

Care and Growth in Edith Nesbit's Magic Tales

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Abstract

Edith Nesbit is known for forming “The Nesbit Tradition” and “The Nesbit Legacy” in children’s literature. Her writing is influential, showing both Victorian and modern temperaments. The proposed talk looks at Nesbit’s child protagonists and non-human creatures in her magic tales, *Five Children and It* (1902), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906). Discussions will be made of how these characters serve as the main carers to help others and eventually her readers grow and mature. Because her protagonists are invariably children without parents’ supervision. Nesbit allows her child protagonists to be independent to confront challenges or resolve problems on their own because there are no adults to take care of them. Her female protagonists deserve further critical assessments, including Anthea in the *Five Children and It* and Elfrida in *The House of Arden*; Lucy in *The Magic City*. They play essential roles in taking care of others; they are often more attentive, vital and brave. Nesbit’s focus on children’s care with regard to gender will be explored. Besides her female protagonists, the non-human creatures, such as Psammead, Phoenix and a magical object (such as a carpet) are also presented as carers in the stories. They offer advice and share their own experiences with the children. Nesbit highlights the care of female protagonists and non-human creatures to assist the transformation and growth of her child protagonists and eventually that of her readers.

Keywords: Edith Nesbit, Care, Gender, Children’s Literature, Non-human Creatures, Education