Identical Cousins

Richard Pennington and David Peterley:

The Story of *Peterley Harvest*

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Peterley! Enigma and ambiguity dog the word! Does it refer to a person or a place? Who is he or where is it? Attempts to clarify the mystery of Peterley can begin at many points over several centuries. This account will begin nearly thirty years ago.

In the fall of 1960, a startling literary event, a *cause célèbre*, rocked the British literary establishment when a slim book was issued by the very respectable publishing house of Hutchinson of London. Indeed the sensation began even before its issue, as reviewers armed with advance copies started their thundering prior to its appearance in the bookstores. To this day, the book continues to attract considerable comment, some laudatory some derisive. But mostly the book is a source of uncertainty, speculation, and gossip, fueled by its scarcity due to being issued in such limited numbers until Penguin Books released a paperback edition in the summer of 1987. In other words, it has become one of the most discussed unread books of its generation.

The book is, of course, *Peterley Harvest* and the reasons for its particular concern to a Canadian audience are three: first, its Foreword claims it to be an edited version of the life of David Peterley based upon papers deposited in the McGill University Library, Montreal; second, the book's self-styled editor is Richard Pennington who at the time of first publication was University Librarian of McGill University (1947-1964); third, the Toronto publishing house of McClelland and Stewart played a critical role in the book's publication.

Reaction by the London reviewers in 1960 was savage. Writing in the *Observer*, Philip Toynbee said:

It has already been revealed that all this information constitutes an elaborate literary hoax and it has been surmised that the book, as we have it, is a piece of fiction for which the editor alone is responsible.¹

All in all, Toynbee felt that the book placed a 'serious strain' on his patience as it was not a real diary and Peterley not a real person but a 'pre-

tentious, indolent and elaborately vulgar youth ... of sporadic literary talent.' Of course, Toynbee's very acerbic attitude may have been due in part to his having been taken in by Colin Wilson's *The Outsiders* a few years earlier. Yet other reviewers were equally unkind and commented upon the failure to locate the Peterley papers at McGill and on the inability of the famous people mentioned in the book to remember anyone called David Peterley. The underlying problem for all of them was an inability to judge the book's literary value – if any – due to their fear of it being a hoax.²

The furor stretched across the Atlantic with articles in various Canadian publications including the *Montreal Gazette*,³ *Maclean's*⁴ and one in the *Montreal Star*⁵ titled, 'Has McGill Librarian Perpetrated Hoax?'

Such a furor would normally ensure good sales; people enjoy reading a notorious book around which hangs the air of scandal. Yet within days of its issue the furor was heightened when, without warning or explanation, the book was suddenly withdrawn from sale; the publisher indicated that no more copies would be issued. Not unexpectedly, booksellers failed to comply with the request to return unsold copies and conducted a brisk under-the-counter business in the remaining copies. Scandal and notoriety turned to rumour, speculation, and gossip which had hardly abated when the book was reissued by McClelland and Stewart of Toronto in a very limited edition three years later in 1963.⁶

That the book continues to generate interest and speculation twenty-five years later is made apparent by the fact that in 1985 and 1987 it was reissued by two British publishers. Secker and Warburg published it in 1985 in association with the Arts Council of Great Britain and included an intriguing preface by the famous biographer Michael Holroyd which raises almost as many questions as it answers and which concludes with the following:

Peterley Harvest fits perfectly into the Arts Council Reprint Library ... [which] is designed to reissue maverick work such as this remarkable exercise in ventriloquism for the general reader and give critics a better opportunity for assessment ...⁷

Another noted biographer, Victoria Glendinning, in her *Times Literary Supplement* review was so distrustful and perplexed by the book that she speculated on whether even Richard Pennington was a real person and whether there was not some yet unidentified third party who was the book's actual author.⁸

In the 1987 edition in the Penguin Modern Classics series, Penguin has capitalized upon the book's reputation to the fullest and in the front and back-end blurbs has used phrases like 'elaborate literary hoax,' 'mystery,'

and 'riddle.' Publication in these two reprint series suggests that at the very least the book is a literary curiosity, that it may also possess literary merit, and that most assuredly it has commercial value.

Before proceeding further in this assessment, I think it is necessary to state my underlying assumption about this book: David Peterley is not a real person but rather is the *persona* or *alter ego* of Richard Pennington who is the real author of *Peterley Harvest*. This paper will attempt to address the following questions: what is *Peterley Harvest* in theme and outline; what relationship is there between David Peterley and Richard Pennington; what intent is there behind the book; why was it withdrawn from sale; and why is it still being read and discussed to-day? The Appendix gives a bibliographical and publishing study of the book.

