Water and the Victorian Child in Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863)

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Charles Kingsley's books for children became part of Victorian popular culture during the 1840s-'60s. While they provided a vantage to look at the social and moral concerns of the period, their subversive innocence opened up deeper layers of loss of certitudes associated with Darwinian theories, Chartism and Kingsley's own formulation of Christian Chartism. His *Madam How and Lady Why*, for instance, ends by praising God's creation, "All things, we should find, are constituted according to a Divine and Wonderful order". Meanwhile, his *The Water-Babies*, a more popular novel, ends with the protagonist, Tom, becoming a man of science who invents things in his laboratory: "he is now a great man of science, and can plan railroads, and steam engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns" (190). Kingsley does a balancing act with Darwinian evolutionary theories, modern science, and Christianity not threatened by the challenges thrown by radical thought. His Christianity was part of the popular culture that looked at the magic of evolution and reconciled faith with doubt. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made" (48) becomes the motto of *The Water-Babies*.

This paper looks at the intermingling of Darwinian popular science and Christianity in Kingsley's *The Water-Babies,* and the use of water as a metaphor in response to the moral anarchy unleashed in the cultural space following Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories as opposed to the biblical idea of creationism. Kingsley wrote, "If I have wrapped by my parable in seeming Tom-fooleries, it is because so only could I get the pill swallowed by a generation who are not believing with anything like their whole heart, in the living God" (469). The parable was a tale meant for nursery children, *The Water-Babies*, that spoke to a dual audience: the adult reader and the child. The point was to address the method in madness behind the Darwinian universe in context of the sobriety and order that Victorians typically lived by: "much of the last century the term Victorian, which literally describes things and event in the reign of Queen Victoria, conveyed connotations of 'prudish', 'repressed' and 'old fashioned'" (Landlow 1). That the Darwinian evolution meant intelligent social progression was pointed out by Linley Sambourne's cartoon in the *Punch* "Man is but a worm" depicted the evolution of man, from a worm to an ape, to an archetypal top hatted Victorian gentleman. Darwin himself grappled with the ideas of land animals and water animals and wrote to his friend Charles Lyell, "Our ancestor was an animal which breathed water, had a swim-bladder, a great swimming tail, an imperfect skull and undoubtedly was a hermaphrodite!".

Kingsley in his children's books used scientific explanations of reality placed in the larger context of Christian revelation. Tom's progression from a vulnerable child to a water-baby, a more evolved human becomes the parable of Christian Chartism, which yoked Christian faith to the Worker's movement dear to Kingsley's heart. While Chartism had failed in 1848, Kingsley found the idea of a proletariat rebellion romantic and was deeply moved by the state of child labor. The social unrest of 1840s made

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Kingsley aware that democracy needed to be adopted by the church if religion were to survive in the process of social transition. Kingsley's 1850 novel *Alton Locke* is a story of a young tailor boy who aspires to be a poet. *The Water-Babies* while it follows the working-class hero's life from poverty to upward mobility, its concerns are more to do with the young boy's inner growth and spiritual transformation. The Bible thus takes over where Chartism becomes powerless in Kingsley's parable about a child's retreat into a parallel water-world that is free from the rigidity of class structures.

In *The Water-Babies*, Kingsley even as he speaks of narrow class distinctions, borrows from the genre of evangelical writing for children, moral tracts and cautionary tales. His novel has a moralistic paradigm and bears echoes of Issac Watt's *Divine Songs* (1715), Maria Edgeworth (1798), Martha Sherwood's, *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818) and *Infants' Progress from the Valley of Destruction to Everlasting Glory* (1821) and Charlotte Yonge (1856). Kingsley, however, moves away from the rigidity of moral values and biblical catechism these writers upheld for children, such as hard work, austerity, duty, obedience, and kindness to animals. His novel, a fairy tale fantasy, endorses freedom of choice in the light of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories.

