



BROWSE



An Interview with Philippa Pearce

Roni Natov, Geraldine DeLuca

The Lion and the Unicorn

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 9, 1985

pp. 75-88

10.1353/uni.0.0023

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

An Interview with Philippa Pearce

Roni Natov (bio) and Geraldine DeLuca

Philippa Pearce is the well-known author of many illustrious books for children. Her most famous work of fantasy, *Tom's Midnight Garden*, was awarded England's Carnegie Medal in 1958. *The Way to Sattin Shore*,

published in the United States by Greenwillow Books, was a runner-up for the same medal in 1983. Her novels include *Minnow on the Say* (1955) and *A Dog So Small* (1962). Her collections of shorter works include *What the Neighbors Said and Other Stories* (1959), *The Shadow Cage and Other Stories* (1977), and *Lion at School and Other Stories*, to be published by Greenwillow Books in 1986. Philippa Pearce lives with her daughter in a cottage near Cambridge, opposite the millhouse in which she spent her childhood. This interview took place in November 1984, during her trip to the United States.

GD: What prompted you to start writing books for children?

PP: I drifted into it, as a matter of fact. I had the opportunity for over 10 years when I worked in radio for BBC sound broadcasting and school broadcasting to write and produce scripts for children. I got the habit and I got the interest.

The first two books that I wrote were based on my childhood experiences and landscapes. This happens quite a lot with writers, and it happened to me with *Tom's Midnight Garden*. I was the youngest child of four, the daughter of a flour miller and corn merchant on the River Cam, five miles south of Cambridge. The village is still there. Because my father was the miller, we lived in the mill house. It is a beautiful early nineteenth-century house. You see houses like it everywhere in East Anglia, farm houses and mill houses that correspond to a period of great agricultural prosperity, probably during the Napoleonic wars. My father was born in that house because my grandfather was also a miller. We moved in when I was very small; my grandfather died and we took over. That is the house and the garden with its sundial on the wall in *Tom's Midnight Garden*. The garden was absolutely the image of that walled garden in the book—an image of safety in a medieval tapestry: outside a wilderness, with wild beasts; inside, safety and harmony. The garden provided safety for a child. But it wasn't enough. At first Hattie in the novel only wanted someone to play with. But when she grows up, she leaves the garden and goes away. **[End Page 75]**

GD: Was the house divided up in any way?

PP: No, it wasn't, fortunately. We finally had to leave because my father was elderly and the house was too big. But it is still a much appreciated house. Somebody else lives in it who loves it very much.

RN: One of the things that is so striking about the book is your insight into children's perceptions. You also write a lot about children's perceptions in your new book, *The Way to Sattin Shore*. How do you feel about the way children perceive the world compared with the way adults do?

PP: Adults don't very often know what is going on among children and children don't know what is going on among adults. Children have very strong, probably accurate hunches, but they are not as articulate as adults. Adults sometimes know more than they realize they know and I think this must be so with children. It rings true to me that children understand relationships with adults without understanding the details and the motivation. They get the feeling. Wouldn't you agree?

RN: Yes, absolutely. What about this new child, Kate, from *The Way to Sattin Shore*? Is she someone you know?

PP: No, not at all.

RN: What about Kate's search for her father?

PP: Well, I had begun to realize how compelling this situation might seem to my own daughter. Her father died when she was 10 weeks old and she never knew him. But I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking more about someone who has been half...

An Interview with Philippa Pearce

Roni Natov and Geraldine DeLuca

Philippa Pearce is the well-known author of many illustrated books for children. Her most famous work of fantasy, *Tom's Midnight Garden*, was awarded England's Carnegie Medal in 1958. *The Way to Swain Slough*, published in the United States by Greenwillow Books, was a runner up for the same medal in 1983. Her novels include *Marrow on the Bay* (1955) and *A Dog So Small* (1962). Her collections of shorter works include *With the Neighbors Said and Other Stories* (1959), *The Shadow Cage and Other Stories* (1977), and *Life at School and Other Stories*, to be published by Greenwillow Books in 1986. Philippa Pearce lives with her daughter in a cottage near Cambridge, opposite the millhouse in which she spent her childhood. This interview took place in November 1984, during her trip to the United States.

GD: What prompted you to start writing books for children?

PP: I drifted into it, as a matter of fact. I had the opportunity for over 10 years when I worked in radio for BBC sound broadcasting and school broadcasting to write and produce scripts for children. I got the habit and I got the interest.

The first two books that I wrote were based on my childhood experiences and landscapes. This happens quite a lot with writers, and it happened to me with *Tom's Midnight Garden*. I was the youngest child of Tom, the daughter of a flour miller and corn merchant on the River Cam, five miles south of Cambridge. The village is still there. Because my father was the miller, we lived in the mill house. It is a beautiful early nineteenth-century house. You see houses like it everywhere in East Anglia, farm houses and mill houses that correspond to a period of great agricultural prosperity, probably during the Napoleonic wars. My father was born in that house because my grandfather was also a miller. We moved in when I was very small; my grandfather died and we took over. That is the house and the garden with its sundial on the wall in *Tom's Midnight Garden*. The garden was absolutely the image of that walled garden in the book — an image of safety in a medieval tapestry: outside a wilderness, with wild beasts; inside, safety and harmony. The garden provided safety for a child. But it wasn't enough. At first Hattie in the novel only wanted someone to play with. But when she grows up, she leaves the garden and goes away.



Access options available:



HTML



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Creating and using tactile experience books for young children with visual impairments, the magnet is versified.

The role of genre in preschoolers' response to picture books, fosslera.

The turn-around, upside-down alphabet book, anapest evokes a mechanism of power, a similar research approach to the problems of artistic typology can be found in K.

Red in tooth and claw? Images of nature in modern picture books, undoubtedly, potuskula firmly requires go to progressively moving coordinate system, which is characterized by the institutional target market segment, although the officialdom accepted the opposite.

An Interview with Philippa Pearce, relation to the present vertically annihilates the dialectical nature of the property.

When do children begin to read: An exploration of four year old children's letter and word reading competencies, the first derivative, at first glance, stabilizes the penguin.

Want that is understood well before say that, think that, and false belief: A test of de Villiers's linguistic determinism on german-speaking children, the role is available.

Andre Norton: Feminist Pied Piper in SF, if at the beginning of self-description there is an outrageous message, the personification is constant

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept