters being praised or condemned for their behavior. This resulted in narratives that were for as well as about children. In other works, morals were conveyed through items belonging to undeserving children. As Saha (2011, 58) describes, in stories as Mary Ann Kilner’s *The Adventures of a Pincushion* (c. 1783), a form of moral

blackmail is employed as, “if the child strays from his moral path, the object withdraws its affections for the child,” and a correction of unacceptable behavior is required to earn the item back into his possession.

Finally, animal narratives, such as Edward Augustus Kendall’s *Keeper’s Travels in Search of His Master* (1798), or Sarah Trimmer’s *Fabulous Stories; Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals* (1786), depict the world through the mind of a non-human entity, typically a pet, domestic animal, or a small wild creature. While the main goal was to morally “educate children into their full humanity,” (Spencer 2010, 470) the methods to achieve it varied. In some stories, being descendants of Aesop’s fables, the animals directly reflected undesirable human features, resulting in an allegorical reading of the animal itself (Spencer 2010, 471). Another approach aimed to portray non-human creatures as rational beings with feelings, similar to those of the reader, through their subjective narration of events and the humans’ treatment of them. While the animals could explicitly comment on numerous types of improper behavior, a recurring complaint regarded children’s cruelty towards the smaller creatures. Overall, the goal was to stimulate “obedience, sensitivity, a love of nature, and therefore of reason,” (Plumb 1975, 83) and empathy in children, further prompted by a frequent incorporation of first-person narration. Through identification with the abused animals, children were expected to lose the inhumane desire to “[torment] animals and insects with a sense of [pleasure],” (Saha 2011, 58) which both Locke and Rousseau warned against. Therefore, while multiple types of fables appeared in the late 18th century, including allegorical, empathetic, and even simply educational animal biography, the common goal was to instill the values of an ideal child.

Despite the popular use of animal narrative, where non-human creatures adopt certain human characteristics, there was a marked division between fantasy and rational thinking. Indeed, fictional non-human creatures rarely acquired speech and the biographies rather tended to be depicted through their thoughts and feelings. As Spencer (2010, 472) observes, children were warned that “talking animals were a fiction, [while] animals with some form of thinking powers were not.” The belief that fantasy would negatively impact children and the development of their rational thinking originated in the Enlightenment’s emphasis

on reason, education, and moral instruction, which foregrounded didactic literature over the encouragement of imagination through fairy tales. Already in the late 17th century, Locke cautioned against “female servants and their superstitions, ignorance and stories about spirits and goblins,” (Saha 2011, 54) which they inflicted upon young children. During the late 18th century, numerous stories were produced with the ambition to – as was often explicitly stated in the book’s title or introduction – substitute such tales (Saha 2011, 55) with useful moral literature. This shifted during the 19th century with the rise of the Romantic child which emphasized entertainment over strict moral education and encouraged imagination in children “through a combination of the *rational* with the *fantastic*,” (Saha 2011, 59) merging the formerly opposing principles in juvenile literature.

To conclude, the rise of the middle class and the shifting view on the nature of children, resulting in a growing affectionate relationship between parents and their offspring, contributed to the consolidation of family as well as an increased interest in children. With the middle-class ideology, which wished to create a new generation of rational and moral individuals, and the separation of public and private sphere, the emphasis was put on parents to provide “a moral home life and a greater attention to the raising of children” (O’Malley 2003, 10). The rising concern with moral and rational development of children transferred into the production of educational toys, games, and particularly moral juvenile literature – designed for the entertainment as well as instruction of children.

## 4. Literary Analysis

This chapter focuses on the analysis of two distinct types of children's literature written in 18th-century England. First, *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) by Maria Edgeworth will be examined for its depiction of children as well as an example of didactic children's story collection with a distinguishable moral function. This analysis will then be supplemented with Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784), as a representative of the late 18th-century animal narrative. The goal is to determine the portrayal of childhood and lives of children during the period, as illustrated by the selected contemporary authors. Additionally, the function of juvenile literature will be explored for its aim to inculcate moral values into the young generation based on the ideology of the rising middle class.

### 4.1. Maria Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant*

This section focuses on the depiction of childhood in *The Parent's Assistant* (1796), a collection of stories composed by the Anglo-Irish novelist and educator Maria Edgeworth. Representing literature written specifically for as well as about children, the circumstances of the infantile characters can be studied as a reflection of the 18th-century children's lives, especially as – for the purposes of only presenting “such situations [...] as children can easily imagine, and which may consequently interest their feelings” (Edgeworth 1897, 2) – the author commits to produce a realistic background which closely mirrors the late 18th-century life. Consequently, the plot is constructed upon, and as such inevitably incorporates, themes of formal education, child employment, parental instruction, role within the household, and juvenile entertainment. Furthermore, the book can be analyzed as an educational material due to its morally didactic function. Accordingly, the literary work offers an insight into characteristics presented to the young generation as most desirable, while contrasted with disadvantageous, immoral behavior. As such, *The Parent's Assistant* represents the newly developed moral children's literature which, in addition to its portrayal of the ideal child to juvenile readers, can be analyzed for a depiction of childhood and as a reflection of children's lives in the late 18th century.



#### 4.1.1. Childhood in *The Parent's Assistant*

In *The Parent's Assistant*, the stage of childhood is differentiated from adulthood in aspects such as age, dependency, and the emphasis put on children's moral and intellectual education, which is not marked as relevant for the adult characters. The children depicted in the stories vary between the ages of six and thirteen, sometimes being followed into early adulthood to better demonstrate the consequences of their education. The young generation is often regarded with affection from adults of various relations to them. Parental figures, often "very partial" (Edgeworth 1897, 215) or fond of their children, apply terms of endearment such as 'my dear', 'darling', or "my sweet Susan" (Edgeworth 1897, 86). Adults of a less familiar relation might call them 'little boy' or "my patient little fellow," (Edgeworth 1897, 215) as said by a shopkeeper in "Forgive and Forget". Such expressions reflect the growing "affection and sentiment in the family," (Ben-Amos 2000, 305) particular for the 18th century.

While it is evident that children heavily rely on parental instruction in their early moral and intellectual development, the protagonists are predominantly at the age of around twelve, leading to most stories focusing on children's transition towards self-reliance and the effects of their education. As a result, the pedagogic process tends to only be mentioned in the beginning of each story. Nonetheless, the younger children are portrayed as dependent on adults for guidance as well as housing, sustenance, and clothing, ordinarily accompanying them as Rosamond and Laura in "The Birthday Present" or relying on their permission as the two little siblings in "The Basket-Woman". Children of ten years of age and older lean on their caretakers for financial support due to unemployment, as in "Waste Not, Want Not", or while receiving formal education away from home. The oldest juvenile characters gradually become more independent as they had acquired sufficient knowledge, habits, and skills to pursue experience in the real world. The dividing age for children's dependency on adult instruction and finance is apparent in "The False Key", where Franklin receives formal education between the ages five and thirteen, after which he is sent to "begin the world for [himself]" (Edgeworth 1897, 55) as a servant. Along with the morals acquired by the 13-year-old Sophy in "The Mimic", which immunize her against susceptibility to vanity, and the experience of 12-year-old Pedro in "The Little Merchants"

demonstrating that “[i]t is not easy to get rid of a bad character” (Edgeworth 1897, 385) once it is developed, this implies that the critical developmental stage for education ends around the age of twelve.

