

THE NARRATIVE VOICE IN THE CHILDREN'S
FANTASY NOVELS OF E. NESBIT

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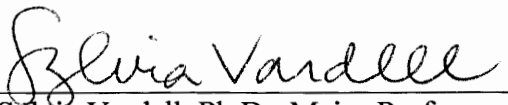
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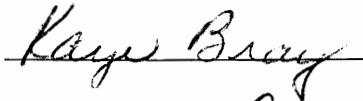
To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Ann Sloan entitled "The Narrative Voice in the Children's Fantasy Novels of E. Nesbit." I have examined this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Library Science.


Sylvia Vardell, Ph.D., Major Professor

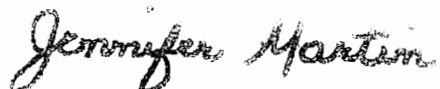
We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:






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DEDICATION

To my parents, Hugh and Irene,

and my aunts, Dr. Virginia and Cora Mae.

Your love, your example, your belief in me made this possible at last.

I only wish you were all here to share it with me.

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ABSTRACT

ANN SLOAN

THE NARRATIVE VOICE IN THE CHILDREN'S FANTASY NOVELS OF E. NESBIT

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The study sought to examine E. Nesbit's unique narrative style in addressing her young readers. Nesbit brought a fresh voice to her books that made a connection between her and her readers that lasted for generations. This study explored her methods in achieving this literary technique. By employing both narratological research methods and descriptive content analysis of E. Nesbit's fantasy novels, the researcher sought to show Nesbit's substantial contribution to the development of fiction for children. This study focused on Nesbit's narrative style in her children's fantasy novels. Its purpose was to explore the question: what characterizes her narrative style?

Children's books center on narrative: in a sense they are *about* narrative – and until relatively recently, narrative has been the poor relation in both theory and criticism (Hunt 1990). Compared to other contemporary directions of inquiry, narrative theory is still taking its very first steps within children's literature criticism (Nikolajeva 2003).

The narrative style of an author is what puts the reader into an implicit relationship with the author. Narratology, the study of the narrative, helps to answer questions that arise from reading children's literature: why narrative appeals, how the

storyteller tells her story, what keeps the reader turning the page, and how to recognize what is important for the narrative. Nesbit had a distinctive narrative style which created a bond with her readers. This study utilized narratology to understand that narrative style.

The study found that Nesbit spent much of her writing career in finding a voice by which to address the new child reader (Hunt 2001, 461). The strong emphasis she placed on the partnership of narrator and narratee made the child's interests rather than the adult's the real concern in her stories (Wall 1991, 149). This was borne out by the findings of the content analysis.

The variables, drawn from narratology, that were used in the content analysis were: mediated narrator; focalization; emotional distance; and tone. The results reflect what may be concluded from a critical analysis of her eight children's fantasy novels: Nesbit used the mediated narrator technique frequently to engage her narratee in her stories; focalization was on the child character; there was no emotional distance between the narrator and the narratee; and the tone in her early and late novels was humorous while the House of Arden books were more serious.

Emotional distance was not used for these analyses or any further analyses because it was found that the author was never emotionally distant from the child. Crosstabulations were conducted between the categorical variables across the eight books to reveal any significant relationships.

The mediated narrator, which engaged the narratee in direct dialogue, stepping out of the story for conversation, occurred 12.4%, in total, for all eight books. This engagement of the narratee is characteristic of Nesbit, as it established a conversation

with the implied child reader. Focalization, in which the narrative was told from the children's point of view or was focused on the children, occurred 91%, in total, for all eight books. There was no emotional distance established in any of the books between the narrator and the narratee. She always saw matters from the point of view of the child; there was never any distance between them. Finally, the tone was humorous 89.3% in the eight books; the later books were more serious. In the Arden books and in scenes in *The Story of the Amulet*, Nesbit addressed her social concerns to varying degrees.

She shaped her narratives to create the illusion of speaking to the narratee directly by constantly taking the narratee into her confidence by sharing information and insights into the characters and actions in the book (Wall 1991).

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to her biographer Julia Briggs, British fantasy author E. (Edith) Nesbit (1858-1924) was "the first modern writer for children" (Briggs 1987, xi). Her fiction "established a style and approach still widely used today..." (Briggs 1987, xi). "Child-like" is an adjective often used by her contemporaries as well as present-day biographers and critics to describe both her character and her writing. Briggs observed that "Edith never entirely wanted to grow up nor fully accepted that she had" (Briggs 1987, 400). Colin Manlove wrote that "One of the keys to an understanding of Nesbit is her passionate delight in life, and her wish to experience it to the full, to 'spread' herself in every direction" (Manlove 1977, 112). She once wrote: "When I was a child I used to pray fervently, tearfully, that when I should be grown up I might never forget what I thought, felt, and suffered then" (Nesbit 1987, 27). She had a special understanding of a child's mind and knew how to speak to that child through the medium of the fairy tale.

E. Nesbit was an authentic voice in the field of children's literature of the twentieth century. She exhibited a genuine respect for the child's intelligence and avoided the didacticism found in the books of her predecessors and contemporaries (Hunt 2001). She offered children enchantment and delight in her fantasies, published in England between 1902 and 1913. Her innovative style of writing children's fantasy placed realistic, contemporary children in seemingly real-world settings that she endowed

with magical objects and adventures. In creating these stories, she influenced many writers to follow, including C. S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, Eleanor Cameron, Diana Wynne Jones, Edward Eager, and J. K. Rowling (Rahn 2006; McGarrity 1999).

Nesbit's children's books played a critical role in the development of modern children's literature. Contemporary writers have acknowledged the debt they owe her (Alexander 1985). After E. Nesbit, writers explored new worlds of ideas and themes in children's books and children's literature would "never return to the stuffily enclosed nurseries of the nineteenth century" (Crouch 1972, 16).

Nesbit was the first writer of fiction for children "who did not feel the need to justify her writing for children, in her own eyes and in the eyes of other adults, by insisting on the intellectual and moral differences between herself and her readers" (Wall 1991, 149). Indeed, she made friends with her readers and resolved to enjoy their company and herself. In doing so, she made it possible for a new kind of children's literature to emerge (Wall 1991).

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to examine E. Nesbit's unique narrative style in addressing her young readers. The condescension that had marked literature intended for children was in the process of changing during this era, which has been called the first "Golden Age" of children's fiction, and Nesbit brought a fresh voice to her books that made a connection between her and her readers that lasted for generations. This study explores her methods in achieving this literary technique and what literary critics and children's authors can

learn from it. By employing both narratological research methods and descriptive content analysis of E. Nesbit's fantasy novels, the researcher sought to show Nesbit's substantial contribution to the development of fiction for children.

Research Problem

While there may be disagreements among critics as to which of her fantasies are the best crafted, there is no disagreement about E. Nesbit's gift in telling stories that appeal to a child's wonder and fancy. While not the first writer to use the overt, or intrusive, narrator stance in her narratives, E. Nesbit successfully popularized these approaches in children's fantasy literature.

Nesbit's influence on modern children's fiction cannot be underestimated. Although she was undeniably indebted to her Victorian predecessors, she brought a new and more modern voice to children's fiction. She acknowledged children as her audience, not adults. She had spent most of her career trying to write poetry and literature for adults; she came into her own when she began writing for children. Nesbit accepted that and seems to have truly enjoyed it. She respected children; she did not condescend to them. Barbara Wall observes that she "pioneered modern writing for children ... She had shown writers for children how to write for children while being themselves" (1991, 157).

Roderick McGillis, in his article "The Embrace: Narrative Voice and Children's Books," discusses the techniques a children's author uses to create the voice of the narrator that tells the story and how that voice works to "embrace" the reader. This voice,

McGillis says, “seeks to draw the child reader in by gaining her trust, by embracing her (1991, 24).” Nesbit had this voice. How she achieved it was explored in this study.

Research Question

This study focuses on Nesbit’s narrative style in her children’s fantasy novels. Its purpose is to explore the question: what characterizes her narrative style?

The children’s fantasy novels analyzed in this study were written between 1902 and 1913, during what is considered to be her most productive period, and certainly her most successful. These novels combined the magical invention of her short stories which she set in contemporary times with the social comedy of her very popular realistic novel series. By bringing magic into the real world, she created a new and influential model for children’s fantasy. The books became more sophisticated, complex, and serious as Nesbit explored the possibilities in traveling in time and space. After *Harding’s Luck*, the books were less impressive, but they continued to demonstrate her ability to connect with children (Lurie 1988). The books examined in this study were:

Psammead Series

1. *Five Children and It* (1902)
2. *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904)
3. *The Story of the Amulet* (1906)

House of Arden Series

4. *The House of Arden* (1908)
5. *Harding’s Luck* (1909)

Others

6. *The Enchanted Castle* (1907)

7. *Magic City* (1910)

8. *Wet Magic* (1913)

The variables selected demonstrate the narratological techniques that enabled her to engage her readers. The variables for this study were:

- *Mediated narration* – a narration in which the narrator’s presence makes itself felt
- *Focalization* – the position or quality of consciousness through which readers “see” events in the narrative
- *Distance* – the narrator’s emotional distance from the characters and the action
- *Tone* – the narrator’s attitude toward the characters, situations, and events presented (Prince 1987; Abbott 2002).

Limitations of the Study

E. Nesbit’s body of work includes adults’ and children’s books, short stories, and collections of poetry. She published over 40 books for children; however, this study focuses on her children’s fantasy novels only. This study does not include her children’s realistic novels and short stories, her poetry, or works for adults. Analysis focused only on works published between 1900 and 1913, the period in which she did her “best work” (Crouch 1962, 13):

- Psammead Series – 1902, 1904, 1906
- House of Arden Series – 1908, 1909
- *The Enchanted Castle* - 1907
- *Magic City* - 1910
- *Wet Magic* - 1913

Nesbit wrote several realistic children's novels published during this period: *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), *The Wouldbegoods* (1901), *New Treasure Seekers* (1904), known as the "Bastable" stories, *The Railway Children* (1908), as well as two collections of modern fairy tales. Nevertheless, her fantasy novels have a special interest. She made several innovations in this genre, in particular the use of time travel (Briggs 2006) and an entirely original blending of the magical and the real (Schwartz 2005).

The work Nesbit produced prior to the "Bastable" stories has not survived the test of time. Although she attained a modest reputation as poet and novelist, the work was conventional, sentimental, and, truthfully, hackwork (Briggs 1987; Schwartz 2005). It gave no sign of what Nesbit proved capable of in her children's fantasy novels (Lurie 1988).

Significance of the Study

Despite E. Nesbit's acknowledged influence on children's authors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, her work has received little critical notice. Nesbit's legacy is real; in his book *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel 1945-1970*, Marcus Crouch (1972), reviews the "heirs to the Nesbit heritage," the heirs being authors who published children's books from 1945 through 1970. Her stamp is also apparent in more recent

books by Philip Pullman and J. K. Rowling, and even in cinematic productions such as *Toy Story*, a direct descendant of *The Magic City* (Schwartz 2005). Crouch asserts that “she reshaped the family story, the fantasy and the historical romance so fundamentally that there is scarcely a writer in these fields who does not, directly or indirectly, owe her a debt” (Crouch 1962, 13). Although the language of the stories, particularly the English slang spoken by the children, and the attitudes expressed towards servants and other classes and cultures may date her fiction, what endures is the freshness of her narrative voice, the ironic and deprecating humor, and the originality of her imaginative inventions. For these reasons, readers continue to find pleasure and delight in her children’s fantasies. Most of all, the quality of her writing makes her work deserve attention today. What endures is “...the freshness of her narrative voice, the vivacity and playful humor, ... the perpetual fusion and confusion between the imaginary and the real ..., [and] the magical lure of our wishes, dreams, and desires” (Schwartz 2005, xxxvii) that can be found in E. Nesbit’s children’s fantasies.

Narratology gives us analytical tools that can help us appreciate the relationship between authors and their young readers. Nesbit has a very special relationship with the children who read her books. In Warhol’s terms, she is truly “engaging,” in that she strives to close the gap between the narrator and the narratee. Such a narrator, Warhol explains, uses narrative interventions and addresses a “you” that is intended to evoke recognition in the reader (1986, 811). Nesbit established this relationship in this manner:

Now that I have begun to tell you about the place, I feel that I could go on and make this into a most interesting story about all the ordinary things that the

children did, -- just the kind of things you do yourself, you know, -- and you would believe every word of it; and when I told about the children's being tiresome, as you are sometimes, your aunts would perhaps write in the margin of the story with a pencil, "How true!" or "How like life!" and you would see it and very likely be annoyed. So I will only tell you the really astonishing things that happened, and you may leave the book about quite safely, for no aunts or uncles either are likely to write, "How true!" on the edge of the story. (*Five Children and It*, 2005, 10)

Barbara Wall concluded that "the quest to find a suitable voice in which to narrate to children ended here, in Nesbit's attitude to her narratees and readers" (1991, 157).

Methodology

Writers about children's books have ignored, on the whole, the theoretical studies of narrative, the very thing that characterizes children's books so clearly (Meek 1982). The narrative style of an author is what puts the reader into an implicit relationship with the author. The novelist creates the situation, the characters, and the events and presents it to the reader as humorous, sentimental, ironic, heroic, or "what-have-you" and invites readers to share the experience (Harding 1977, 201). However, books usually come without instructions; readers absorb an understanding of how to negotiate them from reading other books and from what various people tell them (Cadden and Wyile 2003). Narrative theories help readers understand literary narrative practices they encounter. Narratology helps to answer questions that arise from reading children's literature: why narrative appeals, how the storyteller tells her story, what keeps the reader turning the

page, how to recognize what is important for the narrative. All this must be the concern of theoretician and practitioner alike (Hunt 1990). More awareness of an author's narrative style will facilitate a child's path to comprehension and appreciation of that author's works. Nesbit had a distinctive narrative style which created a bond with her readers. This study utilized narratology to understand that narrative style.

Narratology investigates theories of narrative structure, including character and plot, narrator, and narrative techniques. The dialogue between the narrator and narratee, studied in narratology, is of particular interest in children's literature. This methodology attempts to understand the components of narrative and analyzes how particular narratives achieve their effects (Culler 1997). This study concentrated on the nature of the addresser and the addressee and the manner in which the narrative is communicated between the two.

Summary

This study examines E. Nesbit's children's fantasies, her contributions to, and her influence on the writing of children's fantasies. Following the literary theory of narratology, it concentrates on her narrative style in her children's fantasy novels published between 1902 and 1913, the period in which she wrote her fantasy novels, the period when many critics believe she found where her real talent lay (Avery 2005).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study focuses on E. Nesbit's narrative style in the writing of her children's fantasy novels published between 1902 and 1913. Nesbit's unique contributions to children's literature are best understood in an historical context. A brief review of the research on the history of children's literature and Nesbit's biography provides this context.

The Beginning

Nesbit wrote forty novels for children, eight novels for adults, a dozen collections of short stories, some plays, and a great many collections of serious poetry. In choosing to make fantasy a significant part of her literary output, she was joining a well-established tradition. The British have long loved their folk tales, fairy tales, and fantasies. It says much for "the conservatism and obstinacy of the British that, in the teeth of centuries of denunciation from preachers, moralists, and pedagogues, they clung to their 'fayned fables, vayne fantasyes, and wanton stories' (as Hugh Rhodes's *Boke of Nurture* put it in 1577), and produced a literature notably rich in fantasy and imagination" (Avery 1995, 1). Legends and romances such as those of King Arthur, Robin Hood, Guy of Warwick, St. George, and Reynard the Fox were passed down for centuries orally and then in written form, rewarding readers, child and adult, with a literature rich in fantasy and imagination (Townsend 1990). Beguiling fairies, frightful creatures, splendid

derring-dos, time-honored superstitions, and traditional folk customs found their way into works by such celebrated authors as Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, works that are part of the English-speaking world's literary tradition (Zipes 1999). Over the years, fairy tales and fantasy became, for the most part, the province of the young. Harvey Darton, in writing of children's literature in John Newbery's day (circa 1744), observed that "the Cabinet of Fairies is both the corner- and the coping-stone of any child's library" (1999, 6).

By the time Nesbit was writing her fantasies, such stories were widely accepted as appropriate fare for children. Such had not always been the case, however. With the rise of Puritanism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, fantasy and fairy tales faced great hostility. This cultural code suppressed the development of the literary fairy tale in England, while it flourished in France (Carpenter and Prichard 1984). The domination of Calvinism in England following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had a profound and long-lasting cultural influence. Virtuous conduct in one's private life and industriousness in public commerce were to bring rewards in worldly matters. Christian values and fidelity to reason were to provide the foundation for success and happiness in the family and work. Dedication to reason and distaste for imagination were the guiding principles of the new enlightened guardians of Calvinist and utilitarianism for the next two centuries (Zipes 1999).

As a result of the change of monarchs, laws were passed in England after 1688 that banned amusements in the theater, literature, and the arts. Folk tales, oral or written, were no longer considered proper subject matter for the education of young people.

Stories, poems, and novels written for children were primarily religious and instructional (Zipes 1999).

The Enlightenment circa 1688-1789

With the coming of the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, opposition to fantasy and fairy tales continued, although the opposition was based on somewhat different grounds. Thinkers of the Age of Reason would have none of fairies – fairies and rationality were considered to be incompatible (Avery 1965). This attitude is satirized by the Romantic author E. T. A. Hoffman in his short story, “Little Zaches, Great Zinnober: A Fairy Tale,” published in 1819. A prime minister introducing the new laws of the Enlightenment declares:

Yes! – I name them enemies of Enlightenment . . . they and they alone are responsible for our dear State still being laid low in total darkness. They are carrying on a dangerous trade with the miraculous and they do not shy away from spreading, under the name of poetry, a secret poison that makes people quite incapable of serving the Enlightenment. And then they have such unbearable, police-unfriendly habits, that for these alone they may not be tolerated in any civilised state. For example: the impudent creatures have the effrontery to go, as soon as the fancy takes them, for a drive in the air with harnessed doves, swans – indeed, even winged horses . . . For that, my noble lord – as soon as Enlightenment is proclaimed, out with the fairies! (Haldane).

In *The Governess: or, Little Female Academy* (1749), Sarah Fielding admitted two fairy tales, but only under a strict *caveat*, voiced by her Mrs. Teachum to her infant charges: “Giants, Magic, Fairies, and all Sorts of supernatural Assistances in a Story, are only introduced to amuse and divert . . . Therefore, by no means let the notion of Giants or Magic dwell upon your Minds” (2008, 24). By 1801, Lucy Aikin, in the preface to her *Poetry for Children*, could comment that “Since dragons and fairies, giants and witches have vanished from our nurseries before the wand of reason, it has been a prevailing maxim that the young mind should be fed on mere prose and simple fact . . .” (Darton 1999, 153). Dorothy Kilner, another prolific writer of children's books during the late eighteenth century, assured adults that her *Histories of More Children than One* (c. 1783) was “totally free from the prejudicial nonsense of witches, fairies, fortune-tellers, love and marriage, which too many are larded with” (Avery and Kinnell 1995, 69).

Sarah Trimmer (1741-1810) was one of the most determined opponents of fantasy for children (Avery 1965). She founded a magazine called *The Guardian of Education* in which she condemned the values associated with fairy tales, accusing such stories of perpetuating superstition and irrationality. Her purpose in censoring this literature was “the preservation of the young and innocent from the dangers which threaten them in the form of infantine and juvenile literature” (Darton 1999, 96). She recommended that Cinderella be banished, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* be forbidden, and Robinson Crusoe be prohibited, because his history might lead to “an early taste for a rambling life, and a desire of adventures” (Darton 1999, 97). Trimmer held that Mother Goose tales

were “only fit to fill the heads of children with confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events, brought about the agency of imaginary beings” (Darton 1999, 97).

In the spirit of the Enlightenment, John Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693. Locke wrote that that “children may be cozened into a knowledge of the letters; be taught to read, without perceiving it to be anything but a sport, and play themselves into that which others are whipped for.” Inspired by this, John Newbery, the first significant publisher for children, adopted the motto *Delectando monemus* (*Instruction through Delight*) (Susina 1993). He published *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* in 1744. The book was a hodge-podge of information and games, including riddles and advice on a proper diet. Newbery's tales appear moralistic today, but were popular and enjoyed by children of the 18th and 19th centuries (AbsoluteAstronomy.com).

The Evangelicals

Beginning in the 1730s, the Evangelical movement began to dominate many aspects of English life. The Evangelical ideology was built on a combination of Puritan morality, economic ambition, the virtues of prudence and self-reliance, an authoritarian view of society in general, as well as the family in particular (Butts 1997).

The evangelical faction of the established Church of England and its dissenting allies, including the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, were responsible for many of the attitudes today thought of as “Victorian.” Evangelicalism insisted on the total depravity of humanity and put particular emphasis on faith, denying that either good works or the sacraments possessed any sacramental value. The term came into general

use in England at the time of the Methodist revival, which had its roots in Calvinism and which, with its emphasis on emotion and mysticism in the spiritual realm, was itself in part a reaction against the "rational" Deism of the earlier eighteenth century (Cody).

In keeping with this theological philosophy, children's literature, from John Newbery's time, was premised on its respectability and its middle class values. It taught piety and decency, and commercial virtues such as diligence, honesty, frugality, and prudence. The foundation of its appeal to parents, the intended purchasers, was that it could improve the life of the children who read it, and that it would instill the values that would bring them worldly success. Both the rational works of the Newbery tradition and the increasingly Evangelical moral tales were forms of children's literature marketed as an investment in a child's future (Grenby 2006).

Georgian Age and the Regency 1714-1830

This is not to say that fairy tales disappeared completely. Publishers such as John Harris, the successor to the house of Newbery, and Benjamin Tabart published folk and fairy stories. He launched his *Tales for the Nursery* in 1804, containing fairy stories and traditional tales. These were not new tales, but rather retellings of both the French and traditional British stories, revised, and now marketed directly at children. This was a significant advance in the history of children's literature since many of these stories had previously been available only as chapbooks, intended only for poor and simple readers. Tabart's quality presentation appealed to the middle and upper class children and their elders. Indeed, it was a courageous venture to publish materials under attack by Mrs. Trimmer and likeminded critics (Grenby 2006).

Benjamin Tabart published *Cinderella* as well as the *Collection of Popular Stories for the Nursery*, later published as *Popular Fairy Tales* in 1818. Charles Perrault's fairy tales had first been published in England in 1729, and chapbook versions of his fairy tales continued to be bestsellers for many decades to come. William Roscoe's *The Butterfly Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*, published in 1807, with not an iota of a moral, was very popular with readers and had many imitators (Avery and Kinnell 1995).

William Lane, of the Minerva Press, published several collections of old fairy tales. Lane's sustained production of fairy tales provides a major argument that the genre was falling out of fashion in late eighteenth-century Britain. Between 1788 and the end of the century, he looted Madame d'Aulnoy's works to bring out at least six collections of fairy tales, all of which sold very successfully (Grenby 2006).