In *The Water-Babies*, Tom is parentless and homeless, a wearied chimney sweeper running away from the adult world who happens to fall from the Lewthwaite Crag into a river, only to enter an underground water-world. Similar to Alice, in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), who falls into a rabbit hole then crosses over to another realm through a mirror, Tom after drowning in the Salmon River finds himself in a magical realm ruled by fairy Godmothers. Tom's physical death, biblically speaking, suggests both being raptured and being twice-born. While Alice stays alive but keeps changing her physical form, Tom's body radically transforms into an amphibian—a fish. Alice asks the existential question, "Who in the world am I?" (Carroll 15), while Tom is made to forget his human body as he plays with sea creatures like lobsters, fish and otters as though they were his own kind. Finally, Alice's rejection of the mad world she finds herself in and her refusal to become a queen, her desire to wake up from the grotesque dream in the banquet scene, where a leg of mutton makes conversations with her, turns into a Darwinian nightmare, where everything is unhinged from given roles. Alice gradually realizes that she lacks actual power and is a mere pawn in the impersonal game of chess. Donald Rackin in "Blessed Rage" points to this loss of moral order in a Darwinian cosmos in both *Alice* Books:

> The religious and metaphysical assumptions that once answered the basic human need for orderly and permanent explanations and reasons beyond the reach of reason had thinned out and vanished for many Victorians during their very lifetimes, destroyed by a natural childlike curiosity like Darwin's—and like Alice's. The resulting void was terrifying. (399)

Tom like Alice faces this void both in the land-world and the water-world, when he loses his sense of identity and gets unhinged from his teleological framework to a Darwinian evolutionism. Tom emerges after resurrecting from the life of a miserable chimney sweeper becoming a fragile water-baby who is given freedom to build himself whichever way he would want to grow. His passionate affirmation: "I will be a fish; I will swim in the water, I must be clean, I must be clean" (Kingsley 28) suggests this new existential paradigm.

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Before Tom falls into a river and sees changes in his physical body, he mistakenly enters a rich child, Ellie's bedroom at her home, Harthover Place. Once inside Ellie's bedroom, he notices the image of crucified Jesus Christ and a mirror on the wall. Tom wondering about the image, happens to see himself in a mirror for the first time as a child. Realizing that he is "dirty", he bursts into tears of "anger and shame" (20). In the philosophical context of the novel, Tom becomes the literary successor of Milton's Adam in *Paradise Lost* (Book IX). Adam like Tom is so greatly ashamed to see his reflection after the Fall that he wants tall cedars to cover him up, "Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs/Hide me, where I may never see them more" (Milton 226). Tom becomes an Adam and a link between childhood, water, the discourse of purity versus dirt and redemption.

The novel as a bildungsroman begins with Tom desirous of washing himself to get rid of soot, dirt and grime attached to his body. When he sees his master Grimes wash himself, he is astonished and wants to do the same. Grimes' sardonic remark, "I'd be ashamed to want washing every week or so, like any smutty collier lad" (Kingsley 13), also points to the preciousness of water in the Victorian society and class structures built around it. Later, Tom's yearning to bathe himself in water becomes a part of fantasy narrative especially when he says: "I wish I might go and dip my head in" (13). Later, when he sees bathing accessories in the rich girl, Ellie's washroom: Washing stand, ewers, basins, soaps and brushes, he wonders about her and says, "She must be a very dirty lady". (19). Meanwhile, a mysterious old Irishwoman who keeps following him keeps repeating this chant: "Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be" (14) which underlines the mystical import of water and the spiritual regeneration associated with it. Tom's drowning in this sense becomes symbolic of a certain re-birth, and afterwards he is put through moral education to become a new creation. Thus, Tom's coming-of-age happens through this initiation in water till he becomes a Victorian gentleman and the authorial comment reads: "and thank God that you have plenty of cold water to wash in ; and wash in it too, like a true English man" (182).

"Water" in Kingsley's novel is used as a metaphor deriving from biblical understanding of it as ritualistically purificatory cleanser of body and soul, as in water baptism. In the Bible, water is mentioned in various contexts. In the Book of Genesis, God divides "water" from "water": "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, the spirit of God was hovering over the water" (Gen. 1:1). The portion of the same water becomes firmament, or the sky: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters and let it divide the waters from waters" (1:6). The doubleness of waters defines the limits of earth, heaven and the sky. Water in the Bible symbolically transforms into a manifestation of God's power used to cleanse and destroy life. In the story of Noah's ark water destroys life to renew creation. While in the New Testament, Jesus uses water's curative powers to give new life to his followers. In the Gospel according to John, he says, "Everyone who drinks this water will not be thirsty again" and "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst" (4:13). To the Samaritan woman he speaks about the resurrecting power of water, "but those who drink of the water that I will give them all never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:5-30). In *The Water-*

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Babies, water is used as transformative agent in this complex Biblical sense that connects childhood with adulthood emphasizing the former's innate capacity for self-renewal. Kingsley's novel addresses the child reader using scripture to negotiate matters of the soul, spirit, flesh and cleanliness.

