

# Metanarrative in Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*: A Psychoanalytic Reading

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**Abstract** This paper aims to explore the metanarrative elements in Philippa Pearce's classic children's novel *Tom's Midnight Garden* and how the story is analyzed from a psychoanalytic point of view. Fantasy is an important feature of children's stories and many texts in children's literature use fantasy to create an archaic realm for their setting. *Tom's Midnight Garden* is a time-slip narrative that blends both fantasy and reality. The novel talks about an unusual relationship between two individuals, Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew (Hatty) who are lonely but yearn for companionship in the modern world. The kind of dream telepathy that transpires between Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew lead to their strong connection not of the real world, but of their fantasy. The plot is re-visioned as a story narrated to a child at three levels: realistic, imaginary and psychoanalytic. These features render the story a metanarrative pattern, that is, a story within the story.

**Keywords** Philippa Pearce; *Tom's Midnight Garden*; Metanarrative; children's literature; psychoanalytic theory

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## Introduction

Storytelling is an important aspect of the inclusive development of children as it

enhances brain development and imagination, matures language and emotions, and strengthens relationships. In children's literature, narrative strategies are important in conveying instruction and delight for readers. *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) is considered as a classic text in British post-war children's fiction, as the very theme of childhood is an important element of this text. The novel blends both fantasy and reality in a fascinating way as it is uniquely featured in children's literature. Creating a story based on fantasy and making it appealing for readers is a challenging task for any author. Philippa Pearce (1920-2006) was successful in making this novel interesting for all types of readers, irrespective of age barriers. Roni Natov (2009), Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin (2009) suggest that Pearce uses fantasy to comment metaphorically on reality. For Natov, the story advocates healing (223), and for Rustin, it signifies the deeper truth of fantasy that makes possible loving communication between children and adults (226).

Cosslett (2002) studies that, *Tom's Midnight Garden* tells the tale of a boy named Tom in the modern post-war British society, entering the Victorian era in a time slip manner, while staying with his aunt and uncle in a city apartment that was a country house in the past (Cosslett 16). Tom develops a special bond with the place due to the presence of the midnight garden that he discovers due to his feeling of loneliness and isolation from family. Simultaneously, Mrs. Bartholomew the elderly landlady, also experiences a strong sense of loss, loneliness and isolation in her life. The sense of place experienced by the main characters in the story is similar to what Pearce had for the Mill House on the banks of Cam near Great Shelford, where she spent her childhood.

Metanarrative is a narrative technique predominant in postmodern fiction that refers to various dimensions relating to the manner in which it is employed. It denotes a narrative that represents another narrative, or a narrative that denotes itself and the way in which it is narrated. The term is also used to imply any fictional work that comments on its status as a literary text. It functions as a correlating theme that binds all aspects of a place like past, present and future in an impressive way and highlights the narrator's thoughts on the process of narration. It could also explain a particular historical experience. *Tom's Midnight Garden* fits itself into a variety of the above-mentioned notions related to a metanarrative.

## Literature Review

Studies in metafiction have been nurtured over decades and goes back to 1970s when the term was first introduced in essays of Scholes and Gass (1970). In Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* Sklovskii ([1921] 1965), mentions a device

through which the story telling itself is made part of the story told. In fact, Scholes (1970) coined the term “metafiction” to signify fiction that includes different perspectives of criticism in to the fictional process highlighting structural, formal or philosophical problems. There was a growing academic interest in metafiction as it was considered to be an important historical element of narrative fiction and as a trademark of postmodernism (Hutcheon, 1980; Waugh, 1984). From the mid of 1970 to the mid of 1980s, the conceptual framework and functions of metafiction evolved when scholars were trying to delineate postmodernism as an epoch and ethos (O'Donnell 301).

Metanarration as a term is often used interchangeably with metafiction, which more precisely comments on the “fictionality” or the “constructedness” of the narrative. Here the focus is mainly on the aspect of fictive composition. In postmodern metafiction, there is often a departure from standard narrative conventions, and highlights the dichotomy between the real world and the fictional world. Patricia Waugh (1984) identifies metafiction as “fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 2). In her viewpoint, metafictional works are those which “explore a theory of writing fiction through the practice of writing fiction” (Waugh 2). *Tom's Midnight Garden* further complicates this issue by creating a blend of both the real and fantastic in its plot.

Mark Currie in *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (1998) comments on the relation between fiction and reality as one that seems to preoccupy the postmodern novel (Currie 2). He mentions the characteristic features of postmodern novels. In his observation, the relationship of fiction and reality is a central concern in postmodern narratives. They are often thought of as anti-realist and construct fictional world only to expose them as artificial constructions. Eventually, this process creates an ironical situation where both the fiction and the reality turns out to be fictional at the end. Other predominant features involve frame-breaking, crossing of some uncrossable boundary between different orders of reality or being or intrusion of author to interact with characters.

