

FRIENDLY AMERICANS: REPRESENTING QUAKERS IN THE UNITED STATES,  
1850-1920

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## ABSTRACT

JENNIFER CONNERLEY: Friendly Americans: Representing Quakers in the United States, 1850-1920

(Under the direction of Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp)

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, representations of Quakers—like the Quaker Oats man—were perennially popular, on oatmeal canisters and throughout popular culture. In this dissertation, I examine popular representations of Quakers—in jokes, popular magazines, novels, images, advertising and other media—from 1850 to 1920. I also consider, where possible, Friends’ reactions to these depictions. During this period, popular representations of Friends typically evidence a longing for the devout distinctiveness Friends were imagined to possess—evidenced by their plain dress, plain speech, and well-known restrictions against dishonesty and oath-swearing. The traditional and visible testimonies of Friends were quickly changing during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This evolution seemed to quicken the broader population’s desire to retain and refashion a plain-dressed, old-fashioned representative of a national purity, piety, and unity that never existed.

The most striking features of Quakers depicted in nineteenth century literatures and images center around the following categories: plain speech, abolitionism and women’s rights, pacifism and war, plain dress (in the form of the Quaker bonnet), and the (in)famous Quaker Oats man. In the first body chapter, I explore the Quaker distinctive of plain speech, which seemed to acquire new and greater significance throughout the broader culture just as

Friends were abandoning the witness. Rinsed of doctrinal significance, this testimony became an attractive and admirable anachronism, signifying an imagined set of old-fashioned values. In the third and fourth chapters, I explore the ways in which the Quaker witnesses for reforms and pacifism were absorbed and transformed by purveyors of popular culture who occasionally valued these testimonies but often reshaped them to suit opposing purposes. In the fifth and sixth chapters, I explore the ways in which dress and appearance—for Quaker women and the Quaker Oats man—were interpreted and commodified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By appropriating the attractive and malleable image of a religious sectarian, American authors, artists, and entrepreneurs fashioned a normative and vaguely religious referent for American superiority.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This project began in a moment of laughter. I happened to be leaving the Chapel Hill Friends meeting house when I saw a handmade postcard tacked up by the door. On it was an image of the Quaker Oats man, pointing directly at the viewer. Under his visage appeared the slogan:

I WANT YOU  
For the Hundred Year Lamb's War

I laughed inwardly at the joke—these Friends had reclaimed an image that had capitalized on their name and their assigned virtues since the Quaker Oats man came into use in 1877. But why was he declaring war in an attitude first popularized by James Montgomery Flagg's Uncle Sam? What kind of war was this? And how, exactly, did Quakers respond to the Quaker Oats man—an emblem of the ways their image has been shaped and commodified over the past one hundred and thirty years?

These questions occurred to me in the lobby of a thriving and active meeting. Many late nineteenth century Americans would have doubted that such a meetinghouse would remain standing in the twenty-first century. The “decay of Quakerism” was a crisis that preoccupied many outside observers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Friends—knowledgeable, as always, about their reputation in the world at large—were aware



of their perpetually predicted demise. The *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer* quoted a worldly journal on the subject in May of 1855:

“The decline of Quakerism in Boston” is a subject of marked comment in some of our newspapers. It were well to look into this a little further, before we decide the matter. When there were many Quakers in Boston, there were few others opposed to Slavery, to war, to capital punishment, or to the sale and use of exciting drinks. Now there are many who entertain these and other views once peculiar to the Society of Friends. Has Quakerism then declined, or has not a great portion of the world been improved by becoming Quakerized?—*Eastern paper*.<sup>1</sup>

In 1881, an article in the popular journal *The Living Age* asserted that “Quakerism decays fast; but must always be interesting, for its founders were in advance of their time, and had a firm grasp of some eternal truths which are even now not fully received.”<sup>2</sup> Friends, of course, did not disappear, nor did Quakerism decay into oblivion. And yet, their ancient and visible witnesses were changing, much to the dismay of a watching public who longed to see Quakers preserved just as they were imagined to be in the earliest decades of the new nation.

A merry exchange in Davis B. Casseday’s 1866 novel *The Hortons* succinctly evaluates Quakers’ role in late nineteenth-century American life. Lydia Bardleigh and Bradley Horton (a betrothed couple eventually thwarted by Lydia’s affecting demise) quarrel over the Quaker legacy in the United States. Lydia insists:

“I believe Quakerism to have been one of God’s best gifts to the Anglo-Saxon race, as it was an irrepressible declaration for civil and religious liberty when sorely needed—an unfaltering protest against violence, licentiousness, and the tyranny of dead forms.”<sup>3</sup>

A more skeptical Bradley bows to Lydia’s resolution, acknowledging that

“My ancestors were of the faith a century and a half ago, when there was more meat in the shell of Quakerism, and I respect the traditions. We need, here and now, the protesting spirit of these ancients. Our national lust of gold is ripe in a harvest of mercenary priests, overreaching tradesmen, corrupt judges, and legislatures which are bought.”<sup>4</sup>

For Bradley, it is the force of the early testimonies, or “the traditions” of Quakers that make them a continually necessary presence in American public life. The traditional “spirit of these ancients” had become indispensable as many Americans struggled to fashion themselves and the history of their nation during a historical period of rapid social, economic, and religious change.

As Quaker practices and meeting disciplines shifted and changed over the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century, their visibility in society altered. After the crisis of the Civil War, many holiness and Gurneyite Quakers began to give up the longstanding and readily apparent testimonies of plain dress and plain speech. These changes within the splintered Society sparked a powerful desire outside the Society to preserve an imagined, paradigmatic American Quaker as she or he had always been. As Carl Spencer remarked in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1869, “such is the force of drab clothes, broad-brimmed hats, and a formal vocabulary in recalling the early Friends, that it is hard not to believe every Quaker simple and honest.”<sup>5</sup>

Spencer’s assessment was borne out in many of the depictions of Quakers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but these depictions often embodied opposing impulses. Representations of Friends often evidence a sentimental longing for the rural, devout, modest, and simple distinctiveness Friends were imagined to possess. And yet, their more difficult idiosyncrasies—discipline, gender egalitarianism, pacifism, abolitionism—were often ignored or altered. Literary scholar James Ryan identifies certain positive patterns for Quakers in the fiction of the period, and writes that the “formulaic representation of fictional American Quakers produces characters with unimpeachably rigorous Christian faith, living domestic lives of order and harmony. These quaint figures

appear to embody and manifest the whole range of social virtues promoted by other evangelical Christian groups—charity without condescension, complete egalitarianism, unshakable pacifism, and flawless rectitude in business affairs—to an admirable degree.”<sup>6</sup> Many representations of Quakers during the period are overwhelmingly positive—the resilient Quaker Oats man alone, dating from 1877, provides ample evidence for this stock character. And yet, casting a broader net to examine popular literatures, news items, jokes, songs, and illustrations of the period reveals a meeting-house full of represented Quakers that vary in their testimonies according to the aims and perspectives of their creators. For example, Friends were, to be sure, imagined as pious and plain. The Quaker testimony of nonresistance, however, often clouded the otherwise admiring perspective of frustrated Northerners—and was often transformed in representation into a reluctant but admirable willingness to fight. Rapidly eroding Quaker speech and Quaker dress were preserved and converted, in depictions, into attractive anachronisms that by association linked all Americans directly back to a simpler colonial past.

Considering a wide variety of representations of Quakers (over a long period of time) clarifies the ways in which observers understand and manufacture visions of these religious people and, I hope, sheds light on ways in which representations can transform, damage, or strengthen the larger culture’s memory of religious groups. As Thomas Kimber points out in his study of Quakers in late nineteenth-century dime novels, “there was good story value in these independent and eccentric figures. It is the minor traits often that are stressed, although the pacifism of the Friends is too obvious a feature to be overlooked.”<sup>7</sup> High drama and even useful “story value,” however, is insufficient to explain the persistent and numerous appearances of Quakers in literature and image throughout the middle decades of the

nineteenth century. Though several literary scholars have noted and analyzed the disproportional appearance of Quakers as stock characters in literature in the United States, no single work has assessed a variety of depictions of Quakers including both visual and textual representations, popular publications and popular music.<sup>8</sup>

Studying these representations together, while assessing the responses of ‘real’ Quakers to represented ones, also illuminates the ways in which belief and practice shift and respond to the perceptions of observers.<sup>9</sup> Quakers were never silent when they encountered depictions of themselves, and it is crucial to consider their comments on these depictions—such as their rising and persistent disapproval of the Quaker Oats man. Friends were consistently reflective, assessing both the changing practices within their fractured Society and the persona the world was crafting for them. Depictions of Quakers during the period must be studied in concert with Friendly responses to the world’s fashioning, and I situate representations in the context of responses from “real” Quakers to show how Quaker identity and practice responded to the push and pull of outsider observation.