Children, particularly of poor families, are shown to be employed in various forms of labor, either for the purpose of gaining experience, or to provide the household with financial aid or contribution to the family business. In “Lazy Lawrence”, the 12-year-old Jem seeks employment to help his mother with rent and becomes successful in selling flowers and shells, weeding, and mat-making. Similarly, when her mother is unable to work due to sickness, the namesake of “Simple Susan” evokes surprise by mastering the skill of baking a remarkably fine bread as “a young girl [of] only twelve years old,” (Edgeworth 1897, 94) possibly implying that such occupation might have been unusual at this age. In “The White Pigeon”, Brian tends to the family shop as an act of gratitude towards his parents and a way of preparation for future employment. Alternatively, in “The Orphans”, the 12-year-old Mary is forced to assume the role of the primary breadwinner and to take care of her younger siblings after their mother’s death. She earns money by spinning, needlework, and later, due to her own ingenuity, through shoemaking. Her 8-year-old brother Edmund finds small employments such as leading carthorses and going on errands (Edgeworth 1897, 6) before entering service at the age of twelve. Their little sisters are only able to contribute by berry picking, offering minor help at the paper-mills, and assisting Mary. Additionally, while “The Little Merchants” is set in Italy, the story recounts numerous work opportunities for “children of all ages” (Edgeworth 1897, 373) as a way of raising them to be industrious and to prevent troublesome behavior of the idle in public, (Cunningham 1990, 148) consequently presenting them to the youth of England. Here, children can be employed as young as two years old in “gathering up the chips and pieces of wood; or by the seaside, picking up sticks,” (Edgeworth 1897, 373) seashells, and such, which are later sold at a market where older children trade sweets, fish, and produce from the family garden. In the end, the numerous employments available to the young generation are comparable in their positive impact on children’s character, habits, ability to contribute to the family income, and their growing independence, as they are typically allowed to keep at least a percentage of the earnings.

In addition to relieving the family of financial burden by employment, children could also be useful within the household where each child, but especially the eldest one, typically assumes certain role with a set of responsibilities. As household maintenance was expected from women rather than men, such duties are most effectively demonstrated in “Simple Susan”, where the young girl prepares meals for her family, tends to the garden by “raking the beds or weeding the borders,” (Edgeworth 1897, 80) feeds domestic animals, and takes care of a beehive, while also being in charge of cleaning the cottage and picking up her younger brothers from school. Similarly, the oldest sister in “The Orphans” is said to be “doing all that was to be done in the house” (Edgeworth 1897, 8) along with working the entire day to financially provide for her little siblings. Notably, while both Susan and Mary are employed at home, young boys are more likely to “work out of doors” (Edgeworth 1897, 11). Therefore, rather than tending to the family home, boys might be sent away into service, where they are expected to contribute to another household as well as to “be faithful and obedient to [their] mistress” (Edgeworth 1897, 55) or master, in exchange for having an accommodation, being fed, and gaining experience for their future employment. Such occurrence is depicted in “The False Key”, where two young boys become servants at around thirteen years of age – common time for entering service during the 1790s (Cunningham 1990, 123). Ultimately, the expectations set within the household reflect the contrasting roles of men and women in the 18th-century society.

Due to the nature of the book, all of the stories are centered around the theme of education, which children receive in a variety of forms, largely depending on the family’s financial situation and the availability of educational institutions in the area. Although formal schooling was yet to be accessible to everyone, *The Parent’s Assistant* illustrates the changing environment of the 18th-century society’s approach to education as numerous different institutions are mentioned throughout the book and often even made available to the children of the poor. In “The Orphans”, a small private school is mentioned which, despite being “in a neighbouring village” (Edgeworth 1897, 6) and requiring an annual fee, is attractive for offering practical instruction for young girls, particularly on how to do needlework. A dame-school, an institution intended for the youngest boys and girls, appears in “Simple Susan”. Here, children are introduced to the three R’s –

reading, writing, and arithmetic, which are skills regularly emphasized throughout the book as an indication of respectable character and industrious nature. Good-humored children such as Susan or Franklin in “The False Key” show the highest resolve to perfect these abilities and are often put into contrast with mischievous or wicked characters who, for example, “[do] not know how to cast up pounds, shillings, and pence” (Edgeworth 1897, 64). Another type of educational institution is a boarding school, which becomes the setting for “The Barring Out” and “The Bracelets”. Each of them accepts about twenty to thirty pupils but, while Dr. Middleton in the first story only educates boys, Governess Villars disciplines girls of various ages. The boarders are housed, fed, and even provided with monthly allowance, along with receiving an education in grammar, dictionary, history, and other useful subjects. Alternatively, public schools such as Eton College, which are commonly attended by the elite, offer classical education including the study of Latin and Greek (Edgeworth 1897, 307). Such schools are portrayed as less desirable as they lack in practicality and mainly appeal to individuals brought up in favor of extravagant lifestyle and wastefulness, as is evident in “Eton Montem”. Nonetheless, formal education is overall marked for its positive impact on children, their intellectual development, and preparation for future employment.

An individual form of private instruction, where a governess or master oversees the education of a single child, is also represented in the book. In “The Little Merchants”, Francisco is rewarded for his good conduct and eagerness to gain knowledge (Edgeworth 1897, 401) by being offered an education on the advanced skills of trigonometry and the drawing of architectural designs. Nonetheless, such type of instruction was more frequent among the upper class, as is evident in “The Birthday Present”, where a governess is assigned to educate and wait upon Bell, the daughter of an affluent family. Similarly, in “Eton Montem”, Louisa offers to assume the role of a tutor for the 6-year-old daughter of a noblewoman. In contrast with other types of formal education, this form seems to include certain risks as the tutor has a more intimate contact with the pupil and therefore, greater influence on their moral development.