In Currie's observation, postmodern novels are metafiction: fictions about fictions; self-conscious fictions, fictions that incorporate critical and theoretical reflection into their fictional worlds. They become historiographic metafiction, that raise questions for the philosophy of history, or problems for reality or knowability of the past; fictions that draw attention to the artificiality of historical representations, or to narrative devices that shape historical material. Postmodern novels are intertextual novels that are highly aware of the condition in a world

pervaded by representations, and of their place in a tradition or a history of representations including other novels. They are citational, as they might allude to or internalize other texts and representations that are both real and fictional. They present a general cultural condition where cultural forms recycle, repeat, reshape and rewrite past forms. They use fictional intertexts, incorporating the boundary between fiction and reality within fiction, thereby dramatizing their own relationship with the outside world. They might identify a particular intertext in the form of a novel, for the purpose of rewriting it, especially from the point of view that was marginalized in, or not represented by the original.

A contemporary state of global culture dominated by new technologies is also visible in postmodern novels. Issues of identity and cultural difference is also shown against a backdrop of global, cultural standardization. This leads to experimental narrative forms that reflect the simultaneity of a global village, the loss of linearity in temporal experience, or tendency to experience the present as future representation or recollection (Currie 4). Narrative is identified as central to the representation of identity, in personal memory and self-representation or in the collective identities of groups based in regions, nations, race or gender. Narrative appears as a mode of thinking and being that is inescapable (Currie 6). Paul Ricoeur (1984) in *Time and Narrative* refers to humans as narrative animals, as '*homo fabulans*,' ie; the tellers and interpreters of narrative (Ricoeur 6). It is obvious that Pearce created the narrative pattern in a unique and impressive manner, showing her skill of narration at multiple levels.

Nunning (2004) proposes a distinction between "metafiction" and "metanarration" as an alternative categorization of self-reflexive utterances. The latter is more concerned with act and process of narration whereas the former appears in the context of fiction. The common characteristic of these two terms is its self-referential character (2014). To outline the different forms of metafiction, Wolf (1993), introduces a distinction between fictio- and fictum metafiction to comment on the textuality and fictionality of the narrative in terms of its artificial facts (224).

It is evident that as a specific narratorial utterance, metanarration employs a number of textual functions (Prince 174). At the same time, it cannot be simply restricted to the narrator's "directing functions" (Genette 46). Metafiction emerged as an important topic in narratological research replacing the established defined terms such as "self-conscious narration" and "irony of fictionality." Concerning the formal variety of metafiction and its potential effects, Wolf (2009) developed a typology based on three dimensions: the form of mediation, the contextual relation and the contents of value (37). The first refers to the level of narration and speaker's enga-

gement in metafictional reflections. The second criteria refer to the fact that various forms of metafiction can be distinguished depending on how they seem to appear in a central or marginal position and how they are intertwined with the narrated story. Using Contents value, the third criteria, one can differentiate various forms of metafiction and whether it contains comments on the entire text or parts of it.

As more recent research shows, “metanarration” should be distinguished from “metafiction” (Neumann & Nünning 59). “Metanarration” and “metafiction” are two key terms signifying self-reflective expressions, referring to discourse than to the story. The former refers to the narrator’s reflections on the process of narration, whereas, the latter points to the comments on the fictionality or constructedness of the narrative. Both these literal terms are based on the model of metalanguage, a system of language positioned on a level above the ordinary use of words for referential purpose (Fludemic 15). He propounds the accumulation of metanarrative expressions as a “deliberate meta-narrative celebration of the act of narration.”

This study presents sufficient proof of state of the art and methodology and thus tries to demonstrate the significant conceptual differences in the terms proposed for the analysis of Pearce’s novel. It clarifies why/how “the realistic, imaginary and psychoanalytic features” underline the “metanarrative pattern” as well as what is meant by “pattern,” as claimed in the abstract. This paper seeks to apply fully-fledged theoretical concepts such as “metanarrative,” “metanarration” or “metafiction,” and the definitions given are presented in a concrete manner. Arguments such as “metanarration is often used interchangeably with metafiction,” provide a literary approach to some categories that have been otherwise clearly delineated in post-structuralist narratology.

### **Postmodern Experimental Techniques**

Experimental techniques are common in postmodern metafiction, which includes rejecting conventional plot, challenging conventions to transform reality into a highly suspect concept, exhibiting and exaggerating foundations of their instability, and signifying that no singular truth or meanings exist, and that everything is relative. Metafiction might employ intertextual references and allusions to give multiple dimensions to the story. In *Tom’s Midnight Garden*, the setting of the story itself is allegorical or symbolic as it is based on the author’s own childhood memories of the place where she actually grew up. The grandfather clock, striking thirteen also adds to the sense of magic or fantasy. It foreshadows the adventure that Tom has in the midnight garden by slipping into and traveling back to the Victorian era. Also, Tom’s time in the garden is allegorical of Mrs. Bartholomew’s dreams as