Peterley Harvest purports to be, as its subtitle says, *The Private Diary of David Peterley*, edited to provide a quasi-narrative flow. In fact, however, the narrative is relatively weak and loses out, overall, to a richly textured succession of character sketches, social events, stories, travels, literary and historical allusions and opinions, epigrams, and heavy introspection. It begins with 'Botany Bay,' a brief summary of Peterley's four years in New South Wales, Australia, between 1926 and 1930, where he appears to have spent most of his time having affairs with married women, founding a repertory theatre company, and befriending Australia's first notable poet, Christopher Brennan, who was by then a notorious drunkard. During this period, Peterley's father sends him a long letter of advice which ends with the words 'fear God, honour the King, and be chivalrous to women' which, to judge by his actions, Peterley interprets as: ignore God, forget the King, and chase after women.

Upon returning to England in early 1930, Peterley adopts the lifestyle of a man of independent income and no employment, at which point begins the excerpts from his diary which continue until the book's conclusion in 1939. The main reason for his return is to marry a wealthy woman whose money will save the family's ancestral estate – Peterley – which is mortgaged to the hilt. Despite its fiscal success, the marriage soon becomes an emotional and personal disaster. Peterley spends the next several years socializing, collecting and studying books, chasing unsuccessfully after young women, and soliloquizing about his unhappy state. The ennui and aimlessness of his life infect the narrative which loses its thread during this extended middle section.

Suddenly in 1938 both Peterley and the book regain momentum and interest when he is swept up by the Munich crises when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sold out Czechoslovakia to appease Hitler. Peterley

becomes strongly pro-Czechoslovakian, founds and becomes Honorary Secretary of the Czechoslovak Association, and travels to that country several times. The last trip, in September 1938 at the time of the second Munich crisis when Hitler seized the entire country, was accompanied by danger and excitement. The book ends in April of 1939 on a ship bound for Australia when Peterley compiles this published account of the previous ten years or so.

Several general elements characterize the entire book. The first is its exquisite prose style. The second is its wonderful sense of place and time – London, England in the 1930s as it moves from the introspection of depression to the realization that war is imminent. The third is its intriguing stories of the famous and not so famous, some identified by their real names others protected by pseudonyms.

Central to any consideration of *Peterley Harvest* must be the question of the relationship between Richard Pennington and David Peterley. Is David Peterley a real person or a fictional character? The first thing to be noted is that the two names possess the same number of syllables and sound remarkably alike. The second is that in broad outline Richard Pennington's life and career are remarkably similar to Peterley's.⁹

Like his *alter ego*, Pennington migrated in 1926 from England to New South Wales, Australia, where he founded Sydney's Turret Repertory Theatre in 1928 and befriended Christopher Brennan. In 1930, again like Peterley, Pennington returned to England where he developed a career with books, socialized with prominent people, and at the decade's end became greatly involved in the Czechoslovakian question and strongly opposed appeasement. Not surprisingly, in the spring of 1939 Pennington also returned to Australia.¹⁰

Although the two lives are remarkably similar in outline, comparing their details is very difficult for two reasons. No trace has ever been found at McGill of the Peterley papers which the book's early editions claim reside there. The details of Richard Pennington's life before 1946, when he arrived at McGill, are very difficult to track down. His papers, which are on deposit at the Fisher Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto, are not available for study during his lifetime. In addition, curious rumours have spread saying that in old age Pennington is 'editing' his diaries. Will the true details of his life ever be known?

There are, fortunately, other sources of information which can be used to compare the details of the two lives. The first concerns Peterley, the ancestral family estate which in some ways emerges as the book's hero, only less so than Brideshead in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*.

In the Foreword Pennington writes:

There was only one important change of text: the scenes at home in England were transferred in the rewritten version from the actual family home to the old one in Buckinghamshire, which in fact had long ago been pulled down.

In the *Victoria History of the County of Buckingham*, we are informed that, as in *Peterley Harvest*, there is in the Parish of Great Missenden an ancient manor called Peterley, last rebuilt in the early nineteenth century. Unlike *Peterley Harvest*, however, it is not the ancestral seat of the Peterley family but of the Barons Dormer of Wenge,¹¹ who have a Canadian connection through the Hon. Henry Dormer (1844-1866), fourth son of the 11th Baron, who died while stationed with his regiment in London, Ontario and is commemorated by a plaque in that city's Roman Catholic Cathedral. As late as 1929, Burke's *Peerage* listed Peterley as one of the Dormer family seats.¹² On the other hand, the *Victoria History* speaks of a notable Puritan family, the Penningtons, who lived in other manor houses in the same parish of Great Missenden during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³ Interestingly enough, Richard Pennington is a Quaker whose family lived in the not too distant city of Rugby where he was born and raised and where his father was a local architect. All this suggests to this writer that Pennington, who does not come from a wealthy family or the landed gentry, appropriated for the book's setting a place in Buckinghamshire with which his family had an historical connection. Peterley is a real place but the Peterley family is fictional – at least as far as Peterley house is concerned. As a side note, there are numerous references throughout *Peterley Harvest* to a 'cousin Richard Pennington' and to Pennington family history as it relates to Buckinghamshire.

A certain amount is known about Pennington's life in Australia in the 1920s due to his publication in 1970 of *Christopher Brennan, Some Recollections* in whose Foreword G.A. Wilkes informs us that Pennington 'came to Sydney in 1926 as secretary to a publishing society, and stayed four years.'¹⁴ The book recounts Pennington's friendship with Brennan and his attempts to assist the poet during his ignominious years when he was drinking himself to death. Much of the book's information is repeated, without corroboration, in Axel Clark's scholarly biography of Brennan.¹⁵ Pennington's book contains another fascinating piece of information for anyone interested in *Peterley Harvest*: correspondence is reprinted addressed to him as 'David,' which a footnote explains was because 'I was called David in Sydney to avoid confusion with another Richard.'¹⁶

Another point of comparison is the portrait which appears as the frontispiece of the 1960 London edition and on the dust-jacket of the 1985

reissue and which is unidentified either by artist or subject (Illustration 1). It bears an uncanny resemblance to a mid-1940s photographic portrait of Richard Pennington and leaves the strong impression that they are portraits of the same man in youth and middle age (Illustration 2).

The major source of information on Pennington's life in the 1930s is in a small collection given by him to the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of McGill University's McLennan Library called 'The Czechoslovakia Collection – 002.53c' which, in addition to its large number of Czech travel brochures, also contains various newspaper clippings, correspondence, and memorabilia – such as invitations, programmes, and travel tickets – revealing remarkable similarity and indeed congruence between the lives of Peterley and Pennington.

It contains a copy of the weekly *Times* of London, dated 15 May 1926, in an envelope with the return address 'From Pennington, 41 Cremorne Rd, Cremorne, Sydney, Australia.' Peterley, we are told, also lived in Cremorne at this time.¹⁷ Upon his return to England in 1930, Peterley becomes quite involved in the scandal over the dismissal of Violet Douglas-Pennant as Commandant of the Women's Royal Air Force.¹⁸ The collection contains a number of press clippings dealing with this same case, indicating Pennington's interest as well. In 1936, Peterley spends a great deal of time with George Billam and J.B. Priestley discussing their play 'Spring Tide' whose opening he attends. He remarks with surprise at seeing in the programme a photograph of 'Stella,' an Australian woman to whom he had been engaged and who was now living in London, 'posed in an evening dress in a Marshall & Snelgrove advertisement.'¹⁹ The collection contains a large number of clippings of reviews of the play and a copy of its programme with the hand-written note 'opening night.' Inside, it contains two pages of Marshall & Snelgrove advertisements with photographs of models wearing evening dresses. In March of 1937, Peterley moves from Peterley House to Farm Cottage, Peterley Corner.²⁰ The collection contains Pennington's 26 September 1938 passport application form which gives as his address 'Farm Cottage, Great Missenden' – the parish in which Peterley House is located. This suggests that the choice of Peterley as the setting of the book was determined as much by Pennington living nearby as by his family's historical association with the parish. Correspondence and other pieces of ephemera in the collection show that Pennington knew people like Robert Nichols, Arthur Machen, and Hugh Seton-Watson who are also mentioned in the book.

The most intriguing point of similarity between the two lives revolves around Czechoslovakia. The collection reveals that the Czechoslovak Association existed and that Richard Pennington, not David Peterley, was its Honorary Secretary. Aside from typed lists of members, which include

Pennington, and correspondence, there are newspaper clippings, and the typescript and published copy of an article in the *News Chronicle* by 'Richard Pennington, Hon. Sec. of the Czecho-Slovak Association.'²¹ Concerning Peterley's dramatic attempt to fly to Prague on 24 September 1938, at the time of the second Munich crisis,²² the collection contains the passenger portion of an Imperial Airways Limited ticket, London to Prague, and a Sabena ticket, London to Vienna, both also dated 24 September made out to Richard Pennington.

Along with these points of congruence between the two lives, however, there are some notable differences. Unlike Peterley, Pennington came from a middle-class background and had to work for his living. While Peterley was learning about books and bibliography through self-study in the early 1930s, Pennington was studying at the University of London's School of Librarianship, from which he received a diploma in 1934. Whereas Peterley was a member of the National Liberal Club in the late 1930s, Pennington was its Gladstone Librarian. Perhaps the most awkward detail to reconcile between the two lives is Peterley's marriage and divorce in the 1930s; whether Pennington's marital career followed the same course during these years is not altogether clear.

Given then that no evidence exists that there is a David Peterley but considerable evidence that his life coincides almost exactly with Richard Pennington's when the two lives are superimposed, what is the intent of *Peterley Harvest*? Is it a hoax, spoof, autobiography, or novel? The best source of evidence on this question is probably the McClelland and Stewart papers deposited in the McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Ontario, which Mr. Jack McClelland has kindly given me permission to use but not to quote. Their importance is due to Mr. McClelland being the primary publisher of *Peterley Harvest* and having conducted with Mr. Pennington, between 1956 and 1964, one of the most intriguing and readable exchanges of correspondence which can ever have taken place between a publisher and an author.