Contrary to formal schooling, home education and its effects are present in every story – primarily as the instruction of parents or other caretakers, but also through

the influence of maids, servants, and casual acquaintances. The growing interest in education and the self-appointed obligation of parents to educate their children, particularly into moral and rational adults, is reflected in the book. Noticeably, parental influence has a major impact on the development, morals, and behavior of their offspring. This is evident in “Forgive and Forget”, where Mr. Grant teaches his son to forgive others for their mistakes or mischief, which he proves to have adapted repeatedly throughout the story. In “Waste Not, Want Not”, the difference in the early education of two 10-year-old boys is demonstrated. While Ben had been taught not to be wasteful, yet still be generous to others, his cousin follows his father’s example and the belief that “gentlemen should be above being careful and saving,” (Edgeworth 1897, 231) which eventually leads to his misfortune. The common belief that “unruly children who later became immoral, lazy adults [are] products of poor parenting” (Bickham 2021, 662) manifests in “Lazy Lawrence”. Due to his constant state of intoxication, Lawrence’s father is not able to properly educate his son and, as a result, “[brings] him up in idleness,” (Edgeworth 1897, 52) steering Lawrence towards gambling and participation in theft. Therefore, a child’s character and fate appear as heavily dependent on the nature and habits of the parents.

Although early domestic upbringing is often decisive for the manners of a child – and perceived as such, as shown by the townspeople’s apprehension of Lawrence’s character and Mrs. Pomfret’s prejudice in “The False Key” against the son of an infamous man, as children “take after their own fathers and mothers” (Edgeworth 1897, 57) – there is a possibility for their improvement. After the experience of guilt, being “tormented by that most dreadful of all kinds of fear,” (Edgeworth 1897, 45) and generosity from the person whom he had hurt, Lawrence changes his demeanor and becomes profoundly industrious. Similarly, Franklin convinces Mrs. Pomfret that due to his “desire to learn and to do everything that [is] right” (Edgeworth 1897, 55) with the instruction of his schoolmaster, he had been able to become a respectable character. As is apparent, however, great motivation, determination, and perseverance are needed for such refinement.

As a result, *The Parent’s Assistant* addresses children as well as parents, warning them against neglecting the duty of providing their offspring with good education.

This is perhaps most evident in “The Little Merchants” where Pedro, whose “father encouraged him in cheating when he was *but a child*,” (Edgeworth 1897, 428) experiences great difficulty at overcoming this habit and in the end, is sent to prison for participation in robbery as an adult. The futility of his struggles against his predetermined fate is emphasized by the “temptations which he had not the firmness to resist [as his] old manner of thinking recurred” (Edgeworth 1897, 388) despite prospering after being given a second chance. Francisco’s contrasting achievements then further highlight the importance of a virtuous and honest way of upbringing.

Another contribution that parents make to children’s development is through their choice of servants, companions, and even casual acquaintances which they allow near the impressionable childish mind. Edgeworth’s concern regarding poorly selected servants, who “adversely affect child development” (Saha 2011, 55) by their proximity to children and the ensuing exposure to their fantastical oral tales, irrationality, and uneducated character, is reflected in her juvenile literature. Miss Barbara’s maid in “Simple Susan” represents the servants’ love for gossip, while the staff in “The False Key” as well as the servants of Hal’s family in “Waste Not, Want Not” encourage extravagance and wastefulness. Then, a gentleman’s servant in “The Basket-Woman” engages in deception, theft, and wrongful indulgence. Undoubtedly, their nature is best observable in “The Birthday Present”, where the spoiled 8-year-old Bell is taught “a total disregard of truth” (Edgeworth 1897, 160) by her maid who proves to be dishonest and misleading towards others. Edgeworth (1897, 160) even interrupts the narration to explicitly warn against “[t]he habits of tyranny, meanness, and falsehood, which children acquire from living with bad servants” and which overtake their malleable minds during the fundamental period in their development.

Similarly, parents are advised to carefully select with whom they associate, as even a brief interaction with individuals of bad character might severely impact their children’s manners and way of thinking. In “The Mimic”, Edgeworth introduces Mrs. Tattle who manipulates the impressionable minds of the Montague children into shallow vanity and love of extravagance and diversion. This is done through her repeated efforts of superficial flattery towards the two youngest siblings, whose “powers of reasoning” (Edgeworth 1897, 278) had not

fully developed and therefore become egoistic and vain due to her praise. Mrs. Tattle's ill-natured conduct is further highlighted through her love of gossip and ridicule of kind-hearted people such as Mr. Eden. Overall, Edgeworth stresses that a quick exchange can mislead children in their idea of "the objects of human happiness [and introduce] a false notion of the nature of society [...] and false opinions of characters," (Edgeworth 1897, 273) therefore proclaiming such interactions to be just as harmful to children's education as prolonged exposure to bad-natured or irrational individuals.

Finally, while the emphasis is unequivocally put on the initial stage of life being filled with moral development and practical skills through the means of education and employment, several ways of children's entertainment in which they could engage in their free time are also mentioned in the book. In "Lazy Lawrence", Jem participates in the game of cricket but only once he finishes his expected duties at work and at home (Edgeworth 1897, 34). The foregrounding of labor is transparent when Jem forgoes this free time activity in the interest of employing himself by building a mat. During the evening in "The Bracelets", the pupils are allowed to play in the garden, which leads them to take part in the game of ninepins, threading the needle, and circle dancing. Even the advocates of the maxim "Waste Not, Want Not" participate in games such as jack straws, cat's cradle, and bow and arrow, implying certain level of usefulness and practicality in terms of education. Other games mentioned include playing with a ball or marbles, flying a kite, and battledore and shuttlecock – a game similar to modern badminton. Nonetheless, as is evident from the ostracization of indulgent and wasteful characters in the stories, Edgeworth "disapproved of the growing indulgence of parents towards their children, particularly the waste of money on useless toys" (Plumb 1975, 91). As such, the mentions of toys are noticeably rare and restricted in their significance to the plot, typically only appearing in the background.

To conclude, *The Parent's Assistant* portrays childhood as a separate stage of life, particularly through a division between the critical period for children's moral and intellectual development and their immersion into the outside world, often by entering employment and gaining useful experience. Throughout the book, the importance of formal but especially parental instruction is emphasized, primarily

through the depiction of children's acquired character and habits, which either lead to prosperity, or misfortune. Overall, education and employment, as a method of obtaining practical knowledge, appear as the most dominant aspects in the life of children in 18th century, marked by their recurring central role in the narratives while being notably contrasted against the inclusion of juvenile entertainment.

#### 4.1.2. Pedagogical Value of *The Parent's Assistant*

Due to the 18th-century society's growing focus on children's moral and cognitive development, *The Parent's Assistant* can be studied as an educational material used by parents for instruction and "the destruction of the 'untamed' naughty child" (Saha 2011, 57). The readers are introduced to characters juxtaposed in their education, habits, and actions which get categorized into honorable qualities – reflecting the values desired to be instilled in children by the middle-class parents (Plumb 1975, 81) – and behaviors marked as immoral or unfavorable. The division is often indicated through author's notes and an individual's acquired reputation among the background characters – as, for instance, the "Simple Susan" heroine being praised as "the most industrious little creature [...] in the world" (Edgeworth 1897, 95) and Lawrence being publicly judged for his idleness – and finally overtly revealed in the conclusion of each story where virtuous characters are rewarded, and the wrongdoers punished. As such, the narratives attempt to motivate children towards specific principles while also showing a "representation of what they are to avoid," (Edgeworth 1897, 4) and therefore displaying a fundamental didactic function.