the former's entry into the midnight garden depends on what she dreams from her past. The way Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew hugging each other goodbye on the day when Tom was due to go home also signifies their prior relationship in the midnight garden, although they met in real time only in that morning. To aunt Gwen's surprise, they hugged each other as two children, and not as a young boy and an adult. The reconciliation behind this hug suggests Tom's acceptance of reality and affirmation of events that happened in the garden with Mrs. Bartholomew's past life. The night before their meeting in real time, Tom calls out Hatty's name when he couldn't find her or the garden. But Mrs. Bartholomew heard Tom calling out her name which symbolizes his presence both in the garden and her memories associated with dreams. Hence, she felt like telling Tom about her identity as she could recognize their shared experience in the garden. The novel also suggests the prelapsarian stage and innocence associated with childhood, in the bond between Tom and Hatty. Tom feels chill in the big house when he comes to stay for the first time. Later, he becomes sick due to cold and is unable to distinguish between reality, fantasy, dream and hallucinations for a while.

The metaphor of hunger is significant in Tom's night adventures. The emotional hunger he suffered being away from home when Peter materialized by satisfying himself with heavy meals prepared by aunt Gwen and slipping into the larder at night due to sleeplessness: "he was suffering from night starvation" (12). The metaphorical hunger or longing to have a heavy meal of adventure resulted in finding the garden and his playmate. Not surprisingly, the theme of death is also relevant in the novel's plot. Tom's first meeting with Mrs. Bartholomew also suggests future encounters with her as Hatty at various stages of her life. He envisions her as old, small and bowed and dressed all in black (31). The black color is suggestive of the melancholy pervading her life from a very young age onwards. She lost her parents while she was a little girl and was under the care of a cruel aunt. Once Tom sees Hatty as a tiny little girl, wearing black dress, stockings and shoes; even her hair was black and had a black hair-ribbon. This signifies funeral black and Tom could sense her extreme grief haunted with the death of her parents. She lost her sons in the Great War and later her husband; as an old lady she lives a lonely life and awaits her own death.

A striking feature of the novel is in making Tom as the focaliser and not the narrator of the novel. The thoughts and feelings of other characters are not vividly shown. To understand the story, readers should see and feel through his eyes and sensibilities. Characters and places are presented from his stance. Pearce occasionally used free indirect discourse to convey Tom's thoughts. The blend of the narrator's

voice with Tom's feelings reinforces the reader's identification with Tom and thus the power of fantasy makes the story more real.

In children's fiction, time-slip is a salient feature, where the protagonist or other characters move along time without being aware of it (Beck 184). *Tom's Midnight Garden* is a time-slip fantasy narrative where Tom makes a time travel to the past Victorian era not being able to differentiate between past and the present. Initially, Tom takes the fantasy world of the midnight garden and the characters are real and as if living in his present.

Some literary critics consider themes of *Tom's Midnight Garden* as fantastic as well as realistic. Heather Montgomery (2009) remarks on the significance of the novel's theme that imparts an elegiac tone as it is filled with the feeling of loss and longing for the past (204). It points to the inescapable reality of growing up and growing old (Bryant 93). Montgomery comments that despite the melancholic tone of the novel, it is not tragic as it ends in harmony and resolution. Pearce's creation of the imaginary midnight garden is both physically and morally redemptive and befits the novel in pastoral tradition. Natov (2009) comments on the garden that illuminates heightened reality, in contrast with daily life and associated shortcomings (225). The pastoral setting of the garden helps Tom in consciousness raising and makes him capable of being an empathetic person. The restoring and regenerating capacity of gardens at individual, familial, community and national level is also significant. Rustins (2009) stresses the importance of metaphors of stages of emotional development that play a crucial part in children's fiction, especially in the genre of "fantasy" (209). Modernist literary methods employ interpretations of "realist" and "non-realist" modes of expression in fictional narration. In spite of the aloof felt by the post-war world due to fragmentation and the scale of urban society, the world also shared a culture that felt hopeful about strong possibilities of childhood. Themes of loss, sense of things slipping away, childhood innocence and its metaphorical association with Eden garden, hope, optimism of childhood, possibilities of regeneration and rejuvenation makes the novel a befitting feast for both children and adult readers. Pearce's treatment of these themes and its narrative pattern make the novel a critique of both the terms "metanarrative" and "metafiction."