Nevertheless, during the early years of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the Victorian era (1837-1901), education and religious instruction continued to be the primary goals of writers of literature for children. Adults were anxious about their children. As late as 1799 the *Evangelical Magazine* advised parents to teach their children that "they are sinful polluted creatures" (Cunningham 2006, 130). Hannah More, one of the most successful writers, and perhaps the most influential woman, of her day, warned against the tendency of parents to treat children as if they were innocent (Cunningham 2005). The earnestness, the preoccupation with conscience, and, above all, the heavy moral responsibilities imposed upon children are characteristic of children's books in the early Victorian period. In these works we find a notable lack of imagination and a total repudiation of all irrational influences on the child's mind (Avery 1965).

By 1800, moral tales were the predominant genre in children's books in England. Authors avoided anything fanciful and, if the story had fairies, it also taught a lesson. Perrault and the Grimm brothers included morals with each of their tales when publishing in Britain. George Cruikshank infamously inserted a temperance polemic into "Cinderella and the Magic Slipper" in 1854. This prompted Charles Dickens to protest against this practice in "Frauds on the Fairies," which appeared in Dickens's weekly journal *Household Words*. Dickens beseeched his readers, "In an [sic] utilitarian age, of all other times, it is a matter of grave importance that Fairy tales should be respected . . . The world is too much with us, early and late. Leave this precious old escape from it, alone," pleaded Dickens (1853).

Not all the evangelists agreed with Dickens. The most fiercely didactic of all writers of the moral tale (Carpenter and Prichard 1984), Mary Martha Sherwood (1775–1851) was a prolific and influential writer of children's literature during the first half of the nineteenth century. She composed over 400 books, tracts, magazine articles, and chapbooks. The most famous is *The History of the Fairchild Family*, published in 1818, 1842, and 1847. The *Fairchild Family* tells the story of a family striving towards godliness. It consists of a series of lessons taught by the Fairchild parents to their three children regarding not only the proper orientation of their souls towards heaven, but also the right earthly morality.

The Victorian Age 1837-1901

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, England, along with Western Europe and North America, experienced a momentous

social, cultural, and economic upheaval as its traditional agrarian society was transformed by the Industrial Revolution. The rapidity with which this transformation took place caused anxiety and bewilderment among those living through this chaotic and unstable time (Horn 1997). While the precise period of time covered by the Industrial Revolution varies by historian, most agree that it began in Britain in the 1770-80s, though all its effects were not fully felt until the 1830-40s. The industrialization of the realm would have a profound effect on the lives of English children throughout the nineteenth century (Jordan 1987).

For children of the lower classes, the early part of the nineteenth century was harsh, grim, and even dangerous. Children as young as four or five worked in mills, factories, and mines. This practice was tolerated and even encouraged for many decades. Some argued that the work helped them make a necessary contribution to their family's income. Many factory owners claimed that employing children was necessary for production to run smoothly and for their products to remain competitive. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, recommended child labor as a means of preventing youthful idleness and vice (Tuttle 2001).

The prevailing view of childhood of many was that children were "little adults" and should contribute to the family's income. Work was a traditional and customary part of ordinary people's lives. Families sent their children to work because they needed the income. Working class parents had worked when they were young and required their children to do the same. Many children, of course, were without family or home and had no choice but to work (Tuttle 2001). In *The Affectionate Daughter*, a chapbook published

circa 1820, the opportunity to send a nine-year-old down the mine to work on behalf of her family was considered a positive godsend: “How different was the case of this numerous family from that of many others in the same humble situation of life. Mary and her brothers, so far from being a burden, were bringing a little fortune to their parents” (Avery and Kinnell 1995, 52). Although there were people within the middle and upper classes who defended child labor, it would have been hard to find any within the working class who saw it as anything better than an unavoidable necessity (Cunningham 2005).

The Romantic Age circa 1798-late 1800s

As the nineteenth century progressed, there were fundamental changes in the status of the child in society, changes which were directly reflected in the scope and diversity of literature written for children. These shifts in perception had a variety of causes – some cultural and social, some demographic, and some economic – but two will be particularly significant for this discussion: the Romantic Movement and a growing awareness of the need for a more broadly-based educational system.

The resurgence of fairy tales during this period may in part be attributed to Romanticism, a movement that began during the 1790s with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and gained strength during the Industrial Revolution. Romanticism was, to a great degree, a reaction against the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century rationalism and physical materialism. Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.

Imagination was considered the supreme mental faculty (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online* 2010).

Romanticism esteemed strong, irrational emotions -- particularly horror. It also prized the more gentle sentiments of affection, sorrow, and romantic longing. As the Industrial Revolution relocated people into artificial urban environments, Romanticism placed a new emphasis on the morality and spirituality in untamed nature. It viewed nature as a refuge from the artificial constructs of civilization. Romanticism was an attempt to escape the confines of population growth, urban sprawl and industrialism. It favored the exotic, calling on the power of the imagination to allow people to escape the physical and the counterfeit. Interest in national heritage and folk stories, including fairy tales, was a key element. It elevated folk art and custom to something noble (Holman 1972; Romanticism).

The Romanticism of the Child

The Romantics saw children as innocent and unspoiled. The Romantic child was a redeemer. For the Romantics, the sacred innocence and imagination of childhood offered redemption to fallen adulthood (Sandner 1996). William Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* published in 1806, had a powerful influence on nineteenth century ideas of childhood.

But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy! (Quiller-Couch 1955 628)

Wordsworth's poetry changed the image of childhood and, in so doing, altered the course of English literature, and children's literature in particular (Carpenter 1985). Children began to be considered as individuals and were idealized as superior sources of wisdom. Children were considered to have keener perceptions of beauty and of truth than adults. By the end of the nineteenth century, childhood had acquired value in and of itself. Children's innocence, emotionality, and imagination became qualities to be preserved rather than overcome. A child's sojourn in childhood was to be protected; adulthood was not to be hastened. Life could be seen, not as an ascent to maturity, but as a decline from the freshness of childhood. Literature that stretched the imagination, such as fairy tales or fantasy, was to be desired for the child more than facts or tracts (Cunningham 2005; MacLeod 1992).

Romanticism's view of the imagination as a positive creative force and its view of childhood as sacred promoted the legitimacy of fantasy for children. The shift toward the fantastic in children's literature occurred rapidly over the first half of the nineteenth century. By mid-century (Egoff 1988; Prickett 1979), following the success of Dickens' *Christmas Carol* (1843) and Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* (1855), children's authors wrote to please children without trying to improve them, for the Romantic child had a purity and incandescent power that only faded in the adult (Sandner 1996).

The nineteenth century saw a fundamental change in the portrayal and status of the child in society, which was directly reflected in the scope and diversity of literature written for children, as well as writings concerned about the nature and experience of childhood. For the Victorians, the child came to symbolize the innocence and spirituality

that was directly in conflict with the technological and scientific changes of the Industrial Revolution (Briggs 1995).

Educating the Child

The economic, demographic, cultural, social, and religious interests of this period prompted the beginnings of the educational system that brought literacy to children under the age of twelve who previously had little or no instruction outside their families or their work. Between 1841 and 1901 the inhabitants of England and Wales more than doubled, from 15.9 million to 32.5 million. The majority of this growth was in cities; in 1841 less than half of the population had lived in urban areas, by 1901 around four-fifths did so (Horn 1996). The need to educate this rapidly growing population was eventually evident to business and political leaders. Previously every child's teaching had been a parental responsibility. That was now unworkable and could not meet the needs of the modern world, particularly for the lower classes. As social problems emerged and the need for an educated working class became apparent, the government of England slowly developed a free educational system for all children (Bratton 1981).

Until this institution was established, however, churches provided free schooling for working-class children on Sundays. From 1783, the Sunday School movement expanded rapidly, bringing basic instruction to thousands. Nonconforming churches were particularly earnest in promoting the schools. Evangelical religion was a movement dedicated to the advance of education. The imperative of spreading Bible knowledge demanded it. The fulfillment of religious duty was entirely in harmony with the goal of eighteenth century progressive thinkers: the enlightenment of the masses (Bebbington

1989). In 1858, more than half of the Sunday school students attended their schools, compared to 45.8% attending those of the Church of England, and 1.5% attending those of the Roman Catholic Church (Bebbington 1989). Volunteer teachers, men in the early nineteenth century and women by the end of the century (Bebbington 1989), from the children's own social background (Horn 1997), taught religious lessons as well as basic reading, writing, and, occasionally, other subjects.

More educational opportunities created a need for instructional materials. There was a widening acceptance of children's books as an essential part of a child's upbringing. The availability of lesson books for small children and the increased publication of alphabets, spelling books, and chapbooks was a given by mid-century (Darton 1999). "Through the Sunday school," writes Thomas Laqueur, "children were inundated with the printed word. The Sunday School Union alone sold some 10,000,000 reading and spelling books in the first half of the century . . . Tracts, books, testaments, and Bibles were distributed in tens of millions" (Horn 1997, 84).

The limited curriculum and untrained teachers offered a meager education, at best. Children were weary after a long working week and had little educational background. However, there is evidence that many young people benefited from the social and recreational facilities. Many also absorbed the values of respectability and refinement being propagated through these schools, values which appealed to many working-class families (Horn 1997).

The Literary Fairy Tale

The removal of much of the British population from the countryside to towns and cities during the Industrial Revolution created a strong current of nostalgia for a vanished past. This related strongly to Romanticism's longing for childhood's innocence and imagination. The child at once represented the freedom from responsibility adults craved and the idyll they had lost. At the same time, Evangelicalism, utilitarianism, and educational fervor competed for preeminence in the English consciousness. These opposing strains found their way into the literary fairy tale, or the invented fantasy, for children (Manlove 1999).

Moralists, educators, and those concerned with the religious teaching of children found it hard to reconcile their consciences with allowing fragile juvenile minds to be exposed to dangerous literature (Avery 1965). Contrary to the hue and cry of evangelical reformers, from the turn of the century onwards, Victorian perceptions of childhood, influenced by the Romantics, underwent a change that allowed for the emergence of fairy tales and fantasy in mainstream children's literature (Lam 2007). This conflict was reconciled by melding the two. The literary fairy tale introduced during this period from Germany continued the tradition of the moral didactic tale. Thus while children's fantasy literature embraced a different notion of childhood from that espoused by evangelical writers, it continued to convey lessons from the adult writer to the child reader (Carpenter 1985). Bruno Bettelheim gave this an important impetus twenty years ago with his publication of *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Bettelheim wrote, "it hardly requires emphasis at this moment in our history" and that

children need “a moral education . . . [that teaches] not through abstract ethical concepts but through that which seems tangibly right and therefore meaningful The child finds this kind of meaning through fairy tales” (1976, 1).

These early literary fairy tales had a strongly moral and didactic slant. Fairy tales were disapproved of and children were reluctantly allowed access to them only if the stories’ morals were above reproach. Writers did not hesitate to use the traditional conventions of fairy tales for the purpose of teaching a useful lesson. Using fairy tale themes to illustrate instructive maxims was something at which the Victorians excelled (Avery 1965). In general, fantasies of this period have no highly imaginative writing, no extraordinary fairy tale settings, and no original characterization. Invariably the supernatural is used to illustrate the moral, not because the writers feel any genuine interest in it. Magic is a useful device for the better inculcation of Christian doctrines or other morals. The lessons are stale and worn, and the fairies in the stories are dull and dreary compared to many of the characters in books to follow (Avery 1965).

Such protests were to bear fruit. Indeed, even while evangelical didactic tales were being written, changes were taking place. Some writers were beginning to convey their moral teaching with a more nuanced context than found in earlier writings. While fairy tales were still frowned upon by many and only grudgingly were being admitted to the nursery shelves, a new attitude began forming. Fairy tales became more secular (Manlove 1999). From being deplored as a menace to the fragility of the English child’s mind, the fairy tale gradually became accepted over the nineteenth century as a source of imaginative enrichment. In the end, the fairy tale, with its strict rules of magic and its

clear rewards of merit and punishments of vice, had appeal, not only to Victorian moralists, but to all Victorians who welcomed a literature that expressed clear certainties and an ordered and just universe (Manlove 1999).

“The Dawn of Levity”

Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* (1839) is frequently seen as a turning point in children's fiction, a bridge between earlier didactic literature and the more liberated, later work of Lewis Carroll and others (Rudd 2004). Barbara Wall describes it as “the first modern children’s novel” (Wall 1991, 45). Darton calls this book “the first example of real laughter and a free conscience” (1999, 220). He goes on to say of Sinclair that, while other writers had begun to laugh with children, “Catherine Sinclair was the first to rollick” (1999, 220). However, even *Holiday House*, Darton admits, has “a moral tone about it” (1999, 220-221).

During the following decade, 1840 to 1850, the literary fairy tale was established. These included Francis Paget’s *The Hope of the Katzekopfs: or, the Sorrows of Selfishness – A Fairy Tale* (1844), Hans Christian Andersen’s *Wonderful Stories for Children* (1846), Richard Henry Horne’s *Memoirs of a London Doll* (1846), Edward Lear’s *Book of Nonsense* (1846), Mme Clara de Chatelain’s *The Silver Swan* (1847), Mark Lemon’s *The Enchanted Doll* (1849), and Margaret Gatty’s *The Fairy Godmothers* (1851; Avery 1965).

By the end of the 1840s a new kind of children’s literature was beginning to be serious, but not as explicitly didactic as earlier writing, increasingly aware of the needs of the child, conscious of a sense of responsibility and duty, but with an increasing capacity

for warmth and laughter and imaginative enjoyment, too (Butts 1995). Children's literature reflected the recognition of reading for pleasure rather than reading for purpose. The loving care Felix Summerly took with his publication of *The Home Treasury*, the gaiety and warmth of Sinclair's *Holiday House*, and the exuberance of Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* all show that attitudes to children and to childhood were changing. Darton has characterized this period in children's literature as "The Dawn of Levity" (1999).

Educators, parents, writers, and publishers began to understand that the rigid, didactic training used to rear their children was dulling their intelligence, spontaneity, and creativity. More emphasis was being placed on whimsy and fantasy. Established writers turned to the genre to explore its possibilities. John Ruskin's fantasy novel *The King of the Golden River* (1851) and William M. Thackeray's fairy tale *The Rose and the Ring* (1855) were published in the following years. *The King of the Golden River*'s moral is that of selfishness punished, while *The Rose and the Ring* is thoroughly frivolous, pure comical pantomime. *The King of the Golden River* had actually been written in 1841, which accounts for its more somber, moralistic tone (Butts 1995).

By the middle of the century, discipline had abated somewhat, and recreation and games were beginning to be encouraged, even organized. The shrillness of early Victorian evangelical and educational zeal abated, and with this a quieter mode in fairy tales was possible, in which the moral could be more implicit, less overtly pointed. This can be seen, for example, in Frances Browne's *Granny's Wonderful Chair* (1856), where the author's feeling for the old stories made even allegory seem comfortable or in the

domestic realism of many of Mrs. Ewing's and Mrs. Molesworth's stories in the 1870s and 1880s (Manlove 1999).

The Grimm Brothers' fairy and folk tales in Edgar Taylor's two-volume translation, *German Popular Stories*, had been published in 1823 and 1826 (Meigs et al. 1969). These stories proved enormously popular, and stimulated an increasing volume of translations of fairy tales from other lands throughout the nineteenth century. Many collections of fairy tales and fantasies began to be published, partly translations of new works, partly collections of old. Among the fairy tales from Europe which were popular in translation was *Undine*, published by Friedrich De la Motte, Baron Fouqué, in Britain in 1818 (Zipes 1999). Also popular were *Fairy Tales* (1802-1827) by Wilhem Hauff, a prolific German writer of *Märchen* (fairy tales) and romantic novels, and Ludwig Bechstein's *The Old Story-Teller*, which was translated from the German in 1854. When Anthony R. Montalba published a volume of *Fairy Tales of all Nations* in 1849, he said that we had "cast off that pedantic folly of thinking fairy tales immoral" (Meigs et al. 1969). In 1858, James Robinson Planché translated *Four and Twenty* [French] *Fairy Tales*, and in 1859, Sir George Dasent Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe translated *Popular Tales from the Norse*. The fairy tale had at last truly come into its own (Darton 1999).

By the 1860s, the duality of morality and imagination that underlies so much of children's literature (Richardson 1991) was, on the whole, veering toward the latter (Manlove 2003). Fiction written with humor and creativity for young readers was opening new pathways for children's imagination (Bratton 1981). In the literary fairy tales and fantasies that were now being written, imagination, not morality, seemed to

have no bounds. Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* (1854) parodied the traditional fairy tale, while Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) made one of the most radical statements on behalf of the fairy tale to date (Zipes 1999). In these books, the imagination wanders as unrestrained as was feared by Mary Sherwood or Sarah Trimmer (Manlove 2003).

“Spiritual Volcanoes”

Nothing that had come before prepared the reading public for Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson)'s *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) or its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). The books were satirical, anarchical, anti-didactical, unsentimental, and completely original. They were the “spiritual volcanoes” of children's books; they represented freedom of thought in children's books. There could now be hours of pleasure spent in books with no fear about the moral value of the content (Darton 1999). Alice is the first child in children's fantasy to teach no moral whatsoever (Manlove 2003). The *Alice* books were the anti-fairy tale.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland opened the Golden Age of English children's literature, a literature in part created by George MacDonald, Andrew Lang, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kenneth Grahame, and James Barrie. George MacDonald was a close friend of Charles Dodgson and a clergyman. MacDonald was a mystic and a visionary. His contribution to the literary fairy tale was completely original. More than any other prose storyteller for children at that period, he brought serious imagination into his tales. In *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and *The Princess and Curdie* (1882), MacDonald created a quality of spiritual wonder and

otherworldliness, aided by contact with fairy tales (Darton 1999). The theme of MacDonald's books was a spiritual one: how to attain goodness and enter into a state of grace; however, the quality of goodness, as MacDonald perceived it, was something far higher and purer than many writers approach in their fantasies (Avery 1965). Two other writers MacDonald inspired to blend the spiritual with fantasy are also notable: J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis (Briggs and Butts 1965).

Other literary fairy tales by well-regarded authors were also published. Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869) is pure artless fantasy (Darton 1999). Christina Rossetti published her first work, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, in 1862 and her short story collection, *Speaking Likenesses*, in 1874. Margaret Gatty wrote *Fairy Godmother* (1851) and edited *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, from 1866 until her death in 1873. Her daughter, Juliana H. Ewing, published her short story fantasies, "Amelia and the Dwarfs," and others in her mother's magazine. Mary Louisa Molesworth is best remembered for her fantasies, *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) and *The Tapestry Room* (1879). Ewing and Molesworth wrote a large and varied collection of works; their appealing child characters and narrators, and their diverse adventures, in both real and fantasy worlds, provided a store of voices and plots which writers to come, notably Frances Hodgson Burnett and E. Nesbit, drew on for their own stories (Briggs and Butts 1995).

This period was extraordinarily productive. During the Golden Age of Children's Literature, which began in the 1860's, literary fairy tales proliferated. In a survey taken by the *Academy* (2 July 1898), of the ten most popular books for children, five were fairy tales or collections (Silver 1999). The "Golden Age of children's literature," beginning

with Alice and ending with A.A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books (1924-1928), idealized the child as fanciful and free and, most importantly, it insisted that the child could best learn how to be good through a storyteller's appeal to the imagination (Wolf 2009).

The Edwardian Age 1901-1910

By the end of the century, explicit moral lessons had become passé and the unrelenting moralizing of Victorian fiction for children had become a target for parody (Briggs 1995). As fairy tale conventions were well-established, parodies of the genre were familiar to readers. Children could read fantasies without fears about superstition or ignorance or unreality; they could have fun with books, without being told they were committing a sin by doing so (Darton 1999).

Most of the great names of late Victorian and Edwardian children's literature were writing fantasy stories. James M. Barrie created, in his play *Peter Pan* in 1904, a thing that was in no way like anything known before. He pulled together many small fancies and illusions in conceiving Peter's Never Land, some elements from *Treasure Island*, some from Peter Parley, others from Fenimore Cooper. What is important historically, Darton states, is that Barrie made adults see "the value, even the necessity, of that nonsensical creed" (1999, 310). Rudyard Kipling wrote a time travel children's fantasy, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), in which Dan and Una meet the old earth spirit Puck who then beckons imaginary figures from history into the present. Kipling very much had the British Empire on his mind, even in this fantasy (Briggs 1995). Kenneth Grahame's Mr. Toad is very much the naughty child in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), in which the Rat, the Mole, and Mr. Badger while away the days picnicking and boating (Briggs

1995). Like Grahame, Beatrix Potter anthropomorphized her characters in animal fantasies (1902-1918) with disobedient kittens, rabbits, and squirrels. Tom Kitten ruins his clothes when his mother has guests to tea; Peter Rabbits steals Mr. McGregor's vegetables; and Squirrel Nutkin is extremely rude to the owl (Manlove 2003). Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1910) charts the search for bodily and spiritual wholeness in Arcadia. Mary, Dickon, and Colin heal themselves and each other. If there is a lesson in this story, it is that "a happy and normal child must care for something and must be cared for" (Meigs et al. 1969, 353).

The "juvenile" literary world in the twentieth century existed largely on its own: adults and authority figures were frequently absent, and where they appear, are often eccentric or inept. Children cannot rely on an authority figure to be told what to do, but must work it out for themselves. Children are increasingly seen as having their own natures, which are not to be manipulated by people desiring to tame young minds and make children adults before their time (Manlove 1999).

The Golden Age presented childhood as a thing in itself: a idyllic thing, a joyous thing, a new world to be explored. Suddenly children were not being condescended to, not being written down to any longer – they were respected, being written up to; the spring was being enjoyed for itself, not looking on as a prelude to summer (Green 1969).

Thus, as can be seen, from its beginning in the early Georgian Period (1714-1780), children's literature advanced from dull, unimaginative didacticism, when childhood was hardly recognized, to the Golden Age of children's literature of the late Victorian and the Edwardian Periods (1865-1910), when the child was supreme. From

1780 to 1900, authority was vested in the adult world; with the twentieth century, that ended. If the adults were not absent, they were reduced to the role of shadows (Avery 965). Indeed, for the Golden Age authors, childhood was a self-contained state that was ultimately preferable to maturity.

The Edwardians were interested in children as people. In fact, after the death of the “black-clad Widow at Windsor,” they seem to have wanted to reclaim their own “seen but not heard” childhood as adults (Byatt 2009). The “Golden Age of children’s literature,” ushered in by Alice and ending finally with A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh books (1924-1928), romanticized the child as fancy-free and eternally a child. Most importantly, it insisted that the child could best learn about life through a storyteller’s appeal to the imagination rather than through an adult’s assertion of authority.