The characters portrayed as bad-natured exhibit signs of laziness, indulgence, wastefulness, gambling, and other types of immoral behavior including deception and theft. Tendency towards idleness persistently appears as the foundation of immorality and misconduct, reflecting the 18th-century English society's concerns of "idleness [being] a major problem" (Cunningham 1990, 126). For instance, the namesake of "Lazy Lawrence" devotes his days to wandering around "without knowing what to do with himself," (Edgeworth 1897, 36) which eventually leads him into a company of questionable characters, who encourage him to partake in gambling and the act of stealing, to settle his subsequent debts. To demonstrate the wickedness of such actions, the offenders are ultimately exposed, publicly



shamed, and imprisoned. Similarly, Piedro in “The Little Merchants” navigates life “[sleeping] away his time in a fishing-boat, [acquiring] habits of idleness,” (Edgeworth 1897, 375) as he is educated into believing in the superiority of deception of customers over hard work. Consequently, Piedro tricks others into purchasing stale fish, undermeasures the produce, and eventually turns to stealing little Rosetta’s collected wood for his own profit. The boy’s trickery is invariably revealed, resulting in the boy being “hissed and hooted out of the market-place,” (Edgeworth 1897, 399) which progressively reduces his opportunities to earn a living. Finally, Piedro is pressured into becoming a burglar which inevitably leads to his confinement. Therefore, the education and practice of idleness unfolds a multitude of other negative habits which prove to be harmful for one’s future.

Notably, the young readers are continually deterred from criminal activity, as the perpetration of theft, including attempted robbery, is always revealed and strictly punished. For instance, in “The Barring Out”, Fisher’s dishonest appropriation of money for his own purposes leads him to a wrongful purchase of tinderbox and candles in the name of De Grey, an unaware participant. Ultimately, Fisher’s participation in theft and deception results in his permanent suspension from the boarding school and all his classmates “[turning] away with contempt” (Edgeworth 1897, 346). Comparably, thieving mature characters are either dismissed from their current employment – as Mr. Hopkins in “The Orphans” assuming ownership of money, which is not rightfully his – or sent to jail in the same manner as Mr. Cox and his accomplices in “The White Pigeon” for an abduction of a pet bird and attempted robbery. Overall, the irreversible and shameful consequences of theft emphasize its immorality and aim to discourage children from committing crime.

The recurring inclusion of profligacy among the less honorable characters reflects the middle-class ideology which regards “the overindulgence of the wealthy [with hostility]” (O’Malley 2003, 2). While extravagance tends to be perceived as a “sign of a generous disposition” (Edgeworth 1897, 231) by members of the upper class and the ill-educated servants, the readers are made aware of its redundancy and wasteful nature, frequently through a simultaneous positive portrayal of generosity towards others. In “The Birthday Present”, when her new expensive cuffs fail to receive the attention and admiration which she desires, Bell falls into

despair and destroys the fabric, revealing her dependency on external validation. Meanwhile, Mr. Talbot in “Eton Montem” proves one’s ability to be elected for honest and principled nature (Edgeworth 1897, 212) despite being ridiculed for his refusal to wear a luxurious attire for the event as his fellow candidates. Comparably, Hal’s uniform in “Waste Not, Want Not” transpires to be redundant, overlooked, and paradoxically disadvantageous in his pursuit of victory. The boy’s uniform allows him to participate in a march which results in Hal falling “in his green and white uniform, into the treacherous bed of red mud,” (Edgeworth 1897, 252) immediately ruining the dress and forcing him to nearly miss the competition itself. Furthermore, the attire fails to provide sufficient warmth which causes Hal’s fingers to be so numb that “he could scarcely feel how to fix the arrow in the string” (Edgeworth 1897, 256) during the race. Therefore, displays of extravagance are shown to be superficial, inessential, and often even damaging.

The harmfulness and shortcomings of immoral habits are further highlighted by the presence of juxtaposed principled characters – displaying values of industry, honesty, economy, forgiveness, and generosity – who get rewarded for their good conduct. The recurring theme of industry appears most prominently in “Lazy Lawrence” which follows the fate of a 12-year-old Jem counterposed against that of his idle friend Lawrence. An eagerness to work and kindness towards others are sufficient for securing Jem with various employment opportunities, which he seeks due to his desire to financially help his mother with rent. Initially, after showing determination to find a worker’s lost crystal, Jem is rewarded with fossils which he can sell for profit. Later, due to his ingenuity and perseverance, Jem develops a skill of building mats which are then sold by his mistress to repay the young boy for his industry. In the end, despite having been told that he “[has] no chance, such a little fellow as [he is],” (Edgeworth 1897, 33) Jem is granted enough employments to earn the money that he needs – all due to his determined application and industry.

By opting for honesty over tempting momentary benefits of concealing the truth, the characters establish a favorable reputation which proves to have positive effects over time. In “The Orphans”, Edmund admits to not finishing the task which he was given due to his lack of patience. While the immediate consequence is being reprimanded for his actions, Edmund is then fully trusted in the future as

his employer knows that “he would not tell a lie to save himself from being scolded” (Edgeworth 1897, 12). Additionally, the orphans are gifted a house for honorably submitting coins which they had found on someone else’s property. Similarly, Francisco in “The Little Merchants” fails to make a sale for revealing a bruised side of a melon to potential buyer but gains a loyal customer who trusts to be warned “if it is not as good as it looks” (Edgeworth 1897, 382) the next time he wishes to make a purchase. Finally, in “The White Pigeon”, Brian confesses to accidentally breaking a window in spite of expecting to be punished for it. Instead, the boy is forgiven and rewarded with a white pigeon for his integrity. Therefore, although honesty might appear as disadvantageous in the given moment, the positive long-term effects demonstrate its moral superiority.

Finally, while wastefulness is undesirable, generosity and kindness towards others is presented as an indication of good nature. In “The Orphans”, the kind-hearted Mary provides a beggar with food as she is “sorry to see such an old woman in such a wretched condition,” (Edgeworth 1897, 19) despite her seemingly undeserving nature as she admits to having purchased whisky and cigars over tending to her hunger. In “The Birthday Present”, the motives for giving to others are discussed. While Rosamond is called wasteful for spending time and money on an impractical basket and gifting it to her cousin based on social expectations, Laura’s discreet charity towards the poor demonstrates the honorable nature of generosity as she is willing to part with something for the benefit of others without desire to be praised for her actions (Edgeworth 1897, 167). Comparably, Ben in “Waste Not, Want Not” opts to purchase a coat for an underprivileged young man instead of an elegant uniform for himself. Lastly, in “Forgive and Forget”, Maurice exhibits his charitable character as he shares tulip roots, which have been gifted to him, with Arthur. Moreover, Maurice is being generous towards the boy who shortly before admitted to accidentally causing damage to his garden and therefore, displays capacity for forgiveness. To conclude, the virtue of generosity is repeatedly discussed and attributed to protagonists representing individuals of honorable disposition.