Literary historians and theorists have long had to tussle with the distinctions between spoofs and satires on the one hand and hoaxes on the other, the *Leonardo da Vinci Cookbook* as opposed to the *Hitler Diaries*. In most cases it is obvious when a spoof or a satire is being presented as literary conventions and techniques are used and principles of satire are observed. Of course, some readers may not realize that a work is a spoof or satire as witness the initial reception of *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Flashman Papers*. Yet no one would seriously condemn them as hoaxes which, by comparison, attempt to deceive through presenting as genuine some-

thing which is not. The *Howard Hughes Autobiography* is a good modern example of a hoax.

In applying these criteria to *Peterley Harvest*, as seen through the prism of the McClelland-Pennington correspondence, one is left with an overwhelming sense of ambiguity. At times it appears that David Peterley is being presented as a real person and the book as his autobiography. At other times, there is a suggestion of the book being a spoof or novel. At yet other times there is a tacit admission of it being Pennington's autobiography. All in all, Jack McClelland gives the impression of never quite understanding what the book was and Richard Pennington of never quite clarifying the issue for him or anyone else.

This ambiguity is clearly seen in a number of published sources. Writing in the McGill alumni magazine in 1960, Pennington referred to

the memoirs of my disreputable cousin which are just being published in England and which a far-too-adventurous publisher – Mr. McClelland – is soon to issue in Canada. The difficult task of editing them fell to me, since the memoirs are part of the mass of documents that I have called the Peterley family papers and are now deposited in the University Library's manuscript collection.²³

But in October of that same year he is paraphrased and quoted as follows in the *Montreal Star*:

‘David Peterley’ is a fictional name. Because some of the people mentioned in the diary are still living, it was necessary to conceal the true identity of the author.... ‘The original diary exists and is being preserved at McGill University. So real is it, and so real were the persons concerned, and so strict are the libel laws in England that, in the process of publication, much had to be omitted. Some portions had to be slightly altered and one or two names, including that of the diarist himself, changed.’²⁴

Yet three years later, the exasperated literary editor of the *Montreal Star* after reviewing the events surrounding the initial publication of *Peterley Harvest* in 1960 and the story of the Peterley papers being at McGill quotes Pennington as follows:

But, says Pennington, who told his new publishers, who haven't bothered to tell me, ‘I wrote a *novel* which had as its theme life in the England of the period between the wars, a period that interested me because I had lived through it and because I had certain ideas about it.’²⁵

In the draft of a speech he wrote in the late 1930s on Czechoslovakia called 'Fear versus Honour,' Pennington wrote that he was neither a diplomat nor a politician, but only a librarian. One senses that, because of his background and profession, he felt that no one would take seriously his thoughts, insights, and activities. The only alternative was, therefore, to present a puzzlement, an ambiguity, which must never be clarified. To this end, he would appear to have developed a unique literary sub-genre, a slightly fictionalized autobiography masquerading as the non-fictional diary of a man who never was.

Perhaps the aspect of *Peterley Harvest* which has drawn the most comment was its sudden withdrawal from sale in 1960. Abruptly and without warning on November 4, Pennington announced his decision to both Hutchinson and McClelland and Stewart who were equally shocked and dismayed. Even though Pennington paid the costs associated with the withdrawal, his publishers were greatly upset by an action they did not entirely understand. Whether the withdrawal reflected legal problems or personal / family unpleasantness remains difficult to determine. From a variety of sources, including the McClelland-Pennington correspondence, the speculation of friends and colleagues, plus internal evidence derived from the book itself, a number of possible explanations present themselves. First, was there copyright infringement? It has been noted that the frontispiece portrait identifies neither the sitter nor artist. Did the artist object to receiving no acknowledgement? Is it possible that famous literary people of the day, or their estates, objected to not receiving acknowledgement for quotations from their works? Second, were libel charges threatened by various people who were identified by name in the book? If the book were truly a novel, why weren't pseudonyms used throughout instead of real names? Third, was Pennington's self-esteem unable to cope with the brutally negative press notices? Holroyd in his introduction to the 1985 and 1987 editions suggests that this may have played a part.

The best sources of evidence concerning the 1960 withdrawal are Pennington himself plus the changes in the later reissues of *Peterley Harvest*. In correspondence with Jack McClelland, Pennington refers to the unfavourable British reviews and to family pressure, possibly a lawsuit, as reasons for withdrawing the book from sale and for never publishing it in Canada. Over the next several years, he modifies his stand and suggests various and conflicting alterations in the text which would permit Canadian publication. In some exasperation, McClelland's staff points out, in internal memos, the inconsistencies and confusion in the proposed textual changes, and McClelland points out to Pennington the financial and legal

implications of the various publishing alternatives. Cross-purposes and incomprehension dog the entire project, so that after the Canadian edition was issued in November 1963 the alterations which, as the appended bibliographical and publishing history makes clear, centre largely upon pages 197-198, had to be further changed. While McClelland and his staff assumed full responsibility for mixing up the versions of these pages, the tone of their letters and memos makes it clear that they considered Pennington's instructions a source of confusion.