The images of bathing and washing in *The Water-Babies* are contextualised in Kingsley's Anglican faith and his discourses on dirt and cleanliness in terms of the spiritual essence of the inner person. However, water is also used in a literal sense in terms of its scarcity in the countryside and cities. Victorians in the nineteenth century were indeed plagued by filth and a paucity of clean drinking water. Tom seldom bathed himself despite being covered in soot, "for there was no water up the court where he lived" (Kingsley 7). Tom, on various occasions in the novel, is desperate for water to drink and bathe himself. Writing as he was in the 1860s, Kingsley was reiterating the problems of the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation in the Victorian streets for the poor of London. Water was also polluted by "faeces, urine, chemicals from local factories, and blood from the local slaughterhouse" and in Victorian London, "the waste from overflowing cesspools found its way into little streams and eventually the Thames" where even the drains of rich people were connected to sewers. Kingsley condemns the deplorable state of water in the Victorian world where sewers run into the sea and herrings' heads and dead dog fish are put as refuse in water, therefore there can be "no magical water babies" there (Kingsley 93). Kingsley's novel focusses on the need for clean drinkable water, the images of water as in the Salmon river, the sea, and other water bodies in the alternative world he discovers cause Tom's death by drowning and resurrection.

Kingsley found *The Origin of Species* a fascinating book as it suggested rudimentary similarities between animals and humans. He sermonised using Darwinian theories of evolutionism as different from creationism in the Bible. He also drew upon Darwin's concept of water worlds according to which life on land has a parallel in water as the Bible also suggests. Kingsley in the novel, reiterates a parallel earth or a twin of land earth that is watery. In the fairy tale, he depicts all species of land world replicated and reflected in the water-world, the heavenly realm where behind the scenes truths are revealed. Darwin's water theory states how cellular forms of life existed on earth about two-thousand million years ago, and gradually single-celled, multicellular, and invertebrates were formed when jawless fish evolved and different organisms began to live on land from water. These species in water evolve return to land according to their evolutionary state. However, Kingsley also parodied Darwin's theories and explored the possibility of land animals/humans evolving in water rather than the opposite.

The water-world in the novel is a womb-like space ruled by the fairies, Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, and Mother Carey. They are mother goddesses who judge humans, nurturing their souls as water-babies assisting in their evolution. These water-babies are souls that have erred in some way, are imperfect, or have grieved others through their spiritual ignorance. They and other denizens of water-world including, water insects, water monkeys, water squirrels, water horses, water cows, water birds, water fairies who speak to one another in water language, assist Tom in his own inner development. For Tom, the water world becomes an escape into a state

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of higher innocence and childhood away from the bleak world of colliers, chimney sweepers, and the poor face of London.

Many of Reverend Kingsley's sermons drew upon Darwin's linkage between humans and animals. His mystical philosophy underlined in the sermon titled, "The Spirit and the Flesh" focuses on the immortal essence of all living beings and their infinite capacity to have feelings.

Tom in the novel is called an "ape" and "black gorilla" to point to his soot covered body and suggest his undeveloped spiritual state. He must stay underwater to learn and grow in compassion till he is no longer afraid of the land world and his cruel master, Grimes. His coming-of-age is seen as a certain shedding of his animality and becoming a benevolent being. Kingsley like Darwin believed in the ability of animals to have emotions, feel pleasure and pain, enjoy freedom, cunning to strive for food and shelter, and have capacity to love and be independent, as similar to humans. In one of his sermons he says: "in short, it (human being) has a fleshly nature…after all, it is but an animal". Thus, man is no different in hierarchy than an animal, he is capable of being spirit rather than just flesh as he has discernment and ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

Kingsley was writing for children in Victorian age using Darwinian ideas of metamorphosis and transformation of a species. Gillian Beer refers to Darwinianism as radical re-writing of natural theological and biblical terms such as "design" and "creation" into scientific terms like "production" and "mutation". At this time, naturalists, biologists and zoologists and professors from these disciplines debated intricacies of plant and animal life. The debate is around the fact that whether a water-baby is natural or unnatural being: "But a water-baby is contrary to nature" (44). He mentions Professor Owen, Professor Huxley, Professor Sedgwick and Mr. Darwin to speak about popular science and the limits it could stretch imagination. (44). He refers to the word "cannot" in the context of wisdom of scientists and mathematicians and commoners:

> It is only the children who read Aunt Agitate's Arguments, or Cousin Cramchild's Coversations; or lads who go to popular lectures, and see a man pointing at a few big, ugly pictures on the wall, or making nasty smells with bottles and squirts, for an hour or two, and calling them anatomy or chemistry—who talk about "cannot exist" and "contrary to nature". Wise men are afraid to say anything is contrary to nature. (44).