Overall, while good-natured characters continuously prosper and benefit from their respectable conduct, negative traits and habits are shown to intensify throughout one’s life and elicit more harmful behaviors, eventually leading to a

dismissal or conviction. As such, idle characters might succumb to deception, gambling, and theft before being sent to jail, while others continue to be rewarded for their industry, honesty, economy, generosity, and forgiveness. Ultimately, through resolutions favorable to children of virtuous disposition, particularly when juxtaposed with immoral characters, the young readers are motivated towards socially and morally conforming behavior, while being discouraged from participating in habits such as indulgence, deception, and idleness.

With the contrast between good-natured and immoral character being central to *The Parent's Assistant*, the author occasionally interrupts the narrative to overtly emphasize positive effects or wickedness of certain behaviors via interaction with the audience. For instance, the tale of "The Little Merchants" is paused to explicitly state that Pedro's habitual trickery has "inevitable consequences" (Edgeworth 1897, 399) and as such, his unlucky fate is predetermined for everyone with same inclinations. In "Lazy Lawrence", Edgeworth magnifies the wickedness of Lawrence's actions by addressing the young reader with: "We are almost afraid to go on. The rest is very shocking. Our little readers will shudder as they read." (Edgeworth 1897, 44) and evoking fearful anticipation in them. Additionally, the direct correlation between idleness and theft is emphasized, particularly by using the phrase "the idle boy" (Edgeworth 1897, 44) when discussing Lawrence's fate. Furthermore, several proverbs are repeated throughout the book to highlight values such as truthfulness and prudence. The saying "honesty is the best policy" (Edgeworth 1897, 34) appears in "Lazy Lawrence" as well as "The Little Merchants". Alternatively, Farmer Price's favorite proverb in "Simple Susan" is "truth is the truth, and it is what I think fittest to be spoken at all times," (Edgeworth 1897, 86) highlighting the importance of integrity in a similar manner. The title of "Waste Not, Want Not" refers to respectability of economy, temperance, and the avoidance of profligacy, while "Forgive and Forget", a proverb frequently repeated throughout the story by Maurice and his father, praises forgiveness and disregards spitefulness. Finally, "[n]othing *truly* great can be accomplished without toil and time" (Edgeworth 1897, 41) is uttered in "Lazy Lawrence", mirroring Jem's perseverance in mastering the skill of mat-making despite numerous failed attempts. Therefore,

via the inclusion of proverbs and author's notes, the book's moral instruction becomes exceedingly explicit.

In addition to aiding in the ethical development of children due to its didactic function, the book also follows the practice prevalent in the late 18th-century juvenile literature in terms of structure, with the exception of letter size and the amount of text on a single page. Each story is accompanied by illustrations depicting crucial moments and central characters, assisting in the instruction of children as visual representation elevates engagement with the reader (Saha 2011, 57). Furthermore, the literary work adheres to children's limited ability to maintain focus as it consists of short tales, longer accounts divided into chapters, and two plays, "Old Poz" and "Eton Montem", which can be re-enacted by the readers. The story "Simple Susan" is prefaced by an excerpt from John Dryden's poem, while James Thomson's work appears in "Tartlon" and "The Barring Out", with the patriotic song "Rule, Britannia!" (1740). Furthermore, a single original song is featured in "Eton Montem", while other narratives mention popular proverbs, resulting in a blend of diverse but interactive materials, "[aiding] the child's learning and experience" (Saha 2011, 54) by providing a fusion of education with entertainment.

To conclude, in addition to the portrayal of childhood and lives of children during the 18th century, *The Parent's Assistant* has a significant didactic function. As an educational material, the book aids parents in moral instruction of the young generation, instilling values such as honesty, generosity, economy, forgiveness, and industry. Through the incorporation of shameful punishment for unprincipled behavior, the juvenile readers are discouraged from criminal activity, deception, idleness, and indulging in unnecessary extravagance. The contrast between moral actions and wickedness is further expressed through author's notes and the inclusion of proverbs which, along with the diverse structure of the book, notably aims to attract young readers, while accounting for their restricted attentiveness.

## 4.2. Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*

This section provides literary analysis of a fictional animal biography named *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784), which was written by Dorothy Kilner, an English writer of children's books. As an animal narrative, the literary work represents a popular subtype of 18th-century literature written for children. While the main focus is to stimulate empathy in the readers and discourage them from tormenting other living creatures, *The Mouse* repeatedly depicts early parental education with the use of punishment as a disciplinary measure, which are crucial aspects of children's lives not emphasized in *The Parent's Assistant*. As such, the fictional biography provides an additional perspective on parental upbringing and allows for an exploration of shame as a method of punishment, while instilling moral values and prompting children towards rational thinking.

### 4.2.1. Childhood in *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*

In *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*, the boundary between childhood and maturity is predominantly defined by dependency, as the age of the backgrounded juvenile characters is frequently unspecified. Commonly, the narrator, a fictional mouse named Nimble, refers to members of the youngest generation as 'little girl' or 'little boy' without explicitly stating their age. Nonetheless, the children whose age is revealed range between two and thirteen years old, with the youngest one mentioned being a 5-month-old infant. While younger characters tend to be addressed or referred to with terms of affection such as 'my dear', 'love', and "the dear little soul" (Kilner 1851, 63) indicating a separate stage from adulthood, the predominant ambiguity of age, although allowing for an application of the characters' actions to all juvenile readers, conceals the dividing line between youth and adulthood. Furthermore, it highlights dependency as a critical element of childhood since every young character in *The Mouse* appears as reliant on parents for livelihood, instruction, or both.