By the mid-nineteenth century, even the old reliable and sentimentally attractive Quaker distinctives were breaking down. As Thomas Hamm has shown, the period marked a profound transformation in the Religious Society of Friends. During the 1820s, the Society fractured—one side, led by the teachings of Elias Hicks, clung to a nonrestrictive vision of the Spirit’s leading, a leading that was not necessarily bound by scripture or an emphasis on Christ. The other, Orthodox Quakers, insisted on the crucial doctrinal point of Christ’s reality and redemption. After a protracted fracture (which culminated in Hicks’s departure from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1827), Orthodox Quakers began to look more and more like the evangelical Protestants whose conversion techniques they admired. They left

behind the silent meeting, and began to reject the perceived legalism of plain dress and speech—and their adherents soon far outnumbered the Hicksite schismatics. Although this schism and shift took place almost two centuries ago, outside observers (if they think of Quakers at all) have yet to absorb or acknowledge the similarity of most Quakers to other mainline Protestants. As Hamm points out elsewhere, only today's tiny, rural, and plain Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative) “retains something that . . . most Americans vaguely associate with Quakers.”<sup>10</sup>

Observers in the nineteenth century manufactured a typical Quaker that was plain, modest, frugal, attractive, quaint, and rural. This set of assigned characteristics seems particularly odd when, as Frederick Tolles has shown, Quakers were among the most materially successful groups in the early republic. The best known Quakers were neither rural nor particularly frugal—Tolles's well-known use of the “of the best sort, but plain” paradigm illuminates the reality that, for the most part, Friends lived in relative affluence. As historian of Quakerism Douglas Gwyn points out, early changes to George Fox's initial unrestricted vision for Friendly leadership (prompted, in part, by the James Nayler scandal) tended to weaken the dissenting covenant by inscribing a guiding hierarchy on the faith.<sup>11</sup> This hierarchy, in turn, ensured the Quaker path to capitalist success. Nineteenth-century Friends, therefore, were dissenters who, while clinging (for the most part) to their insistence on social justice, had certainly made the most of their material opportunities in the United States, and were most closely associated with the “Quaker City” of Philadelphia. As Edwin Gaustad makes clear, the Quakers (like so many other groups in U.S. history) became, by the nineteenth century, dissenters without an establishment to dissent from.<sup>12</sup> This disconnect (coupled with the reformation of the mid-eighteenth century and the splits of the early

nineteenth) likely muddled the waters of Quaker identity both within and without the sect. And yet, Friends typically are depicted in natural settings, faithful to the trappings of plainness, but stripped of their doctrinal differences with the broader culture. Moreover, representations of Friends as rural Americans elided the continuing complexity of the transatlantic Quaker network.

As models for this project, I relied on the work of Shari Huhndorf and Philip Deloria on American Indians, David Weaver-Zercher on the Amish in the twentieth century, and Terryl Givens and Jenny Franchot on nineteenth century Mormons and Catholics, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Each of these scholars focuses on the organizing tropes of representing religious and/or ethnic groups. Deloria explores the long history of commodifying and assuming American Indian identity—a history defined by an understanding that “white Americans . . . [are] fixated on defining themselves as a nation.” Franchot and Givens examine groups that were widely despised by those with the cultural power to represent them. While Givens attempts to explain Protestant dislike of Mormonism, Franchot identifies a clear undercurrent of Protestant fascination and longing for the Catholics they’re depicting. This fascination with the constructed other is often nuanced by a longing to own or even to impersonate. Both Shari Huhndorf and David Weaver-Zercher construct histories of Americans’ romance with people they wish to imitate (to a point): “playing” the defused American Indian and “owning” the goods produced by the hale and healthy Amishman. These authors’ findings about their subjects resonate with outsiders’ approaches toward Quakers during the nineteenth century: revision, commodification, and consumption.

The stark differences between these groups and the Quakers is clear: the Religious Society of Friends, after the earliest period of Puritan persecution, was and remains a

materially and culturally privileged presence in the United States. They are perennially outspoken. They are overwhelmingly white.<sup>14</sup> And representations of them, throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, are often celebratory and occasionally verge on the panegyric.

Depictions of Quakers in the nineteenth century provide a useful category for analysis precisely because the representations of Friends are so often positive. Observers of the sect illuminated those aspects of the traditions—not the theology—they most admired and omitted or contravened those they didn't. The attractive features of Friends were highlighted and their dissenting doctrines were domesticated or expunged. Observers' constructions of Quaker characters and figures provide an opportunity for illuminating the ways American religious dissent can be simultaneously celebrated and dismissed.<sup>15</sup>

There is an ever-increasing interest in the material culture surrounding Quaker history. Observers and insiders have been captive to the persistent myth of Quaker simplicity until very recently, though Frederick B. Tolles's *Meeting House and Counting House* began to mend the misunderstanding decades ago.<sup>16</sup> The best recent work on Quaker material culture is Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck's 2003 collection, *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*.<sup>17</sup> Though the essays in this volume focus primarily on material artifacts produced by Quakers, Lapsansky's introduction raises important questions about often surprising outsider perceptions of practicing Quakers.

Many historians have addressed the political, cultural, and theological place of Quakers in the U.S. landscape (Margaret Hope Bacon, Frederick Tolles, Rufus Jones, Rebecca Larson, and Thomas Hamm among them).<sup>18</sup> Only a few, however, have attempted to assess

the slippery category of representation (although Rebecca Larson devotes a chapter to the wider reception of eighteenth-century women Public Friends). Three Ph.D. dissertations have been devoted to the proliferation of Quaker characters in American literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Glen Nelson Cummings has written on literary depictions of antislavery Quakers, and Thomas Kimber and Betty Jean Steele have written on Quaker characters as they appear in novels of the period.<sup>19</sup> My own work, while acknowledging and occasionally exploring the significance of Quaker characters in novels of the period, attempts to cast a broader net, analyzing both popular writing and material culture. Moreover, I have tried, where possible, to illuminate the responses of living Quakers to their depicted image as it was refracted through the desires and feelings of a broader public.

I have chosen the dates 1850 and 1920 to frame this analysis, for two reasons. First, these dates signaled particularly significant changes in the outward witness of Quakers. By 1850, the powerful influence of holiness Quakers was increasing, and the erosion of the plain traditions became a live possibility; by 1920, plain speech and plain dress had vanished. I also choose these dates with reference to the Quaker witness of nonresistance. As historians James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter argue, the practice of shaping historical narratives around timelines determined by wars and other violent acts reinforces the “linkage of violence and freedom in U.S. experience.”<sup>20</sup> By avoiding the historical bookends suggested by the Civil War and World War I (while acknowledging their devastating effects on Quakers and others), I echo Juhnke and Hunter’s call for alternative historical chronologies.

The most striking features of Quakers depicted in nineteenth century literatures and images center around the following categories: plain speech, abolitionism and women’s



rights, pacifism and war, plain dress, and the (in)famous Quaker Oats man. I have organized my chapters around these. In the second chapter, I explore the Quaker distinctive of plain speech, which seemed to acquire new and greater significance throughout the broader culture just as Friends were abandoning the witness. Rinsed of doctrinal significance, this testimony became an attractive and admirable anachronism, signifying an imagined set of old-fashioned values. In the third and fourth chapters, I explore the ways in which the Quaker witnesses for reform and pacifism were absorbed and transformed by purveyors of popular culture who occasionally valued these testimonies but often reshaped them to suit opposing purposes. In the fifth and sixth chapters, I explore the ways in which dress and appearance—for Quaker women and the Quaker Oats man—were interpreted and commodified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, I have relied on Quaker jokes to light the way between chapters; these jokes were a remarkably popular means of discourse about Quakers throughout the nineteenth century. Including them here allows me to share some of the best and most poignant of these religious jokes, and to gesture to the deep significance of humor as a lens for interpreting and reshaping the witness of religious people.

Studying representations of groups like the Society of Friends can be particularly fruitful for scholars of religion. Representations of persons or groups are often more persistent in cultural memory and carry more cultural purchase than the persons or groups themselves. As Nell Irvin Painter demonstrates in her expansive biography of Sojourner Truth, it is in relentless and often confused representations that Truth's life and influence persist and shift, more than a century after her death.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Quaker cultural influence is ebbing, while the power and image of the Quaker Oats man persists.