### **A Psychoanalytic Reading**

As we will try to show below, the novel can be read from a psychoanalytic point of view and can be seen as an exercise in psychological realism, dealing with difficulties of sexual awakening and emotional development. Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin (2009) mention that the novel is strongly informed by psychological

theory. Tom, the protagonist, is in his adolescence, experiencing a transition between childhood and adulthood, in which there is rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial development (Rustin 213). However, he seems to be unaware of his growth and shows mood shifts, experiences strong and intense emotions and is in a stage of confusion, fear and anger that are common at this phase. The very thought of being away from home and his brother during the summer holidays and living with childless uncle and aunt in a city apartment with no garden, makes Tom really upset. He is isolated from his dear ones and with the discovery of the midnight garden and playmate Hatty in the garden, his life and attitude began to change. Not knowing that the girl Hatty in the midnight garden is the same as old Mrs. Bartholomew in his real world, Tom happily gets engaged moving back and forth in reality and fantasy. For Mrs. Bartholomew, the only way to cope up with her loneliness was to dream about childhood, where she finds Tom equally longing for a companionship. Thus, Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew are connected mainly through their dream and fantasy than in reality.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in his seminal work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1965) considers dream as a psychic phenomenon that consists of our conscious and unconscious desires of real life and emerges from an important emotional event. In Tom's case, loneliness, desire for a companion and a space for exploration propel him to enter into the midnight garden of Mrs. Bartholomew's childhood. Freud noticed that people dream for a reason, to deal unconsciously with the problems that the conscious mind cannot deal with. Memories continue to exist outside our awareness in an unconscious manner. He also remarked that dreams and its content represented a disguised fulfillment of a repressed wish. This is true in the case of Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew. The traumas in Mrs. Bartholomew's life started with the death of her parents when she was so young, living with her uncaring aunt and later with the death of her husband and two sons in the war. The loneliness that she suffered is balanced through the dreams of her childhood and youth. In the same manner, the secret desires for a companion and larger space in Tom's mind are also fulfilled with Hatty in the midnight garden. Freud's concept of 'the uncanny' refers to the psychological experience of something strangely familiar which is evident in the way Tom and Hatty feel each other as ghosts. The dark figures that Tom and Hatty see during their skating expedition involve an eerie feeling and the image of Barty in dark form prior to their meeting and proposal of marriage.

Carl Jung (1875-1961) suggests that archetypes are universal, inborn models of people, behaviors or personalities that play a role in influencing human behavior. He identifies three components of the human psyche: the ego, the personal unconscious

and the collective unconscious. In the novel, both Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew are aware of their real existence in day time of their real world, whereas at night by entering into the midnight garden of Mrs. Bartholomew's memories of past, the suppressed feelings of loneliness and loss find a way out by exploring the garden and having the adventure between the playmates, Tom and Hatty. This is the reason why Tom could easily enter into the dream telepathy of Mrs. Bartholomew as they share these traits as part of the collective unconscious.

A better conceptual understanding is required to understand the interconnection between metanarrative and psychoanalysis and how the two notions inform each other. The field of psychoanalysis in relation to 'narrative' is extremely vast, and cannot be covered in the discussions allocated to Freud's and Jung's theories. It is meant to offer an interdisciplinary approach, and accordingly some theoretical background is provided in order to interlink the two disciplines. Moreover, it is good to explore other scholars' perspectives in a critical manner, by pointing to their own line of argument.

The sensibilities of Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew who represent various stages of the British national identity are also evident in the novel. Another archetypal reference made by Jung represents the combination of anima and animus known as syzygy, the pairing of contra-sexual opposites, symbolizing the communication of the conscious and unconscious minds. The syzygy represents completion, unification and wholeness that is evident in the hugging scene of Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew towards the end of the novel. This event represents multiple facts referring to Tom's coming to terms with reality, Mrs. Bartholomew's happiness in reliving her past with Tom, and on a national level where post-war Britain is connected with the glorious Victorian era. Thus, a meaningful connection between the conscious and the unconscious, the real and the imaginary, the child and the adult, the past and the present is materialized in the novel.

Mouhiba Jamoussi (2019) finds the connection between the self and the other, through a fantastic world constantly interwoven with the real, and a past tightly tied to the present. She focuses on the child-adult relationship, and on the effects of connection and disconnection on the individual (Jamoussi 2). Tom bids farewell to loneliness by entering into the garden and by getting connected with nature and its inhabitants. In his encounter with Hatty, Tom creates his own world where Hatty becomes his companion, playmate and story-teller. The garden is symbolic of connection, empathy, and healing that exists literally and metaphorically in every individual's life and consciousness. Maher Ben Moussa (2016) argues that Tom's empathy is an important factor in his growing up, in constructing his identity and in shaping

his relational self through reaching out to the 'other' Hatty (37). Tom is able to empathize with Hatty although she is from an older generation and from a world that is very different from his own but breaks the boundaries of time, gender and age. He identifies that Tom is empowered, transformed and matured through such a journey and finally he is able to end his exile with a capacity to understand himself and the "other" (Ben Moussa 40). In fact, time travel enables Tom to become a better human being.

