

**Children's Literature of the 18th Century: the
Influence of Animals and Objects in Dorothy and Mary**

Ann Kilner's Tales

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Abstract:

The Eighteenth Century is historically known as the age of logic, science, enlightenment and reason. However, it is also an instructional period where educational writers addressed children through books containing stories that taught valuable and moral lessons for their personal growth and development. Decency, differences in class stratification, religious beliefs and reinforcement of gender roles being the main subjects of discussion, served as the basic foundations for appropriate schooling. Children's literature became one of the strongest means for infant guidance, as new writers started to lecture children on how to become respectable human beings. A notorious number of writers of this genre took the works of philosophers John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau concerning didacticism (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and *Émile*) as models for their instructive tales. Mary Ann Kilner, along with her sister-in-law Dorothy Kilner, amongst other contemporary 18th Century tale writers, both incorporated these philosophical archetypes and contributed greatly to children's understanding of the ethical standards of the era. Following the extended premise that infants were indubitably prone to distraction, The Kilners included animals and inanimate objects as literary devices in order to not only instruct, but also prevent tedious monotonous reading. By means of an extensive analysis throughout the history of children's literature, along with a literary review of The Kilner's tales *Memoirs Of A Peg-Top*, *The Adventures Of A Pincushion* and *The Life And Perambulation Of A Mouse*, this paper argues that the use of animals and inanimate objects as narrative tools in Mary Ann and Dorothy Kilner's tales eminently influenced children's education, remarkably contributing to the pedagogical strategies of the 18th Century.

Key Words: Literary devices, pedagogical strategies, instructive tales.

Abbreviations

LPM: *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* (used in citations)

APC: *The Adventures of a Pincushion* (used in citations)

MPT: *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* (used in citations)

1. Introduction

1.1. Historical Context: The Augustan Age

In English literature the 18th Century is preferably called “*The Augustan Age*”, on account of some influential personalities¹ who excelled in literature writings during the period of August the Emperor. The Enlightenment is also called “The Age of Reason” or “The Age of Good Sense”, but it is the combination of all of these labels that truly exhibits the essence of 18th Century English values. The consolidation of classical principles blended with sensitive judgment, became the most solid foundations for self-guidance and education. It is precisely for this appreciation for “classicism” that The Kilners, prolific writers of children’s literature, belong to the English community of classical writers. However, it is difficult to determine where “The Augustan Age” begins, as Richard Hooker states in *Pre-Enlightenment Europe*:

It is difficult to determine precisely when the Enlightenment begins. [...] Since the Enlightenment is primarily about changes in the world view of European culture, the process cannot really be said to have a beginning for when a world view changes it essentially draws on previous shifts in world view. (Hooker, 1997: 1)

In spite of the discrepancies on dating the inauguration of this period, Hooker declares that “The Enlightenment is sometimes dated to the middle of the eighteenth century and the activity of the *philosophes*”(Hooker:1). Philosophers became of great importance in creating social and pedagogical models to instruct children. John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s view on education became crucial basis for the development and spread of pedagogical principles in The Kilners’ books.

¹ See for example: Horace and Virgil.

1.1.1. John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Theories on Didacticism

Published in 1689, John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* deals with the notions of knowledge and experience. According to Locke, experience through the senses is the only source of knowledge. This interpretation claims that the components of the sensitive world create concepts that stem from ideas in the mind only through empirical knowledge.

If I should only show (as I hope I shall in the following parts of this discourse) how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty without any such original notions or principles⁵. (Locke, 1689: II)

Locke's confrontation with the previous Cartesian view on innate ideas² is one of the strongest arguments used by The Kilners to opt for instructive tales that dealt with authentic issues of the era³. Neither Locke nor The Kilners believed in the powers of intuition, instead, they saw the human mind as a blank space ready to acquire knowledge through factual sensitive experience. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* Locke describes the importance of imparting education from a very early stage for efficient learning. Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner adopted this approach and saw the great importance in transmitting valuable lessons to young children through their stories.

It was precisely in *Some Thoughts* where Locke declared that infants were prone to having their attention drawn away when reading books, and suggested a new improved system in favor of a much more playful education. The Kilners, deeply influenced by this idea, incorporated animals and inanimate objects as pedagogical tools for their literary

² Philosophical view that claims that ideas pre-exist in the mind.