In the depictions I have examined in this project, the Quaker is often figured as the static remainder of a simpler time—curious and quaint, but really not so different from ordinary Americans after all. Quakers were imagined to be thrifty, honest, pious, and diligent, overcoming a history of persecution to enter into prosperous contentment—and their invented history comforted many Americans confronted by rapid changes both within the Society and without. Some of the questions I hope to raise through the chapters that follow are these: What is the nature of religious identity? To what degree is it constructed by adherents—and to what degree is it imposed by observers? The powerful cultural memory of Quakerism enabled outside observers to encounter, represent, and consume an exoticized and yet comfortably near religious sect.

Mrs. J.L. Hallowell wrote a paean to the Quaker household in *The Atlantic Monthly* in August 1872. She suggested that the peace and refinement to be found there was almost holy, such that

The wayfaring man may well put off his shoes from his feet when he crosses a Quaker threshold. Peace and holiness dwell therein, and the home is an embodiment of spotless housekeeping and refined and gentle taste.<sup>22</sup>

Four years earlier, an article in *Putnam's* had declared that

In certain ways, Quakers represent the most respectable social development we have in this democratic country. What mortal can be more respectable than an Arch Street Philadelphia Quaker? Is he not the very incarnation of moral dignity and honest worth? . . . Prosperity, also, shines very generally on the modern Quaker, and the recollection of ancient adversity only heightens by contrast the intensity of the present glow of his abundant peace and plenty. . . . [D]ead formalism has been the outcome of this Quaker respectability, regularity, and regard for old customs. Not all dead though, for sweet, quaint homes belong to these staid Quakers, and out of them have come many pure and earnest natures. . . . Is extinction at hand? Some people conceive this to be the case. But let such as incline to this view first study the history of Friends for the last twenty years, and they will see how the elements of good in the society, its spirituality, practical morality, and unselfish simplicity, are tending to renew its life almost in spite of itself.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, extinction was not at hand. Quakers remained. Some of them now wage the Hundred Years Lamb's War, a long-term peace initiative outlined in 2003 by American Quaker Chuck Fager in response to the National Security Strategy of the United States.<sup>24</sup> They remain troubled by the Quaker Oats man and all that he implies about the living Quaker witness.<sup>25</sup> And so, the flurry of representations that accompanied their late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century existence continues to shape their self-perceptions, and has undoubtedly influenced the impact of the Quaker witness on American society.

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<sup>1</sup> *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer* 12, no. 8 (Fifth month 12, 1855): 128.

<sup>2</sup> E. Bagwell, "Quakerism in Ireland (From Temple Bar)," *The Living Age* (April 16, 1881): 170. *Making of America*, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Davis B. Casseday, *The Hortons, or, American Life at Home* (Philadelphia: James S. Claxton, 1866), 252. *Wright American Fiction, 1851-1875*. <http://www.letts.indiana.edu/web/w/wright2/>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Spencer, "Homeward," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 38, no. 227 (April 1869): 700-701, 701. *Making of America*, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> James Ryan, "Imaginary Friends: Representing Quakers in Early American Fiction," *Studies in American Fiction* 31, no. 2 (August 2003), 191-220.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Kimber, "The Quaker in the Dime Novel," *The Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 43, no. 2 (1954): 108-111.

<sup>8</sup> One of the most helpful studies of Quakers in literature is James Ryan's "Imaginary Friends." Anna Breiner Caulfield catalogs twentieth century depictions of Friends in *Quakers in Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography* (Northampton, MA: Pittenbruach Press, 1996). Thomas Kimber provides a review of "The Treatment of the Quaker as a Character in American Fiction, 1825-1925" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1953). See also: Wynn M. Goering, "'To Obey Rebelling': The Quaker Dilemma in *Moby Dick*," *New England Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1981): 519-538.

<sup>9</sup> Quakers have long been deeply interested in their reputation with the broader public. A column in *The American Friend* (which later merged with *Quaker Action* to form today's *Quaker Life*) during the 1910s was entitled "As Others See Us." As the decade wore on, Friends became more and more concerned with the use of the Quaker name as a trademark, and expressed their displeasure in print and through litigation and legislation. "Protect the Quaker Name," *The American Friend* (First Month 13, 1916): 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003), 3. The North Carolina Yearly Meeting is also a well-known Conservative group. Additionally, there are plain Quakers scattered across the United States. Distant from meetings, they often attend other churches and occasionally seek membership in other plain groups.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 1995). In the mid seventeenth century, the meeting system was institutionalized in England. This change was enacted partially in response to the dissent of Martha Simmons and James Nayler, who had begun in 1655-56 to question George Fox and other prominent Friends. Simmons and her followers came to equate Nayler with

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Christ; Nayler tended to agree, and was tried and imprisoned for blasphemy—and repudiated by the increasingly organized larger body of Friends. Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, 20-21.

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Gaustad, *Dissent in American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

<sup>13</sup> Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 5. Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001). Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). David Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish in the American Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001). Terryl Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hamm points out that, ironically, “[e]ven as Friends concluded that slavery was wrong, they were slow to embrace black people as full members of the Society of Friends.” *Quakers in America*, 170. In the present day, Hamm continues, “[w]e have no statistics on how many African Americans belong to or attend Quaker meetings. Impressions are that they are less than 1 percent of all American Friends.” *Quakers in America*, 172. Likewise, there are no available statistics on Latino/a, American Indian, or other minority ethnic rates of membership.

<sup>15</sup> Both Sacvan Bercovitch and William Hutchison inform my understanding of cultural perceptions of “good” Quaker Americans. As Bercovitch argues in his now-classic and inescapable *The American Jeremiad*, all attempts at dissent in America are ultimately subsumed and quashed by the persistent myth of America as a sanctified (though fallen) space. Quaker dissent, likewise, has all but vanished as an insistent presence in the American cultural landscape. As William Hutchison points out, it is only because we have imagined ourselves to be a plural nation, open to religious dissent from the beginnings, does the ideal of pluralism retain any purchase on our ideology of American life. *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978). *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963, c1948).

<sup>17</sup> Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck, eds., *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1921). Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962). Margaret Hope Bacon, *The Quiet Rebels: The Story of Quakers in America* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1985). Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

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Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999). Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003). Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> Betty Jean Steele, "Quaker Characters in Selected American Novels, 1823-1899," Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1974; Thomas Kimber, "The Treatment of the Quaker as a Character in American Fiction, 1825-1925," Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1954; Glen Nelson Cummings, "Exercising Goodness: The Antislavery Quaker in American Writing, 1774-1865," Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace* (Ontario: Pandora Press, co-published with Herald Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Mrs. J.L. Hallowell. "A Quaker Woman," *The Atlantic Monthly* 30, no. 178 (August 1872): 220-225, 220.

<sup>23</sup> "Current Events," *Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art* 11, no. 2 (February 1868): 249-253, 253. *Making of America*, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/index.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Chuck Fager, "A Quaker Declaration of War: A Presentation to Illinois Yearly Meeting—7<sup>th</sup> Month 30, 2003," *Quaker House*, <http://quakerhouse.org/declaration-01.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> I had the opportunity to share my work on the Quaker Oats man with the youth group of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting; on that occasion they shared with me all the stereotypes and misconceptions about Quakers they face in public school, particularly since the beginning of the current war.

A Quaker came before two judges at an assize as a witness, when he made frequent use of the words *also* and *likewise*. "Prithee, man," cried one of their lordships, "why do you vary these words so often, have not they both the same signification?" "No, truly," said the Quaker, "their meaning is very different; as, for example, Sergeant Bettsworth is a judge upon this bench; thou art one *also*, but not *like-wise*."

"Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (September 19, 1863): 599.

## CHAPTER 2

### PLAIN SPEECH

Herman Melville accounts—but only so far—for the inscrutable natures of his Nantucket whalers in the 1851 novel *Moby-Dick; or, the Whale* by drawing attention to the peculiar combination of their profession and their speech.

So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture names—a singularly common fashion on the island—and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these un-outgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman.<sup>1</sup>

So, Melville goes on to argue, it is the accident of their “bold and nervous lofty language,” combined with their sanguinary profession that forms them for such extraordinary lives.<sup>2</sup>

Melville employs the Friendly and “stately dramatic thee and thou” throughout the course of the novel. Quakers faithful and unfaithful throughout the text make use of these words, the most common and widely-recognized peculiarities in the Quaker lexicon. They remind us always of Ahab’s origins.

Melville was not alone in attributing a peculiar power to the “Quaker idiom.” Writers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were fond of using archaic Quaker speech and even Quaker silence as a tool to sketch Friendly characters and to highlight adherence to (or departures from) perceived Quaker values. *Thee, thou*, and the silent meeting proliferated throughout both fiction and non-fiction, and they were particularly



noticeable during the decades when distinctive Quaker speech was disappearing most rapidly and when the “programmed” worship services of Orthodox Friends had outpaced the old silent meetings of the liberal Hicksite minority. Plain speech and Quaker silence, however, were in no danger of disappearing from the public imagination; journalists, poets, and fiction writers used the Quaker *thee* and *thou* as simple spoken signals weighted with myriad meanings. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Quaker plain speech provided an immediate referent to all the virtues associated with Friends: honesty, soberness, wisdom, frugality, and wealth. A Quaker speaker’s *thee* was also a simple and immediate marker of Friends’ long American pedigree, a dying remnant of a reimagined colonial past. Moreover, during an age distressed by questions about scriptural translation and authority, Quaker plain speech resonated with the reassuring and ancient language of the King James Bible. Quaker silent worship provided a novel alternative to the noisy volubility associated with modern life. In this chapter, I will argue that through their words and their silences, written plain Quakers were imagined to be living, speaking anachronisms strongly associated with the fading virtues of a continually invented American past.

Though it lacked systematic study throughout the nineteenth century, Quaker speech and silence were widely recognized and appreciated—even if that recognition was irreverent. Henry David Thoreau, for example, wrote to his sister Sophia in 1856 that “I attended a sort of Quaker meeting . . . (the Quaker aspect and spirit prevail here,—Mrs. Spring says, “Does thee not?”), where it was expected that the spirit would move me (I having been previously spoken to about it); and it, or something else, did, —an inch or so. I said just enough to set them a little by the ears and make it lively.”<sup>3</sup> Plain speech was a crucial part of the popular personality of the paradigmatic “Quaker,” and remained so even after most Quakers

abandoned that testimony. Kate Watkins Tibbals notes the picturesque effects of the “great gift of tongues that descended upon England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. . . . [T]he Society of Friends has embalmed as in precious amber the words and phrases of the most religiously and therefore most prophetically gifted spirits of that great age.”<sup>4</sup>

Since the demise of plain speech, there have been several studies of pronoun usage and patterns of silence and speech during the Friends’ first three centuries. The most useful and broad-ranging of these is Richard Bauman’s *Let Your Words Be Few*, an exhaustive study of the practices and context of seventeenth-century English Quakers in speaking and silence.<sup>5</sup> There is no study, however, which specifically addresses the ways Quaker speaking and silence were represented by outside observers. I will not attempt in the pages that follow a sociolinguistic study or catalog of Quaker speech as represented in period texts; nor will I attempt to reconstruct or recover the realities of regional Quaker speech through these texts during the period. Such studies, however fruitful, would be nearly impossible. The widespread presence of Quakers in fiction and their disproportional influence on public life during the period would make cataloging printed representations of their speech a fearsome task. Instead, I will investigate more broadly the multiple connotations of represented Quaker speech (and silence) using a small number of late nineteenth and early twentieth century popular texts. Moreover, I will situate these representations in the context of the real and rapid disappearance of the plain speech and silence among period Friends.

## **I. Quaker Plain Speech**

From the earliest decades of persecution to the last decades of the nineteenth century, plain speech was an immediate, consistent, and peculiar mark of Quaker identity. Among Friends, the plain speech testimony preceded even plain dress as a theological imperative. The

earliest English Quakers were gripped with a desire to live and speak in perfect accord with the directives of the New Testament; the simplicity of speaking directed in the Sermon on the Mount burned vividly in their minds, and is reflected in George Fox's earliest commandments from God:

Moreover when the Lord sent me forth into the world, he forbade me to put off my hat to any, high or low; and I was required to 'thee' and 'thou' all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small. And as I travelled up and down, I was not to bid people 'good morrow' or 'good evening.'<sup>6</sup>

So, plain speech, as it was practiced by Fox and other early Quakers, sought extremes of literal truth and rejected idle forms. The first Quakers discarded honorary titles. They dispensed with physical greetings implying deference (such as bows and curtsies) and verbal greetings which risked dishonesty. As Quaker speech historian Richard Bauman explains, early Quakers believed that "to wish somebody a good day when he was in an evil day, because he was not in the Light, was both to speak a lie and to partake of his evil deeds oneself."<sup>7</sup> Quakers would not (and in many cases, still do not) swear testimony, taking literally Jesus's directive in Matthew 5:34-37: "Swear not at all . . . But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."<sup>8</sup> Unwilling to speak the "pagan" English names of the days and months, they substituted ordinal numbers for both.<sup>9</sup> Outsiders noticed the peculiarities of Quaker speech from the earliest years; Francis Howgill wrote in 1654 that "we have had strong fightings . . . at some steeple-houses. And though they have our persons in contempt, they say none speak like us."<sup>10</sup>

Most noticeable of all was the Quaker practice of addressing all people by the homely and intimate *thee* and *thou* rather than the accepted *you* for their social superiors. When the

first Friends used *thee* to address everyone, instead of only their intimates or social inferiors, it was interpreted as an offense against the English code of deference. Insulted by this discourtesy, English nobles often harassed or attacked early plain-speaking Quakers. American Friends maintained this and the other forms of plain speech, along with their plain dress, for centuries after the period of persecution—and for centuries after the pronouns, and their leveling implications, had disappeared from common spoken English. As H.L. Mencken points out, *thou* had “passed out of ordinary polite speech by Elizabeth’s day.”<sup>11</sup> *You* won the day as the preferred singular and plural pronoun in common English usage just as the earliest Quakers were rejecting it.

Whatever the reasons for its peculiarity, Friends developed an exhaustive series of justifications for keeping up their plain speech from the very decades it began. Grammatical correctness and the language of scripture were among these explanations.<sup>12</sup> As the great Quaker historian Rufus Jones points out, these defenses were

never adequate to explain its use. . . . It was a badge. It differentiated Friends. It separated them from the world and bound them together into a peculiar unity. The ‘thou-speakers’ belonged together in a bond that firmly held.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, Richard Bauman argues that the “plain style served as an identity badge for the Quakers” from the earliest days of the Society.<sup>14</sup>

Along with plain dress, the plain speech proved to be among the most vulnerable of the Quaker theological distinctives. As early as the late 1850s, some American Friends felt the need to defend the plain speech. The Orthodox American journal *The Friend* asserted in February of 1859 that “the faithful members of our religious Society are clothed with sadness” from seeing certain Friends, young and old, transgress the plain testimony. The

Society's ancient members, *The Friend* asserted, had good reason for their peculiarities of speech:

Their calling the days of the week and the months of the year by their numerical names, though to some it appeared singular, yet it was no unimportant part of the great whole of the testimonies which the Lord laid upon them to bear to the world.<sup>15</sup>

It is not entirely clear why mid-century American Friends had begun to abandon their plain speech. After the Civil War, increasingly influential holiness and evangelical Friends seriously questioned the theological implications of plain speech—and of their broad-brimmed hats and bonnets. As Thomas Hamm points out, holiness Friends “had no desire to be worldly, and they said that a Christian should speak and dress plainly, but they felt that wearing the traditional Quaker garb and holding to the archaic forms of speech fell into the category of dead works, from which they were free.”<sup>16</sup> Where these Friends led, other Quakers followed. By the 1870s, plain speech had eroded fairly seriously; Thomas Ellwood, writing in *The Friend* in 1873, admonished his fellow Friends to beware of the present crisis. He took both the grammatical and scriptural tacks, claiming that “speaking in the plural number to a single person, you to one, instead of thou,” was evidence of the work of “corrupt men, for corrupt ends, in later and corrupt times.”<sup>17</sup> Friends that did retain the plain speech during this time of upheaval often borrowed from the language of early Quakers, characterizing their peculiar speech as a cross—scorned now not only by the world but by many of their fellow Friends. Some plain Quakers, immovable despite the linguistic degeneracy around them, even gladly assented to what Rufus Jones later suspected—that plainness of speech was a both badge and hedge, a sign of their refusal to “conform to the world.”<sup>18</sup> These same conservative Friends brought the practical defenses of cost and health

to the plain dress debates, as we will see in Chapter Five. But they lacked these same defenses for plain speech, and by the nineties, its disappearance seemed inevitable.

Richard Bauman argues that the intent and effect of the earliest plain speech was to “[challenge] the social structure and the structure of social relations in very fundamental ways.”<sup>19</sup> But by the period under consideration, observers recognized that the implications of American Quaker speech had reversed absolutely. Even Kate Watkins Tibbals, an admiring and sympathetic student of the dying Quaker language, remarked in 1926 that

as in so many historic cases, a usage planned originally in the interests of democracy has by the simple passage of time become aristocratic. . . . To speak ‘the plain language’ is no longer, curiously enough, to be ‘plain,’ but to be ‘select,’ ‘precious,’ the members of an esoteric cult.”<sup>20</sup>

The American public had acquired a taste for this “select” language, however, and saw in it something of themselves, something they longed to see preserved.

By 1894, well-known peace advocate and Friend Benjamin F. Trueblood made a “Friendly Exposition” of the “New Quakerism” in the evangelical Quaker journal *The American Friend*. He saw in this “new Quakerism” the relinquishing

of the language of “thee” and “thou,” and of the numerical designations of the days of the week and of the months. These forms of speech are still used to a considerable extent as a family and a church language, but in general no stress is laid upon such use as a matter of principle. The principles of non-respect of persons and of Christian simplicity in dress, manner and speech, out of which these practices originally grew, are still maintained in their true meaning, but the forms of the past are considered as no longer of any binding force.<sup>21</sup>

Plain speech, among Quakers, was now perceived as a dispensable form rather than a central testimony to the plainness mandated by scripture or the directive of the Inner Light. Plain speech lasted longest in Philadelphia, but it had passed almost entirely from wide public use by the 1920s. It did, however, remain common in conversations between intimate or familial

Friends for some years later.<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth F. Shipley, Quaker and linguist, notes that several Philadelphia families were using the plain language up through the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>23</sup> Though some of today's Friends can recall the use of plain speech in the families of their youth, *thee* and *thou* finally have disappeared entirely, except among plain Conservative Friends. Some of these Quakers—who also have revived some of the trappings of the plain costume—have made self-conscious efforts to resurrect plain speech in private conversation with each other. In this age of electronic communications, they even exchange what they wittily term “thee-mail.”<sup>24</sup>

## II. Bad Grammar

When plain speech still was heard regularly, those who were less fond of Friends were likely to accuse them of being ungrammatical. In speaking, most nineteenth and early twentieth century Quakers tended to use *thee* almost exclusively for both the nominative and accusative forms. For example, Quakers today might say: *Will you bring your pencil to meeting?* Plain-speaking Quakers of more than a century ago would have said: *Will thee [rather than thou] bring thy pencil to meeting?* Sympathetic observers like language historian Ezra Kempton Maxfield insisted that “We are aware of the refinement and cultivation of this people and do not expect them to use language ignorantly.”<sup>25</sup> Less sympathetic to Quaker principles and Quaker speech was Robert Montgomery Bird, author of the 1837 *Nick of the Woods* and bloody Nathan Slaughter (one of the most violent Quakers ever to appear in fiction). Bird commented on Quaker grammar in his earlier and still stranger novel, *Sheppard Lee*. In this 1836 work, the hero—Sheppard Lee—is killed in the early moments of the novel, leaving his spirit to rove about the United States, inhabiting a series of other bodies. Each body dies in turn, leaving Sheppard Lee scrambling to find another recently

deceased body to inhabit. In one episode, “Sheppard” tumbles into a snowdrift and encounters a man whose archaic speech is both extreme and comic.

‘Who art thou, friend?’ said he, ‘and what are thy distresses?  
If thou art in affliction, peradventure there is one nigh at hand who  
will succour thee.’ . . . And with that honest Broadbrim  
(for such I knew by his speech he must be) descended from the  
chair, and helped me out of the drift.<sup>26</sup>

Sheppard recognizes that his benefactor, Zachariah Longstraw, is a Quaker, based on his *thous* and *peradventure* alone. Bird (like his creation Sheppard) was deeply critical of the abolitionist cause; therefore, his Quaker’s speech—and his later conduct—are marred by ridiculous excesses. Longstraw’s nephew later gives explicit voice to Bird’s skepticism about Quaker speech, explaining that

when I get among the people of the world, I speak to them in the  
language of the world; for, poor ignorant creatures, they don’t  
understand Quaker. Moreover, uncle, does thee know Ellen Wild is  
of opinion we Friends don’t speak good grammar? Now she and I  
spent a whole hour the other evening trying to parse ‘*thee is*,’ ‘*thee does*,’  
‘*thee loves*,’ and so on, and we could not work them . . . I say, uncle,  
does thee know of any command in Scripture to speak bad grammar?” (73)

Bird figures “Quaker” as a language unto itself, and the Friends who speak it as sorry for the “poor ignorant creatures” who cannot understand their words. As we will see, however, Bird’s criticism of Quaker grammar was soon forgotten in a vast sweep of more positive depictions of *thee* and *thou*.

### III. Simplicity

“Simplicity” was a favorite adjective for characterizing Quakers throughout the period. In the latter half of the nineteenth century—particularly in the North—the earliest truly American character traits were imagined as “the sternness of the Puritan, the simplicity of the Quaker, and the elegant manners of the Cavalier;”<sup>27</sup> a neat table was set with “Quaker



simplicity,”<sup>28</sup> and a plain coat could be a “model of Quaker-like simplicity.”<sup>29</sup> So, too, simple and direct speech was characterized as Friendly. Ralph Waldo Emerson imagined ancient Plato as “plain as a Quaker in habit and speech.”<sup>30</sup> A tiny (non-Quaker) girl in John Norton’s 1855 novel *Full Proof of the Ministry* echoes the straightforward manner Emerson attributed to the ancient philosopher:

“Well, my little girl, do you wish to see me about anything?”—  
“Yes,” she answered, with Quaker simplicity—“Pappy wants you.”<sup>31</sup>

Despite the little girl’s worldly “you,” her language indicates that *Quaker* and *simplicity* had become synonymous, and Quaker speech implied a straightforward plainness and honesty.

The body of Quaker expressions were then and continue to be denoted as “plain speech” or “plain language.” Over the course of the nineteenth century in the United States, both of these phrases developed the additional, common meanings they retain today. As historian Kenneth Cmiel points out, in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, the term “plain speaking” was uncomplimentary; it denoted an unrefined rhetoric, “valuing truth over politeness, no matter how hard the language might sound.”<sup>32</sup> By the latter part of the century, however, the directness and simplicity of “plain speech” had become the most respectable commodity—“the preferred style.”<sup>33</sup> We retain this meaning in our own time; to tell someone the truth, in plain speech, is reckoned a commendable undertaking. The designated “plain speech” or “plain language” of the Quakers, although it varied so widely from the unornamented style in vogue by the end of the century, must have benefited by association with the new, more widely held understanding of the phrase during the decades under consideration here.

When Quakers were represented in print, the words *thee* and *thou* were the most common and most immediate textual markers of their religious identity. Though plain dress

would have been the quickest way to identify a Friend in person, plain speech was the easiest way to indicate Quaker identity and its myriad associated virtues in print. The brief four-letter *thee* issuing from the mouth of a speaker carried an immense burden of meanings. Even when authors understood the original theological impetus for plain language, the represented Quaker *thee* and *thou* carried a range of associated values: simplicity, honesty, soberness and propriety, philanthropy, and a simultaneously humble and aristocratic caution in speech.

Throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, Quakers were widely presumed to be scrupulously honest, having long since cast off their early colonial reputation as shrewd and occasionally untrustworthy businesspeople.<sup>34</sup> Particularly during the antebellum era, Quaker speech and testimony often was figured as simple, dependable, and direct; by the 1870s, advertisers began to take advantage of this strong association, even as the distinctive Quaker idiom began to fade. An 1872 advertisement in *Harper's Weekly* for the Beckwith sewing machine directed readers to:

Read what an honest Quaker says:  
Westchester, Pa., 7<sup>th</sup> month, 10<sup>th</sup>, 1872.  
Respected Friend:  
We value the little Ten-Dollar Sewing Machine highly. . . . With  
a little care and patience in the beginning, it will do all that is promised  
for it.  
Respectfully thy friend, Wm. P. Townsend<sup>35</sup>

This advertisement quoted the full letter penned by the “honest Quaker,” which included a great deal of detail about Townsend’s sickly wife and her remarkable achievements in sewing. Next month, the Beckwith advertisement featured only an excerpt of this letter, but by then Townsend had become “a highly esteemed Quaker” (who had written to the company on “8<sup>th</sup> mo., 15<sup>th</sup> day”).<sup>36</sup> Which of the two dates was correct? Did the letter—or

Townsend—even exist? These questions matter less than the advertisements’ faithfulness to the speech patterns of the “honest Quaker.” Townsend addresses the company as a “Respected Friend;” moreover, he makes use of the intimate and unlikely “thy” in a letter to the “world.” Quoting these words in the advertisement, along with preserving Townsend’s Quakerish dates, draws the Beckwith company via a halo effect into the trustworthy society of all “Friends.” Beckwith was only one of many companies who would take advantage of the public’s association between Quakers and honest dealings. As we will see in Chapter Six, 1877 heralded the birth of the world’s most famous advertising “Quaker.” He spoke in plain speech as late as the 1960s, claiming in a popular catchphrase that “Nothing is better for thee, than me”; he now probably smiles at you now from behind your cupboard door.<sup>37</sup>

The public willingness to hear and trust Quaker speech at the turn of the century was so great that *thee* could be turned to more sinister purposes. In 1902, a special item in the *New York Times* noted that an aged and “alleged swindler” in Chicago had taken advantage of the public trust in plain speech:

On charges of swindling Catholic schools, business houses, and private persons of money as an agent for the “Birds and All Nature Picture Company,” Thomas Cowley, seventy-one years old, is locked up. It is said that he made his victims believe he was a Quaker, sprinkling his speech with “thee” and “thou” when trying to get money on orders.<sup>38</sup>

The most curious aspect of this escapade is that Cowley had only to assume the *thee* and *thou*; these words were sufficient to assure his deceived bird-fanciers that he was a Quaker, trustworthy and true. It is not clear whether he ever asserted that he *was* a Quaker—did he dress as a Quaker? Did he introduce himself as “Friend”? Apparently, his charlatan’s costume consisted only of those two words, and his victims’ willingness to hear them.

Quaker plain speech had disappeared almost entirely from public life by 1909, when the *New York Times* ran a little anecdote on “The Quaker Shop Girl.” This item—quoted below in its entirety—hinted at the myriad meanings attached to Friends’ ever more “quaint” speech:

‘I bought this ribbon,’ said the shopper, ‘from a girl who sprinkled her conversation with Quaker “thee’s” and “thou’s.” I talked with her longer than was necessary, just to hear those Quaker expressions. She was the first person I have ever seen behind the counter who thee’d and thou’d her customers. I have bought goods of girls who spoke in every European accent imaginable, not to mention our different American dialects, but the Quaker phrases were a novelty. I let the girl know that I considered her a regular curiosity in a shop.

“Most people do,” she said. “Employers do not like the Quaker speech in a store because it makes the speaker so conspicuous. For business purposes I try to break myself of the habit, but the quaint old words will slip out now and then.”<sup>39</sup>

This shopper’s story, for all its quotations, might be a fiction. But its trajectory points to many of the associations linked with *thee* and *thou*. The shop girl’s simple and intimate words were inherently opposed to, and even suppressed by, a new economy of spending and shopping. They were imagined to be indicative of a long American pedigree, clearly suggesting a woman somehow different and more attractive than those saleswomen who spoke recently learned English in “every European accent imaginable.” The Quaker was set apart even from the more commonplace run of American women behind the counter; her words called up a long Quaker reputation for honesty, simplicity, and piety. Moreover, these words, when spoken, drew her customer into the intimate space that was, by the turn of the century, restricted to family and Friends alone—the shopper lingers to hear “those Quaker expressions” addressed to her, to partake for a moment of the cozy and antique sphere created in the modern shop. Like *rosary* or *millennial*, Quaker pronouns and phrases were among the English words that had religious connotations. Unlike those words, however, the

very use of *thee* and *thou* was a religious testimony that both called up the language of the King James Bible and implicated the hearer in the widely understood virtues of the Quaker speaker. These words, like this shop girl, are associated with a time passed, a constructed and thoroughly “American” religious history made all the more compelling by its rapid fading.

#### **IV. Biblical Cadences**

Americans also seemed to find reassurance in the resonance between the plain speech once widespread among the Quakers and the speech they saw printed on the pages of their parlor Bibles. If some Americans were troubled by the disappearance of the Quakers’ quaint speech, they were even more distressed by the changing place and form of the Bible in American culture. As Paul Gutjahr points out, a late-century spate of new translations in the United States and Britain indicated “increasing doubt over the dependability and efficacy of the King James Version.”<sup>40</sup> He explains that the Revised Version of 1881-1885

realized one of the worst fears of nineteenth-century American anti-revisionists, namely, that authorizing and introducing a new bible would deprive Americans of a primary cultural ‘anchor’ in the form of a shared national text. In one fell swoop, the introduction of the Revised Version gave credibility to doubts about the trustworthiness of the bible, while it loosened the grip of the King James Bible—a book one author called “the highest bond of unity for the English race.”<sup>41</sup>

Quaker speech was inextricably linked with the language of the King James Bible; Tibbals observed that “as always in the special locutions of Friends, it was the phrasing of the noble King James Version that they followed.”<sup>42</sup> Like the King James Bible, Quakers had become another significant cultural anchor to a unified and pious American past, one imagined to be quite unlike the contentious and changing present. Although the Revised Version retained

*thee* and *thou*, it is likely that believers' fears about a 'changing' scripture would have been allayed by hearing *thee* and *thou* remain in the voices of pious Quakers.

As we have seen, when American writers deployed Quaker speech, they laid greatest emphasis on the pronouns "thee" and "thou," although archaic verb endings such as "wilt" or "goest" often appear. Authors also occasionally made use of plain Quaker speech habits such as the ordinal numbering of the days and months, and phrases like "sense of the meeting." More obscure Quakerisms like "to join the great majority" (a frank and amiable euphemism for death) were seldom used.<sup>43</sup>

*Thee* and *thou* were strongly associated with religious speech in general, and biblical language in particular. As historian Richard Bailey explains, throughout the nineteenth century,

Voices of evangelists took myriad forms, many of them expressing reverence through archaism and formality of a highly conventional kind. Reflecting the language of the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible, nineteenth-century religious ceremonies often drew upon vocabulary and grammatical structures long obsolescent in the language—for instance, the *-(e)th* endings for third-person singular present indicative verbs and the pronouns *thee* and *thou*.<sup>44</sup>

As Quaker speech retained many of these forms in reality (and even more of them in observers' imaginations), Quakers became the perfect vehicle for an everyday piety—a piety which eschewed pulpit or vestments and seemed to reflect a living language of the scriptures in ordinary life.

This living language was often reflected in a mild and admiring humor. As we will see in Chapter Four, jokes were a very popular way to comment on the vicissitudes of nineteenth-century Quaker practices and beliefs. These jokes almost always indicated the Quaker by incorporating plain language; this language lent the Friend the impression of a

person who was at once anachronistic and authoritative. This 1872 joke from *Harper's Weekly* speaks directly to this usage:

A skeptical young collegian confronted an old Quaker with the statement that he did not believe in the Bible. Said the Quaker, "Does thee believe in France?" "Yes. Though I have not seen it, I have seen others who have. Besides, there is plenty of proof that such a country does exist." "Then thee will not believe any thing thee or others have not seen?" "No, to be sure I won't." "Did thee ever see thy own brains?" "No." "Ever see any body that did?" "No." "Does thee believe thee has any?"<sup>45</sup>

In this very funny joke, the Friend (as is typical in Quaker jokes) easily takes the upper hand. The details of the two players' relationship to each other, however, is crucial; the dupe is a "skeptical young collegian," certain that "he did not believe in the Bible." The "old Quaker" knocks down this premise straight away, effortlessly revealing the fallacy in the educated man's syllogism. The plain language not only buffers the Quaker's dismissive tone, but also reflects the language of the Bible he defends. In this instance the language of the Bible and the Bible itself are placed in affirmative contrast with outspoken youth, higher education, and—presumably—Higher Criticism. At the time this joke was published, the Quaker language was beginning its most rapid erosion—but in the joke, *thee* authority remains inviolate.

Even as Quaker speech garnered respect, the biblical cadences of *thee* and *thou* often provoked gentle amusement. This 1871 joke, also from *Harper's Weekly*, reflects a comic perspective on the perceived excesses of Quaker/scriptural speech:

A *Quaker* lately popped the question to a fair Quakeress as follows; "Hum! Yea and verily, Penelope, the spirit urgeth and moveth me wonderfully to beseech thee to cleave unto me, flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone." "Hum! Truly, Obadiah, thou hast wisely said. Inasmuch as it is written that it is not good for man to be alone, lo! I will sojourn with thee."<sup>46</sup>

The Biblicism of this Friendly speech is evident—and, the joke implies, almost obfuscatory. Without the directness (or even the romance) implied by the colloquial “popped the question,” Obadiah’s proposal makes direct reference to Adam’s proclamation in Genesis 2:23—“bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman.”<sup>47</sup> Obadiah himself rejoices in the biblical name of a prophet. (His beloved’s name is equally old-fashioned, but claims Greek rather than Hebrew origins.) When Penelope responds, she likewise quotes the second chapter of Genesis in her assent.

Like the Quaker proposal, the Biblicism—and plain truth—of plain speech could be both comic and admirable. In 1877, *Harper’s Weekly* printed this joke, which makes several explicit references to scripture:

*The Quaker’s Address to his Watch-Maker.*—“I hereby send thee my pocket clock, which standeth in need of thy friendly correction. The last time it was at thy friendly school it was in no way benefited or profited thereby, for I perceive by the index of its mind that it is a liar, and the truth is not in it. Purge it, therefore, I beseech thee, and correct it from the error of its ways, and show it the path wherein it should go; and when thou layest thy correcting hand upon it, see that it be without passion, lest thou shouldst drive it to destruction; and when thou seest it conformable to the above-mentioned rules, send it home to me with a just and true bill, drawn out in the spirit of moderation, and I will remit it to thee in the root of all evil.”<sup>48</sup>

The joke savors of the prodigal’s tale; moreover, the Quaker writing makes direct allusions to 1 John 2:4, James 5:20, Proverbs 22:6, and 1 Timothy 6:10 (references which would have been recognizable to most readers of the day).<sup>49</sup> The Quaker’s standards for virtue are such that he equates a faulty watch with a fallen sinner—the fun of the joke lies in the recognition of the biblical passages used with reference to such a mundane object. Quakers were imagined by logical extension of their plain speech to speak the language of the Bible, too—whatever the circumstances—and in this case, the frustrated Quaker’s scriptural plea sanctifies the sphere of commerce and exchange.



## V. An American Past

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Quakers had become firmly entrenched in the founding myths of the United States. As we will see in Chapter Six, even the Quaker Oats Company took full advantage of the Quaker legend, replacing outright the starving pilgrims at Plymouth Rock with the less problematic Friends. Unlike pilgrims and Puritans, however, Quakers remained a thriving and present religious group. But by virtue of their calcifying reputation as founders, Quakers were imagined to be, like their speech, something less than wholly modern. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1847 *Evangeline* finds old-fashioned music in the speech of the Quakers that reminds her of home:

There from the troubled sea had Evangeline landed, an exile,  
Finding among the children of Penn a home and a country. . . .  
And her ear was pleased with the Thee and Thou of the Quakers,  
For it recalled the past, the old Acadian country,  
Where all men were equal, and all were brothers and sisters.<sup>50</sup>

As plain speech began to disappear in the latter half of the century, the Quakers' pleasant language resonated all the more with an American past as yet untouched by the hustle and noise of industrial life. An article in *The Atlantic Monthly*'s "Contributor's Club" in March of 1881 remarked on scenes which were "particularly pleasing in the picture of the simple rural life of the Quaker family in Rhode Island, as yet unvexed by any of the evils which may attend trade and manufactures."<sup>51</sup> Quaker practices and virtues were becoming static in the American imagination, transformed from living witnesses to comfortable reminders of a long, pious, and gentle history of the United States.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the plain Quaker language often was imagined to indicate a person diametrically opposed to modernization and technologies. Their long history as practical (and theological) innovators was forgotten or subsumed in records of

their charming speech. For example, Henry Fairfield Osborn's reminiscence of the great naturalist and taxonomist Edward Drinker Cope, published in *The Century* in 1897, takes pains to point out the gently comic disconnect between Cope's Quaker background and his very early scientific researches. At the age of eight, young Cope was observing and then, according to the memoir, "recording in quaint Quaker language: 'Two of the sclerotic plates look at the eye—thee will see these in it.'"<sup>52</sup> Osborn's characterization of this study clearly marks a contrast between the "quaint Quaker language" and Cope's precocious and progressive research.

Quakers were imagined as old-fashioned—but occasionally eminently susceptible to the superiority of the modern. Although the imagined Quaker balked at the new, he could be persuaded by example to accept superior American advances in technology. In 1863, the author and critic H.M. Alden wrote an "anecdote" of an anxious and anonymous Quaker couple observed at the tourist cars on the steep incline at Mount Pisgah. Before their trip up the hillside began, a Quaker man addressed his plainly spoken fears to the conductor: "'Does thee mean to say,' asked the Quaker, 'that all these people are going up?' 'Certainly,' said the conductor, again assuring them of their perfect security.'" The Friends evidently were persuaded by his reassurance, and

agreed to make the venture upon one condition. "Thee will go no faster than we want thee to?" stipulated the Quaker. "Not a whit," replied the conductor . . . The old Quaker's gray eyes glisten with excitement as the speed gradually increases. Soon he gives an impatient gesture, and asks the astonished conductor, "Can't thee go a little faster, friend?" . . . The Quaker's eye has a mad twinkle about it, as with still greater impatience he beseeches the conductor to *put on all possible speed*, utterly unconscious of the merriment which he is making among the party.<sup>53</sup>

The comedy of this scene lies in the Quaker's desire to go faster and faster, presumably in stark contrast to the stereotype of Quakers as slow-moving, even as fixed points. His requests—first to go slow and then, in assent to the excitement and promise of what man has wrought, to go faster—are consistently couched in the plain speech. While he eventually succumbs to the allure of technology, his language, the anecdote assures the reader, will remain static.

Among the favorite characterizations of these quaint Quakers was that they were living reminders of colonial days. *Thee* and *thou* were old-fashioned on their own terms, and provided the quickest (and sometimes cloudiest) referent to admirable early Americans. After all, John Adams observed the simple language with a touch of irony in September of 1774, when he dined with the Quaker lawyer Mr. Fisher. Impressed by Fisher's wife and table, Adams remarked that "this plain Friend, and his plain, tho pretty Wife, with her Thee's and Thou's, had provided us the most Costly Entertainment."<sup>54</sup> The impression of *thee*-ing and *thou*-ing as an attractive colonial practice lasted more than a century. In 1899, Jennie Betts Hartswick penned "A Colonial Valentine," addressed "To a Belle in 1770," for the *Ladies' Home Journal*. An earnest Quaker—not a dashing Minuteman—penned this "Colonial Valentine," and the scene laid by its archaic spellings is completed pleasantly by *thee* and *thou*:

And when upon ye windy square  
By happie chance I meet her—  
We "thee" and "thou" each other there—  
(Sure language ne'er was sweeter!)  
If I behold her eyelids falle  
Beneath my glances steadie  
I cannot help but hope withal,  
Since we are "Friends" already.<sup>55</sup>

In this poem, the “sweeter” language of the Quaker lovers is a crucial component of the colonial setting, and their modest and plain-spoken courtship is rendered less uncertain by Hartswick’s easy joke that they “are ‘Friends’ already.” Popular historian of everyday life Alice Morse Earle was likewise interested in the courtship and marrying habits of colonial Quakers. In 1898, she wrote an article on colonial Friends for the *New England Magazine*.<sup>56</sup> Much of her space was spent on Friendly lovers; she spent her conclusion, however, lamenting that the

The horse sheds have vanished, and the horses and carriages too.  
Every Sunday the shrill resounding notes of Moody and Sankey  
hymns with parlor organ accompaniment rend and pierce the air.  
Scarce one who enters within the garish walls ever heard a *thee* and  
*thou*, and I doubt whether a child in the Sunday School has ever seen  
a Quaker man or Quaker woman in Quaker garb; there is not a Colton,  
a Hadwen, a Hartshorn, an Earle, a Chase or any of good old Quaker  
names among them; and people say with much satisfaction, it is no  
longer a dull old Quaker meeting, but a hustling mission.<sup>57</sup>

In Earle’s estimation, Quakers of the colonial days were far superior—it is the loss of both the plain language and the aristocratic “good old Quaker names among them” that are to be lamented (careful readers will see the Earle among these). The “shrill resounding notes of Moody and Sankey hymns,” the widespread markers of a rising evangelical influence among Quakers, were as objectionable as the passing away of “*thee* and *thou*.” Quakers, she suggests, had been able to stave off time—to remain in the colonial period as long as they retained their simple language, their plain habits, and the well-known aristocracy of their gathered families.<sup>58</sup>

## **VI. Maids and Men**

Like the Quaker shop girl, women were typically constructed as the primary purveyors of the plain speech tradition. As Robert Barry Coffin wrote in his 1865 novel *My Married Life at*

*Hillside,*

I really enjoy my present manner of life exceedingly. There is a repose in it which is quieting to one's nerves. I feel my Quaker descent now very palpably. Occasionally I find myself using, quite unintentionally, the plain language. Abeline thinks that I utter "thee" and "thou" very prettily. She says it is a wonder I am not a "Friend." I should be one, I tell her, if it were not that my forefathers were sea-captains. As sailors, they learned to use strange words, and forgot the milder forms of speech their mothers taught them. She thinks it a great pity. Perhaps it is.<sup>59</sup>

As this character observes, plain speech was a matrilineal gift, uprooted (rather than solidified, as in Ahab's case) by a violent and changeable life at sea. And here it is a woman admiring the cadences of plain speech, as it spills unintentionally from the speaker's mouth. Although time has erased the influences of his Quaker foremothers, this character's long American heritage is still evident in more than blood when he slackens into the Quaker tongue.