### **Time Travel in *Tom's Midnight Garden***

Pearce's treatment of time is highly relevant in understanding the importance of the events that unfold in the real and imaginary world. On his arrival to stay with the Kitsons, Tom finds the big house unwelcoming and feels that "the heart of the house was empty—cold—dead ... It remained empty and silent" (5). The only sound that Tom noticed is that of the clock: "tick, and then tick, and then tick, of a grandfather clock" (5). Tom is curious as he has never checked inside such a clock, but aunt warns him not to, as it belonged to old Mrs. Bartholomew and that she is rather particular about it. Tom realizes that the clock is not striking at the right hour and Uncle Alan says: "The clock kept good time—its fingers were now correctly pointing to five o'clock—but it seldom chose to strike the right hour. It was utterly unreliable in its striking" (6). Tom finds the voice of the clock so penetrating and senselessly wrong in striking. This reference to the confusion in time foreshadows the upcoming events that are likely to happen during his stay with Kitsons.

Tom's stay indoors and lack of physical activity affected his sleep. His sleepless nights and the striking of the grandfather clock turned to be normal. "He would go to bed at usual time, and then lie awake or half-awake for hour after hour... in his half-dreaming, he became two persons, and one of him would not go to sleep but selfishly insisted on keeping the other awake with a little muttering monolog" (10). It points to Tom's double consciousness or split personality that eventually reveals, and the movement between fantasy and reality like the pendulum of a clock. Uncle Alan insists that Tom should sleep from nine to seven in the morning. For him, "with the thirteenth hour somewhere between—was more than ten hours: it was eleven. He could be in bed for ten hours, and still have an hour to spare—an hour of freedom" (15). These musings over the time seems to be a deliberate action from Tom before he started his midnight adventures. Apparently, it seems that he plans the future events, but lacks cohesion and becomes unaware that he is in real time during the day and enters the fantasy world of the midnight garden when the grandfather clock strikes thirteen. Because of this experience, Tom is active during his stay in

the midnight garden, while during day time he plans for his next activity and waits for the clock to strike its magical time.

Unlike the grandfather clock that takes him back to the past, the clock in the kitchen takes him forward in a linear way. Maria Nikolajeva (2009) studies the concept of time by differentiating it with *Kairos*, the eternal or mythic time and *chronos* which is the measurable or linear time, while discussing the blend of fantasy and reality in Tom's world (218). There is always summer and fine weather in the midnight garden as it is evoked by Hatty's nostalgic memories. It also signifies the most dynamic time in her life being young and hopeful of a bright future. It seems that the garden is transformed from a spatial to temporal state representing childhood, as seen in utopian fiction. The grandfather clock is presented as a magical object with ambivalent function and in *chronos*, that takes Tom closer to departure while in *kairos*, it is his password to the garden. In the beginning, Tom is intolerant of uncle Alan's rationality or theories about time and fixed sleeping hours for a boy like him. In a discussion about the past and the possibility of living in it, uncle Alan responds: "It's just a saying, Tom— 'to put the clock back.' It means to have the Past again, and no one can have it. Time isn't like that" (56). Uncle Alan talks about the real, linear, chronological time, whereas Tom's thoughts are about the mythical time of his experience.

The image of the angel of the Book of Revelation, who stands with one foot on land and one on sea, and seen at the heart of the grandfather clock is symbolic of Tom's presence in the two worlds. The inscription on the face of grandfather clock 'Time No Longer,' identifies time as linear with a beginning and end, similar to a flowing river (Carpenter 58). Tom understood the real nature of time through the words revealed by the angel. He dreams of skating to the world's end and the end of Time. He knew that he did not miss any fraction of a second of ordinary time, but gained the liberty of extra, mythical time in the midnight garden. Tom makes reference to the river to Hatty during one of his earlier visits to the garden: "All rivers flow into the sea" (87) and Hatty envied the endless journey of the waters. This indicates the linearity of time in *chronos*, and Mrs Bartholomew's apprehension regarding her loneliness, old age and approaching death. It signifies the final unifying vision at the end, of the binaries between past and present, child and adult, male and female, inner and outer, conscious and the unconscious.

Peter, Tom's brother, enters in time travel, by reading about his adventures in the midnight garden through the letters sent by Tom. Peter is equally tempted to witness these incidents narrated in the letters and dreams about it. When it was time for Tom to be back home, Peter makes his entry into Tom's dreams and sees Hatty as

a young woman, unlike as a child defined in Tom's letters. This is a focal point that defines the future events in Tom's life. In the dream, Hatty and Tom went on skating to Ely cathedral and wanted to climb its tower. Before their trajectory to the tower, Tom reads a memorial tablet written 'Exchanged Time for Eternity' that refers to all secrets of his time travel and existence of the garden. Peter also believes in the existence of the garden as he reads Tom's adventures and manages to dream of his presence with Tom.