Nesbit and Fantasy

E. Nesbit is the key figure of the Edwardian decade. She was by intelligence and instinct very much a person of the new age (Crouch 1962). A fresh exploration of the mysteries of the imagination and a slowly emerging view of children as a discrete social group with its own conventions and literary expectations evolved as the century advanced. She replaced the somber, literary style of Victorian literature with the informal, conversational and intimate prose, her unique contribution to the children’s novel (Filmer 1991).

Nesbit was a natural fantasy writer, and her late start was due as much as anything to her difficulty in discovering her true bent in face of the overwhelmingly realistic

conventions of the Victorian novel. Her now forgotten novels for adults failed partly because of their tendency towards the fantastic (Prickett 1979).

There is a natural connection between children and fantasy. Jack Zipes calls the fairy tale “the most important cultural and social event in most children’s lives . . .” (1983, 1). Fantasy has appeal for children for several reasons: first, it tells a story. We all want stories; stories sustain life. Story is “a compelling flow of discovery, transformation, confrontation, and reconciliation” (Attebery 1992, 10). Second, fantasy literature is literature of the imagination. One of the most basic human needs is to imagine, to play, and to escape into the worlds of the mind. Last, fantasy allows a dark topic to be explored at an arm’s length, a safe distance away. Fantasy gives freedom to delve into the emotional depths of something in a non-threatening way, a way that evokes imagination and understanding. Psychological truth is important in all literature, but especially so in fantasy (Pattison 2001).

Egoff has observed that creators of fantasy possess a “natural love of storytelling” (1988, 20). Through the story, the storyteller creates images and reflects realities in a way that can change the lives of the audience. It is in the interaction with the audience that the storyteller finds joy. It is clear in books such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful World of Oz*, Philippa Pearce’s *Tom’s Midnight Garden*, and J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series that creators of fantasy bring about “discovery, transformation, confrontation, and reconciliation” (Egoff 1988, 19) for their readers through their stories.

These creators of fantasy, or fantasists, also respect the qualities of children, including curiosity, a sense of wonder, a love of the fabulous, and an ability to see to the heart of things with courage and honesty, that all elements of fantasy (Egoff 1988). Nesbit excelled in this genre because she recognized and respected these qualities in her young readers. In creating her fantasies, she deconstructed the traditional rules of fairy tales and created her own set of rules which most of her successors in twentieth century children's literature have enthusiastically accepted, from C. S. Lewis and Alan Garner to Madeleine L'Engle and J. K. Rowling (Nikolajeva 1987).

Nesbit's influence on modern children's fiction cannot be underestimated. Although she was undeniably indebted to her Victorian predecessors, she brought a new and more modern voice to children's fiction. Her distinctive blending of magic and realism endures to this day in its influence on major writers of children fiction, particularly the genre of fantasy. Nesbit's "best books explore the relationship between imagination, fiction, and life . . . Her children live primarily in an imaginative world . . . and act out their fantasies and expectations in the real world, in the process discovering important truths about that world and about themselves" (Briggs 1987, 401). After Nesbit, children's fantasy was never quite the same again. She showed how much pleasure there could be in bringing magic into the ordinary lives of children (Manlove 2003).

A Brief Life of E. Nesbit

Had E. (Edith) Nesbit written no children's books at all, her life would fascinate the student of social history (Moss 1991). With her quick wit, lively sense of humor, keen

intelligence, commitment to social issues and attraction to spiritualism and mysticism, as well as her friendships and love affairs, Nesbit's life reflected many of the best and worst qualities of her era. Her ideas and her life often contradicted one other. Her concern in social equality did not agree with her frank admission that she wrote for middle-class children and usually about them as well. Although her books created liberated identities for her child characters, she was sometimes guilty of neglect and unjust treatment of her own children. Despite Nesbit's advanced social views, she did not support women's effort to win their civil rights, probably due to the influence of her somewhat domineering husband, Hubert Bland. Nor did Nesbit's desire for social justice and a benevolent government always coexist well with her idealization of the past (Moss 1991).

Edith Nesbit discovered her vocation as a children's writer late in life and rather reluctantly. Disappointed by the reception of her poetry, she found the ideal outlet for her wit and exuberance in a succession of novels and short stories for children that have influenced many other writers and are still discovered with pleasure by both children and adults. Her novels for adults were less well received in her lifetime and have been nearly forgotten since her death, but although marred by the hackneyed clichés of romantic convention, they nonetheless reveal the combination of realism and fantasy that marks Nesbit's best work for children (Barisonzi 1995; Townsend 2002).

Her last verdict on her own work showed that she was still quite ignorant of the lasting worth of her contribution to prose literature: "Poetry ... is really what I should naturally have done, that and *no* prose, if I had not had to write for a living" (Moore 1966, 298). Be that as it may, as John Rowe Townsend said in a speech, "How good a

writer was she? Well, her poetry and her adult novels haven't lasted. And I can't honestly say I think that even the best of her children's books are great literature. She wrote them in haste and didn't rate them all that highly herself. But ... E. Nesbit's books haven't gone away. They've given incalculable pleasure to millions of us, both as children and adults; and surely that's enough? I'm glad she lived. I'm glad she wrote" (2002).

Early Days

Nesbit's sometimes unhappy childhood is often reflected indirectly in her novels, in which she perhaps re-creates her life as she wished it to have been. The youngest of six children, Edith Nesbit was born on August 15, 1858 in Kennington, South London. Her father, John Collins Nesbit, a chemist, managed and taught at an agricultural college in south London that had been established by his father. Nesbit's earliest years appear idyllic as she and her brothers, Arthur and Harry, were free to roam and play on the expansive grounds of the school. This period came to an abrupt end, however, with the sudden death of her father in 1862. Nesbit's mother stayed on at the college as an administrator until the ill-health of Nesbit's elder sister Mary prompted the family to spend the next few years searching for a healthy climate for her. Edith spent her childhood at a series of boarding schools she hated, alternating with a unsettled routine of European travel with her mother, Sarah Alderton Nesbit, stepsister Sarah Green, and sister Mary. These childhood experiences fed her abhorrence of formal schooling and her conviction that children need freedom to engage in adventurous, imaginative play, beliefs that underlie her adult nostalgia for childhood (Briggs 1987).

Marriage

After Mary's death from tuberculosis in 1871, the fortunes of the Nesbit family gradually declined. Nesbit began to publish a small amount of poetry and to engage in rebellious, unconventional behavior. She married Hubert Bland, a charismatic young socialist and aspiring businessman, on April 22, 1880, when she was already seven months pregnant. Bland seems to have been rather casual about such things. When he married Nesbit, he was also engaged to his mother's companion, Maggie Doran, with whom he had also had a son; he failed to break off his relationship with Doran for another ten years. He and Nesbit did not immediately live together, as Bland initially continued to live with his mother. Shortly after their marriage, Bland contracted smallpox, and during his illness his business partner abandoned him, taking their joint capital (Moore 1966).

Family Life and Career

Nesbit was forced to support her husband and children – Paul, born in 1880; Iris, in 1881; and Fabian, in 1885 – by designing greeting cards and writing short stories for magazines. Despite financial insecurity and constant work, Nesbit and Bland enjoyed a bohemian lifestyle, participating in the cultural and political life of London in the 1880s. They became founding members of the Fabian Society (precursor to the Labour Party) in 1884, and, through the group, formed close friendships with George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Annie Besant, and Havelock Ellis (Briggs 1987).

As a married woman, Edith had access to the society of clever and amusing men and women. Julia Briggs recounts in her biography (1987) how Nesbit appreciated the

stimulating company, the freedom to behave unconventionally, and the dramatic situations, quarrels, and reconciliations that appealed to her propensity to view herself as the heroine of any episode. Among her friends were Eleanor Marx (a daughter of Karl Marx), Olive Schreiner, Clementina Black, and Charlotte Wilson. Through her work Nesbit would also meet Rudyard Kipling, Laurence Housman, and Richard Le Gallienne, and in later, Noël Coward.

E. Nesbit was a striking woman and made friends of both sexes easily. She was tall, handsome, athletic, and a great giver of parties. She early on became one of the late Victorian so-called new women: she cut her hair short, wore loose flowing gowns - no corsets - and she smoked incessantly at a time when smoking by women was frowned on (Townsend 2002).

The Blands' marriage was never without strain, most of it stemming from Bland's infidelities. To H. G. Wells, whose tastes were quite similar, he observed that Bland was "a student and experimentalist ... in illicit love" (Prickett 2005, 220). The most important of his affairs was Bland's relationship with Nesbit's close friend Alice Hoatson, which began when she came to care for Nesbit at the birth of her fourth child (stillborn). Hoatson became pregnant and Nesbit agreed to pass off the child as hers. Hoatson stayed on to manage the household. Nesbit did not learn that Bland was the father until six months later. The Bland-Nesbit-Hoatson household continued until Bland's death. Nesbit's children, then, included not only her biological progeny — Paul (1880), Iris (1881), and Fabian (1885) – but also Hoatson's children, Rosamund (1886) and, later,

John (1899). Rosamund and John were not aware that Alice was their mother until their adolescence. Alice managed the household, allowing Nesbit time to write (Briggs 1987).

Nesbit responded to this uncomfortable situation by engaging in discreet affairs of her own and forming close, literary relationships with a series of young male admirers, several of whom, particularly Oswald Barron and Noel Griffith, greatly influenced her work (Barisonzi 1995). She flirted with George Bernard Shaw, in a little affair made up largely of teas and train journeys, but Shaw backed off in alarm when she started going to his rooms (Briggs 1987).

While Nesbit and her husband pursued their separate careers as writers, they also collaborated on short stories and novels, which they published under the pen name of Fabian Bland. Their collaborative novel, *The Prophet's Mantle* (1885; Briggs 1987), was based on their acquaintance with Russian political émigrés living in London, combined politics with a conventional romance plot. They continued to contribute short stories to the radical London newspaper *The Weekly Dispatch* during the late 1880s (Moore 1966).

Writing was for Nesbit always a financial necessity. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s Nesbit produced numerous volumes of poetry, romances, horror stories, children's fiction, and several plays, and edited a series of anthologies of poetry and sketches. For the most part, Nesbit's works throughout this period were considered conventional by critical standards though they provided necessary income (Briggs 1987).

Success as a Children's Novelist

At the age of forty, Nesbit started on another, more productive direction in her career with the publication of her first children's novel, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*

(1899), which had already appeared as a magazine serial in *Windsor* and *Pall Mall* (Briggs 1987). Nesbit's new direction apparently resulted from a reawakening of her memories of childhood experiences, occasioned by her friendship with Oswald Barron and a commission for a series of reminiscences, published as "My School Days" in the *Girl's Own Paper* in 1896-1897. This book was so popular that she wrote sequels: *The Wouldbegoods: Being the Further Adventures of the Treasure Seekers* (1901) and *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904; Briggs 1987).

The years from 1899 to 1909 were good years for her. Nesbit's yearly earnings in that decade were something like \$180,000 at present-day prices. She and Hubert moved to a big house called Well Hall, beside the Dover Road at Eltham, in Kent, which they ran as a kind of open house for progressives (Townsend 2002). They always lived far beyond their means; despite her success Nesbit felt that she had to write so prolifically for money. Of one of her numerous boating holidays she observed:

But, ah, this joy that we were made for

Must in hard coin be duly paid for –

So I must whet my wits, and add

A Chapter to the Psammead (Carpenter and Prichard 1999, 373).

In 1902, she wrote *Five Children and It*, a fantasy, serialized in *The Strand* and imaginatively illustrated by H. R. Millar (Briggs 1987), featuring a different family (we never learn their last name), based on her five children, which is introduced to fantasy adventures by the chance acquisition of various mythical animals. This would be the first

of a three book series, including *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906).

Nesbit wrote several adult novels during these years. *The Red House* (1902) was her best-received adult novel. Another book was *The Incomplete Amorist* (1906), in which she deals indirectly with her experience of sexuality and marriage. She published *Daphne in Fitzroy Street* in 1909, based on her relationship with George Bernard Shaw, and *Salome and the Head: A Modern Melodrama* in the same year (Barisonzi 1995).

In 1906, she stepped back from fantasy to write a realistic children's novel, *The Railway Children*, an adventure story involving a family of three children — Peter, Phyllis, and Roberta. This is the book for which she may be best known. The moment in which the father is restored to his daughter is, according to Julia Briggs, the most moving in all Edith Nesbit's fiction:

“Oh! my Daddy, my Daddy!” That scream went like a knife into the heart of everyone in the train, and people put their heads out of the window to see a tall pale man with lips set in a thin close line, and a little girl clinging to him with arms and legs, while his arms went tightly round her (Briggs 1987, 1).

Nesbit's next children's book returned to fantasy. *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) showed disciplined evolution in her artistry. *The Enchanted Castle* was in many ways a departure in that it introduced real horror into the story. Her next two novels were historical-fantasies, *The House of Arden* (1908) and *Harding's Luck* (1909).

The years 1908-1909 marked a turning point in Nesbit's career. Her serious moral and social concerns had overpowered the humorous depiction of family life and the lighthearted fantasy that had made her children's books so widely loved. Thereafter, Nesbit's appeal to the public declined (Barisonzi 1995).

Nesbit's last years were marred by a deep depression following the death of her husband in April, 1914, and a descent into poverty as the sales of her books and her ability to write declined. Her friends urged her to give up her beloved Well Hall, but she was determined to hold on to the old, large home. With the coming of the first World War, the pattern of life changed; many of the young men whose company she had once so much enjoyed had joined up and some would not return. The servants also had left either to serve or to work in the nearby munitions factories (Briggs 1987).

Edith explored ways to alleviate her financial problems. A friend arranged for her to receive a Civil pension of £60 a year for her services to literature. She was gratified by the compliment; characteristically, as Julia Briggs points out (1987), she was indignant at having to pay income tax on it. She decided to see how Well Hall could pay for itself. She sold garden produce to the munitions workers and to two local military hospitals. She also began to take in "pigs" – i.e. P.G.s, or paying guests, something that Nesbit resented.

Like many others during the war, she found comfort in religion. As recounted by Julia Briggs (1987), she had become obsessed by the Baconian movement around 1908, an enthusiasm that wasted her money but stimulated her imagination by appealing to her sense of a hidden, deeper reality. The theory that Bacon was the son of Elizabeth by Leicester was already accepted by a few of the more fanatical Baconians, but Edith's

version of this fantasy related it to her own personal story: due to the circumstances of the birth of her eldest child, she felt that she had condemned Fabian, her son, to death by permitting his fatal operation.

In 1900, then fifteen, Fabian had been suffering from a series of serious colds, and his doctor had advised that his adenoids be removed. In those days, an operation like this was performed at home, on the kitchen table; the doctor and anesthetist arrived at eleven in the morning, when Fabian was working in the garden and his mother was not yet up. The family had forgotten about the operation; no one had remembered that Fabian was not to eat before the anesthesia. He did not wake from the anesthesia; he probably choked to death on his own vomit as he lay unconscious (Briggs 1987).

In the summer of 1916, Thomas Terry Tucker, “the Skipper,” came to help Nesbit at Well Hall. They married on February 20, 1917, and finally left Well Hall in February, 1922. They retired to a couple of linked ex-service huts, which they christened the Long Boat and the Jolly Boat, on the Romney Marshes. She called him Skipper; he called her Mate (Townsend 2002). She wrote little more before her death from lung cancer on May 4, 1924 and was buried in the churchyard at Saint Mary's-in-the-Marsh near Dymchurch (Briggs 1987).

After E. Nesbit died, C. L. Graves wrote these verses for *Punch*, the humor magazine, which pay homage to her place on children’s book shelves:

In Memoriam – E. Nesbit
(*Neminem tristem fecit* – Old Latin Epitaph)
1924

E. Nesbit – what unclouded joys
That name, familiar on the cover

Of twenty books for girls and boys
Recalls to every story-lover!

You flattered both the old and young
In your exhilarating pages,
Enhancing with a golden tongue
All that is charming in all ages.

How we adored *The Would-be-Goods*
And drank delight in brimming beakers
Exploring likely neighborhoods
For treasure with *The Treasure-Seekers*!

Would that your *Bastables* could be
Indefinitely duplicated,
So rare in life, it is to see
High spirits with good manners mated.

Later you spread, each Christmas time,
Your magic mat for every corner,
And bore us smoothly to the clime
Of wonderland and endless summer.

With you in elfin halls we drained
Nectar from jeweled fairy flagons,
Most amiably entertained
By friendly Phoenixes and Dragons.

You waved your wand, and swift upsprang
Enchanted castles, magic cities;
You were a poetess, and sang
Delectable fantastic ditties.

....

You pass, but only from the ken
Of scientists and statisticians
To join HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN,
The Prince of all the good Magicians.

So, for the joyance that you gave,
Inspired by love, not code or system,
Punch lays his laurel on your grave,
Quod neminem tristem fecit (Streatfeild 1958, 155-156).

Contemporaries' Criticism

Her children's books were received with respect during her lifetime by her fellow writers. Her position in the literary world is hard to understand today, for there is no

living writer for children who holds anything approaching the position she held. Letters from the distinguished showered her, and towards the end of her life admirers made pilgrimages to visit her. For Nesbit the appreciation her work received may have been some little consolation for any disappointment she may have felt in the reception of her work for adults; she very much enjoyed the attention (Streatfeild 1958).

Reviewing Edith Nesbit's verse collection *Leaves of Life* (1888) in the Socialist periodical *To-Day* (January 1889), popular novelist Adeline Sergeant singled out for praise Nesbit's "passionate sympathy," her "fine enthusiasm for splendid deeds," and her "strong and tender feeling," concluding, "She has the gift of inward vision" (Nelson 1994, 199-216). At the time Nesbit was doing what she could to support her family through hack writing. She hoped to establish herself as an important Victorian woman poet, the equal of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti. She was able to gain a measure of transitory fame for her verse. She received accolades from Algernon Charles Swinburne and Oscar Wilde, as well as admission to *Who's Who* as "poet and novelist" in 1897 (Nelson 1994).

In the January 1903 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*, just after *The Red House* had concluded its serialization there, reviewer Marshall Steele praised Nesbit as a writer for adults but noted that her true talent is in juvenile fiction: "With the single exception of *The Jungle Book*, no child's book of recent years has had success to compare with that of *The Wouldbegoods*" (Nelson 1994, 199-216). Thus, when "The Psammead" began in the *Strand* in April 1902, Nesbit was established as a major children's writer; her *Who's Who*

entry for 1903 for the first time added the phrase "and author of children's books" to her identification as "poet and novelist" (Nelson 1994).

Evidence of Rudyard Kipling's children's love for *Five Children and It* is found in a letter to Nesbit, dated March 11, 1903 (Rutledge 1997). Kipling writes of his children, aged five and seven: "Their virgin minds never knew one magazine from another till it dawned upon Elsie that a thing called the *Strand* with a blue cover and a cab was where the Psammead tales lived...I have been sent for *Strands* in the middle of the month, I have had to explain their non-arrival; and I have had to read them when they came. They were a dear delight to the nursery" (Rutledge 1997, 200-213).

Literary Criticism of E. Nesbit

Despite her importance in the field of children's fiction, particularly fantasy, there has been only one major study of Nesbit published. Noel Streatfeild published *Magic and the Magician: E. Nesbit and Her Children's Books* in 1958. Although it is generally described as a biography of E. Nesbit, Streatfeild devotes more than half the book to a study of Nesbit's characters, and the biographical material concentrates almost exclusively on her childhood. *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel in England, 1945-1970* by Marcus Crouch focuses on her successors' works rather than on Nesbit's. Two biographies of E. Nesbit have been published: *E. Nesbit: A Biography*, by Doris Langley Moore, originally published in 1933 and revised in 1966, which has the advantage of including material collected from Nesbit's family and friends and *A Woman of Passion: The Life of E. Nesbit 1858-1924*, published in 1987, by Julia Briggs. Briggs draws on Moore's information but presents a more complete picture of her life than

Langley. Other minor critical analyses have appeared as book chapters or journal articles. No major examination has been made of her narrative style.

Nesbit's Narrative Style

Nesbit made the deliberate decision as narrator to make her relationship with her young readers a dominant element in her books. She created a narrative personality for her narrator unlike any which had come before and allowed that narrator to communicate freely and frequently with her reader, or narratee, not just directly, but outside the story being told (Wall 1991).

Nesbit was always on the side of the child against the adult. Her willingness to believe young readers capable of sharing a joke with her enabled her to use irony consistently in her stories (Wall 1991). Dry humor with a touch of cynicism had not, before E. Nesbit, appeared in fairy tales (Lochhead 1977). In her attitude to her readers, she discovered her true voice. She fashioned a true literature for children in showing writers how to write for children while just being themselves (Wall 1991).

E. Nesbit's narrative style reflected the changing attitudes of the times toward children. With writers like Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, E. Nesbit, and Robert L. Stevenson, a new way of addressing the child reader was being developed – a new attitude, a new narrative stance, and the concept of the new empowered child was emerging. For the best writers, children were peers, not inferiors (Hunt 2001). The adult narrator with whom adult readers were accustomed disappeared and Nesbit introduced a storyteller more interested in pleasing her child readers than worrying what the adult ones might think (Wall 1991). Her voice was that of the “universal aunt” (Howes 1989, 2), but

did not patronize her readers. Nesbit spoke directly and intimately to her readers, more as a storyteller than an author. She invited her readers into the story.

Nesbit was the first writer of fiction for children "who did not feel the need to justify her writing for children, in her own eyes and in the eyes of other adults, by insisting on the intellectual and moral differences between herself and her readers" (Wall 1991, 149). Indeed, she made friends with her readers and resolved to enjoy their company and herself. In doing so, she made it possible for a new kind of children's literature to emerge (Wall 1991).

Conclusion

Fantasy is the product of pure imagination. This may be the reason why it has been, and still is, feared by many. It can free the mind to all manner of things. Albert Einstein said, "When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking" (Heiner). Fantasy can open the reader to the author's vision that draws from the imagination to create images that bond our psychological existence to the real world (Egoff 1988).

Fantasies are the first stories children hear. There is a natural bond between children and fantasy. This may be why, during the periods when fairy tales were banned, the imagination could not be suppressed. The fairies returned with the Romantics, along with the idealization of the child. The nineteenth century saw an extraordinary growth of children's literature in England; no other country has anything to match it. For the English, the child at once represented the freedom from responsibility they craved, the

idyll they had lost (with the disappearance of the countryside), the savage they fear (in the colonies), and the future they seek to shape (in their Empire). These feelings were expressed in the literary fairy tale, the invented fantasy for children (Manlove 1999).