³ See for instance gender roles.

works. By means of these comical and enjoyable characters, Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner cooperated with Locke's advanced approach.

Additionally, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* was another clear reference for establishing the educational values promoted in the 18th Century England. In his work, Rousseau examines the perfect social model that would best adjust to the uncorrupted man. He also analyses the notion of the individual in society and how this ideal citizen might be educated. To explore these ideas, *Émile* contains advice on how to raise children up to maturity in order to become respectable civilians. In the book, an imaginary character called Émile undergoes this process of full-growth, exposing Rousseau's theories on didacticism in each stage of his life. The main message in this work is therefore to understand that the most important task of educators is to "civilize" children through real-life scenarios.

Our real study is that of the state of man. [...] He among us who best knows how to bear the good and evil fortunes of this life is, in my opinion, the best educated; whence it follows that true education consists less in precept than in practice. We begin to instruct ourselves when we begin to live; our education commences with the commencement of our life; our first teacher is our nurse. (Rousseau, 1689: 18)

Émile, therefore, works as a practical manual that exposes an inclination towards a reality-based education, which Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner also intended to promote. The Kilners, recreated these ordinary situations through animals and inanimate objects in their tales. In resonance to Rousseau's views, Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner also aimed to lecture children on becoming ideal human beings. Combined with Locke's guidance for amusing learning, The Kilners linked both assumptions into single didactic books.

In light of 18th Century values, Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner attempted to fashion both moral and gender ideals by means of animals and inanimate objects. These dynamic

characters functioned as filters that not only established social boundaries, but also lectured young readers on day-to-day conflicts. It is on these literary devices that this paper will focus on, in an attempt to highlight their importance in children's literature of the 18th Century. Hence, by inquiring into The Kilners' tales, this paper claims that the use of animals and inanimate objects in their books influenced children's education and contributed to the pedagogical strategies of their period.

2. Objectives and Structure

In order to understand Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner's contribution to education through the use of animals and inanimate objects, this paper will examine three of their major works extensively: *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*, *The Adventures of a Pincushion*, and *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*. In these books, both animate and inanimate characters engage in the story to inflict a valuable message on the children and invite them to reflect on their own actions. It is through these literary devices that the preservation and promotion of the moral beliefs of the era can be partly attributed to writers Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner. In this paper, the use of primary and secondary sources along with a critical in-look into The Kilners' publications mentioned above, will account for the justification of such argument.

Firstly, Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* will cover the topic of animals serving as didactic instruments, which will eventually be followed by the analysis of Mary Ann's books. The evaluation of her works *The Adventures of a Pincushion* and *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* will precedently account for the relevance of inanimate objects as a determining factor in the pedagogical strategies used by Mary Ann. Finally, by examining the function of both animate and inanimate characters within The Kilners' tales, I will assess their importance in 18th Century education.

3. Development: Pedagogical Tools in The Kilners' Tales

3.1. Animals

3.1.1. Dorothy Kilner: *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*

One of Dorothy Kilner's most recognized fictional biographies *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* is an example of an instructive book that incorporated the adventures of an animal. Unlike fairy tales, fictional biographies did not feature magic creatures relying on superstition or implausible circumstances, but rather only violated one cogent principle: the anthropomorphism of their non-human characters. However, before proceeding with the story, Dorothy assured her readers:

But before I proceed to relate my new little companion's history, [...] I must beg leave to assure my readers that, in earnest, I never heard a mouse speak in all my life; and only wrote the following narrative as being far more entertaining, and not less instructive, than my own life would have been: and as it met with the high approbation of those for whom it was written, I have sent it to Mr, Marshall, for him to publish it, if he pleases, for the equal amusement of his little costumers. (LPM: 7)

With these words the author reaffirmed her inclination toward a rational education, in spite of a mouse being the narrator of the story. Dorothy Kilner, nonetheless, was aware that animals had proven to be an effective model for pedagogical purposes due to children's familiarity with them. *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* sets its tale in a conventional 18th Century England, for the young readers of the period to instantaneously be able to relate to the different situations presented in the story. It narrates the adventures of little Nimble the mouse and his three brothers, Longtail, Softdown and Brighteyes trying to overcome the adversities of life with the purpose of educating young readers. At a gathering in Meadow Hall, in the confinements of one of the guest's rooms, Nimble agrees

to narrate the story of his life. It is at this early stage that the author already exposes that the experiences of little Nimble will become the means for transmitting instructive lessons.