What then of the various changes? Deletion of the frontispiece portrait from the 1963 Toronto edition lends credence to the argument that the artist had claimed copyright infringement. On the other hand, since the same portrait appeared on the dust jacket of the 1985 Secker and Warburg edition, again without acknowledgement, that theory has subsequently lost some of its credibility. The real questions focus upon figuring out the significance of pages 197-198 in the original 1960 version and in the two 1963 versions.

The setting for these pages of the diary is a dinner party in a Parisian student restaurant, the evening of 23 March 1937. Present in the 1960 London edition are Peterley, 'Cousin Richard' Pennington, Mlle Françoise Armand-Périers, Mlle Laval, Simone Monnet, Jacques Diemer, Vermorel, Gilbert Sigaux, and Millot. They engage in a lively, at times heated, philosophical discussion. Several points are of interest: the name Françoise Armand-Périers seems remarkably like Françoise Julien Durand whom Pennington married in 1940; elsewhere in the book there are references to the Durand family in France; a sentence on page 197 reads 'I notice my cousin is almost silent with admiration for Mademoiselle Françoise' – the cousin is Richard Pennington; in a footnote, also on the same page, Sigaux is referred to as 'Gilbert Sigaux now the well-known novelist and critic'; on page 198 Françoise refers to Sigaux as 'my cousin.'

In the first state of the 1963 Toronto edition the setting is the same but those present are Peterley, Gaston Cottet, Annie, Gilbert Sigaux, and Françoise. Except for discussing medieval art in the first half of page 197, there is carried out almost exactly the same conversation as in the 1960 edition except by different people. Several points are of interest: 'cousin Richard' does not appear in these two pages; all the other people mentioned in the 1960 edition have also been removed except for Gilbert Sigaux and his footnote and Françoise at the bottom of page 198 saying 'Gaston my cousin...,' instead of 'Gilbert my cousin...'

In the second state of the 1963 Toronto edition, the text is identical to that of the first state with one exception, all references to Gilbert Sigaux, including the footnote, have been eliminated.

It is difficult not to assume that it was this reference to a dinner party

including 'cousin Richard' Pennington, a woman we assume to be his future wife, and a man, Gilbert Sigaux, who may be her cousin that must have been at the crux of the book's withdrawal from sale in 1960. That said, it is hard to say much else. Sigaux is apparently still alive, a much published French author and editor of whom little else is known. Pennington, Françoise, Sigaux, and some of the others in the 1960 edition are mentioned elsewhere in the book. The setting, conversation, and people in the original 1960 edition appear innocent enough. In the 1985 and 1987 editions there is a reversion to the original 1960 version of pages 197-198. Whatever problem existed in 1960 and 1963 would no longer seem to be in contention.

Other changes have appeared in the 1985 and 1987 editions which impinge directly upon the question of whether *Peterley Harvest* is a novel, a biography, or an autobiography. Richard Pennington's original Foreword has been altered with the last sentence of the first paragraph becoming two sentences. In the 1960 and 1963 editions it reads:

So that by 1939, when the journal ends, it had grown to the six bound volumes, the seventeen folders, and the bundle of Czech documents which fill the red boxes now in the manuscript collections at McGill.²⁶

In the 1985 and 1987 editions it reads:

So that by 1939, when the journal ends, it had grown to six bound volumes, seventeen folders, and a bundle of Czech documents. ments which fill the red box box now in the manuscript collection at McGill.²⁷

As the plates of the 1960 edition have provided the text, with amendments, for all successive editions, this cannot be considered a typographical or mechanical error but rather a deliberate change designed to make ambiguous to the point of nullification the original contention that the Peterley papers were housed in the McGill University Library.

Another change centres upon the names in the 'Botany Bay' section which have apparently been changed from pseudonyms in the 1960 and 1963 editions²⁸ to real names in the 1985 and 1987 editions.²⁹ The chaperon Dr. Trumple in the earlier editions becomes Dr. Rundle in the two most recent ones. Of considerably more importance, however, are the name changes of the three married couples in Sydney with whom Peterley was particularly intimate – to the point of having affairs with the wives: Dr. Talbot and Betty Talbot become Dr. Crosslé and Betty Crosslé; Peter Landell 'economic adviser to one of the banks' and Dorothy Landell become John Gunn 'a senior member of an accountancy firm' and Dorothy

Gunn; and von Beseler 'the German geologist' and Penelope von Beseler become Innes Kay 'a socially prominent solicitor' and Annabelle Innes Kay. The Crosslés, Gunns, and Innes Kays are also mentioned in Pennington's 1970 book on Christopher Brennan, and the Gunns and Innes Kays in Clark's 1980 Brennan biography.

