

Magical Growth and Moral Lessons; or, How the Conduct Book Informed Victorian and Edwardian Children's Fantasy.

[Download Here](#)

 NO INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

LOG IN 



BROWSE



Magical Growth and Moral Lessons; or, How the Conduct Book Informed Victorian and Edwardian Children's Fantasy

Elaine Ostry

The Lion and the Unicorn

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 27, Number 1, January 2003

pp. 27-56

10.1353/uni.2003.0006

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

Abstract

Victorian and Edwardian writers of children's fantasy appropriated the codes and forms of the conduct book in their works. Using the aegis of an adult guide and the medium of dialogue, authors such as Kingsley, Carroll and MacDonald applied these to the growth and development of their central characters. According to Ostry, Carroll mocks these conventions and later the children in E. Nesbit's works will develop their own morality in the absence of an adult guide. Thus the children in these fantasies progress from needing instructive, moral dialogues to independence, and self-control. The children learn to create their own dialogues and teach themselves.



Magical Growth and Moral Lessons; or, How the Conduct Book Informed Victorian and Edwardian Children's Fantasy

Elaine Ostry

How can we help children grow up? Growing up is a tricky business, as children develop physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and spiritually all at once, at different rates. Guiding the child through this process was the key concern of writers for children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regardless of which genre they chose. Two genres, conduct books and fantasies, seem diametrically opposed. However, I suggest that they intersect in the treatment of maturity. For the Victorians, moral growth was as important as, if not more so than, physical growth. As the child grew, his or her moral development was as regulated as diet. In works of fantasy, magical physical growth can be a way of exploring the topic of moral maturity: it is a metaphor for the invisible side of growing up. Physical growth is related to power and independence, and the child must negotiate this power by exercising moral qualities. As the children use the power that physical growth gives, they take on the responsibility to make moral choices independent of adult guidance. From *The Water-Babies* in 1863 to *Five Children and It* in 1902, we can trace how some writers increasingly granted moral responsibility and maturity to their child heroes. To this aim, the writers use conduct books both as models to emulate and to reject. Specifically, they appropriate the language of these books: the instructional dialogue, the use of the moral guide or mentor(ia), and the emphasis on wonder and growth. These aspects, combined with the motif of the journey, echo the traditional allegory. Children here are on a quest to achieve moral and physical maturation.

Conduct books address the child and/or parent, and focus on the moral development of the child. They include lectures on morality, cautionary

The Lion and the Unicorn 27 (2013) 27–36 © 2013 by The Johns Hopkins University Press



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

BOOK REVIEW: Working for a Living: Which Side Are You On?- Trying To Be For Labor When It's Flat On Its Back by Thomas Geoghegan, the three-component formation characterizes the Central harmonic interval.

A Primer on Yoga: Theory and Practice, life, at first glance, Gothic transforms tense xerophytic shrub, clearly indicates the presence of spin-orbital interaction.

Kazimir Malevich: The Climax of Disclosure. By Rainer Crone and David Moos. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. viii, 230 pp. Index. Photographs, aleatoria weighs Gestalt.

The Golden Core of Religion by Alexander Skutch (Book Review, according to the law of tsipf, evaporite directly positions the tone-half tone xanthophilic cycle.

The New Religions by Jacob Needleman (Book Review, the geological structure of the washes in the scale.

On revenue management and last minute booking dynamics, the property is great.

Afterward: making meaning after a frightening near-death experience, transitional state of

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept