

Endnotes

Regarding the Authenticity of the Story

Discovering and collecting the various pieces of the puzzle that eventually arranged themselves into *BEHIND THE VELVETEEN DAUGHTER* was a wonderful obsession. It continues to amaze me that this story has not come to light before now. To my knowledge, no biography of Margery Williams Bianco has been published, and Pamela Bianco has been forgotten almost entirely.

A reader who finishes a fictional work based on a true story always thinks, *How much of that was real, I wonder?* I hope that the following will provide a sense of how much of *BEHIND THE VELVETEEN DAUGHTER* is “real.” As you will see, a great deal is.

The Bianco family. The story of Pamela and her family is historically accurate in terms of where they lived and when they lived there. Francesco was, in fact, an antiquarian book dealer and had stores in London and on West Eighth Street in New York. (The Gershwin brothers were known to frequent his shop.) He was an expert on Papal Bulls. The trajectory of Pamela’s fame and her art career is documented in newspaper accounts, in a file in the *New Yorker* archives, in university collections, and in family letters. Margery did suffer the loss of her father and sister when she was a child. Cecco attended Columbia University, was a fencer, was stationed in Germany for a while, and eventually got a job in Washington.

The Diccon and Pamela relationship. This not-quite-love affair between Pamela and Diccon, which constitutes a good portion of the novel, hews closely to the truth as depicted. The trove of letters in the Hughes archives at the University of Indiana (Bloomington) provided the basic tapestry upon which I could embroider events. Other facts were gleaned from Robert Graves’s biography of Richard Hughes. The initial meeting in Wales is based on fact. Diccon was engaged to Nancy Stallibrass and the description of that relationship—Nancy’s officious mother, the insistence on a six-months’ separation, and Diccon’s cold feet just before the wedding—is all factual.

Pamela’s depression/madness. Sadly, her episodes of depression were all too real, and took place as described. She was hospitalized more than once at Four Winds in upstate New York. Pamela herself documents her breakdown at age eighteen in a letter to Diccon written from Four Winds. The disease caught up with her at the end of her life, and she was institutionalized at the time of her death in 1994.

Eugene and Agnes O'Neill. Agnes was Pamela's cousin, and the relationship between the O'Neills and the Biancos was, in essence, just as depicted in the novel. The Biancos often visited them at Peaked Hill Bars in Truro, Massachusetts and at their home in Bermuda. Agnes' account of her courtship and early years of marriage are taken directly from her own memoir, *Part of a Long Story*. The O'Neill's volatile marriage has been well documented.

Gabriele d'Annunzio. The famous poet-warrior-lover did write a poem, reproduced in many newspapers, describing Pamela as a "new flower." He also gave her a wooden box and told her to keep all future correspondence from him in it.

Pablo Picasso. It is true that Picasso was a friend of the Biancos during their Paris years. However, the scene in the novel when he and Fernande (his real-life girlfriend) come to dinner is wholly imagined.

Anne Carroll Moore and Bertha Mahony. Moore, the legendary children's librarian at the New York Public Library was a close friend of Margery's. She was also a strong supporter of Mahony, who opened The Bookshop for Boys and Girls and founded *The Horn Book* magazine

Robert Schlick. Pamela married Robert in Harlem in a ceremony at Alexander Gumby's salon almost exactly as described. A book dealer in California who owns a copy of Schlick's exceedingly rare volume of poetry (*The Supplement Poems*, 1930) found two holograph accounts of the wedding tucked inside his edition and he kindly shared copies with me. Soon after the birth of Lorenzo, Robert did run off to Oregon with Roy de Coverley, a minor actor-poet-journalist of the Harlem Renaissance. To the best of my knowledge, he was never heard from again..

Alexander Gumby was a well-known figure of the Harlem Renaissance. He had a book salon and regularly hosted parties for the literati. Perhaps his biggest contribution to American culture are his 161 scrapbooks chronicling the history of African Americans from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. An online exhibition was launched in September 2011 at the Columbia University Libraries' website.

Georg Hartmann. Pamela married Georg when she was forty-eight. Besides that, and the fact that he did etchings, I could find no other information on him.

Artwork. I invented the "apple tree at dawn" picture, the goat Pamela draws with Picasso, and the drawing purchased by d'Annunzio. All other paintings and drawings and lithographs referenced are Pamela's actual work. She did paint the

unsuccessful mauve fruit and flower paintings, although her white-washing of them is an invention. Her triumphant return to the art world in 1961 is fact.

Invented characters. The following characters are entirely fictional: Signora Campanaro, Sara, the green-eyed sculptress, and Dr. Henry Boardman at Four Winds. (Pamela does mention a “Henry” who helped her with her letter-writing, but I do not know to whom she was referring).

Invented places. The Mason and Dyer Gallery, where Pamela meets Georg for the first time, is fictional.

Letters. All letters between Diccon and Pamela are based on letters in the Richard Hughes collection in the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana (Bloomington). A letter found in the Butler Library at Columbia University from Francesco to Mr. Henry L. Bullen written on Christmas Day, 1928, provides the information on Papal Bulls, which Francesco relates to Pamela when he is ill. Robert's farewell letter to Pamela, which she turns into a paperboat, is fictional, as is the “deathbed” letter from Francesco to Pamela. The 1977 letter from Robert to Pamela is also fictional.