What is the significance of these changes? To this author, the various name changes and alteration of the Foreword constitute tacit admission by Pennington that the 'Peterley papers' as opposed to the 'Pennington papers' do not exist and that *Peterley Harvest* is in effect his autobiography.

That nearly thirty years after its first publication *Peterley Harvest* should once again be in print and be the centre of so much attention and debate underlines both its ambiguous and controversial nature and its status as a minor underground classic. What are the factors that continue to keep the book in the eye of the reading public and to inspire so much comment and speculation? To begin with, the aura of scandal surrounding its original publication has never entirely deserted the book, particularly as Richard Pennington has steadfastly refused all suggestions that he provide an open and frank explanation of its intention and surrounding circumstances. In the history of Anglo-Canadian publishing it is difficult to think of any other book with as complex a trans-Atlantic publishing history and as contentious a public reception in both countries.

Perhaps a more important reason for its continuing fascination is that during this century, there has occurred a gradual blurring of the line between fiction and non-fiction, particularly between fiction and biography. Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and Gore Vidal are well known contemporary American practitioners of 'faction' – the non-fictional novel – in which factual events are presented in a fictional manner. An interesting variation is the 'docudrama' which attempts similar things on film. The danger with both 'faction' and the 'docudrama' is the uncertainty over where reality ends and fiction or speculation begins. Is Billy Bishop still a World War I flying-ace and hero or is he merely a fraud as the National Film Board of Canada's 'The Kid Who Couldn't Miss' portrays him to be? The question seems to centre around the use of historical evidence and the presentation of imagination and interpretation as fact.

Yet twentieth-century studies and experiments in biography and autobiography beg the question of whether the fact and fiction of a life can ever be disentangled. Writing in the 1920s André Maurois argued that all biography is to some extent 'autobiography disguised as biography'.³⁰ And in 1985 Brian Finney argued 'how the most factual of autobiographers are forced to fall back on some of the staple techniques of the novelist'.³¹

Given these contexts it becomes possible to appreciate *Peterley Harvest* as a continuing experiment in the blending of biography, autobiography, and fiction. It is clear that Richard Pennington has written his autobiography disguised as a biography all the while employing the techniques of the novelist.

It is perhaps Pennington's skill as a novelist which will determine ultimately whether *Peterley Harvest* will continue to be read and appreciated. Will his character sketches and insights on the human condition retain their relevance and interest for future generations? Whether they do or not, it seems likely that the book will long be appreciated for its marvellous atmosphere which conveys so effectively the ennui of the 1930s. There is an even greater likelihood of a continuing appreciation of the book's remarkable prose style. 'David Peterley writes like an angel, though Heaven would not seem to be his destination.'³²

Appendix

Peterley Harvest:

A Bibliographical and Publishing Study

The publishing and bibliographical history of *Peterley Harvest* is as complex and intriguing as any of the book's other aspects. Between 1960 and 1987 there have appeared five states with significant variations among them. As the McClelland-Pennington correspondence makes clear, McClelland and Stewart of Toronto was the primary publisher, having agreed to be so after Pennington wrote Jack McClelland in 1956 and after considerable study and negotiation. McClelland arranged for the book's co-publication by the British publisher, Hutchinson. Indeed, but for the intervention of a British shipping strike, the book would have appeared simultaneously in Toronto and London in the fall of 1960.

The five states in four editions of *Peterley Harvest* are as follows:

1. *First edition, London, 1960*

Peterley Harvest / [line 1½ cm.] / The private diary of / DAVID PETERLEY /
now for the first time printed / [publisher's device] / HUTCHINSON OF
LONDON

[1 leaf], [p.H.A., with frontispiece portrait tipped in after first leaf]⁸,
[p.H.B.]⁸, p.H.C-I, K-S⁸, [1 leaf]

Fly leaf; [p. 1], half-title page; [p. 2] blank; frontispiece portrait tipped in,
[p. 3] title page; [p. 4] verso; [p. 5,6] foreword; [p. 7] Botany Bay; [p. 8]
blank; p. 9-15; [p. 16] blank; [p. 17] Peterley; [p. 18] blank; p. 19-285;
[p. 286]; fly leaf

Between 1,000 and 2,000 copies would appear to have been printed of this first edition which is the definitive printing; all subsequent editions have employed either the original sheets or facsimile duplicates of them with variations as noted.