The central character does not exclusively perform his individual piece in the story, for Nimble's role surpasses fiction directly into the reader's psyche. In other words, the aftereffect of his actions does not simply play a theatrical part in the narration, it has an effect on the reader's mind too. Dorothy Kilner therefore, meticulously uses Nimble and his brothers to create a link between the literary and the real world, between fictional creatures and real humans. With such wide spectrum of possibilities, the impact of animals on 18th Century education explains their successful influence as didactic tools. The situations revolving Nimble and his brothers implement moral lessons to both teach and correct unethical behavior:

Charles, I had a much better opinion of you, than to suppose you were capable of so much cruelty. [...] What right, I desire to know, to torture any living creature? If it is only because you are larger, and so have it in your power, I beg you will consider, how you would like, that either myself, or some great giant, as much larger than you as you are bigger than the mouse, should hurt and torment you. (LPM: 48)

The book is a compilation of events that deal with two major points: the relationship between children and animals and the dangers of not following parental guidance. Firstly, Dorothy's lecture on illogical fear of animals served as a warning for the tragic consequences and accidents this attitude sometimes brings. The inoffensiveness of the little creatures is emphasized throughout the story to remind young readers about the importance of focusing on significant issues and real threats. The selected excerpt insists on the absurdity of self-indulged fear:

Her mamma begged to know the cause of her sudden alarm. Upon which she called out, [...] ‘A mouse! a mouse! I saw one under the chair!’ ‘And if you did, my dear,’ replied her mother, ‘is that any reason for your behaving so ridiculously? If there were twenty mice, what harm could they possibly do? You may easily hurt and destroy them; but, poor little things! they cannot, if they would, hurt you.’ ‘What, could they not bite me?’ inquired the child. ‘They may, indeed, be able to do that; but you may be very sure that they have no such inclination,’ rejoined the mother. (LPM: 8)

Through this passage the author invites children to examine their relationship with animals, and recognize that it should be one of respect and compassion, particularly with harmless mice. Moreover, cruelty towards animals, if unjustified, was certainly perceived to be abusive and unacceptable, so by introducing the young readers to the world of Nimble and his brothers, Dorothy Kilner aimed to induce a feeling of pity and sympathy towards them. Often being universally detested, mice are the writer’s choice to call for the reader’s compassion, for their condition and size require the completion of human benevolence.

The atrocious torture of one of the mice is imparted by two children in the book, reaffirming who the lessons and advice in it are targeted at. To make the narration even more children-focused, the human characters are often so:

At the same moment Brighteyes was so entangled in a handkerchief which the other boy tossed over him, that he likewise was taken prisoner. [...] Our little heart now beat quick with fear of those tortures we expected to receive; nor were our apprehensions lessened by hearing the boys consult what they should do with us, ‘I,’ said one, ‘will throw mine into the pond, and see how he will swim out again.’ ‘and I,’ said the other, ‘will keep mine and tame it.’ ‘But where will you keep it?’ inquired his companion. ‘Oh,’ replied he, ‘I will keep it under a little pan til I can get a house made for it.’ he then, holding me by the skin at the back of my neck, ran with me into the kitchen. (LPM: 16).

Another recurrent theme in the story is the series of fatalities that Nimble and his brothers experience due to outright disregard to one of their mother’s most valuable

lessons; under no circumstances should the mice frequent the same places. The lamentations of Nimble and his brothers are an open display of regret and anguish when, due to not having followed their mother's advice, one of the mice is put to death. The grief of the surviving brothers, which they will forever have to face, is one of Dorothy's most straight-forward messages in the book; disobedience leads to appalling circumstances and even death.