The comic/parodic, mystic, and socialist strains that entered the fairy tale throughout the nineteenth century culminated in the work of E. Nesbit. She combines fantasy with adventure and history and introduced many original magical creatures, objects, plot twists, and logical puzzles. She was interested in children - their interactions with each other and the world around them, and she expressed this interest in her narrative style. Nesbit's tone in her stories was informal and direct; even today her unreserved espousal of the child's point of view is striking. Nesbit was the first author to write at length for children as intellectual equals and in their own language (Lurie 1988). She speaks to children of our time as well as she did to children of hers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates E. Nesbit's narrative style and the contributions she made to the evolution in the relationship between author and reader in children's literature. To understand this aspect of Nesbit's literary gift, the researcher analyzed Nesbit's children's fantasy novels. Narratological critical research and descriptive content analysis of her children's fantasies are the two methodologies the researcher used for this study.

Narratology

"Narratology," a term coined by Tzvetan Todorov in *Grammaire du Décaméron*, 1969, examines the nature, form, and function of narrative, with *narrative* being the representation of an event or a series of events (Abbott 2008). The dialogue between the narrator and narratee is studied in narratology and is of particular interest in children's literature.

Narratology is the literary study, or poetics, which investigates theories of narrative structure, including character and plot, narrator, and narrative techniques. The poetics of narrative attempts to understand the components of narrative and analyzes how particular narratives achieve their effects (Culler 1997). This study concentrated on the nature of the addresser and the addressee and the manner in which the narrative is communicated between the two.

The telling of stories is such a pervasive aspect of our environment that we sometimes forget that stories provide an initial and lasting means for shaping children's lives. Recurring patterns of values and stable expectations about the roles and relationships which are part of their culture remain with children. It is these underlying patterns which make stories an important medium of socialization, one of the many modes through which the young are taught the values and standards of their elders (Applebee 1978). It is the way the stories are told, and to whom they are told, which marks a book for children (Wall 1991).

In *The Case of Peter Pan*, Jacqueline Rose calls children's fiction an "impossibility" because it claims that it "represents the child, speaks to and for children, addresses them as a group. . ." (1984, 1). She describes children's fiction as a world in which the adult comes first as the author, the maker, and the giver, and the child comes after as the reader, the product, and the receiver (1984).

Children's books are written for a particular readership for which both the writing and the buying of them is carried out by adult non-members of that readership. Unlike other reading audiences, "actual readers" of children's literature seldom publish critical writings about literature that might provide evidence of how informed minds have experienced particular texts (Lesnik-Oberstein 2005). Adults can make no simple assumptions about the young audience and may even need to reconsider conventional analytic strategies with regard to the poetics of children's literature (Hunt 1985).

The period in which E. Nesbit published the works that were the focus of this study, 1902-1913, saw new attitudes on the part of writers develop. No longer did writers

such as Kipling, Grahame, and Barrie write children's books for both adults and children. Children alone became the true addressees. The adult narrator with whom adult readers identified disappeared, and a narrator oriented solely to child readers emerged (Wall 1991). The investigation into the narrative raises important questions about the nature of children's writers – adults who address child readers (Richardson 1994).

The development of narratology has provided a new set of criticism that allows us to consider the relationship between narrator and narratee. "Narratology has stimulated the close textual examination, hitherto deemed unnecessary, even irrelevant, of many different aspects of fiction for children, and is . . . bringing about a startling change in the way in which children's books, and children as readers, are regarded" (Wall 1991). The narrator's is the "voice" we hear as we listen to the story being told. The narrator's voice in our literature is invariably that of an adult, and adults speak differently in fiction when they are addressing children (Wall 1991).

Narratology Terminology

Like most methodologies, narratology has its own jargon that is used to refer to its unique interests and describe precisely its concepts. Therefore, it is useful to consider the building blocks of the narratological model referred to in this paper.

In narratology, *diegesis* is the fictional world in which the situations and events narrated occur. In diegesis the narrator tells the story. Within this world, the narratives, narrators and narratees, existents (actor or item), and events are described in diegetic terms. The diegetic level is the level of the characters, their thoughts and actions. Narrators can be extradiegetic, or, not be part of or external to any diegesis or they can be

intradiegetic, or, be part of the diegesis presented in the narrative by an extradiegetic narrator. A homodiegetic narrator is one who is a character in the situations and events s/he recounts; when s/he is the protagonist of these situations and events, s/he is an autodiegetic narrator. A heterodiegetic narrator is one who is not a character in the situations and events s/he tells. The metadiegetic level or hypodiegetic level is that part of a diegesis that is embedded in another one and is often understood as a story within a story, as when a diegetic narrator himself/herself tells a story (Prince 2003).

Distance is the narrator's emotional distance from the characters and the action and the distance between the narrator's moral, emotional, or intellectual sensibilities and those of the implied author. A narrator's distance (in both senses) affects the extent to which we trust the information we get from the narrator, and its moral and emotional coloring (Prince 2003).

Tone is the author's/narrator's attitude toward the narratee and/or the situations and events presented, as implicitly or explicitly conveyed by the narration (Prince 2003). Tone may reflect the way the author's/narrator's personality pervades the work (Cuddon and Preston 1998).

Focalization refers to the perspective through which a narrative is presented. Focalization refers to the author's practice of selecting and restricting narrative information and of seeing events and actions from a character's point of view. In children's literature, voice and point of view seldom correspond, since the narrative voice belongs to an adult while the point of view is often that of a child. Narratology differentiates between who speaks (the narrator), who sees (the focalizing character, the

focalizer), and who is seen (the focalized character, the focalize; Nikolajeva 2003). The types of focalization are as follows:

- A narrator-focalizer is an external focalizer.
- A character-focalizer is an internal focalizer.
- Zero focalization occurs when the perspective varies or cannot be located. The narrator knows more than the characters. He may know the facts about all of the protagonists, as well as their thoughts and gestures. This is the traditional "omniscient narrator" (Genette 1980; Prince 2003).

In *Story and Discourse* (1978), Seymour Chatman proposed a model for the process that helps to schematize the components of narrative communication (see Figure 1).

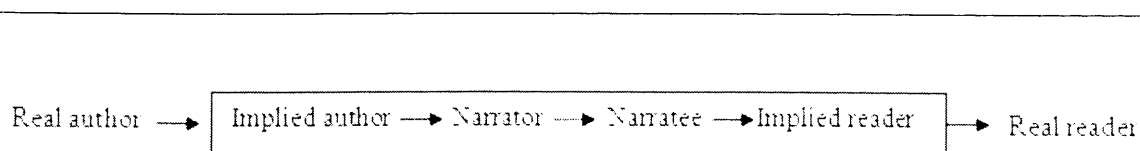


Figure 1. Components of narrative communication.

In Chatman's model, the parties not found within the text are the *real author* and the *real reader*. The real author is the person who holds the pen or types on the keyboard, s/he who has written the words that create the story within the book. The real reader is the child who listens to, or reads the story, within that book.

The other parties (within the box) are found within the pages of book, that is, within the text. The *narrator* is the someone or something actually telling the story. The narrator may be overt, that is, a real character or an intrusive outside party, covert, or he or she may be absent. The *narratee*, first described as such by Gerald Prince in *Notes Toward a Categorization of Fictional 'Narratees'* (1971), is the person to whom the narrator recounts the story. The narratee may be an actual character in the work itself or only have his or her presence be felt (Chatman 1978).

The *implied author*, so christened by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), is the virtual author fashioned by the real author. It is distinct both from the real author and the narrator in the story. Booth referred to the implied author as the author's "second self" (1961, 71). For Chatman, the implied author is an indirect "silent instructor" who communicates indirectly, an instructor who is

reconstructed by the reader from the narrative. He is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative, that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happen to these characters, in these words or images. Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chose to let us learn." (Chatman 1978, 148)

George Orwell created a memorable portrait of this concept in his essay on Charles Dickens, describing it as the "face behind the page" (Orwell, 1940).

The *implied reader*, a term coined by Wolfgang Iser in *The Implied Reader* (1974), is the counterpart to the implied author, “not the flesh-and–bones you or I sitting in our living rooms reading the book, but the audience presupposed by the narrative itself” (Chatman 1978, 149-150). The author, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, in Wayne Booth’s words, creates: “an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement” (1961, 138). “The implied reader is the one for whom the real and implied authors have . . . shaped the story, who is always there, and whose presence and qualities – as the real reader adapts himself or herself to the moral and cultural norms of the narrative – can be deduced from the totality of the book” (Wall 1961, 7). The author then guides this reader’s second self towards the book’s potential meanings (Chambers 1977).

At no time do the real author and the real reader, whose existence, Wall points out (1991) makes printed narrative communication possible, communicate directly. The real author knows only the implied reader, a presence his or her text inescapably calls into being; the real reader knows only the implied author, whose presence may become the most significant factor in the reader’s engagement with the text (Wall 1991). The fact that many readers, children especially, have favorite authors is evidence of that.

Aidan Chambers’s influential essay, “The Reader in the Book,” raised the issue of the author-reader relationship in children’s books. He emphasized the importance of the implied author-implied reader connection: “I would say that, until we discover how to take account of the implied reader, we shall call fruitlessly for serious attention to be paid

to books for children, and to children as readers by others than that small numbers of us who have come to recognize their importance” (1977, 5). Barbara Wall, on the other hand, finds more significance in the narrator-narratee relationship. She feels that it is the “distinctive marker of a children’s book” and that, further, it has changed “markedly in the last one hundred and fifty years” (1991, 9).

Focusing on the Narrator

This study primarily considered the role of the narrator. In a given narrative, there may be more than one narrator. A narrator may be overt, intrusive, knowing, ubiquitous, and reliable, or completely opposite. In a mediated narration, the narrator’s presence makes itself felt; the narrator is overt rather than covert. S/he may be distant from the characters and situations and events narrated. The diegetic level may vary. The point-of-view and perspective may vary. The real author of a narrative is in no way to be confused with the narrator of the narrative; *who speaks* (in the narrative) is not *who writes* (in real life), and *who writes* is not *who is* (Barthes and Sontag 1982). Some types of narrators are as follows:

- The *intrusive narrator* comments in his or her own voice on the situations and events presented, their presentation, or its context.
- The *overt narrator* presents situations and events with more than a minimum of narratorial mediation; an intrusive narrator.
- The *covert narrator* presents situations and events with a minimum amount of narratorial mediation; a non-intrusive and *undramatized narrator*.

- The *dramatized narrator* can be an observer or witness, a minor participant in the action, a relatively important participant, or a protagonist.
- The *absent narrator* presents situations and events with minimum narratorial mediation and in no way refers to a narrating self.
- The *omnipresent narrator*, or the ubiquitous narrator, has the capacity to be in two or more different spaces at the time or to move freely back and forth between scenes occurring in different places; is not necessarily omniscient.
- The *omniscient narrator* knows everything about the situations and events and tells more than any and all the characters know (Prince 2003).

Content Analysis

In order to draw conclusions about E. Nesbit's narrative style, this study used a tool that systematically quantifies and analyzes the presence, meanings, and relationships of the narrative building blocks identified here. The tool used was content analysis, a methodology which involves a structured reading of a body of texts to ascertain the usage of certain words or concepts within texts (Krippendorff 2004). Researchers quantify and analyze the incidence, significance, and relationships of these words and concepts, and then make inferences about the texts and the author, including what messages the writer was conveying to the audience and the importance of those messages within the culture and time of which these all were a part. "*Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts . . . to the contexts of their use*" (Krippendorff 2004, 18).

A problem-driven analysis starts with a research question which the researcher attempts to answer through an examination of the texts. The steps that researchers take to get to those inferences are:

- Formulate research questions – A well-formulated research question guides research design; verify that content analysis is the appropriate means to answer the research question.
- Ascertain stable correlations - Content analysis answers research questions by analyzing texts, focusing on linguistic references, expressions of attitudes, and evaluations. These assume a one-to-one correlation between textual units and the events referred to or expressed in them. The researchers' task at this step is to ascertain a reliable network of these correlations that researchers can rely on to be stable over time.
- Locate relevant texts – A text is relevant if there is evidence for or an assumption of stable correlations between that text and answers to the research question.
- Define units of analysis – The definitions of units of analysis have important implications. If units are too small (such as words or short expressions), semantic validity may suffer and the content analysis tends to become shallow. If units are too large (such as whole documents), the content analysis becomes unreliable.
- Sample the texts – If the population of relevant texts is too large, content researchers may select representative samples of these texts.

- Develop categories and record instructions – These instructions may include:
 - a) operational definitions of the recording and context units; b) operational definitions of the syntax and semantics of the data language that coders are to apply in describing or categorizing each textual unit; c) copies of the form(s) to be used in creating records and entering data for processing.
- Select an analytical procedure – The number of well-formulated procedures from which researchers can choose is not very large. In making an informed choice, researchers are advised to do three things: a) be clear about the network of stable correlations in their analytical context, and b) find out how texts are processed in the procedures available, in order to c) select the procedure whose operations provide the best model and are therefore most likely to yield valid answers to the research questions.
- Adopt standards – Standards for sampling, semantic, structural, and functional validity should be related to the level of validity demanded of the results. To decide on such standards, researchers may want to work backward from how certain, general, or selective the results need to be to how often-unavoidable imperfections can affect them.
- Allocate resources – Limited resources, whether in time, qualified personnel, analytical devices, or funds, can impose organizational constraints on a project. Researchers must develop ways to organize their work (Krippendorff 2004).

Krippendorff identified six components the researcher needs in order to proceed from texts to results:

1. *Unitizing* or classifying the segments of text, i.e., words, images, voices, and other observables, that are of interest to the researcher.
2. *Sampling* which allows the researcher to limit observations to a subset of units that is representative of the set of all possible units.
3. *Recording* which creates durable records of possible transient events. In the case of the written word, this involves entering the text for reference.
4. *Reducing data* to manageable representations: relying on established statistical techniques or other methods for summarizing or simplifying data. It serves the researchers' need for efficient representations, especially of large volumes of data.
5. Abductively *inferring* contextual phenomena from texts which allows researchers to form a hypothesis based on the data collected.
6. *Narrating* the answers to the researchers' research question to others (Krippendorff 2004).

After the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels--word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme, it is then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. Conceptual analysis establishes the existence and frequency of concepts – most often represented by words or phrases – in a text. Relational analysis goes one step further by examining the relationships among concepts in a text (Writing@CSU, 2010).

In conceptual analysis, the objective is to identify the selected terms, implicit and explicit, within a text or texts. While explicit terms are easy to identify, recognizing implicit terms can be complicated by the researcher's subjective judgment. The process of coding is basically one of selective reduction. Selective reduction is the central idea of content analysis. By reducing the text to categories consisting of a word, set of words, or phrases, the researcher can focus on, and code for, specific words or patterns that are relevant to the research question (Writing@CSU, 2010).

Once the research question has been established, the researcher must make his/her coding choices using eight category coding steps.

1. Decide the level of analysis. The researcher must decide whether to code for a single word or for sets of words or phrases.
2. Decide how many concepts to code for. The researcher must also decide whether to develop a pre-defined set of concepts and categories or to add supplementary concepts and categories during coding. Then the researcher must determine how much flexibility will be allowed during coding. Settling on a certain number and set of concepts allows a researcher to examine a text for specific things, thereby keeping him/her on task. On the other hand, more flexibility allows new, important material be incorporated into the coding process that could include significant findings in one's results.
3. Decide whether to code for existence or frequency of a concept. After a certain number and set of concepts are chosen for coding, they must answer a key question: is he/she going to code for existence or frequency? This is

important, because it changes the coding process. While it is usually assumed that content analysis simply means doing a word-frequency count, it is not always true that the words mentioned most often are the words that reflect the greatest concerns. Consider other possibilities when using simple word frequency counts to make inferences about matters of importance.

4. Decide on how to distinguish among concepts. The researcher must decide whether concepts are to be coded exactly as they appear, or if they can be recorded when they appear in different forms. In performing word frequency counts, one should bear in mind that some words may have multiple meanings. The researcher needs to determine if two words mean radically different things to him/her, or if they are similar enough that they can be coded as being the same thing.
5. Develop rules for coding texts. The researcher must formulate rules to streamline and organize the coding process so that he/she is coding things consistently throughout the text, in the same way every time.
6. Decide what to do with "irrelevant" information. One must decide what to do with the information in the text that is not coded. One's options include either deleting or skipping over unwanted material, or viewing all information as relevant and important and using it to reexamine, reassess, and perhaps even alter the one's coding scheme. The researcher must decide whether irrelevant information should be ignored, or used to reexamine and/or alter the coding scheme.

7. Code the texts. Once these choices about irrelevant information are made, the next step is to code the text. This is done either by hand, i.e. reading through the text and manually writing down concept occurrences, or through the use of various computer programs. When coding is done manually, a researcher can recognize errors far more easily.
8. Analyze the results. Once the coding is done, the researcher examines the data and attempts to draw conclusions and generalizations. Because the conceptual researcher is dealing only with quantitative data, the levels of interpretation and generalizability are very limited. The researcher can only extrapolate as far as the data will allow (Writing@CSU, 2010).

Content analysis offers several advantages to researchers. In particular, content analysis:

- allows for both quantitative and qualitative operations.
 - provides valuable historical/cultural insights over time through analysis of texts
 - allows a closeness to text which can alternate between specific categories and relationships and also statistically analyzes the coded form of the text
 - provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use
- (Writing@CSU, 2010)

Content analysis suffers from several disadvantages, both theoretical and procedural. In particular, content analysis:

- can be extremely time consuming.
- is inherently reductive, particularly when dealing with complex texts.

- tends too often to consist of simple word counts.
- often disregards the context that produced the text (Writing@CSU, 2010).

In keeping with Krippendorff's procedure, the researcher created a database of four data units to sample, organize, and code. With this information, the researcher could then compare and contrast using narratological poetics to understand Nesbit's relationship with her child readers. The database included the following data units:

- *Mediated narration*- a narration in which the narrator's presence makes itself felt. The variable is measured as the narrator is addressing the reader directly or is not (Prince 2003).
- *Focalization*- the perspective of a character or the narrator through which the narrated situations and events in a narrative is presented. The focal point measured is that of the narrator, an adult, or a child (Prince 2003).
- *Distance*- the figurative space between the narrator, the characters, the situations and events being narrated, and the narratee. The distance measured is emotional (Prince 2003).
- *Tone*- a reflection of a writer's attitude, manners, mood, and moral outlook in his work. Tone measured may be serious, humorous, sentimental, or didactic (Prince 2003).

Data Collection

The books by E. Nesbit from which the researcher collected data are her children's fantasy novels published between 1902 and 1913:

Psammead Series

1. *Five Children and It* (1902)
2. *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904)
3. *The Story of the Amulet* (1906)

House of Arden Series

4. *The House of Arden* (1908)
5. *Harding's Luck* (1909)

Others

6. *The Enchanted Castle* (1907)
7. *Magic City* (1910)
8. *Wet Magic* (1913)

These books were selected because these novels were written in the fantasy genre in which she excelled. Additionally, her Psammead series, House of Arden series, and *The Enchanted Castle* have been her best received and reviewed novels. Nesbit's fantasy novels were innovative and introduced plot elements that never been used in children's literature before. She is so associated with these fantasies that "almost every writer of children's fantasy in this century [the twentieth] is – directly or indirectly – indebted to her" (Lurie 1988, 430).

This provided a basis on which to explore Nesbit's relationship with her children readers and how she was and is able to connect with them so well.

To collect the data, the researcher used content analysis for systematically quantifying and analyzing the presence, meanings, and relationships of these four

narrative variables. Observations were made by counting the number of mediated narrative events in each of the eight novels, the pages in which the focalization was of the child, the adult, or the narrator, the pages in which the narrator's emotional distance was distant or not distant, and the pages in which the narrator's attitude was humorous, serious, didactic, or sentimental. In order to properly conduct the analysis for the study, it was necessary to count the number of occurrences by page number in order to capture how often these variables occurred across the eight books. The researcher also calculated the frequencies and percentages of the demographic variables, such as series of the books, types of tones, types of focalizations, types of emotional distance, and types of author's voice. Additionally, the researcher examined the relationships between the different variables through cross tabulations with Chi Square analyses. These relationships, including interactions between variables such as mediated and focalization, were also done across the three series of books (i.e., the Psammead series, the Arden series, and 'other') and also across each of the eight individual titles. Tables and figures are included for each of the analysis strata.

Limitations

E. Nesbit wrote over 40 novels for children, in addition to her work for adults, including novels, short stories, and poetry. The researcher examined only her children's fantasy novels published between 1902 and 1913. This study focuses exclusively on the narratological analysis of Nesbit's fantasy works. Other aspects of her novels certainly also further study. Nesbit is only one of the major fantasy authors of Britain. Although

she is significant and unique in her approach, further research is needed to contextualize her work among her peers.

Nesbit was a principal author of the Golden Age of children's literature during the first decade of the twentieth century, and, in the words of Marcus Crouch, "No writer for children today is free of debt to this remarkable woman" (1972, 16). Although she is more well-known in Great Britain than she is in the United States, Americans know of her indirectly through the writers she influenced.

Nesbit wrote several novels for children that were not fantasies; however, her fantasy novels introduced innovations to the genre – time travel, domestic magic, and an unidealized fairy in the person of the Psammead. She perhaps turned to fantasy because it allows for a wider scope of adventure and imagination. Also, fantasy has particular qualities; as G. K. Chesterton said of fairy tales: "Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be beaten" (<http://www.quoteland.com>). Fantasy provides children the opportunity to try out beating the dragons. That, and they are fun.

This study focuses on Nesbit's narrative style because of her "intrusive narrator," or "engaging narrator," style of interrupting the action to address the narratee directly, usually commenting on the action in progress. This style went out of fashion not long after Nesbit ceased publishing and, thus, seems fresh and novel to a reader today. Its effect on the relationship between the narrator and the narratee, how it drew the child reader into the book, is an important quality to explore. Being able to attract and hold a

young reader is an art and a skill that many writers strive for; E. Nesbit has been doing it for over a hundred years.

A limitation affecting content analysis was using only one researcher. Tallying the occurrence of mediated narrations, focalizations, distance, and tone is essentially a subjective task and, in best case, should be done with at least three researchers. Time constraints in this instance dictated the limitation of one researcher.

Variables

A database of four data units was used to sample, organize, and code E. Nesbit's eight children's fantasy novels based on. The database included the following data units:

Mediated Narration - a narration in which the narrator's presence makes itself felt. The variable is measured as the narrator is addressing the reader directly or is not (Prince 2003). An example of this technique is expressed well in the first pages of *Five Children and It*:

Now that I have begun to tell you about the place, I feel that I could go on and make this into a most interesting story about all the ordinary things that the children did – just the kind of things you do yourself, you know – and you would believe every word of it; and when I told about the children's being tiresome, as you are sometimes, your aunts would perhaps write in the margin of the story with a pencil. "How true!" or "How like life!" and you would see it and very likely be annoyed. So I will only tell you the really astonishing things that happened, and you may leave the book

about quite safely, for no aunts and unless either are likely to write

“How true!” on the edge of the story. (Nesbit 1996A, 4)

Focalization- the perspective of a character or the narrator through which the narrated situations and events in a narrative is presented. The focal point measured is that of the narrator, an adult, or a child. A passage from *Harding's Luck* will illustrate how Nesbit conveys the story from Dickie's point of view:

They locked up the house and went to breakfast, Beale gay as a lark and Dickie rather silent. He was thinking over a new difficulty. It was all very well to bury twenty sovereigns and to know exactly where they were. And they were his own beyond a doubt. But if anyone saw those sovereigns dug up, those sovereigns would be taken away from him. No one would believe that they were his own. And the earthenware pot was so big. And so many windows looked out on the garden. No one could hope to dig up a big thing like that from his back garden without attracting some attention. Besides, he doubted whether he were strong enough to dig it up, even if he could do so unobserved. He had not thought of this when he had put the gold there in that other life. He was so much stronger then. He sighed.