Verso of the title page: 'c Richard Pennington, 1960' 'This book has been set in Bembo type face. It has been printed in Great Britain by the Anchor Press, Ltd., in Triptree, Essex, on Antique Wove paper and bound by Taylor Garnett Evans & Co., Ltd., in Watford, Herts'

Binding: dark green cloth

Spine: letters in gold with red decoration

Wrapper design: by Patricia Davey with an illustration of a house on the front, with title (see page 66)

Price: 25s net

II. *Second edition, first state, Toronto, 1963*

Peterley Harvest / [line 1½ cm] / The private diary of / DAVID PETERLEY /
MCCLELLAND & STEWART LIMITED / TORONTO

Approximately 1,000 copies were published using unbound sheets from the London edition of 1960, with the following changes:

Verso of title-page: 'Copyright, Canada, 1963, by Richard Pennington'

'Printed in Great Britain'

Frontispiece portrait removed

New title page and verso tipped in [P.H.A] second leaf

Pages 197-198, third leaf of P.H.N, cancelled and replaced with a new text

Binding: dark green cloth, slightly different in colour and quality from 1960 London edition

Spine: letters in gold with red decoration, as in 1960 London edition

Wrapper design: by Frank Neufeld with flourished letters PH on the front, along with title

Price: \$ 5.00

III. *Second edition, second state, Toronto, 1963*

Identical to first state, second edition, except that at the insistence of Richard Pennington in a telegram of 20 November 1963, McClelland and Stewart cancelled a second time pages 197-198, third leaf of P.H.N, and replaced them with another revised text in which all references to Gilbert Sigaux were deleted

No issued copies of the first state were recalled; the number of copies in each of the two states of this edition is unknown

IV. *Third edition, London, 1985*

Peterley Harvest / [line 1½ cm] / The private diary of / DAVID PETERLEY /
Preface by / Michael Holroyd / Secker & Warburg / LONDON / In
association with the / Arts Council of Great Britain

Identical to first edition, London, 1960 with changes as indicated:

No frontispiece portrait

New title page as noted

Verso of title page: 'c Richard Pennington 1960' 'Preface copyright c Michael Holroyd, 1985'

'Printed in Great Britain by Redwood Burn Ltd., Trowbridge, Wiltshire'
Preface by Michael Holroyd, p. x-xvi, inserted after verso of title page and before Foreword
Foreword [p. 5] by Richard Pennington. The last sentence of the first paragraph has been altered to create two sentences, the second without subject or verb.
'Botany Bay': many of the names in the text of this section, pages 9-15, have been changed from the London (1960) and Toronto (1963) editions and now correspond to names of people mentioned in Pennington's *Christopher Brennan ... 1970*
Pages 197-198, have been returned to the wording used in the 1960 edition, with typographical correction in the first word on page 197 adding the letter 's' to 'supper.'
Binding: light blue cloth
Spine: lettering and decoration in gold and slightly different from 1960 and 1963 editions
Wrapper design: by Eric Ross who incorporated portrait from frontispiece of the 1960 edition
Price: £8.95
ISBN: 0-436-36715-7
Note: Although the original signature statements of the first edition, 1960, have been retained, they no longer coincide with the gatherings

v. *Fourth edition, Harmondsworth, England, 1987*

Peterley Harvest / THE PRIVATE DIARY OF / DAVID PETERLEY / Preface by / Michael Holroyd / [Publisher's Device] / PENGUIN BOOKS

Issued in the Penguin Modern Classics series
Identical to the third edition, London, 1985 with noted variations:
New title page as noted
Verso of title page: 'Made and printed in Great Britain by Prichard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd., Bungay, Suffolk Typeset in Bembo'
'Published in Penguin Books 1987' 'First published by Hutchinson & Co. 1960'
No indication that Michael Holroyd's Preface had earlier appeared in the 1985 edition from Secker & Warburg
Foreword by Richard Pennington retains changes introduced into the 1985 edition from Secker & Warburg
'Botany Bay': pages 9-15 retain the name changes introduced in the Secker & Warburg edition of 1985
Pages 197-198, same as 1985 edition from Secker & Warburg
Half-title page removed

Recto of first leaf, last three leaves, and verso of back cover carry editorial and advertising copy of publisher

Signature statements have been removed

Perfect binding without gatherings

Reduced size of format: using page 137 as a model page, in previous editions the text, including page number, measured 17.5 cm x 10.6 cm, in this edition it measures 16 cm x 9.9 cm

Cover design: 'the cover shows "Portrait of a Young Man" by Augustus John in the National Museum of Wales'

Price: £3.95

ISBN: 0-14-008584-X

In the McClelland-Pennington correspondence there exist two additional variant versions of pages 197 and 198 of *Peterley Harvest*: one a hand correction of the 1960 edition, the other a typeset correction, neither of which has been published.

In addition to the five states of *Peterley Harvest* described above there are at least three other Peterley publications from private presses operated by Mr. Pennington.³³ From the Redpath Press, housed in the Redpath Library of McGill University during the late 1950s and early 1960s, he issued publication number 4 in 1958, *Biscay Ballads, Printed from the Peterley Papers* [16 leaves] and publication number 7 in 1962 *Johnson's Life of Boswell, the Sole Surviving Fragment* [4 leaves]. From his retirement home at La Haye le Comte, Normandy, France he ran his Presse de l'Abricotier Abattu of which publication number 7, 1978 was *A Letter from a Father to a Son in a Distant Colony*, extracted from the 'Botany Bay' section of *Peterley Harvest*. The author has not seen this last item. As well, there are recurring rumours of the Pennington papers at the University of Toronto containing the manuscript 'Peterley in New South Wales.'