Recollect, my dear friends, what were the last words which our good mother spoke to us at parting. [...] She charged us, upon no account, for no temptation whatever, to return frequently to the same place: if we did, she forewarned us that death and ruin would certainly await us. But, in what manner have we obeyed this her kind advice? (LPM: 15)

The writer finalizes her story by reminding young readers to follow Nimble's useful advice and not let the temptations of misconduct obliterate their good reasoning. Hence, Nimble and his brothers are the tools the author uses to raise consciousness about the difficulties of life and the perils of ignorance. In order to influence children's learning processes, the observation of the mice's experience merges into a complex didactic method that benefits from its multiplicity. Put simply, *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* is a manifestation of the correlation between animality and children in 18th Century education.

In summary, the mice are Dorothy Kilner's tools to transmit human values and cultivate ethical thinking on the young reader's mind. More specifically, as it has already been discussed, Nimble's multiple experiences impart lessons of mercy and dignity towards animals, and stress the importance of obedience to parents. As a result, the young reader's education becomes intrinsically affected by these literary instruments, together contributing to the general Augustan pedagogical system.

3.2. Inanimate Objects

3.2.1. Mary Ann Kilner: *The Adventures of a Pincushion*

Due to an over-sentimentalization of animals in fictional biographies, stories of inanimate objects rapidly became the most popular choice amongst readers. Public campaigns for the rights of animals soon deteriorated the production of stories of cats that were ironed or thrown into a fire so they could dance. Although having been a crucial comical ingredient in former times, like in *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*, this attitude was becoming increasingly less well-received by some 18th Century readers.

Animals were made use of in an *emblematical way*; now they were elevated to the rank of *human beings*, they are our *fellow creatures*, our equals if not superiors *in virtue*. (Pickering, 1981: 96)

Because of their incapability to experience pain or have rights, objects became the alternative option to fictional biographies. In *The Adventures of a Pincushion*, Mary Ann Kilner explores the nature of inanimate objects serving as engaging devices to guide and lecture children.

Similarly to Nimble, the pincushion witnesses and experiences a series of incidental events which will show the infant a vital and meaningful message. Notwithstanding, unlike other Kilner biographies, *The Adventures of a Pincushion* was expressly designed for the use of young ladies, as the cover of the book illustrates.

Being targeted mostly at young girls, the majority of the moralistic messages and situations included in the book are a representation of the rules composing the ethical code of womanhood and the confirmation of a clear distinction between genders. This division between sexes aimed to emphasize the distinctive roles the children of the Augustan Era were expected to take.

Mary Ann's selection of a pincushion to be the central object to her story, suggests a natural link between this object and women, implying therefore that it was their occupation to sew. This cult to domesticity and good manners of decent ladies in general, are important elements to the analysis of *The Adventures of a Pincushion*.

But indeed, my dear Sally, said she, [...] I wish you would try to exert yourself, and as you cannot be a lady, you had better endeavor to please my father. You see we all live very happily, and I am sure I would do all in my power to make you do so too; so cheer up your spirits, and do not weep so sadly. (APC: 31)

Simultaneously, the pincushion is not only an emblematic object that symbolizes this lady-like condition; it is also a complementary part of all the characters in the story. Their lives are affected by the object, as it creates a state of selfhood and psychological plausibility to both entertain and lecture the reader.

The pincushion is passed onto periodically, as it delivers miscellaneous messages to motivate and convince infants to follow its moral code. In order to deliver the pincushion's lessons, the book adopts a fundamental strategy that is key to this kind of fiction; the object encourages children to take its advice through a real-life based story. That is to say, excluding the imaginary essence of the pincushion, the book imitates nature and hence, the children should embrace the lessons taught by the object.

The author uses mimicry to reconstruct a particular real-life scenario. It is only through this process that the pincushion can function, as the lessons it gives are meant to be used in the real world. Using this rational base, the pincushion addresses readers and provides them with lessons that will be of practical use in the physical world.

Another confirmation of the pincushion functioning as an instructive tool is that it is the human characters in the story, not events, who represent the outcome of a

circumstance. In other words, the situations revolving the characters are not accidental, they are the result of a logical sequence. This distinguishing quality gives readers the capacity to recognize their role, and identify the power and effects of free will (at least through a Christian viewpoint). More specifically it teaches that consequences are subject to voluntary decisions, which the children are responsible of:

But as she had slept so long, it was some time before she could make her appearance; and [...]Mr. Mindful, who was justly displeased with her indolence, told one of his children to carry her milk away; for that those who were too lazy to provide for themselves, and to be ready at the proper time, might go without food. (APC: 29).

The pincushion travels from its original owner, ten-year-old Martha Airy, to a boarding school where it is accidentally dropped and eventually forgotten. Given the tragedy of the event, the object takes a moment to reflect and suggest yet another useful hint to its readers; lamentation and self-pity are of no benefit when in despair. Although pincushions are not children, as much as they expressed their sorrow at such unfortunate condition, they never improved their plight. Through this passage, the reader will find that distress, anger and discontent will never lead to happiness.

I had frequently reason to feel the force of; namely, That [...]although I fretted and fumed every day at my unfortunate condition, I never found it was at all improved by it, or that my ill-humour in the least degree made me happier, or assisted my escape. When I determined to submit quietly, I was as happy as any Pincushion in such a state of retirement could be. (APC: 4)

The object was later found and presented to a housemaid who gave it to her grandchild Jenny. The pincushion was stolen from her by a shoemaker's daughter and

finally taken by Sally Flaunt, a farmer's niece. Thereafter, the plot again digresses from the fundamental storyline to offer a new didactic passage. Once more, the pincushion becomes the authorial voice of ultimate reasoning.

The pincushion derives from the Era's common understanding of the notions of modesty, elegance and dignity to make its formal remarks and underline the story's morals. In the following example, the book presents a parallel between Hannah and her malicious cousin Sally. These two characters represent opposed ideals from which the pincushion can frame its pedagogical lesson:

By wishing for great riches, and despising that way of life to which she was destined, her heart was constantly agitated by anxious vexation. Whereas, Hannah was always cheerful, good-humoured, and contented: and the same incidents, which to the one were the occasion of dissatisfaction and complaint, the other submitted to without repining, and rejoiced with gratitude at the felicity of her lot. (APC: 39)

As a conclusion, the pedagogical method used in *Adventures of a Pincushion*, pushes young readers to an early maturity through a variety of principles and themes designed to fit their interests. The pincushion embraces both the real world and that of their imagination for a diverting intellectual exercise. In the same way, the object becomes the parental guiding voice that allows children to learn from their own mistakes.

In this sense, the pincushion relegates its precedent to the child, as he/she becomes responsible of his/her own upbringing. Considering this assertion, it can be said that the object gives the impressionable reader the foundations for appropriate self-conduction. The pincushion is therefore the tool that wittily affects the reader's consciousness by detailing and contextualizing each one of the lessons.

3.2.2. Mary Ann Kilner: *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*

Whereas *Adventures of a Pincushion* was created for the use of young ladies, Mary Ann Kilner wrote the masculine counterpart for her male readers. Since *Adventures of a Pincushion* attempted to address mainly traditional feminine roles, *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* was designed to focus on the set of behaviors and attributes stereotypically associated with young gentlemen.

Even though there were clear gender distinctions, as a result of the socially constructed norms of the period, there were some virtues that were of common duty, according to the writer. For that reason, the book does not only offer a collection of calculated norms for the use of boys, it also proposes a general instructive portrait of a collective model. However, as the author herself clarifies in the preface, the aim of the story is to concentrate on manlike subjects;

The former work was designed chiefly for the use of young Ladies; [...] this is evidently calculated for young Gentlemen: for although the laws of justice, probity, and truth are of *general* obligation, yet, it was imagined, that by consulting *different amusements* and *pursuits*, and recommending the accomplishments separately, in which each sex were more particularly concerned, the subjects would become more interesting to those readers to whom they were immediately addressed. (MPT: IV)

By making these distinctions between sexes, Mary Ann Kilner hoped to appeal to their interests accurately, and consequently, engage the reader in a more suitable lecture. Despite both pieces being a compilation of instructive lessons taught through the use of an inanimate object, there is a rather apparent difference in style. Whilst *The Adventures of a Pincushion* uses a more refined and sophisticated form, *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*, in contrast, attempts to pursue a more informal and simple language.