The bond between brothers and their strong telepathic feelings is evident when Tom visualizes they both are climbing the tower of Ely cathedral. Tom could sense Peter's presence even before seeing him. Hatty who is looking for Tom at the top of the tower sees two boys very much alike as they are dressed identically in pajamas. Tom realizes that Peter is thinning out and vanishes, even without looking at him. When Hatty inquired about the other boy, Tom says: "He was my brother, Peter ... but he's real Hatty. He's real, like me" (196). This indicates that Tom is aware of the real and unreal. Tom is surprised by Peter's presence in his dream as he knew that he was back home by then. The vision of the two boys can be related to Mrs Bartholomew's dead sons. She develops a strong relation with these two and expresses her desire to meet them together at the end of the story. Tom's dream of climbing the spiral staircase and down the tower of Ely cathedral symbolizes his own self-discovery in psychological terms.

Natov (2009) remarks on the nature of mythic time and states that "time travel serves as a metaphor for the way we need to travel, fluidly, reflexively between our own childhood selves held together in our consciousness, or recalled from our unconscious through dreams and recognized by the conscious self upon waking" (223). Tom and Hatty's skating together with the same pair of skates also suggests their shared time travel and foreshadows the final reconciliation represented in Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew hugged each other and brought the two worlds together. Until then, Tom is involved in both worlds without realizing the difference between the two. The pair of skates that Hatty keeps with a note for him is discovered by Tom, which helps to meet the two worlds of reality and dream.

In the real time talk between Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew towards the end, the absence of the garden is discussed. An incident that happened the night before Tom is about to go back home, he tries to visit the midnight garden, but couldn't find it and desperately calls out for her. Mrs. Bartholomew tells Tom: "You woke me [...]. I knew it was Tom calling for help, although I didn't understand, then. I couldn't believe you were real, until I saw you this morning." Tom said: "We're both real; Then and Now. It's as the angel said: Time No Longer" (224). This reveals the emotional

maturity that Tom has achieved through his midnight garden adventures, the power of empathizing and connection. Thus, the novel ends by affirming the power of feeling that makes this connection possible. Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew's longing for a companionship creates a space for their joint adventure through telepathy culminating in their well-being.

### **Treatment of Space in *Tom's Midnight Garden***

The manner in which Pearce creates the midnight garden from memories of Mrs Bartholomew is significant in understanding the connection between reality and fantasy, blending past and present. The place where the Kitsons stay is a big Victorian household converted into modern day flats. The space where the garden stood in the past has been used as a parking space in the present. The imagery of the garden is very powerful in providing the space for Tom and Hatty to meet and have their timeless adventure. The midnight garden is first seen by moonlight, with its life-in-death associations, and the idea of a grave-like place is represented through the yew trees. Rustins (2009) refers to the importance of trees to all children (209). Tom and Peter had plans to make a tree house at home during holidays, and Tom and Hatty made a tree house in the midnight garden. At the crisis moment in the story, on Hatty's wedding eve, the tree at the center of the garden is struck by lightning and she hears Tom crying out. Abel, the gardener, acts as a protector of the garden as well as Hatty. He is deeply concerned about her safety and initially hates Tom's presence in the garden. Later, he found Tom to be harmless.

Tom sees the garden at many times of its day and at different seasons. Its favorite season is summer, with perfect weather. During his visit, Hatty makes Tom watch the garden in different shades through the coloured glass panes. Hatty mentions the presence of the garden to Tom: "You look and see nothing, and you might think there wasn't a garden at all; but, all the time, of course, there is, waiting for you" (77). These words act as a kind of consolation for both Tom and Hatty that the garden exists always in our memories too. Tom is invisible to most of the people in the garden, but Abel gets a glimpse of him at times along with other innocent animals like cows, geese and dogs. This is symbolic of the fact that Tom as a child is innocent like Hatty and only god-fearing and innocent people could see each other. Tom's invisibility in the garden initially symbolizes his feeling that his family and others are insensitive towards him as he has to stay at Kitsons house without a garden and playmate. But Hatty in the garden is shown to be good at hiding from others. This shows her less chances of socialization being an orphan and uncared child, living with the aristocratic and rich Melbournes.

There are various religious and biblical references in the novel. The name Abel is biblical, as he is the son of Adam, the first of God's creation. The religious and spiritual implications are also relevant in reading and understanding the story. Hatty and Tom's adventures show their pre-pubertal existence in the garden of innocence. Raymond Jones (1985) comments on the double consequences of a child entering the Eden or the metaphorical garden, that end up in both restoration and entrapment (218). The portrayal of Hatty in the garden refers to her reluctance in growing up, as being an orphan under the care of her cruel aunt, and she has nothing much to look forward to in life. But, Tom's initial reaction after reaching the apartment and seeing his room with bars across the bottom of the window is one of anger and he bursts out: "This is a nursery! I'm not a baby!" (6) This is highly significant as it refers to his subconscious awareness of growth, both physically and mentally. His frequent visits to the garden makes him feel more entrapped in it, by providing a sense of restoration. Neil Philip (1982) sees the novel as the story of Eden and Fall, but Hatty is seen as a savior rather than a seducer in the garden for Tom.

