



## **Happening to Oneself: Zen, Taoism, and Jungian Individuation as Paths to Spirituality in Edward Gorey's The Object Lesson and Shel Silverstein's The Missing Piece.**

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### **Abstract**

Carl Jung writes in *Psychology and Religion: West and East* that "It is not I who create myself, rather I happen to myself." This surprisingly Taoist statement is perhaps a perfect way to define the distinction between spirituality and religion in children's picture books. While religious children's books can be easily identified and classified based on the religious system to which they ascribe, spirituality in children's picture books is much harder to pin down, and can be extended to any book that provides an imaginative mental playground with enough freedom to allow a child to "happen" to itself. This article seeks to further explicate Jung's theory of individuation by looking at Taoism and Zen Buddhism in children's literature. Specifically, it examines Edward Gorey's *The Object Lesson* and Shel Silverstein's *The Missing Piece* as exemplary texts for this explication.

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