From the beginning of the book, the story develops through the use of fairly short

and straightforward structures. The author recurs to these literary resources to create a mirror effect that mimics the more passive and rudimentary attitude of boys. These assertions are not only represented in speech, but also in the form of violence. The following excerpt exhibits both statements;

I met here with two of my brethren, who informed me, that all our species who were introduced into this fatal inclosure, would attempt to split us, and make their own escape: and [...] I had a melancholy proof of the truth of this intelligence in the very top who communicated it, as it immediately experienced the fate above-mentioned; and, saw with horror, one which belonged to my own master cleave it through the middle. (MPT: 17)

In this particular scenario, it is not coincidental that the object used in the book is a skill-focused toy. In the narration, peg-tops are marketed to boys, as playing with them required some technical abilities which in the book are attributed to them. 18th Century girls on the other hand, as it has been already proved through *Adventures of a Pincushion*, were considered to have different kinds of expertise.

The peg-top internalizes, therefore, the two principal components of this type of fictional biography; it is simultaneously a symbol of boyhood and entertainment. The whole storyline contains moral messages that are taught by the inanimate object. Similarly to the previous Mary Ann Kilner's production, *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* narrates the journey of an inanimate object that passes through the hands of different owners. Each one of those will contribute to an exhaustive array of ethical principles the peg-top will introduce.

This matter being decided, he was counting my *acorns* with great attention, when Powel joined him, and desired to have me restored: but Playful offered to give a *bat* and a *ball* in exchange, and begged he might keep me; to which Powel consenting, [...] I became Ben Playful's property. I was now always in use: for my new master thought but little of his studies,

though his neglect met with frequent disgrace. (MPT: 32-33)

The object, as this citation suggests, operates as a narrator that apart from communicating the events, makes a direct contribution to the plot. The inanimate objects used in Mary Ann Kilner's *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* and *Adventures of a Pincushion* share a similar idiosyncrasy. That is to say, they present the solution to an improper or unjust incident through the use of rational thinking, explanations and evidence.

There is an additional resemblance to *Adventures of a Pincushion* in terms of the characters. They do not undergo a psychological development, nor are they subjected to casualty; they are in charge of their own position and state. Furthermore, in both Mary Ann and Dorothy's books, the children are disciplined by a figure of authority (which is often a relative), or by the events that will follow their own misconducts.

The following quotation corresponds to a speech that is delivered after a passage that deals with trickery, deception, impudence and violence. The peg-top witnesses how several boys blindfold glutton Tom Swallowell in exchange of some money to buy pastries. Swallowell however, becomes the victim of a mischievous game and is finally ridiculed and struck by one of the boys in the group.

I am very sorry, Frank, the warmth of your temper has hurried you to add offense to your raillery, and that you have concluded by fighting, what you began in play. You well know, my dear boy, the frequent caution I have given you upon this subject. I would by no means have you a *coward*, or afraid of being *hurt*; but to be ever ready to strike, or return a blow, is a proof of the violence of your passion, but no argument of the justice of your cause. (MPT: 29)

As a result, the aggressor receives a lesson. His father supports and advertises

values like courage and serenity as forms of politeness and etiquette, as opposed to brutal force and hostility. The fact that such instructive message is imparted by the boy's father is not arbitrary, for he represents the maximum figure of virility and authority *par excellence*. The message is clear; the boy too should be as honorable as his father.

Here, the peg-top participates in the instructive lesson of the father by adopting a passive role in the scene. The object, much like the reader, becomes the spectator of an irremediable outcome. In light of the peg-top's admonition, the boy in the story becomes the victim of his own imprudence. Consequently, both the readers and the peg-top are inevitably left with a feeling of impotence, which nevertheless shall be significant to their education.

Thence it can be concluded that, by either adopting a direct narrative tone or being passively involved in the text, the peg-top is the element from which the moral codes in the book are constructed. The object accompanies the story's characters as well as the reader in a journey of reflection. It provides the necessary tools to depict 18th Century values.

The directions given in everyday tasks assist the reader in completing them successfully in both *Adventures of a Pincushion* and *Memoirs of a Peg-Top*. With narratives suitable for young ladies and gentlemen, the author introduces her readers to valuable instructions to become children of exceptional civilized conduct. Despite being, for the most part, addressed to different audiences both books share the same fundamental principle, as they are essentially designed to educate.

4. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, it was declared that the 18th Century underwent major social, historical and scientific changes that resulted into new forms of understanding the world. A new appeal to logic and reason influenced new literary productions. British

literature was no exception, and it quickly reflected these revolutionary ideals.

Children's literature was primarily pedagogical, and it was shaped greatly by the views of philosophers John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The works of these eminent intellectuals (such as *Émile* or *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*) served as the basis for The Kilners' books. Their progressive views on scholarship and the individual were central to the shift in the parameters of childhood. As it has been reflected in Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner's books, in literature of the Enlightenment children were associated with freedom, innocence and, more importantly, flexibility. This idea of malleability was the essential ingredient to develop their pedagogical tools.

Considering this approach on the topic of childhood, The Kilners soon recognized the power of representing fundamental values of the Era in their stories. These authors became the pioneer developers of a new educational method that incorporated the use of didactic elements. Their tales gave life to speaking animals and objects whose purpose was, on the one hand, to assure an understanding of the set of 18th Century values and, on the other hand, produce engaging and suitable material. As a result, The Kilners were required to obtain with their tools the perfect balance between enjoyment and instruction.

In order to successfully carry out such rather problematic task, the Kilners' fictional biographies came with an admonitory note to remind young readers not to assume the verisimilitude of the narrator. The events in their stories however, concentrated on experiences that were based on real-life situations. Hence, the remaining product is a semi-legitimate tale that mixes authentic and imaginary aspects. This paper has focused precisely on these literary mechanisms to argue for the influence of animals and objects as didactic instruments in The Kilners' books. Through the use of an extensive literature examination of the works: *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*, *Adventures of a Pincushion* and *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* I have been able to account for the fundamental

conclusion of my research.

Not only did Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner address their readers through captivating narrators, they also achieved an impeccable method for amusement and discipline. Through the use of animals and inanimate objects that had strong connotations, the writers transmitted substantial lessons. Nimble, the pincushion and the peg-top, situated children in the context of 18th Century principles and installed a sense of morality in its widest sense. In Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse*, as it has already been discussed, the figure of Nimble imposes a hierarchical order in the readers' lives in relation to their parents and other creatures. Nimble situates readers in a position of power (which they are responsible of) but synchronically reminding them of their place at home. This seemingly contradictory lesson, taught children values like empathy, obligation and honor. All the perils and situations Nimble encounters or witnesses, transcend the barriers of literacy altogether contributing to the child's judgment and standards of behavior.

All of these offerings are possible through an intuitive use of the multiple interactions between the reader and the animal figure. The child is the receiver of the information Nimble and his brothers convey. The learning process is consequently produced by this interaction. Hence, it can be asserted that the use of Nimble in Dorothy Kilner's book *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* constitutes all in all the means by which a vast set of Augustan principles were transmitted.

Lastly, the pincushion and the peg-top in Mary Ann's books, although being less relatable to human nature, also succeeded in their pedagogical purposes. Miscellaneous passages provide a meticulous outlook on the topics of gender, humbleness, justice, mercy or duty. Some of these issues have been claimed by the author to be of *general use*. However, in both *Adventures of a Pincushion* and *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* the objects awake in the reader a sense of purpose and ambition that is generally conditioned according to the

child's gender. In the former book, the pincushion favors the development of an elementary awareness of ladylike values and 18th Century views on femininity.

The latter production based its goals on the same foundations to create the masculine equivalent; the recognition of boys' duties. As it has already been depicted in both stories, the pincushion and the peg-top are the representation of these gender correspondences. The power of their symbolism, entitled the pincushion and the peg-top to educate both parties by explicitly positioning themselves in a state of major influence. This authority is crucial to emanate a sense of morality in the reader and make claims on the diverse topics that are discussed in each book. The influence on the readers comes directly from the objects, evidencing therefore their ability to shape the child.

That being said, this paper aims to have stressed the significant weigh of the tools used by authors Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner. The use of animals and inanimate objects in The Kilners' tales provided a decisive formula to operate on 18th Century education. These tools were directly involved in cognitive processes dedicated to storing knowledge, giving moral and intellectual instructions, and offering specific theoretical constructs. Hence, the importance of animals and inanimate objects in Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner tales relies in their influence as a supplementary aid in the inventory of Augustan pedagogy.

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