Tom in the course of the novel is referred to as a "black ape" and "heathen". This seemingly naturalist description is ethnographic, riddled with racist slant in the way it reads the poor working class chimney sweeper as an undeveloped and unchristian simian. Kingsley wrote about Englishness and the English race in the novel becoming central to Tom's coming-of-age towards the end when he becomes a man of science and a Victorian gentleman. Tom in this magical fairy tale, is initiated through water, turned into a sentient being. Before his translation, he metamorphoses into a water-baby, an amphibian to overcome the seeming carnality of the flesh. Kingsley's observations in the novel, "I am afraid they will all be apes very soon, and all by doing only what they liked" (137) and "I declare they are all apes" (37) suggests how consciousness can devolve from human to animal unless checked by devotion to a higher purpose and following the biblical principles more consciously. Kingsley parodies Darwin in the debate about

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humans having "hippopotamus majors" (a satirical distortion of the Darwinian "hippocamus question") in their brains and whether or not they are inherently apish. While he rejects the anthropocentric notion of man as a supreme creation, he is reluctant to fully classify Man as an animal, "they could not possibly have been apes, though they were more apish than the apes of all aperies" (138).

Peter Hunt speaks about Kingsley's loss of faith and his quest for alternative spiritual paradigms in *The Water-Babies*. According to Hunt, Kingsley wrote the novel because he "believed in the curative and transformative powers of water". His fairy tale becomes an escape from the reality of child exploitation, fears linked to childhood and to a life under water. The water world becomes Tom's refuge and there he journeys forward from being an "ape" to a young man responsible for his own moral choices and capacity for self-growth. This conflict between faith and doubt, interest in the natural world, and search for an alternative Christianity finds place in his books for children, *The Water-Babies, Madame How* and *Lady Why,* and *The Heroes.*

While Darwin spoke about water animals moving to land as part of their natural evolution, Kingsley in the novel shows the water-world as more developed than the land-world. The water-world in fact is utopian in the freedom it gives to souls to grow, learn from mistakes and make difficult choices. Tom's falling down the grassy slope is allegorically a slipping down the Darwinian ladder like Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* falling into the rabbit hole. "Then a bump down a two-foot step of limestone/Then another bit of grass and flowers/Then bump down a one-foot step" (Kingsley 31). Tom jumps into the water as he tries to save his life after being wrongly accused of stealing silver utensils from Harthover Place. The wild chase of Tom and shouts of "Thief" follow him as he keeps running to save his life. He must lose himself quite literally in order to find himself. The water-world becomes a place where neglected, overworked children who have been killed turn magically into water-babies for education in a water-nursery. Tom as a baby once again in water after his drowning is fed sea-cakes, sea-apples, sea-oranges, and sea-toffees like other water-babies. All are disciplined and "purified" to become better individuals before they can return to their old human form.

Tom in the magical water-world is turned into an amphibian by fairies. He is a water-baby who swims about in the stream "being about four inches…3.87902 inches long" having "round the parotid of his fauces a set of external gills" (Kingsley 42). Tom becomes a hybrid creature from a mammal, and his form transcends the guilt and shame ridden Victorian society with its rigid class structures. The nursery in the water-world is mainly for children who were ill-treated and oppressed in the land-world. Tom, away from the hardships of being a chimney sweeper becomes happy in water as he "had been sadly overworked in the land-world" (53). As a water-baby he had "nothing more to do with foul, dirty men". Using the Darwinian fairy science (which was more myth and supernaturalism than science, according to Kingsley), Kingsley following Tom's transmutation into a better being, reiterates the belief that a species is not static but keeps growing eternally. His Christian Chartism emphasises on social equality in the water-world, where all have freedom to express themselves and evolve as babies in a nursery. The emphasis here is on the moral choices individuals make to evolve at personal and collective levels. Tom learns discernment from all forms of water life such as, water insects, fish, otters, and water forms of land animals and birds.