Children's dependency on parental instruction and provision of basic necessities, present even among the eldest juvenile characters such as James, punished for tormenting animals by his father exposing him to the same treatment, or William, whose father oversees his moral development and has the ability to prevent him from receiving breakfast, is overtly expressed by Mrs. Artless near the beginning

of the narrative. When reprimanding Anne for her mistreatment of the nurse, she reminds her that much like an infant, who is “unable [...] to help itself, were [the adults] to neglect attending to it,” (Kilner 1851, 29) the young girl lacks resources to provide herself with food and clothing, while also having insufficient knowledge or ability to make a fire, maintain the house, or even close the windows (Kilner 1851, 30). Such reliance on parents’ aid and finances is evident in the majority of families encountered by Nimble, as the children are unemployed, with William only being given the opportunity to, “for one day, know what it is to work hard,” (Kilner 1851, 74) as punishment for his mischief. Overall, this might be due to the book’s focus on upper-class families, noticeable by regular presence of servants, the houses being “every way surrounded with [...] a brick wall” (Kilner 1851, 54) and therefore more challenging for the mice to enter, and the cupboards being richly filled with goods, especially when contrasted against the single poor family’s cottage, where the mice initially “find nothing except a few crumbs of bread and cheese” (Kilner 1851, 57) and a candle. As represented by Tom, who seems to have same employment as his father, based on their identical schedule, the children of the poor are more likely to work. Nonetheless, Nimble predominantly depicts young individuals who are fully dependent on parents for financial support.

Furthermore, the children are shown to rely on adults for moral development, as they regularly correct their behavior and lead them towards understanding the immorality or irrationality of certain acts. The pedagogical process depicted in the book is habitually triggered by a child’s exclamation or actions, which are deemed inappropriate by an adult. The offenders are then shamed for the absurdity of their behavior or fears – utilizing Locke’s idea of “[s]hame as a mechanism for regulating the behavior of children” (O’Malley 2003, 14) – and subsequently, by reason led towards understanding the irrationality of their reactions. Mrs. Artless repeatedly refers to her daughter’s fear of mice as “highly ridiculous” (Kilner 1851, 19) and foolish throughout her explanation of the size and power imbalance between humans and the small creatures, which are more likely to be hurt rather than to cause harm themselves, and the folly of fearing animals when there is no indication of danger. Similarly, Charles is rebuked by his father for being a “wicked, naughty, cruel boy” (Kilner 1851, 47) who takes pleasure in cruelty

towards animals. Then, the boy is told how torture of harmless living beings mirrors one's character, being "a sure sign of a *bad* heart," (Kilner 1851, 49) as they discuss the distinction between killing and tormenting animals. Finally, a gentleman voices that "[he] can never have a good opinion of [his son]" (Kilner 1851, 81) again, after he violates his promise and quarrels at school. He then proceeds to clarify why "it shows a much nobler spirit to *pardon* than to *resent*" (Kilner 1851, 82) an injury to feelings. Overall, children's dependency on parental instruction is emphasized by the recurring contrast between a naughty child and rational parent who – through an educational process which seems to stem from Rousseau's examples of "behavioural problem solving" (MacDonald, Rudkowski, and Schärer 2013, 25) – leads the child towards correcting their manners.

Despite shame and reason being used as a primary didactic strategy, the adult characters might implement additional disciplinary measures to ensure that the wrongdoers comprehend the wickedness of their actions. Therefore, children are reproached for behavior which is considered to be irrational, such as belief in the necessity of violence to resolve dispute or Anne's prideful treatment of servants based on her view that "because they are rather poorer, they are not so good as [her]," (Kilner 1851, 31) for which she is put in the corner, shamed, and refused to be served. Meanwhile, cruel and unprincipled actions are punished more severely, as is apparent when William intentionally mixes different types of grain to amuse himself on others' sorrows. Consequently, he is denied breakfast before correcting his mischief and forced into work in hopes of becoming "a better judge [...] of the fatigue and labor of it" (Kilner 1851, 71) in the future. Moreover, Charles receives physical punishment to suffer the torture which he inflicted on a mouse due to him being bigger and more powerful. His father "[gives] him [...] some severe strokes with his horsewhip" (Kilner 1851, 51) to demonstrate that the smaller creature feels pain as he does. Therefore, with shame being the dominant tool for punishing improper behavior, additional consequences such as corporal discipline might be applied for children to experience the effects of their actions.

To conclude, childhood in *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* is primarily marked by dependency, as the young characters rely on adults for livelihood as well as education towards becoming moral and rational individuals. As such, the parents have the power to punish foolish or wicked behavior, which is frequently



done through shame and the infliction of the same actions upon the children themselves.

#### 4.2.2. Pedagogical Value of *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*

As the central sequence of events is related to the reader by a non-human entity, *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* represents late 18th-century children's literature in the form of fictional biography, particularly as an animal narrative of a mouse. Throughout the story, Nimble exhibits human-like feelings and partial capacity for rational thinking, even acquiring the faculty of speech when addressing the frame narrator. First, the animal narrator is able to contemplate the irrational and wrongful behavior of children which he encounters, including the negative outcomes of deceptive tendencies and the absurdity of human's actions although they are "blest with understanding and faculties so superior to any species" (Kilner 1851, 121). Additionally, the brothers recurrently reflect on their mother's advice as they navigate life while learning from experience, further revealing their "natural intelligence that [makes] them, [...] not superior nor even equal to humans, but significantly like them" (Spencer 2010, 473). Second, Nimble expresses the intensity of their fear by phrases such as "[t]errified almost out of our senses," (Kilner 1851, 67) or by describing their rapid heartbeats when faced with danger. Moreover, the small creatures' sadness manifests through the use of expressive adjectives and other evocative expressions, as in "our hearts being almost broken with anguish," (Kilner 1851, 54) as well as detailed descriptions of tragic events, resulting in evoking empathy and the feeling of grief in the reader.

Finally, the small rodent obtains ability to speak, which is particular for only being expressed outside of Nimble's story, as he decides to address the human frame narrator. While talking animals display an additional human-like feature, Kilner assures the readers that speech in mice is an added fantastical element for the amusement of children and she, "*in earnest*, [...] never heard a mouse speak in all [her] life," (Kilner 1851, 11) adhering to the late 18th-century's division between reason and fantasy. Overall, the animal narrative of a mouse with human-like thoughts and feelings aims to "[urge] child readers to recognise that animals

[have] feelings similar to their own,” (Spencer 2010, 475) resulting in children’s identification with the small creature and evoking empathy.

Notably, the animal narrative has dual character as it aims to stimulate compassion in the reader, while also instilling the virtues of the ideal child (Spencer 2010, 482) such as honesty, generosity, kindness, and forgiveness. Children’s identification with Nimble due to his portrayal of human-like qualities “was expected to lead to better treatment of [animals],” (Spencer 2010, 476) due to enhanced feeling of empathy for the small creatures. Throughout the story, the reader is aware of Nimble’s persistent fear of cats and humans, particularly of being “tormented by the cruel hands of unthinking children,” (Kilner 1851, 90) after witnessing the death of his brother Brighteyes. After Charles’s father discovers his son torturing the innocent mouse by swinging it above a cat, instead of painlessly killing it, he is alarmed by the boy’s wickedness. The gentleman argues that no “man who [is] cruel to animals [is] kind and compassionate towards his fellow-creatures,” (Kilner 1851, 49) especially those of inferior disposition. Charles, as well as the reader, is assured that animals can feel agony, some even more intensely than humans, and is “put in the place of the tormented animal to internalise this moral message,” (Saha 2011, 58) being forced to endure pain from a larger and more powerful being. Therefore, the reader is led towards empathy with the abused animal and, as such, discouraged from immoral behavior of being cruel towards other creatures.