NOTES

- 1 Philip Toynbee, 'The Man Who Never Was,' *Observer*, 23 October 1960, p. 25.
- 2 'Behind His Beard,' *Times*, 27 October 1960, p. 15; David Garnett, *Listener*, 3 November 1960, p. 804; *Punch* (9 November 1960): 685; Leonard Russell, 'The Mr. P. Mystery,' *Sunday Times*, 4 September 1960, [Magazine section], p. 28; Robert Taubman, 'Irregulars,' *Spectator*, 18 November 1960, p. 786; *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 October 1960, p. 698; H.D. Ziman, "'Treasure" of McGill,' *Daily Telegraph & Morning Post*, 11 November 1960, p. 19.
- 3 'Montrealer's Book Withdrawn: Critic,' *Montreal Gazette*, 18 April 1961, p. 19.
- 4 Cathie Breslin, 'Who's Who (Pennington-Peterley Department),' *Maclean's Magazine* (3 June 1961): 65.

- 5 'Has McGill Librarian Perpetrated a Hoax?', *Montreal Star*, 17 September 1960, p. 27.
- 6 Marion B. Smith, 'Doomed Fragrance,' *Canadian Literature*, no. 21 (September 1964): 72-74.
- 7 Michael Holroyd, Preface to *Peterley Harvest* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985), p. xvi. The Preface was published also as 'Who Was David Peterley,' *London Review of Books*, 15 November-8 December 1984, pp. 6-8.
- 8 Victoria Glendinning, 'Figments of an English Life,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 April 1985, p. 374. Other reviews include: *British Book News*, June 1985, p. 363; Paul Driver, 'The Diary of a Somebody?' *Sunday Times*, 31 March 1985, p. 44; P.N. Furbank, 'Is It a Crime?' *London Review of Books*, 6 June 1985, p. 23; Christopher Hawtree, 'Solitary Reaping,' *Spectator*, 6 April 1985, pp. 21-22.
- 9 'Pennington, Richard,' *Canadian Who's Who, 1961-1963* (Toronto: Trans-Canada Press, 1963), p. 878; I.A. Shapiro, 'Letters – Pennington,' *Spectator*, 20 April 1985, p. 19.
- 10 Norman Horrocks, 'The Carnegie Corporation of New York and Its Impact on Library Development in Australia: A Case-Study of Foundation Influence' (ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1971), p. 477.
- 11 W. Page, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Buckingham* (London: Constable, 1905), vol. I, pp. 347, 350, 375.
- 12 Bernard Burke, *Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage* (London: Burke's Peerage, 1929), p. 787.
- 13 *The Victoria History of ... Buckingham* (1905-1927), vol. I, p. 332; vol. III, pp. 143, 185, 186, 189, 193, 250; vol. IV, p. 351.
- 14 G.A. Wilkes, Foreword to *Christopher Brennan, Some Recollections*, by Richard Pennington (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), p. v.
- 15 Axel Clark, *Christopher Brennan, a Critical Biography* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1980), xvi, 341 pp.
- 16 Pennington, *Christopher Brennan*, p. 43.
- 17 *Peterley Harvest* (London: Hutchinson, 1960), p. 10.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- 21 Richard Pennington, 'Europe's Storm Centre, Yesterday and Today,' *News Chronicle*, 30 May 1938, p. 10.
- 22 *Peterley Harvest*, pp. 249-263.
- 23 Richard Pennington, 'My Disreputable Cousin,' *The McGill News* (Autumn, 1960): 19, 22.
- 24 'Author Ends Peterley Puzzle,' *Montreal Star*, 15 October 1960, p. 3.
- 25 David M. Legate, 'Peterley Returns to Haunt the Critics,' *Montreal Star*, 21 December 1963 (Entertainments Section), p. 5.
- 26 *Peterley Harvest* (1960, 1963), p. [5].

- 27 Ibid. (1985, 1987), p. [5].
- 28 Ibid. (1960, 1963), pp. 9-15.
- 29 Ibid. (1985, 1987), pp. 9-15.
- 30 André Maurois, *Aspects of Biography*, trans. S.C. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 111.
- 31 Brian Finney, *The Inner I; British Literary Autobiography of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 66.
- 32 *Peterley Harvest*, (1960, 1963, 1985), dust-jacket, front flap.
- 33 Richard Pennington, 'An Account of the Redpath and Abricotier Abattu Presses,' *The Private Library*, third series, vol. 9, no. 3 (Autumn, 1986): 102-118.

ILLUSTRATION 1 Portrait which appears as the frontispiece of the 1960 London edition of *Peterley Harvest* and on the dust-jacket of the 1985 reissue.

ILLUSTRATION 2 Photographic portrait of Richard Pennington from the mid-1940s.