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Tom meets fairy godmothers, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, and Mother Carey on Saint Bernandan's Island. Here he is given an understanding of life from behind the scenes. Kingsley brings in moral education based on biblical principles of body and soul intermingled with Darwinian evolutionary theories with focus on heredity and environment and survival of the fittest. Once when Tom grows prickly in temper, his body turns prickly and they remind him, "You put them there yourself, and only you can take them away". Tom bursts out crying and begs her "to teach him to be good, and help him to cure his prickles" (127).

Nina Auerbach says, "Victorian concepts of the Child tended to swing back and forth between the extremes of Innocence and Original Sin. Rousseau and Calvin stood side by side in the nursery" (Auerbach 343). In Auerbach's view, Rousseau's idea of original sin co-existed with Calvin's conception of the noble savage. William Wordsworth's lines: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" and "trailing clouds of glory" fed into the romantic images of Victorian children as pure, and with a certain unconsciousness glorified into the cult of childhood. The romanticisation of children co-existed with stark reality of child labour and infant mortality.

In 1830s and '40s, children worked in textile mills, coal mines, while rural children worked in farms and cottage industries. In 1840, Lord Ashley set up a children's employment commission which published reports on mines and colliers.

Victorians, because of growing child activism, accepted the romantic idea that children are innocent and must be shielded from the adult world and allowed to enjoy their childhood. With Lewis Carroll, the focus came to be on increasingly sentimentalized images of children, in his photography and novels which emphasized their angelic, adorable, and often subversive qualities. The illustrations of *The Water-Babies* for instance, focus on the cutesy images of toddlers and infants. In Kingsley's novel, the water-world becomes a sacred space of childhood where Tom, "did not remember having ever been dirty. Indeed, he did not remember any of his old troubles, being tired, or hungry, or beaten, or sent up dark chimneys" (Kingsley 41). Though he is still afraid that he might be turned into a chimney sweeper again and wear his dirty clothes. The water-world becomes a protective space for children where they are nurtured and kept ensconced,

> All the little children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not; all who are untaught and brought up heathens, all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect, all the little children who are overlaid, or given gin when they were young, or are let to drink our of hot kettles, or to fall into the fire; all the little children in alleys and courts, and tumble-down cottages, who dies by fever, and cholera, and measles, and scarlatina, and nasty complaints. (Kingsley 111)

The Water-Babies uses the water-world to explore larger questions about upbringing of children from nursery to adulthood, nurturing of their souls by keeping them away from parental neglect and societal exploitation. The idea that souls could be given a body other than human for some time for their progression is pivotal to the narrative. Victorians were path breakers in the manner in which they differentiated between adults and children. They delineated innocence as innately linked to childhood. Forced child labour while particularly true of working class parents was an evil that

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persisted in Victorian society. The reform acts in nineteenth century focused on abolishing this to improve the lot of working children. Using the genre of fantasy, Kingsley addresses some of these urgent issues concerning children's physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being. The water-world becomes an exclusively children's realm away from parental neglect and societal abuse. This parallel reality allows Tom to have freedom from work that he never had in the land-world: "Tom was happy in water. He had been sadly overworked in the land-world; and so now, to make up for that, he had nothing but holidays in the water…He had nothing to do now but enjoy himself, and look at all the pretty things which are to be seen in the cool clear water-world" (Kingsley 43) and he was very glad "that he was a water-baby, and had nothing to do any more with horrid dirty men, with foul clothes" (63). However, he is still afraid that he might be turned into a chimney sweeper again wear his dirty clothes or meet Grimes in water who might beat him and force him to work again.

Martha Finley in Elsie Dinsomor serialized from 1867 has a worried adult tell a child: "I will tell you any story I know that is suitable for the Sabbath; but I cannot tell the fairy tale to-day, because you know that it would be wrong." Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* is a fairy tale that uses Darwinian ideas of transformation, metamorphosis and transition which inspires a re-think on established religion and mystical traditions and at times subverting evangelicalism and moral indoctrination of children. The fairy tale in Kingsley's novel uses motifs of "high fantasy" as opposed to "domestic fantasy", where the protagonist is taken into another world that is rich with possibilities and a moral space where everyone is responsible for the choices they make. The fantasy elements of the novel plunges the reader into another dimension where the differences between cleanliness and dirt becomes pivotal to the narrative.