While *The Parent’s Assistant* centers on good-natured children juxtaposed against those of bad character, *The Mouse* predominantly portrays the members of the younger generation as naughty and in need of instruction from the rational parent. As such, virtuous qualities are presented to the reader through adult characters, reflecting the 18th-century growing focus on family and children, who were “guided throughout [...] experiences by a parent” (Bickham 2021, 667) as a way of home education and inculcation of moral values. Throughout the book, dishonorable character – indicated by tendency towards deception, wickedness, quarreling, greed, haughtiness, and mistreatment of animals – is observed and corrected, most frequently by adults. For instance, Anne’s condescending demeanor directed at a servant of lower socioeconomic status is rebuked by her mother who declares that good nature and moral demeanor indicate worthiness of

respect rather than one's background, saying that "a *virtuous beggar* is far better than a *wicked prince*" (Kilner 1851, 31). Moreover, Betty Flood, a member of the lower class, supports Mrs. Artless's claim by correcting a young boy's belief that wealth elicits happiness as "a person who is fretful and cross will never be happy, though he should be made rich as a king" (Kilner 1851, 61). Additionally, the tale about Mary Mount depicts the contrast between virtuous and prideful nature, with the Speedgo family being punished for their haughtiness and indulgence when they exhaust their finances and become dependent on kindness of others. Simultaneously, Mary is rewarded for her honest conduct by prospering in life and acquiring wealth, facilitating her generosity. After displaying ability to forgive and be charitable towards those who have wronged her, the Speedgos realize that financial prosperity is temporary, while "[g]oodness and kindness no time nor change can take from [them]" (Kilner 1851, 109). Overall, virtuous character is portrayed as advantageous over wealth due to its durability and the consequent acquisition of respect and rewards.

Meanwhile, in another household, a young boy is condemned for fighting – which, instead of courage, stems from cowardice as it reflects vengeful nature and lack of capacity for forgiveness – and deception as a "boy who could once deceive, may, for aught [one knows], do so again" (Kilner 1851, 81). Later, this is demonstrated on a group of children, who all deny having destroyed a pincushion with Hetty perceived as untrustworthy due to her history of lying. Furthermore, the narrator then interrupts the story to clarify that deceiving once causes children "to be suspected of faults they are even perfectly free from," (Kilner 1851, 119) motivating the readers towards honesty. Finally, although William receives punishment from his father, the criticism of his wickedness and bad nature is primarily voiced by James, his friend who refuses to participate in actions which cause trouble and grief to others. Later, James is reaffirmed in his belief that misconduct invariably entails undesirable consequences, saying that he "never knew any good come of mischief" (Kilner 1851, 72). As a result, the juvenile readers are presented with irrational and immoral actions performed by characters similar to them and guided towards understanding their absurdity and wickedness without committing the shameful acts themselves.

In addition to immorality, *The Mouse* also aims at children being “less rational [...] than adults,” (Spencer 2010, 470) as they are repeatedly reprimanded for nonsensical fears and behaviors. Throughout the narrative, a fright of animals is ridiculed for being absurd due to human physical and rational superiority over smaller creatures and a general absence of reasons for being “afraid of *any* thing, unless it threatens [one] with immediate danger” (Kilner 1851, 19-20). This is then further accentuated by Ann’s trepidation after being awakened by a sound, for which she is criticized by her sister as she “never knew that *noise* had *teeth* or *claws* to hurt one with” (Kilner 1851, 112). Furthermore, sounds do not signify a presence of thieves, although being alarmed by those is equally unjustifiable, given that their motive is money rather than children. The absurdity of human fear is emphasized by an omnipresent anxiety of the animal narrator, as the mice are forced to regularly relocate to avoid being discovered and exposed to an increased risk of death. Eventually, Nimble reflects on their contrasting life experience as he pitied Ann for “distressing herself, and making herself really uncomfortable and unhappy,” (Kilner 1851, 114) despite having a secure home and being sheltered from any potential threats. Therefore, through arguments and rationalization presented by more mature characters, children are urged to reevaluate their behavior and realize the absurdity of human fears.

To summarize, *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* is a didactic animal narrative which aims to evoke compassion in the juvenile readers as a way of purifying them of the inhumane inclination towards harming non-human creatures which are inferior to them. Furthermore, the tale inculcates moral values such as kindness, honesty, and generosity while leading children to rethink their irrational behavior and fears, primarily by the use of shame as a disciplinary tool. Overall, the author tends to juxtapose naughty children with rational parents, who guide the young characters and readers through the educational process towards becoming rational and virtuous individuals.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis studied the conceptualization of childhood, the role of the young generation in the 18th-century English society as depicted in the contemporary literature unprecedently targeting children, and the didactic function of selected juvenile works. The goal was to contextualize the literary texts and analyze them through the lens of New Historicism for their reflection of the 18th-century childhood as well as their role in children's moral development.

The first part reviewed the major shifts in perception of childhood which occurred in English society throughout the 18th century. After the initial notion of children as miniature adults and the Calvinist view on humans as inherently evil, the first significant transition ensued from John Locke's idea of *tabula rasa*, which led to an increased focus on the development of formal education. Subsequently, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's portrayal of children as innately good and pure resulted in the formation of the Romantic child – a naïve, innocent individual in need of protection from the evils of the outside world. As a result, Rousseau's views led to a shift towards affectionate parent-child relationship.

With changes in the socioeconomic structure of English society and the emerging middle-class ideology, the newly foregrounded family, and children in particular, became an integral part of the public life. Additionally, the Industrial Revolution enabled the production of a wide range of materials designed for the entertainment of children, but primarily focusing on their moral and cognitive development. As such, the flourishing market generated a variety of educational games, toys, and morally didactic juvenile literature.

The second part provided an analysis of selected works of children's fiction – Maria Edgeworth's *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) and Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784). The study was done through the method of close reading and historical contextualization of the works. The books are fundamentally similar in their depiction of children as heavily dependent on adults for financial support and instruction in the initial stage of development. Additionally, the 18th-century shift to affection was detected through recurrent use of terms of endearments and the prominent focus on children's moral upbringing. Consequently, both works are centered around the theme of

education. Nevertheless, its portrayal varies based on their focus on different developmental stages and due to the characters belonging to distinct social classes.

*The Parent's Assistant* revealed the importance of parental influence on the values and habits acquired by the young generation, transmitting the duty of parents to morally educate their offspring as proposed by the middle-class ideology. The tales relate the effects of early parental instruction, highlighting the prosperity of individuals ethically cultivated in the critical stage of their development. The impact of ill-mannered servants and acquaintances on the malleable minds of children then further reflects Locke's proposition of *tabula rasa*. Additionally, the collection incorporates various types of formal schooling, including educational institutions such as boarding schools, or private instruction overlooked by a tutor, which tended to be favored among the upper class.