Tom and Hatty's skating expeditions during the Great Freeze provides the opportunity for Tom to explore these places that existed in his mind. Tom's dream of traveling with James and Hatty on horseback also makes him think of the difference between traveling with uncle and aunt in a bus or car. He notices the changes that occurred between the past and the present. Abel's expression towards Tom is also noteworthy as he gives a private, friendly wink, unlike his previous serious looks and talks. This is suggestive of Tom's awareness of his growth as shown in others' reaction and behavior towards him. At the end of his stay at Kitsons, Tom decides to meet Mrs. Bartholomew to apologize for causing troubles to the residents of the apartment. They notice the change and maturity in his character, unlike the first time he comes to stay in that neighborhood.

### ***Tom's Midnight Garden as a Metanarrative***

*Tom's Midnight Garden* employs metanarration at various levels. Pearce is narrating the story of Tom to the reader in which the protagonist Tom co-creates another story with Mrs. Bartholomew. By entering Mrs. Bartholomew's dream, Tom goes back to the Victorian grounds and experiences the glory of the past. As readers, we too get a chance to revisit the past. Like Tom and Mrs. Bartholomew, the readers also enjoy the privilege of entering the temporal and spatial arena of differing and sometimes opposing domains, combining the real and the fantastic. From the beginning of his stay at uncle and aunt's house, Tom is writing letters to Peter updating him about his adventures in the midnight garden and Peter is closely following them through the

narratives of Tom.

The code language employed by Tom and Peter is typical of children in their letters. Tom signed his letters to Tom with the drawing of “an elongated cat, supposed to be a tom. It signified Tom Long” (7). As his writing progresses, Tom is planning the future actions in the garden with another code, “B.A.R.” that stands for “Burn After Reading.” When aunt Gwen comments that Peter won’t be allowed to strain his eyes after measles and that writing long letters to Peter will make mother read it aloud to him, Tom writes “PRIVATE” and “CONFIDENTIAL” to make sure that the letter will reach only Peter. They want to keep the secrecy of the garden and adventures in it to themselves. Eventually, Peter feels highly tempted to go and stay with Kitsons to be part of the adventures in the midnight garden. While sleeping, Peter also has dreams of the garden, and the reactions on his face are noticed by his mother. This suggests the ability of Tom in conveying the events of his midnight adventure in a convincing manner to Peter who relives it, in his own dream. Both Tom and Peter felt upset when Tom could not write to Peter for the last two days of his stay at Kitsons. They become involved in story-writing/telling and reading/listening that Peter feels desperate as he doesn’t know what is happening to Tom in the garden, whereas Tom feels guilty for not being able to write to Peter as promised. Peter’s curiosity in listening to stories is further extended in Mrs Bartholomew’s invitation to him along with Tom as both of them remind her of her own dead sons.

The events in the novel can also be decoded by re-reading it as Tom’s experience of reading the books, that are “school stories for girls from Aunt Gwen’s own childhood” (7). During his initial sleepless nights staying with Kitsons, Tom tries to sleep reading Aunt Gwen’s school-girl stories. This provides the chance for Tom to be aware of the sensibilities of a girl like Hatty, and results in a positive development of his growth, morally and psychologically. Natov (2009) remarks that the inevitable loss and sadness of growing up and leaving childhood behind, can be resolved through fiction. For Rustins (2009), Tom’s adventures in this story can be taken as a metaphor for the experience of reading and story-telling (209).

It is interesting to note that the novel takes a fairy tale pattern (Waugh 24). Like the story of “The Ugly Duckling,” Hatty is not very well treated by her aunt while she was young and staying with her as an orphan. Later, Hatty gets married to Barty and her life changes. The aunt acts like the wicked stepmother stereotype in fairy tales. Hatty’s life also reminds of the fairy tale plots where the disadvantageous character becomes advantageous at the end. The wicked ones suffer loss and receive the right sort of punishment for their cruel actions. Hatty’s life with Barty is one like the fairy tale ending of “lived happily ever after,” as Barty is a loving and

caring husband. But, tragic events like the death of their sons in the Great War and later Barty's death make Mrs. Bartholomew feel lonely and decides to move back to the house of her childhood to hide in the memories of her past.

During Tom's visit to the garden before meeting Hatty, he finds a white paper, folded and addressed in a childish handwritten: "To Oberon, King of Fairies" (40). This suggests that Hatty is living her life as if in a fairy tale, imagining herself as a character in a story. Tom's response on seeing it is different and he "did not want to be mixed up with talk of fairies and that kind of thing" (40). When Tom and Hatty meet for the first time, he sees her holding a twig of yew in one hand and half-eaten apple on the other, holding both like a queen's scepter and orb. She introduces herself as "Princess Hatty" to which he responds that "if you're a Princess, your father and mother must be a King and Queen: where's their kingdom—where are they?" (73) Hatty informs that she is held as a prisoner there, a Princess in disguise, as her aunt is wicked and cruel. These are indications of her imaginary mind, seeing herself as a fictional character. The half-eaten apple is symbolic of the fairy tale 'Snow White' and the mythical and religious overtones of 'Eve' in Eden garden. Hatty makes the garden a kind of her own kingdom. Tom feels that "all the persons that her fancy had ever brought into this garden—Biblical heroes and fairies and the people of legend and hearsay and her own imagination—all her friends fell away from her now" (94). He cries thinking of his powerlessness to comfort and save her.

While exchanging tales and secrets, Tom enquires about Abel, the gardener, while recounting the events after Tom missed entry to the garden. Mrs. Bartholomew tells him that "he had married Susan and they had a large family and lived happily" (224). This also serves as another fairy tale involved in the whole narration which also has a happy ending. Tom's experience in the garden is similar to 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.' Like Alice entering the wonderland, Tom accidentally steps into the magical, midnight garden. As a fantasy, the novel functions like a fairy tale where magic at the center reflects and comments on the real world. It intensifies and enriches recognition that is necessary for healing and restoring a sense of harmony in both children and adults.

Nikolajeva (2009) comments that in Mrs. Bartholomew's account of events, the whole story is seen from a different perspective (217). The novel is read as a story told by an old lady to a boy, a grandmother to a grandson, though Mrs. Bartholomew and Tom are not blood relatives. Rustins' (2009) comments on the last chapter of the novel "A Tale for Tom Long," can be re-interpreted that the whole story is Mrs. Bartholomew's tale for Tom (213). It is created from her childhood memories and multiple identifications with Tom as her own childhood self and the reminder of

her dead sons that are not necessarily and entirely true. The sermon that the old lady wants to share with future generations is kept untold in her mind, but conveyed to Tom through the dream telepathy. The novel recounts how a young boy is tempted to exchange time for eternity and the tragic story of an old woman who knows from experience that time is irreversible. Mrs. Bartholomew's words that "I knew Tom, that the garden was changing all the time, because nothing stands still, except in our memory" (221) reveals the wisdom of her life experience.

Mrs Bartholomew alerts Tom: "When you're my age, Tom, you live in the Past a great deal. You remember it; you dream of it" (222). Tom understands the facts in a better way—in the garden the weather is always perfect, time jumps back and forth—everything depends on what Mrs. Bartholomew wishes to remember from her past in the dreams. She recollects that never before that summer has she ever dreamt of the garden so often and so vividly and felt like little Hatty, longing for someone to play with. This is because of Tom's presence and longing for the same that ends up in their co-creation of midnight garden in their time travel.

The ending also suggests the possibilities of new beginnings. Mrs. Bartholomew's invitation for Tom and Peter to visit her again, and Tom's promise to bring Peter with him suggest the possibilities of the tale to be continued regarding the child adventure in the midnight magic garden. Pearce has beautifully created several stories, one of reality and the other of fantasy, and within each one different layer of other tales in creating *Tom's Midnight Garden* as a metanarrative.

## Conclusion

From the discussions above, it is obvious that the novel *Tom's Midnight Garden* is a metanarrative and stories of children make use of fantasy to establish strong connections. It validates the psychology of children and adults, the way in which they live their life in fantasy and reality. In addition to that, it demonstrates how children create and live their own stories, and in old age how one lives her past life through memories and dreams, passing on their life as stories to future generations. The novel created as part of the dream telepathy of Tom and Hatty, appears and creates the illusion of reality. The presence of the note left by Hatty along with the skates for Tom is used as a device to bind reality and fantasy in a peculiar manner.

The story acts as a motivation for both children and adult readers to come to terms with the anxieties and sensibilities of their present or of the remembered childhoods. The novel succeeded in connecting the past and the present for the central characters and as result to find a balance between intergenerational gap. The past glory of Victorian England is linked to the modern post-war England as part

of the continuum. The myth of Fall of Man has been repeated and re-imagined in a novel manner, by focusing on the pre-lapsarian stage of Tom and Hatty and their innocent play in the midnight garden, reminiscent of Eden garden. The modern age and the associated fragmented condition is visible in characters and the space they occupy. However, they try to keep balance in their memories of past glory and relationships with each other. This is made possible through the time travel of Tom and Hatty in linking 'chronos' and 'Kairos.' Tom's realization of his experience in the midnight garden being part of Mrs Bartholomew's dreams and memories enables Tom to move forward in life by accepting reality and facts.

Although *Tom's Midnight Garden* tells the story of Tom and Hatty, it is also connected to the nation's history, and makes a link between individual and group. History is presented as part of the inescapable reality of life for characters in which they find solace and root for existence. No doubt, the story is intertwined with fantasy and reality as it is narrated at realistic, imaginary and psychoanalytic levels. These features develop the story into a metanarrative pattern, creating a story within the story. Thus, *Tom's Midnight Garden* establishes a strong association between old age and childhood, the conscious and the unconscious, fantasy and reality, and past and the present.

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