In this fantasy, water becomes the element which decides the life of Tom and other characters. Many are brought into the water-world to grow, learn by being transformed into babies once again. This water nursery run by Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid follows the actions and conduct of surface humans and they are paid in kind in the water-world. The water-world becomes a mirror to the land world and each person sees their own reflection there. Tom's own inner development in this alternative space hinges on bathing and being cleaned of dirt. The dirt here is not just physical but rather in the dimension of the metaphysical. Once in a dream, he dreams of a little White Lady crying to him: "Oh, you're so dirty; go and be washed". The images of water before he enters the magical reality of water beings all point to his spiritual baptism and they include the salmon river, the shining sea and the stream.

According to Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy as a genre exposes underbelly of power structures and institutions to reveals cracks in them. She points to pockets of illegality, disorder and chaos that fantasy brings to the surface. Fantasy in *The Water-Babies* also addresses brutality of the Victorians towards children who are punished in the novel and turn from adults to babies blurring distinctions between childhood and adulthood. Jackson says, "fantastic literature points to or suggest the basis upon which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder or to illegality, on to that which lies outside the law, that which is outside dominant value systems. The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made absent" (Jackson 10). Kingsley's The Water-Babies is a

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fantasy that negotiates exploitation of young children as chimney sweepers and their coming-of-age to become wealthier and socially adapted beings. Tom's movements in the land-world and the water-world exposes the cracks in the former: Victorian society unhinged by Darwinian laws of biology and zoology. The focus on his journeys back and forth are to point to the inadequacy at times of conventional biblical teaching emphasising the need for a higher spiritual understanding of the cosmos. The water-world provides a vantage to address issues of child atrocities, ignorance about childhood, and the revival of childish prelapsarian state where they can dance around the gooseberry bush and make dirt-pies: "but their foolish fathers and mothers instead of letting them pick flowers, and make dirt-pies, and get birds' nests, and dance around the gooseberry bush, as little children should, kept them always at lessons, working, working, working" (Kingsley 182). Kingsley was successful in impressing upon the need for reforms in laws pertaining to child labour, the Chimney Sweepers Regulation Act became a law within a year of the publication of *The Water-Babies*.

In the space of the fantasy, the water-world becomes an escape from brutal class distinctions. Inside water, Tom knows freedom from constraints and oppression, he loses his identity as a chimney sweeper: "He did not remember having ever been dirty. Indeed, he did not remember any of his old troubles, being tired, or hungry, or beaten, or sent up dark chimneys" (Kingsley 41). Tom is still fearful under water lest his master Grimes find him and turn him into a chimney sweeper again or beat him up. However, he is gradually made to overcome these fears and become a stronger person someone willing to help Grimes when he finds him turned into a water-baby towards the end of the novel. Ellie, the rich girl with pale ringlets, associated with Jesus, the crucifix and Christian faith also meets Tom as a water-baby in the water-world. The underground water-world becomes a place of wish fulfilment while Ellie in the allegorical sense turns into Dante's Beatrice. She represents both spiritual revelation and fulfilment of divine promise. The people who mistreated Tom and other children are turned into water-babies kept in a nursery taken care of by Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. She with her matronly air goes around with a great Birch rod punishing them if they err. The water-babies are given a taste of their own medicine as they have to experience what they did to other helpless children as their mothers or nursery maids:

> And then she called up a whole troop of foolish ladies, who pinch up their children's waists and toes; and she laced them all up in tight stays, so that they were choked and sick, and their noses grew red, and their hands and feet swelled; and then she crammed their poor feet into the most dreadfully tight boots, and made them all dance, which they did most clumsily indeed; and then she asked them how they liked it; and when they said not at all, she let them go…Then she called up all the careless nurserymaids, and stuck pins into them all over, and wheeled them about in perambulators with tight straps across their stomachs and their heads. (Kingsley 116)

Tom as a water-baby is given lessons on patience and common sense. Kingsley, however, sees fantasy as alternative to change the lot of chimney sweepers rather than radical reforms. The emphasis is on morality and goodness which can deliver him from social abuse and pain: "Nobody can turn water-babies into sweeps, or hurt them at all,

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as long as they are good" (131). Tom is nurtured by the fairy godmothers, kissed and petted "till he fell asleep from pure love" (120).

Eventually, Tom is returned to his childhood as a water-baby, and water becomes means of his restoration. The lines from Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's…For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters" become the basis by which Tom is allowed to grow and fashion himself into a Victorian gentleman. He is endowed with all the vigour of Kingsley's idea of "Christian manliness" as someone who can plan railroads, and steam engines and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns". He is no longer a vulnerable child and a street urchin looking for water.

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