(1998, 125)

Distance- the figurative space between the narrator, the characters, the situations and events being narrated, and the narratee. The distance measured is emotional. There either is distance exhibited or no distance (Prince 2003). Nesbit was at one with her characters:

There was a ring at the front-door bell. The opening of a door. Voices.

“It’s them!” cried Robert, and a thrill ran through four hearts.

“Here!” cried Anthea, snatching the Amulet from Jane and pressing it into the hand of the learned gentleman. “Here – it’s yours – your very own – a present from us, because you’re Rekh-marā as well as ... I mean, because you’re such a dear.”

She hugged him briefly but fervently, and the four swept down the stairs to the hall, where a cabman was bringing in boxes, and where, heavily disguised in travelling cloaks and wraps, was their hearts’ desire – threefold – Mother, Father, and The Lamb. (Nesbit 1996B, 292)

Tone- a reflection of a writer’s attitude, manners, mood, and moral outlook in his work. Tone measured may be serious, humorous, sentimental, or didactic (Prince 2003). While Nesbit was humorous in nearly all her texts, she became more serious in her later books:

“I hate your times. They’re ugly, they’re cruel,” said Richard.

“They don’t cut your head off for nothing anyhow in our times,” said Edred, “and shut you up in the Tower.”

“They do worse things,” Richard said. “I know. They make people work fourteen hours a day for nine shillings a week, so that they never have enough to eat or wear, and no time to sleep or to be happy in. They won’t give people food or clothes, or let them work to get them; and then they put the people in prison if they take enough to keep them alive. They let

people get horrid diseases, till their jaws drop off, so as to have a particular kind of china. Women have to go out to work instead of looking after their babies, and the little girl that's left in charge drops the baby and it's crippled for life. Oh! I know. I won't go back with you. You might keep me there for ever." He shuddered. (Nesbit 1997, 235)

Conclusion

This study investigates E. Nesbit's narrative style and how she constructed the relationship between narrator and narratee, a relationship which is fundamental importance in children's literature (Wall 1991). Narratological critical research and descriptive content analysis of her children's fantasies are the two methodologies the researcher used for this study. To collect the data, the researcher used content analysis for systematically quantifying and analyzing the presence, meanings, and relationships of four narrative variables: mediated narration, focalization, emotional distance, and tone. The texts considered were Nesbit's eight children's fantasy novels.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study focuses on E. Nesbit's narrative style in the writing of her children's fantasy novels published between 1902 and 1913. There were eight novels in total: three of the books form the Psammead series; two books make up the House of Arden dyad; and the remaining three books stand alone. To provide a review of the plots, characters, and themes, summaries have been included in this chapter to offer an overview of Nesbit's stories and people who inhabit them. Afterwards, there is a discussion and analysis of all four variables that were used to collect data needed to analyze E. Nesbit's narrative style and their interactions and correlations.

Children's Fantasy Novels

Psammead Series

In *Five Children and It* (1902) Nesbit creates a Psammead, or Sand-Fairy, who grants wishes that seem to bring only trouble. It reappears in *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), while in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) the Phoenix arrives with the carpet.

The children in these books – Anthea, Robert, Cyril, Jane, and the Lamb – are not strongly individualized; instead, the memorable characters are the Psammead and the Phoenix, who are vain, selfish, and ill-tempered. They dispense magical bounty but resent being bothered by children and need to be appeased and flattered; at the same time, they are really fun to be around. They criticize the children's lack of intelligence and culture

and their moral weaknesses, allowing Nesbit to write from a juvenile viewpoint while maintaining the perspective of an adult.

To a considerable extent, these creatures substitute for absent fathers and busy mothers. They provide information and advice, and lay down the rules for conduct:

“Now you’re talking,” said Robert.

“Of course I am,” retorted the Psammead tartly, “so there’s no need for you to.”

(Nesbit 1996a, 32)

These three books have an episodic structure. In *Five Children and It* and *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, the children's magic powers clash with everyday adult reality. The magic, always limited by an internal logic of rules, repeatedly leaves the children stranded in awkward predicaments in the adult world. The magical granting of them only points up Nesbit’s favorite moral of the vanity of human wishes – you had better be careful what you wish for in case you actually get it. This theme is particularly relevant to young children who intensely desire the fulfillment of all their wishes, and yet would be terrified by the consequences if they really came true. The child’s realization that wishes have no power in the real world is at once deeply disappointing and yet also reassuring, since it protects the ill-controlled self from the appalling consequences such power would confer. Nesbit chose a subject which had a special meaning for young children; her stories reassured them that their decision to grow up and abandon such fantasies was the right one (Briggs 1987, 224). Bruno Bettelheim has pointed out that in such stories, “after all the wishing is done, things are exactly as they were before the wishing began,” and this is part of the comfort such stories afford (1976, 71).

Five Children and It. In Nesbit's *Five Children and It*, the story begins as the children and their mother arrive at a house in the country where they will spend their summer holiday. Straight away the children meet the Psammead with its power to grant wishes. What the central characters fail to take into account, however, is that they must still contend with rules; instead of freeing them from the requirements of the everyday world, the Psammead's magic adds more.

Their wishes – some of which are not at all what they intended – are of several kinds. Some represent long-held dreams, such as being as "beautiful as the day" or having a sandpit full of gold coins. Some hold out freedom from responsibility, such as Robert's and Cyril's impulsive wishes to be free of having to baby-sit the Lamb, or Anthea's desire for wings. Robert's impetuous wish to be "bigger than the baker's boy" reflects the child's anger at powerlessness; the wishes to be in a besieged castle or to be under attack by Red Indians express the importance of imaginative play in a child's life.

None of these wishes turn out the way the children hoped; indeed, the children speculate that the Psammead secretly hopes that none of their wishes will turn out well. The rules of the magic seem to be stacked against them – the only convenient feature (although even this leads to problems) being that the wishes cease to work at sunset. At the end, the children, in order to clear up the myriad of problems created by one of their wishes, they must promise the Psammead that they will never ask him for another wish. Ultimately, really, what they desire most is a return to the status quo, where all they need to worry about are the rules of daily life.

The Phoenix and the Carpet. Nesbit's next work for children was a sequel to *Five Children and It – The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), which combines two magical entities, the Phoenix and the wishing carpet. The latter provides more opportunities for disaster than did the Psammead, in part because it permits the children to make expeditions to foreign lands. Still, although they encounter real danger, their use of the magic is somewhat more successful than in the preceding work, thanks to the Phoenix's supervision. While he is as prone as the children to make mistakes about the everyday world, the Phoenix is naturally more expert in dealing with magic. Another key difference between this novel and its predecessor is in the children's hopes for the carpet: this time they seek only adventure, and any material benefits go to others. While their earlier dealings with the Psammead were aimed chiefly at selfish pleasures, the carpet is used to bestow benefits on others.

The adventure begins when their mother purchases a second-hand carpet which contains an egg which the children place near the fire. It hatches, revealing a beautiful golden Phoenix, the mythical sacred firebird. The carpet turns out to be a magical carpet and can transport the children to anywhere they wish in the present time, although it is only capable of three wishes per day. Accompanied by the Phoenix, the children have exotic adventures in various climes.

At a few points in the novel, the children find themselves in predicaments from which the Phoenix is unable to rescue them by himself; he goes to find the Psammead and has a wish granted for the children's sake. In addition, in the end, the carpet is sent to ask the Psammead to grant the Phoenix's wish. At one point, the children and their

supernatural bird visit the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company: the egotistical Phoenix assumes that this is his modern-day temple, and the insurance executives must be his priests.

Then, for a special treat, their parents let the four children attend the play, “The Water Babies,” at a West End theatre. Robert smuggles the Phoenix along inside his coat. The Phoenix is so excited by this spectacle that he unintentionally sets fire to the theatre. All ends well when the Phoenix magically reverses the damage; no one is harmed, and the Phoenix has the power to “undo the work of flames” (Nesbit 1973, 232).

Finally, in “The End of the End,” the Phoenix has reached the end of his current lifespan and must begin the cycle again. The children prepare an altar with sweet incense, upon which the Phoenix immolates himself. The magical carpet has also reached the end of its span, as it was never intended for regular wear-and-tear, and it vanishes with the Phoenix's egg. There is a happy ending, with the children receiving a parcel of gifts from an unknown benefactor (the Phoenix, of course), and Robert receiving a single golden feather. But the feather has vanished by the evening, and it is truly the last of the Phoenix and the Carpet.

The Story of the Amulet. The Psammead was too popular for Nesbit to leave behind when she began the third book of the series, *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), although the children could never ask the Psammead for another wish. *The Story of the Amulet* was the most thoroughly researched of Nesbit's fiction and is also the most serious. She worked on the novel for at least three years with the assistance of Dr. Wallis Budge of the British Museum, who became Nesbit's close friend and lover (Briggs 1987).

The machinery of this novel owed much to the keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities at the British Museum, Ernest Wallis Budge, to whom the story is dedicated. Budge suggested the Amulet, the Words of Power, and many of the settings and historical data that are essential to the plot.

The work examines the possibilities of social organization, from primitive prehistory to a utopian future as the children travel through time to find the missing half of an ancient Egyptian amulet, restore its power, and finally answer their wish for their hearts' desire. The scene shifts from prehistoric England to ancient Egypt and Babylonia, mythical Atlantis, and Caesar's Gaul, but the novel is not a didactic lesson in history. This most wide-ranging of Nesbit's books inspired C. S. Lewis to comment in *Surprised by Joy* that, "It first opened my eyes to antiquity, the 'dark backward and abysm of time'" (1956, 101).

This time the children are living with their Old Nurse while their father is in Manchuria to report on the war and their mother and the Lamb are in Madeira for her health. Without their parents and little monitoring by the nurse, the children are free to do as they wish. On one of their perambulations, they happen on the Psammead in a cage in a pet shop, very much worse for the wear. The Psammead's gratitude for their rescuing it from a pet shop leads them to find half of an Egyptian amulet, and with the help of the Learned Gentleman, a fellow boarder and Egyptologist who decodes the amulet's inscription, the adventures begin. The time-travel motif plays its role here because the full power of the amulet is dependent on the two pieces being united. They must search through time for the amulet's other half. Suspense is heightened as they become aware of

being followed by Rehk-marā, an Egyptian priest and a former possessor of the amulet. The resolution of the chase through time, although logical – the souls of the Learned Gentleman and Rekh-marā merge into the Learned Gentleman's body, thus fulfilling the heart's desire of both, for knowledge – has nuances beyond those which may be fully understood by a child narratee: "But the eyes of Rekh-marā and the learned gentleman met, and were kind to each other, and promised each other many things, secret and sacred and very beautiful" (Nesbit 1996b, 289).

The children's final wish is that their parents and baby brother be restored to them, and, once this is granted, they have desire nothing else. For the Psammead, its heart's desire turns out to escape into the distant past. The Learned Gentleman absentmindedly wishes the Psammead to a beautiful Baalbec temple in the desert, and the Psammead is never seen again.

If *The Amulet* ends with fulfillments of private happiness, the book is concerned with the connections between the achievement of private happiness and a public life conducive to it. *The Amulet* contains episodes that dramatize the social criticisms of the Fabians as to the working and living conditions of England at the time. In the twelfth chapter of *The Amulet*, "The Sorry-Present and the Expelled Little Boy," the children travel into a brighter future. In this chapter, Nesbit creates a utopia from the child's point of view, focusing upon the nature of schools and nurseries in this brave new world.

Injecting her social and political views into her children's fiction reflects the beginning of a shift in Nesbit's work as a whole; increasingly, her writings tend to display a moral as well as a narrative complexity absent from her early stories. The Phoenix's

concern for the children's good behavior is noticeably greater than that of the Psammead, who merely grumbles about their manners; even the mute carpet is capable of pointing out to them that "good and kind actions" might best be performed at home.

The Enchanted Castle

The Enchanted Castle (1907) is considered by many to be Nesbit's most ambitious work of fiction. Given the usual absence of psychological complication in Nesbit's fiction, *The Enchanted Castle* provided a somewhat unexpected departure as the only one of her children's books to deal at length with the author's inner fears.

The story concerns three siblings, Gerald, Jimmy, and Kathleen, and their friend Mabel, the castle housekeeper's niece. Again, adults are all but absent; although it is the holidays the children must remain at school because of illness at home. The only schoolmistress in residence is Mademoiselle, the French teacher, so Jerry, Jimmy, and Cathy (their nicknames) are free of any "overwatching" (Nesbit 1994, 2, 5). They meet Mabel on one of their explorations; they mistake her for a Sleeping Princess.

It is only the first time in the book when things are not what they appear to be. The enchantment begins when Mabel discovers a magic ring while she is playing a trick on the others. The form and duration of the ring's magic change according to several variables: it is sometimes a ring of invisibility, sometimes a wishing ring, sometimes a ring that alters the wearer's form, and so on, depending on how its user has described it. To complicate the situation still further, the ring is but a key to a place of greater magic, the Hall of Granted Wishes, where one's heart's desire may be found. Not until comparatively late in the novel do the children master the rules of this magic, and as is

usual in Nesbit's fiction, they continue to make mistakes in practice even after they understand the theory. Consequently Kathleen accidentally turns herself into a statue, and Mabel grows to be four yards high.

Significantly, *The Enchanted Castle* is unique among Nesbit's full-length fantasy tales in providing the central characters without any instruction in the magic's use. The adults in this novel are not surrogate parents; they exercise little or no authority over the children, or themselves, for that matter; not until the end is there a sense that anyone's life is well ordered.

Moreover, just as various episodes incorporate some of the delights of Nesbit's own childhood, such as the Crystal Palace's life-size model of a dinosaur and the Great Exhibition's classical statues – all relocated to the castle grounds, where they come alive after dark – others incorporate some of her terrors. The Ugly-Wuglies recall the mummies of Bordeaux, which she had described in *Long Ago When I Was Young* as "the crowning horror of my childish life" (Nesbit 1966, 64). *The Enchanted Castle* has more to do with Nesbit's own childhood than do any other of her fantasy tales.

The Ugly-Wuglies are the most remarkable passage in the book and perhaps in all of E. Nesbit's writings. The ring has turned from an invisibility ring into a wishing ring. The children are putting on the play, "Beauty and the Beast," to entertain Mademoiselle and to provide an narratee for their show they have mocked up seven effigies of people:

Their bodies were bolsters and rolled-up blankets, their spines were broom-handles, and their arm and leg bones were hockey sticks and umbrellas. Their shoulders were the wooden cross-

pieces that Mademoiselle used for keeping her jackets in shape; their hands were gloves stuffed out with handkerchiefs; and their faces were the paper masks painted in the afternoon by the untutored brush of Gerald, tied to the round heads made of the ends of stuffed bolster cases.... you would hardly have known they were faces, some of them, if they hadn't been in the position which faces usually occupy, between the collar and the hat. Their eyebrows were furious with lamp-black frowns – their eyes the size, and almost the shape, of five-shilling pieces, and on their lips and cheeks had been spent much crimson lake and nearly the whole of a half-pan of vermilion. (Nesbit 1994, 139)

Mabel, who is in possession of the ring but who is unaware of its new power, says unwittingly that she wishes the creatures were alive, so that they could applaud, too. And they do, with clapping that makes a dull padded sound. Not only that; every painted paper face has come to life. There is horror, then panic. Mademoiselle and Eliza flee the room. What will the children do? Reversing the spell does not work, and the children cannot face pulling the creatures to pieces. The hall is crowded with these live, strange things. They cannot speak intelligibly because they have no roofs to their mouths. One of them, a respectable gentleman, asks a question that would be reasonable enough if he were alive: “A oo ré o me me oo a oo ho el?” Can you recommend me to a good hotel? (Nesbit 1994, 143-146).

These are the Ugly-Wuglies: they include, besides the respectable gentleman, a sporty not-quite-gentleman wearing the old brown overcoat and top hat from the hat stand in the hall and a stropky lady who wants to know what happened to the carriages they ordered. And when instead of that good hotel they are tricked into a dark passageway, the Ugly-Wuglies turn nasty and, from that, threatening. There's some quite alarming action before they are eventually found, the magic having expired, as a heap of old sticks and clothes; indeed, the bailiff has been attacked by some very irate Ugly-Wuglies. From then until the end of the book, the castle and its grounds again become magical; statues come to life in the moonlight, and there are mystical, evocative passages involving Grecian gods and moonlight swimming (Nesbit 1994,147-240).

The Enchanted Castle is a very strange book. It, unfortunately, marks the end of E. Nesbit's best period (Townsend 2002).

The House of Arden Series

The House of Arden and Harding's Luck. The concept of time travel and the social critique that Nesbit began to develop in the historical settings of *The Story of the Amulet* are combined in her complicated pair of children's novels, *The House of Arden* (1908) and *Harding's Luck* (1909), in which Nesbit drew on English history to present the story of the interconnected lives of three children – Dicky Harding, a crippled orphan from the slums of London, and Elfrida and Edred Arden, a sister and brother seeking the return of their lost father and fallen family fortunes. The three children travel through time on intersecting paths.

In *The House of Arden* Edred and Elfrida are brother and sister, whose father is missing and presumed dead, and Edred has just inherited the title of Lord Arden. Their mother is also dead; they live with their aunt. There is a run-down family castle but no money, and the children, aided by the Mouldiwarp, a white mole, dedicated to the interests of the Arden family – he is the family crest, set out to find a buried treasure so that they can restore the family fortune.

There's a lot of assorted magic – thanks to the Mouldiwarp and Dickie's moonflower seeds, Tinkler, and the white seal – costume drama, excursions into the past; some of it gets quite confused. What's interesting is that while they are in the time of the Gunpowder Plot, which occurred in 1605, the children meet their cousin Richard, a young gentleman; and they meet him in what both he and they know is the past. Richard has come from their own time, the twentieth century; but there he is poor, lame orphan Dickie Harding. And he will be the hero of the second book, *Harding's Luck*.

Dickie was born in an East End slum, and Nesbit gives a pretty convincing account of his harsh life there. As a slum child, Dickie has been befriended by a tramp, Beale, for whom he has deep affection. The harsh realities of Dickie's life are vividly portrayed by the Fabian side of E. Nesbit's temperament, but in the end no upset to the status quo is caused, for in the end Dickie is recognized, inherits the estate and a knighthood, disappears into the seventeenth century, so managing matters that the castle and its treasure will go to Edred three hundred years in the future.

The moral virtues stressed in these two books are love and self-sacrifice. Dicky sacrifices his desire to return to the past, where he is not crippled, out of loyalty to Mr.

Beale, a tramp whom he believed was befriending him when he actually was recruited as a criminal accomplice. By his sacrifice, he brings about Beale's moral reformation.

Ultimately, Dicky gives up his true status as heir to the Arden fortune in the interests of the Arden relatives he has come to love. Meanwhile, Edred pursues his quest to become "wise and good," overcoming his childish ignorance and lack of confidence, so that he is fit to be Lord Arden.

Interestingly, Nesbit portrays seventeenth-century England as a utopia. Not only is Richard physically and emotionally whole, provided with a family and a fortune, but society is healthier as well. The unpolluted countryside is beautiful; the rich live in harmony with the poor. The modern Dickie, is offered an assortment of acceptable surrogate parents ranging from the genial tramp Beale to Lady Talbot and finally to Edred and Elfrida's father. But his knowledge of Jacobean society makes it easier for Dickie to turn his back on Edwardian times even after he is restored to his proper station and to membership in the Arden family. Unwilling to deprive Edred and Elfrida's father of the title and fortune, which the latter will use responsibly to improve the lot of the village poor, Dickie employs the magic a final time to vanish into the family's past.

The House of Arden books lack the sense of enjoyment present in the Psammead books. The Mouldiwarp does not have the dash that either the Psammead or the Phoenix had. Although he is the badge of the House of Arden come alive, he is still just a mole. Nesbit's sure touch of magic had faltered, by the time *The House of Arden* was conceived, and the Mouldiwarp did not achieve the memorable personality of his two predecessors (Streatfeild 1958).

The Magic City

The Magic City (1910) is based on Nesbit's interest in constructing elaborate structures out of children's blocks and common household objects, the type of imaginative play she believed vital for children. Orphaned Philip's older sister has just married, and Philip does not like his new brother-in-law or his daughter, Lucy. Staying with Lucy and her domineering nurse while the newlyweds are on their honeymoon, Philip is sullen and angry. His chief recreation is in building a model city, a project that Lucy wants to assist and the nurse wants to clear away. Magic is introduced, and the pretend world becomes real. Philip finds that he must perform seven tasks to save the city, aided by Lucy and threatened by a veiled woman known as the Pretenderette – who turns out to be the nurse. After he and Lucy return to this world, Philip is able to reconcile himself to his sister's marriage of his beloved older sister and has come to accept and admire Lucy. *The Magic City's* central lesson is the need to love and share love (Briggs 1987).

Nesbit uses this story to suggest that the dreamworld of magic and imagination is the best place to reorder oneself and even, perhaps, society. Along the way, Philip and Lucy are instructed about the dangers of moneygrubbing and technology, among other Nesbit pitfalls. Thus, when they leave the magic world after solving the assorted problems of its inhabitants, they find that the drawbacks of their everyday situation have disappeared. This lesson in the uses of fantasy is implicit in other Nesbit works as well, but *The Magic City* represents its clearest statement, according to one critic, Claudia Nelson (1994).

The Magic City is a totally created world, but Nesbit's inventive spirit flags, and the complex magic demands overly concentrated attention. This novel is indicative of the decline of Nesbit's powers as a writer for children; the story is all a bit of a hodgepodge. Certainly the period after 1910 was filled with worries likely to distract her attention from her work, such as Bland's heart trouble and increasing blindness and her own financial difficulties (Moore 1966).

Wet Magic

Nesbit wrote one more children's novel, *Wet Magic* (1913). This book gives every sign of having been written under strain. The children are lifeless and the under-sea adventures that occupy most of the book are too distantly related to daily experience to be compelling (Briggs 1987, 352). *Wet Magic* takes place in an underwater realm that five children, after rescuing a mermaid from human cruelty, are taken to visit. By carelessly touching the sky, they expose the kingdom to danger, starting a war that threatens to end the underwater civilization, but then cleverly restore peace. Written during the lead-up to World War I, the book is a plea for international harmony and the acceptance of differences between people.

Wet Magic (1913) is an oddly assorted work that never achieves unity of focus; it is full of motifs and situations from past novels. Its frame story, the quest of the circus boy Reuben for his true parents, is only occasionally integrated into the story. The mermaid, rescued by four children, Kathleen, Francis, Mavis, and Bernard, is as difficult at first as the Psammead or the Phoenix, but later, once the undersea portion of the adventures begins, she too is simply one of a very large cast of characters. The central

action of the story is the defeat, with the children's help, of an invasion of the water realm by "under-people," one of whom is the mermaid's rejected lover. Among the invaders are also characters from books the children have read, but their connections with events are less clear than similar instances in earlier works.

The central value of *Wet Magic* is bravery, which consists of both moral courage and pluck in battle. The narrative invokes some of war's attractions: gorgeous parades, opportunities for courage, the sense of community arising from facing a common enemy. Thus, the lasting result of the "battle of the book people" is that literature takes on for the children "an interest far above any [that it] had ever held before" (1996c, 130). At the same time, however, the novel ultimately establishes peace as a higher good. As Francis points out to the merprincess, "Why, don't you see, all these people you're at war with are *nice*" (1996c, 156). Despite Nesbit's hope that war between the nations could be averted, Britain and Germany soon declared war and she supported her country wholeheartedly.

Summary of Fantasy Novels

Nesbit's fantasy novels, with one exception, have a family of children who discover a magical creature or object, have adventures together, and take responsibility for themselves. She was inventive, she was entertaining, she was engaging, and she invited children into her stories. After *Harding's Luck* Nesbit's books are less impressive as a whole, but all of them contain good moments, and they continue to exhibit her remarkable sense of how children think, speak, and feel.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher used content analysis for systematically quantifying and analyzing the presence, meanings, and relationships of these four narrative variables: mediated narration, focalization, distance, and tone. Notations were made by counting the number of mediated narrative events in each of the eight novels, the pages in which the focalization was of the child, the adult, or the narrator, the pages in which the narrator's emotional distance was distant or not distant, and the pages in which the narrator's attitude was humorous, serious, didactic, or sentimental. In order to properly conduct the analysis for the study, it was necessary to count the number of occurrences by page number in order to capture how often these variables occurred across the eight books. The researcher also calculated the frequencies and percentages of the demographic variables, such as series of the books, types of tones, types of focalizations, types of emotional distance, and types of author's voice. Additionally, the researcher examined the relationships between the different variables through cross tabulations with Chi Square analyses. These relationships, including interactions between variables such as mediated and focalization, were also considered across the three series of books (i.e., the Psammead series, the Arden series, and 'other') and also across each of the eight individual titles. Tables and figures are included for each of the analysis strata.

Data Analysis

Nesbit's eight fantasy novels were analyzed using these four variables: *mediated narration*, *focalization*, *emotional distance*, and *tone*, as shown in Table 1. What follows is a discussion of each, along with the interactions and correlations between them.

In order to properly conduct the analysis for the study, it was necessary to count the number of occurrences of each by page number in order to capture how often each occurred in and across the eight books. For example, this would be tallied as one occurrence of a *mediated narration*:

I am sorry that the first thing you should hear about the children should be that they did not care about their Aunt Enid, but this was unfortunately the case. And if you think this was not nice of them I can only remind you that you do not know their Aunt Enid. (1996c, 15)

Table 1

List of Variables and Their Values

Variables				
Mediated Narration	Yes	No		
Focalization	Narrator	Adult	Child	
Distance	Yes	No		
Tone	Serious	Humorous	Sentimental	Didactic

Before statistical analysis and discussion of the significance of that data is presented, for clarification, the raw data gathered and percentages of notations per book is given. Throughout the series of books, the number of total notations (1821) was fairly evenly distributed. The Psammead series contained 725 notations (39.8%), the Arden series had 484 notations (26.6%), and the remaining books contained 612 notations (33.6%). Similarly, the number of notations among book titles was evenly distributed as well. *Five Children and It* contained 186 notations (10.2%), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* had 240 notations (13.2%), *The House of Arden* had 258 notations (14.2%), *Harding's Luck* had 226 notations (12.4%), and *The Enchanted Castle* had 222 notations (12.2%), *The Magic City* had 210 notations (11.5%), while *The Story of the Amulet* contained the most notations with 299 (16.4%), *Wet Magic* had the fewest with 180 notations (9.9%). See Figure 2.

With respect to specific data units, for *mediated narration*, across all eight books, 1596 notations (87.6%) were made in which the narrator did not directly address the reader, that is, the narrator simply related the story, and 225 notations (12.4%) made where the narratee was directly addressed.

For the *focalization* variable, 1657 notations (91.0%) were narrated through the perspective of a child. This was a substantial majority over the other categories, with there being 78 notations narrated through the narrator (4.3%) and 67 notations narrated through an adult (3.7%). The notations for the variable of *emotional distance* were assessed in 100% of the notations (1821).

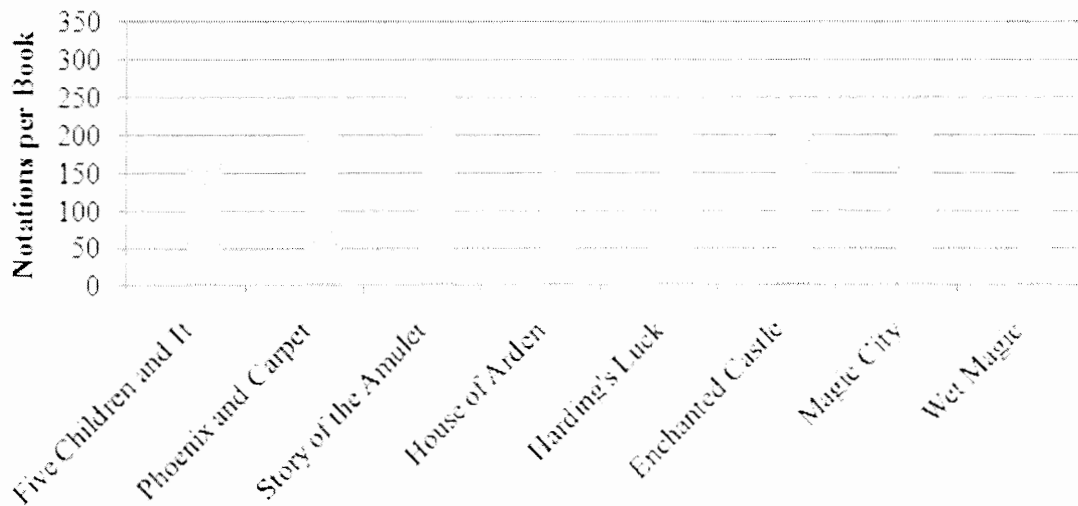


Figure 2. Notations per book.

The variable of *tone* used most frequently was a humorous tone, with 1625 notations (89.3%). Three other tones comprised the remaining 10.8%, with serious tones observed 163 times (9.0%), didactic tones observed 17 times (.9%), and sentimental tones observed 10 times (.5%).

Crosstabulation Analyses

A number of these variables and their inter-relationships revealed significance. The statistical analyses for the study include crosstabulations with Pearson chi square analyses. Crosstabulations were conducted to examine the relationships between categorical variables.

All Book Titles – All Variables

To confirm whether Nesbit was consistent in her narrative style in all eight books across all four variable analyses were made to demonstrate these relationships. When examining the relationships with the variable mediated narration, there was a significant relationship between mediated narration and focalization, $\chi^2(2) = 28.65, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .126$. When the narrator did not speak directly to the narratee, that is, the narrator simply related the story, a greater proportion of the notations occurred when the focalization was that of the child (92.5%) and when the narrator did speak directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations was made when the focalization was also of the child (87.9%). There was, however, no significant relationship between mediated narration and tone, $\chi^2(3) = 2.04, p = .564$, Cramer's $V = .034$. Nesbit's narrator often stepped out of the story to comment to the narratee on the character's action or the plot. When this happened, naturally, the narrator's focus was on the child narratee. If Nesbit wished to convey a serious, didactic, or even sentimental message, she chose another technique to deliver it.

When examining the relationships with focalization, there was a significant relationship between mediated narration and focalization, $\chi^2(2) = 28.65, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .126$. When the focalization was that of the narrator, a greater proportion of notations (69.2%) was made when the narrator did not speak directly to the narratee. When the focalization was that of an adult, a greater proportion of notations was made when the narrator did not speak directly to the narratee (95.5%). When the focalization was that of the child, a greater proportion of notations was made when the narrator did

not speak directly to the narratee (88.2%). The focalization was that of the narrator when the narrator was engaged in exposition, rather than relating the actions, thoughts, or dialogue of a character.

When examining the relationships with the variable of tone, there was a significant relationship between focalization and tone, $X^2(6) = 17.21, p = .009$, Cramer's $V = .098$. When the proportion of the focalization was that of the child (99.4%), the tone of the books was serious. When the proportion was (91.2%), the tone was humorous. If the tone was sentimental, the notations were 100% child focalization. Finally, when the tone was didactic, a greater proportion of notations was made when the focalization was that of the child (88.2%). There was, however, no significant relationship between mediated narration and tone, $X^2(3) = 2.04, p = .564$, Cramer's $V = .034$. This relationship exists because Nesbit's narrator's focus is nearly always on the child character, in telling the narratee what the character is doing or thinking, or communicating the child's point of view to the narratee.

There was also a significant relationship between mediated narration and tone, $X^2(6) = 17.21, p = .009$, Cramer's $V = .098$. When the focalization was that of a narrator, a greater proportion of notations was made when the tone was humorous (96.2%). When the focalization was that of an adult, a greater proportion of notations was humorous (100.0%). Finally, when the focalization was the child, a greater proportion of notations was humorous (88.7%). The tone of the Psammead series, *The Enchanted Castle*, *The Magic City*, and *Wet Magic* was humorous; in the Arden books, however, Nesbit was

more serious, particularly in *Harding's Luck*. Dickie, recall, was a poor, crippled child who sacrificed much to rehabilitate Beale and the Arden fortune.

Overall, across all eight novels, the most arresting result was the degree to which Nesbit's novels were child-centered. Her focalization, whether attention was focused on the child or the story was being told from the point of view of the child, was nearly always that of the child.

Mediated Narration

There was also a significant relationship between mediated narration and book title, $\chi^2(7) = 16.31, p = .022$, Cramer's $V = .095$. When comparing mediated narration by book title, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, a greater proportion of notations was made when the narratee was not spoken to directly, in *The Story of the Amulet* (93.3%), *The Enchanted Castle* (90.1%), *Wet Magic* (88.9%), *Harding's Luck* (86.3%), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (86.3%), *The Magic City* (85.2%), *Five Children and It* (84.9%), and *The House of Arden* (84.1%). Thus, the narrator address the narratee directly most often in *The House of Arden*. This may be because *The House of Arden* was a historical fantasy and became intertwined with *Harding's Luck*; it also had complicated magic. The Mouldiwarp's power had to do with time travel and that all things white obeyed it and ... well, it got complicated. *The Story of the Amulet* may have the least number of narrator intrusions because the magic of the amulet was explained once and that was sufficient; also, the story was well thought out, unlike that of the Arden books, and moved quickly. The Psammead by this time was a well-known commodity and needed little explanation.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Focalizations, Mediated Narration, and Tone by Book Title

		Five Children & It	The Phoenix & the Carpet	The Story of the Amulet	The House of Arden	Harding's Luck	The Enchanted Castle	Magic City	Wet Magic
Focalization									
Narrator	n	18	0	9	3	3	12	27	6
	%	9.7	.0	3.0	1.2	1.3	5.4	13.8	3.3
Adult	n	3	0	39	1	0	20	4	0
	%	1.6	.0	13.0	.4	.0	9.0	2.0	.0
Child	n	165	240	251	249	223	190	165	174
	%	88.7	100.0	83.9	98.4	98.7	85.6	84.2	96.7
Mediated Narration									
Did not speak to narratee directly									
	n	158	207	279	217	196	200	179	160
	%	84.9	86.3	93.3	84.1	86.7	90.1	85.2	88.9
Spoke to narratee directly									
	n	28	33	20	41	30	22	31	20
	%	15.1	13.8	6.7	15.9	13.3	9.9	14.8	11.1

Table 2, continued

Frequencies and Percentages of Focalizations, Mediated Narration, and Tone by Book Title

		Five Children & It	The Phoenix & the Carpet	The Story of the Amulet	The House of Arden	Harding's Luck	The Enchanted Castle	Magic City	Wet Magic
Tone	Serious	n	1	0	13	1	148	0	0
		%	.5	.0	4.3	.4	65.5	.0	.0
	Humorous	n	181	230	283	249	70	222	210
		%	97.8	97.9	94.6	96.5	31.0	100.0	100.0
	Sentimental	n	0	0	3	1	6	0	0
		%	.0	.0	1.0	.4	2.7	.0	.0
	Didactic	n	3	5	0	7	2	0	0
		%	1.6	2.1	.0	2.7	.9	.0	.0

Table 2, continued

Frequencies and Percentages of Focalizations, Mediated Narration, and Tone by Book Title

		Five Children & It	The Phoenix & the Carpet	The Story of the Amulet	The House of Arden	Harding's Luck	The Enchanted Castle	Magic City	Wet Magic
66	Tone								
	Serious								
	n	1	0	13	1	148	0	0	0
	%	.5	.0	4.3	.4	65.5	.0	.0	.0
	Humorous								
	n	181	230	283	249	70	222	210	180
	%	97.8	97.9	94.6	96.5	31.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Sentimental								
	n	0	0	3	1	6	0	0	0
	%	.0	.0	1.0	.4	2.7	.0	.0	.0
	Didactic								
	n	3	5	0	7	2	0	0	0
	%	1.6	2.1	.0	2.7	.9	.0	.0	.0

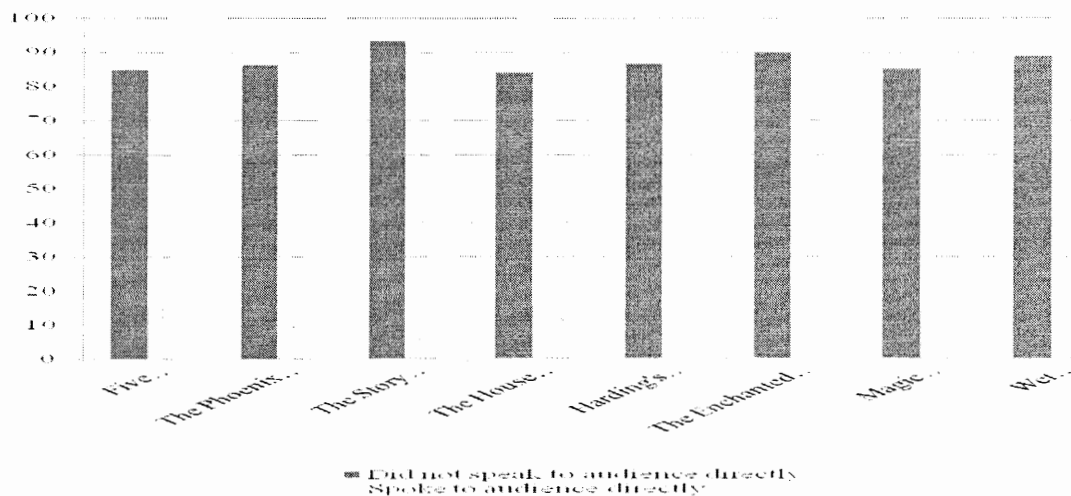


Figure 3. Frequencies and percentages of mediated by book title.

Focalization

The study also examined the relationship between focalization and individual book titles, $\chi^2(14) = 206.61, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .239$. A greater proportion of notations in *Five Children and It* was made when the focalization was of the child (88.7%). As shown in Table 2 and Figure 4, a greater proportion of notations in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* was made when the focalization was the child (100.0%), whereas a greater proportion of notations in *The Story of the Amulet* was made when the focalization was of the child (83.9%). A greater proportion of notations in *The House of Arden* was made when the focalization was of the child (98.4%) and a greater proportion of notations in *Harding's Luck* was made when the focalization was of the child (98.7%). In *Five Children and It*, the children shared the stage with the Psammead, the servants,

and, occasionally, with Mother. In *The Story of the Amulet*, the children's parents were away, and the only significant adults were the Learned Gentleman and Rekh-marā, the Egyptian priest. Dickie Harding is responsible for the destinies, not only of himself, but of Beale the tramp and the Ardens, so the narration is on him.

A total of 85.6% of notations in *The Enchanted Castle* were made when the focalization was the child and 96.7% of notations in *Wet Magic* were focused on the child. In *The Enchanted Castle*, when children are not driving the narration, the narrator is providing exposition or the magical creatures – the dinosaurs and Grecian statues – are present. In the latter books, adults and magic creatures are all but absent. Children in these books enter secondary worlds to fight battles; the beings they encounter there seem to be extensions of themselves.

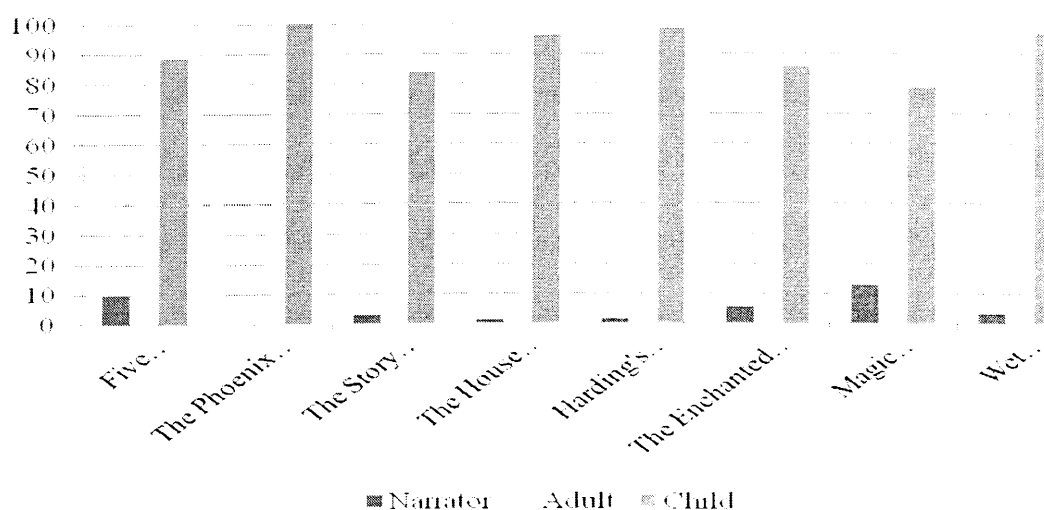


Figure 4. Frequencies and percentages of focalization by book title.

Emotional Distance

All notations for emotional distance showed that there was no emotional distance between the narrator and the narratee across all the books. This was an expected result; as has been observed previously, Nesbit's books were child-centered and no emotional distance was felt or demonstrated.

Tone

When tone was compared across the books, there was a significant relationship between book title and tone, $\chi^2(21) = 1068.98, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .443$. A greater proportion of notations in *Five Children and It* was made when the tone was humorous (97.8%); as shown in Table 2 and Figure 5, a greater proportion of notations in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* was made when the text was humorous (97.9%); 94.6% of notations for *The Story of the Amulet* were made for a humorous tone; 95.6% of notations for *The House of Arden* were made for a humorous tone; and a greater proportion of notations in *The Enchanted Castle*, *The Magic City*, and *Wet Magic* was made when the tone was humorous (100.0%). A greater proportion of notations, however, in *Harding's Luck* was serious (65.5%). The Arden books are socially conscious, and Nesbit integrated more of her Fabian philosophy in these books than she did in any other of her children's fantasy novels, hence, the seriousness.

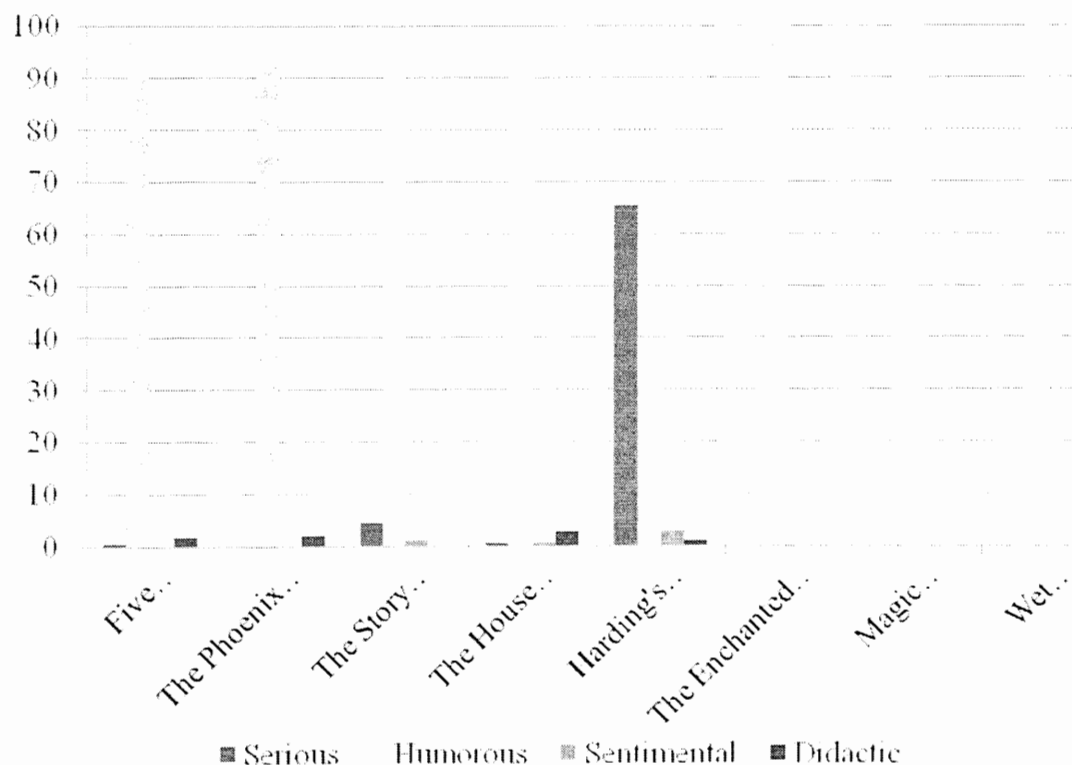


Figure 5. Frequencies and percentages of tone by book title.

