



Imagining Soldiers and Fathers in the Mid-Victorian Era: Charlotte Yonge's Models of Manliness

Susan, Dr Walton

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Beginning with the premise that women's perceptions of manliness are crucial to its construction, Susan Walton focuses on the life and writings of Charlotte Yonge as a prism for understanding the formulation of masculinities in the Victorian period. Yonge was a prolific writer whose bestselling fiction and extensive journalism enjoyed a wide readership. Walton situates Yonge's work in the context of her family connections with the army, showing that an interlocking of worldly and spiritual warfare was fundamental to Yonge's outlook. For Yonge, all good Christians are soldiers, and Walton argues persuasively that the medievalised discourse of sanctified violence executed by upright moral men that is often connected with late nineteenth-century Imperialism began earlier in the century, and that Yonge's work was one major strand that gave it substance. Of significance, Yonge also endorsed missionary work, which she viewed as an extension of a father's duties in the neighborhood and which was closely allied to a vigorous promotion of refashioned Tory paternalism. Walton's study is rich in historical context, including Yonge's connections with the Tractarians, the effects of industrialization, and Britain's Imperial enterprises. Informed by extensive archival scholarship, Walton offers important insights into the contradictory messages about manhood current in the mid-nineteenth century through the works of a major but undervalued Victorian author.

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