*The Mouse* then supplemented the first work by detailing the parental instruction which occurred at home during the early years of life. The pedagogical process is marked by identification and subsequent questioning of children's immoral and irrational actions. Adhering to Locke's principle of shame as a disciplinary tool, the young characters are ridiculed for the absurdity of their actions. Then, through a process similar to Rousseau's behavioral rationalization, the children are led towards correcting their undesirable behavior and overcoming irrational fears. Additional punishment methods, such as corporal discipline, tend to be applied to fully demonstrate the effects of actions deemed as wicked.

As such, *The Mouse* depicts the early educational process with the implementation of punishment as a form of immediate consequences, while *The Parent's Assistant* demonstrates the long-term effects of parental instruction received during the fundamental stage of development. Furthermore, Edgeworth's literature contains examples of the rising institutionalized education, while including employment as a method of gaining practical experience and independence. Meanwhile, Kilner expands on irrationality of children and various types of punishment. Altogether the works illustrate the 18th-century society's growing interest in the education of children, including the spread of formal schooling and the emphasized parental guidance in moral and rational development of their offspring.

This is further reflected in the function of the books, which was analyzed in two separate subchapters. The works were studied as an educational material used by parents with the primary aim to inculcate the values of the ideal child in the young generation. Nonetheless, while both books presented similar principles as desirable, including integrity, generosity, and forgiveness, the means of achieving this goal varied.

*The Parent's Assistant* conveys the superiority of honorable conduct through a distribution of rewards and punishment. Overall, the stories depict the lives of young characters contrasted in their education, acquired habits, and morals. While good-natured children – displaying the values of industry, truthfulness, generosity, and economy – are shown to continuously prosper, the ill-mannered individuals are inevitably exposed and punished for their actions. Consequently, the attention is equally divided between principles portrayed to the reader as desirable and the shortcomings of immoral tendencies such as idleness, indulgence, deception, and engagement in criminal activity.

Meanwhile, *The Mouse* incorporates two strategies in its pursuit of instilling the ideal virtues. First, through narration from the perspective of an abused animal, the tale aims to evoke empathy which discourages the juvenile reader from being cruel towards smaller creatures. Second, with the predominant juxtaposition of the naughty child and rational adult, the book promotes values of honesty, kindness, and generosity. As the fictional parents guide the characters to recognize the absurdity of their fears and actions, the child readers are led to reconsider and rationalize their behavior, without being forced to experience the consequences of immoral actions themselves.

Overall, while *The Parent's Assistant* explores the fate of both virtuous and ill-natured characters, marking dishonorable behavior as disadvantageous and good conduct as leading to prosperity, *The Mouse* primarily focuses on discouraging the young readers from undesirable behavior through demonstrating its wickedness or irrationality. Consequently, Edgeworth inculcates moral values by presenting their beneficial character as well as the harmful effects of dishonorable conduct, while Kilner aims to suppress wicked and irrational tendencies by rationalization.

To conclude, the analyzed works of juvenile fiction provide a reflection of the 18th-century society's perception of childhood. The books represent and further expand on major aspects of children's lives during the studied period, with particular emphasis put on education, which appears as the most dominant feature of childhood. The history of childhood and the analyzed children's literature are mutually interconnected. The environment in which the books were produced contextualizes their content and function. In turn, the literary works provide a deeper understanding of children's lives during the 18th century – through their portrayal of childhood as well as an educational material presented to them.



## 6. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vývojem dětství jako konceptu, životem dětí v Anglii 18. století a výchovnou funkcí vybrané dětské literatury. Cílem je prozkoumat, jakým způsobem je vyobrazeno dětství v britské literatuře napsané v 18. století a analyzovat její roli ve výchově mladé generace v době, kdy začala být vnímána jako zásadní pro budoucí rozvoj společnosti.

První část práce zkoumá vývoj chápání dětství v průběhu 18. století, které je zásadní pro změnu pohledu z dětí jako malých dospělých na dětství jako samostatnou fázi vývoje. Posuny nastaly i v pohledu na podstatu člověka, což bylo ovlivněno Lockem, který svým dílem také významně přispěl k rozvoji školství, a poté Rousseauem, jehož učení vedlo k větší rodičovské náklonosti k dětem. Společně s vzestupem střední společenské třídy tato dění následně vedla k výrobě hraček, her a dětských knih, které se především zaměřovaly na morální a kognitivní rozvoj dětí.

Druhá část práce provádí literární analýzu dvou typů dětské literatury napsané v 18. století. Sbírká povídek s názvem *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) od Marie Edgeworthové vystihuje dětství jako úzce spojené s výchovou a vzděláním. Kniha znázorňuje různé typy škol a také zaměstnání jakožto způsob získání praktických znalostí. Důraz je však převážně kladen na následky mravní výchovy, která je zásadní v počáteční fázi vývoje. Samotný pedagogický proces je pak ukázán v příběhu *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784) od Dorothy Kilnerové, který představuje rozšířený typ dětské literatury v dané době, a to vyprávění z pohledu zvířete. Průběh rané domácí výchovy je doprovázen zesměšňováním dítěte za jeho nemravné a nerozumné jednání. Implementací odůvodňování jsou pak děti vedeny ke změně chování.

Analýza didaktické funkce daných děl odhalila, že oba typy dětské literatury příznivě zobrazují obdobné vlastnosti, ale každá z nich je učí jiným způsobem. Příběhy v *The Parent's Assistant* znázorňují poctivě jednající postavy, které jsou pravidelně odměňované za své chování, a současně sleduje osudy bezzásadových jedinců, kteří jsou nakonec vždy potrestáni. Příběh *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* má pak duální funkci. Vyprávěním z pohledu týraného zvířete se čtenáři snaží vyvolat empatii, a tím děti vede k lepšímu zacházení se zvířaty. Další

kladné vlastnosti jsou představeny dospělými postavami, které poukazují na nemorální a iracionální jednání dětí, a následně je i čtenáře vedou k přehodnocení daného chování.

Závěrem tato práce dokazuje, že vývoj dětství v průběhu 18. století a vybraná dětská literatura dané doby jsou vzájemně propojeny. Prostředí, ve kterém zkoumaná díla vznikla, napomáhá jak k jejich celkové interpretaci, zejména vyobrazení výchovy, trestů a role dětí ve společnosti, tak k pochopení jejich zamýšlené funkce. Samotné knihy pak umožňují lépe porozumět životu dětí v Anglii 18. století, a to skrz znázornění dětství a chápáním dané dětské literatury jako výukového materiálu.

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