Summary

These results reflect what may be concluded from analysis of the eight novels: Nesbit used the mediated narrator technique frequently to engage her narratee in her stories; focalization was on the child character; there was no emotional distance between the narrator and the narratee; and the tone in her early and late novels was humorous while the House of Arden books were more serious. *The Enchanted Castle* and *The Magic City* are actually special cases and should have asterisks. They are written in a

light and breezy manner while they have a serious undertone. *The Enchanted Castle's* scenes of mysticism in the garden and scenes of horror with the Ugly-Wuglies make this book very different from the Psammead series or the House of Arden books. And while it has much in common with the other books, *The Magic City* has an antagonist the children must oppose: the "Pretenderette," a mocking illusion to the suffragettes. Nesbit and her husband opposed women's rights; in this book, the Pretenderette is a threat to the social order (Briggs 1987). This undertone was not taken into account in the variables included in this study.

Mediated Narration and Focalization

It is also worthwhile considering the interactions between and among the four discrete variables. Two pairings in particular generate statistically significant results. These are mediated narration and focalization. As shown in Table 3, crosstabulations with Pearson's Chi-Square analysis were conducted to examine the relationship between mediated narration and focalization within each book. The results show that significant relationships between these factors were found in *The Story of the Amulet* $\chi^2 (2) = 10.59$, $p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .188$ and *Wet Magic* $\chi^2 (1) = 9.50$, $p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .230$. In *The Story of the Amulet*, a greater proportion of notations occurred using a child's perspective when the narrator was not speaking directly to the narratee, that is, was simply telling the story, (84.6%) and a greater proportion of notations occurred using a child's perspective when the narratee was directly addressed (75.0%).

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of the Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by Book Title

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Did not speak to narratee directly																
Narrator	12	7.6			6	2.2	2	.9	3	1.5	9	4.5	19	11.4	3	1.9
Adult	3	1.9			37	13.3	1	.5			19	9.5	4	2.4		
Child	143	90.5	207	100.0	236	84.6	210	96.8	193	98.5	172	86.0	143	86.1	157	98.1
Spoke to narratee directly																
Narrator	6	21.4			3	15.0	1	2.5	0	.0	3	13.6	8	26.7	3	15.0
Adult	0	.0			2	10.0	0	.0			1	4.5	0	.0		
Child	22	78.6	33	100.0	15	75.0	39	97.5	30	100.0	18	81.8	22	73.3	17	85.0

Note. 1 = *Five Children and It* ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.62, p = .060$, Cramer's $V = .174$), 2 = *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (no statistics computed because focalization is a constant), 3 = *The Story of the Amulet* ($\chi^2 (2) = 10.59, p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .188$), 4 = *The House of Arden* ($\chi^2 (2) = .884, p = .643$, Cramer's $V = .059$), 5 = *Harding's Luck* ($\chi^2 (1) = .47, p = .495$, Cramer's $V = .045$), 6 = *The Enchanted Castle* ($\chi^2 (2) = 3.64, p = .162$, Cramer's $V = .128$), 7 = *The Magic City* ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.49, p = .064$, Cramer's $V = .167$), 8 = *Wet Magic* ($\chi^2 (1) = 9.50, p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .230$).

In *Wet Magic*, a greater proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used when the narratee was not spoken to directly (98.1%) as well as when the narratee was directly addressed (85.0%). There was no significant relationship between mediated narration and focalizations, however, in *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, *the House of Arden*, *Harding's Luck*, *The Enchanted Castle*, and *The Magic City*.

Focalization and Tone

The interaction of focalization and tone by book title was also analyzed, as shown in Table 4. Significant relationships between these factors were only found in *Harding's Luck* $\chi^2 (3) = 36.74, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .403$. When the tone was serious, a greater proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (99.3%). When the tone was humorous, a greater percentage of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (98.6%). Similarly, when the tone was sentimental, a greater percentage of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (100.0%). Finally, when the tone was didactic, a equal proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (50.0%) and when a narrator's perspective was used (50.0%). There were no significant relationships between focalization and tone for *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and The Carpet*, *The Story of the Amulet*, *The House of Arden*, *The Enchanted Castle*, *The Magic City*, and *Wet Magic*.

Table 4

Frequencies and Percentages of the Interaction of Focalization and Tone by Book Title

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Narrator																
Serious	0	.0			0	.0	0	.0	1	.7						
Humorous	17	9.4			9	3.2	3	1.2	1	1.4	12	5.4	27	13.8	6	3.3
Sentimental					0	.0			0	.0						
Didactic	1	33.3					0	.0	1	50.0						
Adult																
Serious	0	.0			0	.0	0	.0								
Humorous	3	1.7			39	13.8	1	.4			20	9.0	4	2.0		
Sentimental					0	.0										
Didactic	0	.0					0	.0								

Note. 1 = *Five Children and It* ($\chi^2(4) = 2.08, p = .721$, Cramer's $V = .075$), 2 = *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (no statistics computed because focalization is a constant), 3 = *The Story of the Amulet* ($\chi^2(4) = 3.23, p = .520$, Cramer's $V = .074$), 4 = *The House of Arden* ($\chi^2(4) = .13, p = .998$, Cramer's $V = .016$), 5 = *Harding's Luck* ($\chi^2(3) = 36.74, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .403$), 6 = *The Enchanted Castle* (no statistics computed because tone is a constant), 7 = *The Magic City* (no statistics computed because tone is a constant), 8 = *Wet Magic* (no statistics computed because tone is a constant).

Table 4, continued

Frequencies and Percentages of the Interaction of Focalization and Tone by Book Title

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Child																
Serious	1	100.0			13	100.0	1	100.0	147	99.3						
Humorous	161	89.0	230	100.0	235	83.0	241	96.8	69	98.6	190	85.6	165	84.2	174	96.7
Sentimental					3	100.0			6	100.0						
Didactic	2	66.7	5	100.0			7	100.0	1	50.0						

Note. 1 = *Five Children and It* ($\chi^2 (4) = 2.08, p = .721$, Cramer's $V = .075$), 2 = *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (no statistics computed because focalization is a constant), 3 = *The Story of the Amulet* ($\chi^2 (4) = 3.23, p = .520$, Cramer's $V = .074$), 4 = *The House of Arden* ($\chi^2 (4) = .13, p = .998$, Cramer's $V = .016$), 5 = *Harding's Luck* ($\chi^2 (3) = 36.74, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .403$), 6 = *The Enchanted Castle* (no statistics computed because tone is a constant), 7 = *The Magic City* (no statistics computed because tone is a constant), 8 = *Wet Magic* (no statistics computed because tone is a constant).

Of these findings, that of the relationship between focalization and tone in *Harding's Luck* is striking. This book is told from Dickie's point of view; this is the one book in which there is not a family group. The tone is more diverse in this book; while it is the most serious, there are also some humorous scenes, and even some sentimental and didactic moments, although the didacticisms are often directed towards Beale, the adult. It is also interesting that there are not more significant statistical relationships.

Comparison of the Book Series

Crosstabulations with Pearson Chi-square analyses were also conducted to examine the relationships between mediated narration, focalization, and tone across the three series (i.e., Psammead, Arden and Other (*The Enchanted Castle*, *The Magic City*, and *Wet Magic*). Because emotional distance was 100% across all series, this variable was not included. The relationship between mediated narration and series of books was not significant, $\chi^2 (2) = 3.43, p = .180$, Cramer's $V = .043$.

There was a significant relationship between focalization and series of books, $\chi^2 (4) = 52.82, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .172$. Within the Psammead series, a greater proportion of notations occurred when the narrator spoke from a child's perspective (90.5%). Within the Arden series, a greater proportion of notations also occurred when the child's perspective was used (98.5%) and when the series was Other, a greater percentage of notations occurred when the child's perspective was used (88.5%). Nesbit's narrator had the child's point of view the majority of the time.

The relationship between tone and series of books was also significant, $\chi^2 (6) = 18.11, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .172$. In the Psammead series, a greater proportion of

notations occurred when the tone was humorous (96.5%). In the Arden series, a greater proportion of notations occurred when the tone was humorous (65.9%), and when the series was Other, a greater proportion of the tone was humorous (100.0%). The Psammead series and the Other series were humorous with occasional didactic and sentimental lapses, while the Arden series, which has been discussed, addressed more serious issues.

Most interesting in this comparison was that the mediated narrator was not statistically significant. The researcher had expected that the occurrences of intrusions of the narrator into the text would decline over time, from the Psammead series, which were the early novels, through to the House of Arden series, the more serious books, and then, perhaps, increase in *The Magic City* and *Wet Magic*, which were written quickly and were closer to the “hack” work she had once done. However, the occurrences of mediated narratives remained even; she never lost sight of who her readers were.

Comparison within the Book Series

Crosstabulations with Pearson Chi-square analyses were also conducted between the categorical variables (i.e., mediated narration, focalization, and tone) within each series of books. Because emotional distance was 100% across all series, this variable was not included.

As shown in Table 5, the relationship between mediated narration and focalization was significant within the Psammead series, $\chi^2 (2) = 15.27, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .145$. When the narrator was not speaking directly to the narratee, that is, was simply telling the story, a greater proportion of notations occurred when the child's perspective was used

(91.0%) than when the adult's perspective was used (6.2%) or when the narrator's perspective was used (2.8%). When the narrator spoke directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations occurred when the child's perspective was used (86.3%) than when the adult's perspective (2.5%) or the narrator's perspective was used (11.1%).

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of the Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by Series

	Psammead		Arden		Others	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Did not speak to narratee directly						
Narrator	18	2.8	5	1.2	31	5.9
Adult	40	6.2	1	.2	23	4.4
Child	586	91.0	403	98.5	472	89.7
Spoke to narratee						
Directly						
Narrator	9	11.1	1	1.4	14	19.4
Adult	2	2.5	0	.0	1	1.4
Child	70	86.4	69	98.6	57	79.2

Note. For Psammead series ($\chi^2(2) = 15.27, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .145$), for Arden series ($\chi^2(2) = .19, p = .909$, Cramer's $V = .020$), for Others ($\chi^2(2) = 17.66, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .172$).

There was no significant relationship between mediated narration and focalization in the Arden series, $\chi^2(2) = .19, p = .909$, Cramer's $V = .020$. There was no significant

relationship in this series because the focalization in these books is nearly always on the child, particularly in *Harding's Luck*.

There was a significant relationship between mediated narration and focalization in Other series, $\chi^2 (2) = 17.66, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .172$. When the narrator was not speaking directly to the narratee, that is, was simply telling the story, a greater proportion of notations occurred when the child's perspective was used (89.7%) than when the adult's perspective (4.4%) or when the narrator's perspective was used (5.9%).

Additionally, when the narrator was speaking directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations occurred when the child's perspective was used (79.2%) than adult (1.4%) or narrator (19.4%). For both the Psammead and the Other books, the narrative's focus would have been with the child when the narrator was directly addressing the narratee, rather than with the adult or the narrator.

The interaction of focalization and tone by book series was analyzed as well, as shown in Table 6. There were no significant relationships between tone and focalization for any of the three series.

There is nothing surprising in these findings. The mediated narration was addressed to the narratee, who was assumed to be a child; therefore the chances were good that the focalization would be usually be with the child. What is surprising is that the narrator would intrude when the focalization was with an adult or the narrator. When this happened, the comments were ironic and put the adults at a distance from the narrator or mocked the narrator; Nesbit was always on the side of the child.

Table 6

Frequencies and Percentages of the Interaction of Focalization and Tone by Series

	Psammead		Arden		Others	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Narrator						
Serious	0	.0	1	.7		
Humorous	26	3.7	4	1.3	45	7.5
Sentimental	0	.0	0	.0		
Didactic	1	12.5	1	11.1		
Adult						
Serious	0	.0	0	.0		
Humorous	42	6.1	1	.3	24	4.0
Sentimental	0	.0	0	.0		
Didactic	0	.0	0	.0		
Child						
Serious	14	100.0	148	99.3		
Humorous	626	90.2	310	98.4	529	88.5
Sentimental	3	100.0	6	100.0		
Didactic	7	87.5	8	88.9		

Note. For Psammead series ($\chi^2(6) = 3.96, p = .681$, Cramer's $V = .053$), for Arden series ($\chi^2(6) = 8.08, p = .232$, Cramer's $V = .092$), for Others (no statistics computed because tone is a constant).

Analyses by Individual Book Title

Analyses were also performed by each book individually to see whether Nesbit had been consistent over time or whether there had been any trends. The data collected for each of the variables, mediated narration, focalization, emotional distance, and tone, were compared for each of Nesbit's fantasy novels: *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix*

and the Carpet, The Story of the Amulet, The House of Arden, Harding's Luck, The Enchanted Castle, The Magic City, and Wet Magic.

Five Children and It

In *Five Children and It*, the mediated narration, the narratee was not directly addressed a majority of the time (84.9%), compared to when the narratee was directly addressed (15.1%). Focalization was most often through a child's perspective (88.7%), compared to the narrator's perspective (9.7%) and an adult's perspective (1.6%). As shown in Table 7, majority of the tone of this books was humorous (97.8%) compared to serious (.5%) and didactic (1.6). In *Five Children and It*, there was not a significant relationship between mediated narration and focalization, $\chi^2 (2) = 5.62, p = .060$, Cramer's $V = .174$.

Table 7

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by Five Children and It

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					5.62	.060
Narrator	12	7.6	6	21.4		
Adult	3	1.9	0	.0		
Child	143	90.5	22	78.6		

Note. ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.62, p = .060$, Cramer's $V = .174$)

The Phoenix and the Carpet

In *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, regarding mediated narration, there was 13.8% mediated narration compared to non-mediated narration, 86.3%. Focalization was through a child's perspective 100% of the time. As shown in Table 8, the tones present in this book were humorous and didactic. A humorous tone occurred more frequently (97.9%), compared to a didactic tone (2.1%). There was no crosstabulation analysis performed for *The Phoenix and the Carpet* due to the fact that there was only one focalization (i.e., child).

Table 8

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by The Phoenix and the Carpet

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	<i>p</i>
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization						
Child	207	100.0	33	100.0		

Note. No statistics computed because focalization is a constant

The Story of the Amulet

In *The Story of the Amulet*, in terms of mediated narration, the narratee was not directly spoken to more often (93.3%), compared to when s/he was directly addressed (6.7%). Focalization was most often through a child's perspective (83.9%), compared to

an adult's perspective (13.0%) and compared to the narrator's perspective (3.0%). The tones present in this book were serious, humorous, and sentimental. A humorous tone occurred most often (94.6%), compared to serious (4.3%) and sentimental tones (1.0%). A significant relationship between focalization and mediated narration was found, $\chi^2 (2) = 10.59, p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .188$), as shown in Table 9. When the narrator did not speak directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (84.6%) than adult (13.3%) or narrator (2.2%). When the narrator did speak directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (75.0%) than when an adult's perspective (10.0%) or narrator (15.0%).

Table 9

Frequencies and Percentages of Focalization by Mediated by The Story of the Amulet

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					10.59	.005
Narrator	6	2.2	3	15.0		
Adult	37	13.3	2	10.0		
Child	236	84.6	15	75.0		

Note. ($\chi^2 (2) = 10.59, p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .188$)

The House of Arden

In *The House of Arden*, for mediated narration, the narratee was not directly spoken to more often (84.1%), compared to when s/he was not directly addressed (15.9%). Focalization was most often through a child's perspective (98.4%), compared to an adult's perspective (.4%) and narrator's perspective (1.2%), as shown in Table 10. The tones present in this book were serious, humorous, sentimental, and didactic. A humorous tone occurred most often (96.5%), compared to serious and sentimental tones (both .4%) as well as didactic tones (2.7%). For *The House of Arden*, there was no significant relationship between focalization and mediation narration, $\chi^2 (2) = .88, p = .643$, Cramer's $V = .059$.

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by The House of Arden

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					.88	.643
Narrator	2	.9	1	2.5		
Adult	1	.5	0	.0		
Child	210	98.6	39	97.5		

Note. ($\chi^2 (2) = .88, p = .643$, Cramer's $V = .059$)

Harding's Luck

In *Harding's Luck*, for mediated narration, the narratee was not directly spoken to more often (86.7%), compared to when s/he was not directly addressed (13.3 %).

Focalization was most often through a child's perspective (98.7%), compared to the narrator's perspective (1.3%), and no adult perspective was offered in this book. The tones present in this book were serious, humorous, sentimental, and didactic. A serious tone occurred most often (65.5%), compared to a humorous tone (31.0%), sentimental tone (2.7%), and didactic tone (.9%). As shown in Table 11, there was not a significant relationship between mediated narration and focalization, $\chi^2 (1) = .47, p = .009$, Cramer's $V = .045$).

Table 11

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by Harding's Luck

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					.47	.495
Narrator	3	1.5	0	.0		
Child	193	98.5	30	100.0		

Note. ($\chi^2 (1) = .47, p = .495$, Cramer's $V = .045$)

The Enchanted Castle

In *The Enchanted Castle*, the focalization was most often through a child's perspective (85.6%), compared to the narrator's perspective (5.4%) and an adult's perspective (9.0%). Regarding mediated narration, the narratee was not directly spoken to more often (90.1%), compared to when s/he were not directly addressed (9.9%). The only tone present in this book was a humorous tone (100%). No significant relationship was found between focalization and mediated narration, $\chi^2 (2) = 3.64, p = .162$, Cramer's $V = .128$, (see Table 12).

Table 12

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by The Enchanted Castle

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					3.64	.162
Narrator	9	4.5	3	13.6		
Adult	19	9.5	1	4.5		
Child	172	86.0	18	81.8		

Note. ($\chi^2 (2) = 3.64, p = .162$, Cramer's $V = .128$)

The Magic City

In *The Magic City*, the focalization was most often through a child's perspective (84.2%), compared to the narrator's perspective (13.8%) and an adult's perspective (2.0%). In terms of mediated narration, the narratee was not directly spoken to more often (85.2%), compared to when s/he were not directly addressed (14.8%). The only tone present in this book was a humorous tone (100%). No significant relationship was found between focalization and mediated narration, $\chi^2 (2) = 5.49, p = .167$, Cramer's $V = .064$ (see Table 13).

Table 13

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by The Magic City

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					5.49	.064
Narrator	19	11.4	8	26.7		
Adult	4	2.4	0	.0		
Child	143	86.1	22	73.3		

Note. ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.49, p = .064$, Cramer's $V = .167$)

Wet Magic

In *Wet Magic*, the focalization was most often through a child's perspective (96.7%), compared to the narrator's perspective (3.3%) and there was no adult perspective. Regarding mediated narration, the narratee was not directly spoken to more often (88.9%), compared to when s/he were not directly addressed (11.1%). The only tone present in this book was a humorous tone (100%). There was a significant relationship between focalization and mediated narration, $\chi^2 (1) = 9.50, p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .230$, as shown in Table 14. When the narrator was speaking directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (98.1%) than when a narrator's perspective was used (1.9%). When the narrator did speak directly to the narratee, a greater proportion of notations occurred when a child's perspective was used (85.0%) than when the narrator's perspective was used (15.0%).

Table 14

Frequencies and Percentages of Interaction of Focalization and Mediated by Wet Magic

	Did not speak to narratee directly		Spoke to narratee directly		χ^2	p
	n	%	n	%		
Focalization					9.50	.002
Narrator	3	1.9	3	15.0		
Child	157	98.1	17	85.0		

Note. ($\chi^2 (1) = 9.50, p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .230$)

Summary of Individual Book Titles

The Story of the Amulet was the first book to register a serious tone; *Five Children and It* and *The Phoenix and the Carpet* being humorous. This was the first story in which Nesbit allowed herself to include her Fabian views protesting the social ills of Edwardian England. This book also had a sentimental note at the end of the book when the children's mother, father, and baby brother return, fulfilling their hearts' desire.

The two House of Arden novels have all four tones – humorous, serious, sentimental, and didactic – reflecting both the attitudes Nesbit brought to these books as well as her personal anxieties at the time.

The Enchanted Castle, *The Magic City*, and *Wet Magic* were all humorous in tone, although in subject matter, they had serious themes, those themes were handled with a light touch.

Otherwise, Nesbit did not change her focus over the course of the writing of these books – once she decided to write for children, she was single-mindedly determined to have fun with them.

Conclusion of Content Analysis

To examine E. Nesbit's unique narrative style in addressing her young readers, the variables selected for this study demonstrated the techniques that enabled her to engage her readers. The variables for this study were: *mediated narration*, *focalization*, *distance*, and *tone*. To collect data for the analysis, for all eight books, the number of total notations was 1,821.

First, all variables (i.e., tone, focalization, mediated narration, and emotional distance) were analyzed across all eight books for frequencies and percentages. This resulted in an overview of which books had the greatest number of notations for each variable.

Secondly, crosstabulation analyses with Pearson's Chi square analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between categorical variables (i.e., mediated narration, tone and focalization) for all book titles. Emotional distance was not used for these analyses or any further analyses because it was found that the author was never emotionally distant from the child. Crosstabulations were conducted between the categorical variables across the eight books to reveal any significant relationships.

Next, analyses were conducted for each individual book title to examine if there were any significant relationships between mediated narration, focalization and tone and a particular book. Crosstabulation interactions were also conducted to see if there were any significant interactions between categorical variables (i.e., mediated narration, tone and focalization) within a particular book title.

Finally, crosstabulation analyses were conducted between categorical variables with each series of books (i.e., Psammead, Arden and Other) to reveal any significant relationships between variables. As with individual book titles, analyses were also conducted to reveal any significant interactions between categorical variables within an individual book series.

The most interesting aspect of these analyses is how well the results of these statistical analyses supported the conclusions drawn from reading the texts. Nesbit

connected with the imaginative child directly through play, confiding in the child, trusting the child to accompany her through the story. As Barbara Wall pointed out, Nesbit “took as her province the child mind” (Wall 1991, 156). This explains why the data indicate the regular occurrence of mediated narrative notations, that the majority of focalizations is of the child, that there is no emotional distance between the narrator and the narratee, and that the lighthearted narrator’s tone was usually humorous.

Impressions

“How little we attend to the voice of the narrator in assessing books for children” (Meeks 1982, 290). To determine the quality of E. Nesbit’s voice in her children’s fantasy novels, this study examined E. Nesbit’s narrative style, that is, how she structured the dialogue between the narrator and the narratee, a dialogue that so appealed to her child readers. To understand this facet of Nesbit’s work, the researcher employed the research methodologies of narratological and content analysis to obtain the data to come to these conclusions.

E. Nesbit was a very different writer from any who came before her in her willingness to invite her readers to share experiences with her. She made an extraordinary and often undervalued contribution to the development of fiction for children. Lloyd Alexander, one of the foremost modern writers of fantasy for children, has expressed his appreciation for her art:

I must also thank her for something else: her voice. That is, her tone, her personality E. Nesbit has a freshness, tartness, without gushing or talking down. Today’s writers owe her a debt. We are modern thanks

largely to her. As much as anyone, perhaps more, she helped us to find our twentieth century voices (1985, 355).

In writing of children's fantasy writers' voices, Jane Yolen calls it "the schoolboy voice;" writers such as E. Nesbit, C. S. Lewis, Diana Wynne Jones, and Natalie Babbitt have this voice. This voice, as Yolen describes it, is "childlike, innocent, a sensible commentary on the imaginary." The key to the "schoolboy voice" is that the world belongs *to* the child, this world in which magic has slipped through. It is not the magic itself that is startling, because children expect magic to occur naturally, but the vulnerability of the creatures of magic who are sad and yet are sometimes silly and sentimental. The child responds to this vulnerability by becoming both more childlike and yet adult, giving advice and taking it at one and the same time (Yolen 1996, 168-169).

The relationship between adult narrator and child narratee can be a difficult one for writers to handle. E. Nesbit was able to find the right attitude and lead the way for writers who followed her (Wall 1991, 148). Indeed, she was to explain to her friend Berta Ruck, "I make it a point of honour never to *write down* to a child" (Nelson 1994, 199-216). When she came to terms with the fact that she was writing for children she deliberately made the relationship between adult narrator and child narratee a dominant element in her books. Nesbit claimed that she could recall exactly what she did, felt, and thought as a child, so that when she wrote she felt that she had a child's vision with an adult's perception (Nesbit in *Wings and the Child, or, the Building of Magic Cities*, 20, quoted in Manlove 2003, 43). Although her narrative manner seems light-hearted and

playful, her address to her narratee casual and familiar, in reality she treated child readers with a new seriousness, for she placed them first, and in doing so gave the act of communicating with children, of writing *to* them, a new significance. She showed the way for adult narrators to communicate with child narratees, but no one else in her time achieved such free, open, and easy communication (Wall 1991, 247).

Nesbit created a narrative persona for her narrator unlike any which had come before, and allowed that narrator to communicate without restraint with a narratee, not merely overtly, but outside the story being told. By the time she reached *Five Children and It*, she had made the decision to concentrate on a single narratee, that is, the child. This was an important decision. Problems entered in the works of other children's fantasy authors because they were writing to a double narratee, the child and the adult. Nesbit put her narratee, and hence her child narratee, first, and showed how it would be possible both to address children unselfconsciously, without caring if adults overheard (Wall 1991, 109-110). Nesbit showed how an adult narrator could close the gap between adult narrator and child narratee by using single address (Wall 1991, 174).

There is never any question that Nesbit's narrator is an adult with greater knowledge and experience than the narratee's, but at her best and most characteristic Nesbit managed to imply a relationship in which narrator and narratee are partners, sharing the fun of the story. Her narrator is cheerful, irreverent, and animated, as ready to make fun of the narratee as of herself or the characters, with full expectation of the reader's participation in the joke (Wall 1991, 150).

Those of my readers who have gone about with an invisible companion will not need to be told how awkward the whole business is. For one thing, however much you may have been convinced that your companion *is* invisible, you will, I feel sure, have found yourself every now and then saying, “This must be a dream!” or “I *know* I shall wake up in half a sec!” and this was the case with Gerald, Kathleen, and Jimmy as they sat in the white marble Temple of Flora, looking out through its arches at the sunshiny park and listening to the voice of the enchanted Princess, who really was not a Princess at all, but just the housekeeper’s niece, Mabel Prowse; though, as Jimmy said, “she was enchanted, right enough” (1994, 48).

The narrator creates the sense of speaking to an equal by taking the narratee into her confidence and by sharing information and insights about the characters in the story. The tone is humorously ironic; nearly every child has had an invisible friend, but in this case, the characters really do. Irony became her trade mark. Her willingness to believe young readers capable of sharing a joke with her enabled her to use irony consistently in her stories.

Nesbit had a clear understanding of the difficulties that writing for children presents to an adult writer:

There is ... a freemasonry between children, a confidence and give-and-take which is and must be forever impossible between children and grown-ups, no matter how sympathetic the grown-up and how confiding the child. Between the child and the grown-up there is a great gulf fixed – and this gulf, the gulf between one generation and another, can never really be bridged (Quoted in Moore, 1966, 255).

However, she also saw at what point child and adults are able to readily communicate, and that is in play. Play is essential to the child; she counseled a friend on bringing up an only child that if it was not possible to have another child to live with the boy, she should “get him a tutor, not too old or too young to be able to play as well as teach” (Moore 1966, 257). In the same letter she attributed any success her stories had had to “a sort of light-hearted outlook on life” (Moore 1966, 257). A willingness to play and be light-hearted are the core of her narrative technique. To these must be added her beliefs about what is due to children:

Liberty is one of the rights that a child above all needs; every possible liberty of thought, word and deed (Croxson 1974, 51).

Nesbit’s narrator takes it for granted that children, whether characters or readers, are intelligent, independent beings, capable both of following suggestions and acting on their own initiative. She assumes that children will accept the friendliness implied by informality:

You know what a mummy-case is like, of course? if you don't
you had better go to the British Museum at once and find out
(*The Story of the Amulet*, 36).

She was confident enough of her readers and of herself that she would direct jokes towards young readers, to be shared with them at once if they already had the necessary knowledge, or later, if they needed time to grow into them. It is certain that not all child readers would see Nesbit's ironies, and she very rarely explained. She never paid her young readers a greater compliment than in her readiness to trust them to cope.

"Autres temps, autres mœurs," said the creature.

"Is that the Ninevite language?" asked Anthea, who had learned no foreign language at school except French (1996A, 90-91).

She makes it clear that she knows that adults think differently from children, and without taking sides, expresses her understanding of children's pleasures, and does it in such a way that only very inexperienced readers could fail to miss the facetiousness.

The others were tasting the fearful joys of domestic tobogganing. You know how it is done – with the largest and best tea-tray and the surface of the stair carpet. It is best to do it on the days when the stair rods are being cleaned, and the carpet is only held by the nails at the top. Of course, it is one of the five or six thoroughly tip-top games that grown-up people are so unjust to – and old Nurse, though a brick in many respects, was quite enough of a standard grown-up to put her foot down on the tobogganing long before any of the performers had had half enough of it.

The tea-tray was taken away, and the baffled party entered the sitting-room, in exactly the mood not to be pleased if they could help it (*The Story of the Amulet*, 86).

Similarly it would be a naïve reader indeed who did not glimpse the mischief in the eye of the narrator as she gives this piece of advice.

I do not wish to describe the picnic party on the top of the tower. You can imagine well enough what it is like to carve a chicken and a tongue with a knife that has only one blade – and that snapped off short about half-way down. But it was done. Eating with your fingers is greasy and difficult – and paper dishes soon get to look very spotty and horrid. But one thing you *can't* imagine, and that is how soda-water behaves when you try to drink it straight out of a siphon – especially a quite full one. But if imagination will not help you, experience will, and you can easily try it for yourself if you can get a grown-up to give you the siphon. If you want to have a really thorough experience, put the tube in your mouth and press the handle very suddenly and very hard. You had better do it when you are alone – and out of doors is best for this experiment (1996A, 104).

Nesbit took as her special sphere the child's mind. Adults who might enjoy her work did so because she wrote well about and for children, and not because she provided another level for them, or sometimes addressed another and older implied reader. Her narrator, on the contrary, deliberately refuses to develop adult characters. She disowns any ability to read or understand the adult the adult mind, but she is equally

straightforward about what she can do; she is very frank about her skills as an adult writing for children. The casualness and amusement in her language removes the threat of condescension.

[Lord Yalding] must have thought – but all this is vain; I don't *really* know what he thought any more than you do Nor can I give you any clue to the thoughts and feelings of Mademoiselle Jimmy's thoughts, of course, I can read like any old book (1994, 402).

For this reason, although settings, such as The Phoenix Fire Office in *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, and events sometimes allow adults to see ironies which few children will see, most of the ironies are there for young readers to discover, if not on first, then on a subsequent, reading. She consistently wrote in a way which gave children the opportunity to extend their range:

“There will be a future,” said Cyril, driven to greater clearness by the blank faces of the other three, “there will be a time *after* we've found it. Let's go into that time – and then we shall remember *how* we found it. And then we can go back and do the finding really.”

“I see,” said Robert, and this time he did, and I hope *you* do (*The Story of the Amulet*, 228).

Nesbit always has pleasure in store for those young readers prepared to take the trouble.

Nesbit really pioneered modern writing for children. Her acceptance of children as fit companions enabled her to bridge what she herself called the “great gulf” between adult and child in a new way, a way that gave children as readers a new importance and status. She began a true literature for children. Nesbit wrote to children and for children, and was content to do just that. Nesbit demonstrated that distance between an adult narrator and child narratee was irrelevant. Writers to come were able to maintain a similar attitude while dispensing with the dominant narrative personality. Despite Humphrey Carpenter’s claims that she was “easy to copy” (1985,137), Nesbit’s manner was really inimitable. Her narrative voice had a profound and far-reaching effect. She created a lively personality for her narrator, fashioning the kind of partnership, outside of the tale told, in which adult narrator and child narratee could come together to enjoy characters and situations (Wall 1991, 157).

Thanks to E. Nesbit and her contemporaries, a new children’s literature had begun. Children were now to have a literature that was wholly for them (Wall 1991, 177).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As children's literature has striven to become a recognized field of study, it has adopted the disciplines of literary critical theory with some special modifications for its audience. Children's books center on narrative: in a sense they are *about* narrative – and until relatively recently, narrative has been the poor relation in both theory and criticism (Hunt 1990). Compared to other contemporary directions of inquiry, narrative theory is still taking its very first steps within children's literature criticism (Nikolajeva 2003). This study has focused on E. Nesbit's narrative manner and how her narrator related to her narratee. The researcher examined her children's fantasy novels, the books that established her reputation as one of England's preeminent writers for children (Jones 2006).

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the question: What characterizes E. Nesbit's narrative style? The roles of adult narrator and child narratee have always been difficult to navigate for conscientious writers (Wall 1991). While this relationship can still be problematic, writers have fewer difficulties in contemporary writing. The distance between narrator and narratee has lessened because of the attitude reflected in the narrative approach adopted by Nesbit. She challenged conventions so enthusiastically and

successfully that it is possible to speak of children's literature as "before and after E. Nesbit" (Lurie 1990, 99).

Before Nesbit, the narrator spoke with the adult voice to a double audience, adults and children. Many books thought of now as children's books were originally intended for adults. After Nesbit, the adult teller had disappeared and a teller committed to pleasing child readers, without regard to adults, had emerged (Wall 1991). Nesbit was the first to write at length for children as intellectual equals and in their own language. She told them stories from her own childhood, memories that she kept close and revisited many times in her books. She shaped her narratives to create the illusion of speaking to the narratee directly by constantly taking the narratee into her confidence by sharing information and insights into the characters and actions in the book (Wall 1991). The narratee – and the child reader – could connect with her and feel comfortable with her.

Wanting to be a serious poet, Nesbit became, of necessity, a writer of children's books. Her readers are fortunate that she did; she had stories to tell and she was a natural storyteller with an ear for dialogue (Egoff 1988). The telling of stories is such a pervasive aspect of our life and our world that we sometimes forget that narratives provide the means for shaping our experience. Stories are the repository for our collective wisdom and understanding; they are how we make sense of ourselves and our place in the world (Pradl 1984).

The question "Is it really a children's book?" is constantly being asked by parents, reviewers, teachers, and librarians (Wall 1991). Scholar Barbara Wall's answer is that "If a story is written *to* children, then it is *for* children, even though it may also be

for adults” (1991, 2). Narratology provides the tools and the process that can determine whether a book is a children’s book. The central question of narrative theory is "how?" as opposed to the "what?" of many other approaches in children's literature research (Nikolajeva 2003). Narratology seeks to understand how elements, themes, and patterns make up the structure of a story. Narratology examines the nature, form, and function of narrative.

Analysis

The variables selected for this study demonstrated the techniques that enabled Nesbit to engage her readers. The variables for this study were:

- *Mediated narration* – a narration in which the narrator’s presence makes itself felt
- *Focalization* – the position or quality of consciousness through which readers “see” events in the narrative
- *Distance* – the narrator’s emotional distance from the characters and the action
- *Tone* – the narrator’s attitude toward the characters, situations, and events presented (Prince 1987; Abbott 2002).

To collect the data, the researcher used content analysis for systematically quantifying and analyzing the presence, meanings, and relationships of these four narrative variables. Observations were made by counting the number of mediated narrative events in each of the eight novels, the pages in which the focalization was of the child, the adult, or the narrator, the pages in which the narrator’s emotional distance was

distant or not distant, and the pages in which the narrator's attitude was humorous, serious, didactic, or sentimental. In order to properly conduct the analysis for the study, it was necessary to count the number of occurrences by page number in order to capture how often these variables occurred across the eight books. The researcher also calculated the frequencies and percentages of the demographic variables, such as series of the books, types of tones, types of focalizations, types of emotional distance, and types of author's voice. Additionally, the researcher examined the relationships between the different variables through cross tabulations with Chi Square analyses. These relationships, including interactions between variables such as mediated and focalization, were also done across the three series of books (i.e., the Psammead series, the Arden series, and 'other') and also across each of the eight individual titles. Tables and figures are included for each of the analysis strata.

Results

Edwardian writers had been children during the Victorian age and they were determined to erase from children's literature the last remnants of nursery discipline and the tyranny of nannies, nursemaids, governesses, and parents. Childhood was seen at this time as the best of times, and the separation of childhood from adulthood was practically complete. This shift was a remarkable feat in view of the fact that most of the major writers of the period – Nesbit, Potter, Kipling, and Grahame – had far from idyllic childhoods (Blackburn 1988, 329-336; Briggs 1995, 167-191; Kuznets 1988, 247-254; Lurie 1988, 423-432; MacDonald 1988, 439-446).

Barbara Tuchman has described the last few years of the 1910s as a “rich fat afternoon” (Tuchman 1990, 9). The Edwardian period is often regarded as a romantic Golden Age of long summer afternoons, garden parties and big hats , although this perception was created by those who remembered the Edwardian age with nostalgia looking back across the dark abyss of World War I (Tuchman 1994). These idealized pleasures were memorialized in children’s literature of the Edwardian age.

Memory and imagination were for Nesbit the vehicles which could enable the sympathetic adult to reach across the gulf of childhood. E. Nesbit’s books were written solely to give children pleasure (Egoff 1988). In her books, Nesbit gave her characters independence. Morality is taught primarily through experience, rather than through guides. The children are on their own in their decision-making. When Anthea asks the Psammead for advice, it retorts that there is “one thing I won’t give – that’s advice” (Nesbit 1996, 89). The Psammead provides what passes for didacticism in Nesbit.

Adults are less and less necessary, and their moral authority is questioned and mocked. The children figure out their own affairs and sort out the mistakes caused by their unwise wishing. They are, in fact, in charge of their own morality without adult guides. All of her works assert the desires of children for independence and grant them the capacity to create their own identities. This is not to say that these works no longer contain didactic elements, but that the children learn to teach themselves, through experimentation, dialogue, negotiation, the ethics that is the foundation for true wisdom, perception, and maturity.

All of this was delivered with humor in Nesbit's novels. Nesbit's narrator knew how hopeless it could be to be a child and to try to make one's voice be heard by adults and could convey that feeling with empathy. In *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, Anthea, who has a sensitive conscience, feels she should explain to her mother why the cook is missing (the children have left her happily settled in as queen of a cannibal island), but to no avail:

"Darling one," said mother, "you know I love to hear the things you make up – but I am most awfully busy."

"But it's true," said Anthea desperately.

"You shouldn't say that, my sweet," said mother, gently. And then Anthea knew it was hopeless. (1973, 82)

Nesbit's children often seem to struggle ineffectually with a series of recalcitrant or uncomprehending adults who always have the last word.

When Nesbit wrote, her voice was informal and direct. Her children's books were totally child-centered. She saw wholeheartedly from the child's point of view; she was always on the child's side:

"If it's a dream," said Robert, "you will wake up directly, and then you'd be sorry if you'd sent us into a dream-asylum, because you might never get into the same dream again and let us out, and so we might stay there for ever, and then what about our sorrowing relatives who aren't in the dreams at all?"

But all the curate could now say was, “Oh, my head!”

And Jane and Robert felt quite ill with helplessness and hopelessness. A really conscientious curate is a very difficult thing to manage. (Nesbit 1973, 214)

In *Magic and the Magician*, Noel Streatfeild observed that E. Nesbit did not particularly like children, which may explain why the ones that she created in her books are so entirely human. They are intelligent, vain, aggressive, humorous, witty, cruel, compassionate . . . in fact, they are like adults (1958). Not only is Nesbit’s tone direct, humorous, and fast-moving; her children are modern and believable. They are not as they might be seen by adults, but individuals as experienced by their peers, each with his or her shortcomings, qualities, and enthusiasms (Lurie 1990).

Nesbit spent much of her writing career seeking a voice by which to address the new child reader (Hunt 2001). The strong emphasis she placed on the partnership of narrator and narratee made the child’s interests rather than the adult’s the real concern in her stories (Wall 1991). This was borne out by the findings of the content analysis. The mediated narrator, which engaged the narratee in direct dialogue, stepping out of the story for conversation, occurred 12.4%, in total, for all eight books. This engagement of the narratee is characteristic of Nesbit, as it established a conversation with the implied child reader. Focalization, in which the narrative was told from the children’s point of view or was focused on the children, occurred 91%, in total, for all eight books. Nesbit’s books were child-centered; she never wrote for the dual audience, always for the single

audience of the child. There was no emotional distance established in any of the books between the narrator and the narratee. She always saw matters from the point of view of the child; there was never any distance between them. Finally, the tone was humorous 89.3% in the eight books; the later books were more serious. In the Arden books and in scenes in *The Story of the Amulet*, Nesbit addressed her social concerns to varying degrees.

Nesbit's novels were fun – she wrote them to be fun. She did not idealize children, but she recognized the power of their imaginative lives. Her fantasies inspire the imagination, point the way to new creativity, and stimulate fresh inventiveness but also warn against the vanity of wishes and the dangers of make-believe. She was a complex woman and her books are far more complex than they may seem.

Of E. Nesbit, Marcus Crouch has stated, “No writer today is free of debt to this remarkable woman being content in the main to make good stories out of the resources of her experience and her imagination, she managed to create the prototypes . . . in modern children's fiction” (1972, 16). The joy and enchantment that she brought to her writings gave rise to a Nesbit tradition that has lasted until our own time (Egoff 1988).

Delimitations

This study focused on E. Nesbit's children's fantasy novels only. This study did not include her children's realistic novels and short stories, her poetry, or works for adults. E. Nesbit published two collections of fantasy short stories. This analysis also

focused only on works published between 1900 and 1913; she did not publish fantasy novels or short stories outside of this timeframe.

This study included only four narrative variables, chosen in order to concentrate on E. Nesbit's structure of address from narrator to narratee. Other aspects of narrative were not considered: e. g., plot, characterization, or reader response.

Implications for Further Research

E. Nesbit's stories are rich and abundant with themes and topics for further study. The Children's Literature Association published in 2006 the *E. Nesbit's Psammead Trilogy: A Children's Classic at 100*. Essays in this collection looked at such subjects as gender, social issues, colonialism, magical realism, time travel, H. R. Millar's illustrations, and the books of Nesbit's most avid imitator, Edward Eager. Four other possible areas of inquiry also seem promising: the effect of reading on children; the children's acting out scenes from books; narrative studies of Nesbit's realistic novels; Nesbit's influence on children's fantasy writers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

All Nesbit's children's stories are preoccupied with the effect of reading upon the child; Nesbit's children live in a "book-shaped world" (Briggs 1987, 402). This process occurs most often at the beginning ("the Book of Beasts", "The Town in the Library in the Town in the Library") and at the end (*The Magic City*, *Wet Magic*) of her career (Briggs 1987). The children act out scenes from popular Victorian and Edwardian children's books, they refer to incidents or characters from those books, or, in the case of *The Magic City*, actually construct a city from books. In *Five Children and It*, Cyril

wished they were in a besieged castle, and the children had an adventure out of a novel by H. Rider Haggard, G. A. Henty, or R. M. Ballantyne:

“Fear not to speak the truth, my child; thou has nought to fear from Wulfric de Talbot.”

Robert had a wild feeling that this glorious leader of the besieging party ... would be able to understand ... the true tale of the wishes and the Psammead. The only difficulty was that he knew he could never remember enough “quothas” and “beshrew me’s”, and things like that, to make his talk sound like the talk of a boy in a historical romance. However he began boldly enough, with a sentence straight out of *Ralph de Courcy; or, The Boy Crusader*. (Nesbit 1996, 129-130)

Further study should be made of the act and depiction of reading in Nesbit’s novels because reading and books were so important to her at the same time that formal schooling was anathema to her, dating from her childhood. Also, this quality of her children characters date them more than anything else – their imaginative worlds are based on their reading rather than television, movies, or video games. Finally, it provides a wonderful insight into Nesbit’s likes and dislikes into her contemporary authors – who she enjoyed reading, who she respected.

Research similar to this study could be expanded to include *The Treasure Seekers* series and *The Railway Children* to discover whether Nesbit used the same narrative method in her realistic adventure novels.

In 1972, Marcus Crouch wrote *The Nesbit Tradition: The Children's Novel 1945-1970* in which he surveys writers who he considers have carried on the Nesbit tradition of depicting children as real and authentic, writing humorous stories, portraying domestic magic, and writing in informal prose. Continuing this review from 1970 to today would be very worthwhile.

Conclusion

E. Nesbit created some of the best children's books ever written; today, her stories are still read and loved by children. What seems to have endured is the freshness of her narrative voice, the vivacity and playful humor that can modulate into high seriousness, and, perhaps above all, the perpetual fusion and confusion between the imaginary and the real, the magical lure of our wishes, dreams, and desires, and the inevitably limited conditions of existence that they ceaselessly enchant (Schwartz 2005).

Noël Coward continued to reread her work each year; a copy of *The Enchanted Castle* lay beside his bed when he died. In 1956 he wrote home from Jamaica:

I am reading again through all the dear E. Nesbits and they seem to me to be more charming and evocative than ever. It is strange that after half a century I still get so much pleasure from them. Her writing is so light and unforced, her humour is so sure and her narrative quality so strong that the stories, which I know backwards, rivet me as much now as they did when I was a little boy. Even more so in one way because I can now enjoy her actual talent and her extraordinary power of describing hot summer days

in England in the beginning years of the century. All the pleasant memories of my own childhood jump at me from the pages . . . E. Nesbit knew all the things that stay in the mind, all the happy treasures, I suppose she, of all the writers I have ever read, has given me over the years the most complete satisfaction . . . (Briggs 1987, 404)

E. Nesbit's novels are delights; I find myself laughing out loud even after reading them many times. Sadly, I did not experience those summer days in England at the turn of the last century, but her descriptions are so brilliant that my imagination can almost put me there. Nesbit had a singular talent for engaging her readers, a warmth that is truly authentic. She deserves to be better known.

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