As the plain speech continued to fade, observers—like those fooled by Cowley and like the shopper who so admired her Quaker shop girl—evidenced a greater longing to participate in the cozy feminine sphere conferred by the *thee* and *thou*. Tibbals claimed that during the nineteenth century, "young people listened with sentimental envy to the intimate talk of their contemporaries brought up to say 'thee' to their families and friends and 'you' to outsiders."<sup>60</sup> Well-loved storyteller Frank R. Stockton spoke to this desire in "The Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander," an 1899 adventure story serially published in *The Century*. His hero, Mr. Randolph, is at one point the guest of the Crowders, a Quaker wife and her worldly husband; Randolph explains that Mrs. Crowder's

use of the plain speech customary with Quakers was very pleasant to me. I had had but little acquaintance with it, and at first its independence of grammatical rules struck upon me unpleasantly; but I soon began to enjoy Mrs. Crowder's speech when she was addressing her husband much more than I did the remarks she made to me, the latter being always couched in

the most correct English. There was a sweetness about her “thee” which had the quality of gentle music; and when she used the word “thy” it was pronounced so much like “thee” that I could scarcely perceive the difference. To her husband and child she always used the Quaker speech of the present day; and as I did not like being set aside in this way, I said to her that I hoped there was no rule of the Society of Friends which would compel her to make a change in her form of speech when she addressed me. “If thee likes,” she said, with a smile, “thee is welcome to all the plain speech thee wants.” And after that, when she spoke to me, she did not turn me out among the world’s people.<sup>61</sup>

Though Randolph is no Quaker, he craves to be drawn into the intimate sphere created by Mrs. Crowder’s speech—once he overcomes his objections to her grammatical peccadilloes. The longing he describes is familial—almost sensual—as he considers the profound difference between addresses to himself and to Mrs. Crowder’s husband. Randolph is unable to ask her directly for the favor of inclusion in her Friendly speech, and finds recourse in the rules of the Society to obtain the intimate language he seeks. When Mrs. Crowder gracefully grants it, offering “all the plain speech thee wants,” Randolph interprets her changed speech pattern as a tacit embrace within the Society; he is no longer cast out among the “world’s people,” or non-Quakers. He is satisfied with his self-fashioned and undemanding new membership in the Society—a membership extended by the “sweetness” and intimacy of a woman he deeply admires.

Randolph’s reaction to Quaker speech was typical. It was enough for observers to hear the language, to receive its benediction and affirm its sweetness, without speaking the phrases themselves—which would have been a component of full and orthodox participation in the Society. For outsiders, assumption of Quaker speech often was perceived as burdensome, or worse, deceptive. In 1861, Godey’s *Lady’s Book* published a thrilling story of “The Night of Terror,” originally narrated by Tabitha, a pretty Quakeress. As retold by her niece, the story outlines the tale of a chained “maniac” and a mass of ghostly figures,

although it comes to a mundane and unsatisfying ending. The author of the story explains that

Aunt Tabby gave the following narrative in the plain language of the Quaker, which I will of course discard, and by so doing divest the account of one attraction, at least to me, having always had a partiality for the primitive and solemn “thou and thee;” but I am no Quaker, and assumed manner is ever objectionable.<sup>62</sup>

The anonymous author finds the “primitive and solemn” language of the Quakers beautiful, and recalls hearing it with pleasure; she either mistrusts her ability to record it accurately, or is sincere in her assertion that writing the narrative in the plain style would be presumptuous. There is an authenticity to the simple Quaker speech that cannot be assumed (one is reminded of sly Cowley’s bookselling). Though it is crucial to acknowledge that the plain speech was there—and remains available and present in the culture—to mimic it would be pretentious or deceptive. It is enough for this author simply to remember the “attraction” of the *thou* and *thee*—to hear them, without repeating them.

Quaker speech was often figured as an attractive and womanly custom, analogous to the decorative nature of the famed Quaker bonnet. This aspect of the plain speech is evident in Rebecca Pollard’s 1856 *Emma Bartlett*, a curious book which attempts to point out the duplicity of the Know-Nothings while pointedly disapproving perceived excesses of the abolitionists. Patience, a “pretty Quakeress” who makes a brief appearance in the novel, keeps to the *thee* forms: “How pretty she looked, as she stood untying her neat Quaker hood, and speaking in her simple dialect! With her perfectly plain dress of drab colored delaine, and small India book collar!”<sup>63</sup>

As is evident with pretty Patience, the consistent use of Quaker speech was often perceived as a feminine practice—and, as we will see, represented Quaker women were

much less likely to abandon their *thees* than men. The characters in Augusta de Bubna's short story in the *Lady's Book* in 1880 remarked with trepidation on the impending visit of a pair of plain Quakers:

"Shall we have to say 'Thee' and 'Thou,' Charley?" asked Mrs. Lewis, with a grimace.

"It is not imperative, you might teach baby to talk that way, however, it would make her attractive, you know," laughed Mr. Lewis.

"Dost thou love me, my child?" asked Mrs. Lewis of baby, very soberly. The little one looked up smilingly at its mother and answered, demurely, "Aye," at which they all laughed merrily.

"There," cried Mrs. Gray, "she has understood our talk, and has adopted the plain speech at once!"<sup>64</sup>

Clearly, the plain speech is imagined to make little "baby" more "attractive." It is imagined as demure and feminine. The spoken words *Friend* and *thee* provided a pious and attractive icing on the wide Quaker reputation for domesticity and perfect housekeeping. Moreover, the increasingly rapid disappearance of Quaker speech and the restriction of the *thee* and *thou* forms to the home circle made plain speech an even stronger marker of the quiet and ordered household sphere—in lovely contrast with the common, workaday world.

Quaker *thee* and *thou* were conceived as crucial components of a Friendly and feminine domestic sphere. Mrs. J. L. Hallowell's "A Quaker Woman," appearing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1872, describes a beautiful household scene that seeks to show both the similarities with and differences between a family of Friends and any other American family (or, at least, any other American family subscribing to *The Atlantic Monthly*). She explains that

There is time for everything in a Quaker family, even time for demure plays in the plain language and thoughtful dressing of dolls. The little boy who reproved his brother for saying in a rage, "Thee nasty little you, thee!" by the threat of, "O James! I'll tell mother thee swore!" has probably long since grown up and learned there are other tithes than those of mint and cummin.<sup>65</sup>



The “demure plays in the plain language,” combined as they are with the “thoughtful dressing of dolls,” presumably refer to the placid pursuits of small Quaker maids. The boys in a Quaker household, however seem to be no less prone to little battles than the “typical” American boy. When these boys clash, they hurl the insulting *you* instead of the familial *thee*. Holloway’s characterization of this exchange is both bemused and mildly critical; her reference to Matthew 23 explicitly links the plain language with the dispensable and dead works of the Pharisees. Holloway’s narration of this domestic scene suggests that as adults, the males of the family would have dropped their plain speech long ago, in assent to its perceived role in Quaker life as both decorative and nonfunctional.

## **VII. Dropping the Plain Speech**

Friends in print occasionally forgot or laid aside their plain speech. Such moments were always noteworthy, and tended both to emphasize the speaker’s frailties and to reassure readers that Quakers were subject to passionate emotions and lapses in caution—indeed, that they were not so unlike other people after all. Plain speech could be dropped or laid aside for several reasons, including passionate love, anger, or excitement, emotions which were evidently incompatible with the unflappable placidity widely connected with Friendly speech. These episodes usually centered around male Friends, evidently less capable of training their speech and containing their outbursts than their Quaker sisters. Instances of forgotten speech were often noted as “anecdotes,” a favorite mode of communicating about Friends; like the tale of the Quaker shop girl, the lack of detail in such stories gave them a universal cast. For example, in 1871 *Harper’s Monthly* published this “anecdote” of “one Captain B,” who

commanded a coasting vessel which plied between Nantucket

and New York, and his first mate was Peter Chase, a man conspicuously rough and inelegant in his conversation. Once, while attempting to haul into dock on the East River, his way was obstructed by an obstinate river boatman, who made no effort to get his vessel out of the way. The old Quaker talked his plain language to him in vain, and finally losing patience, called out loudly to his mate, "Come up out of the hold, Cousin Peter, and use some of thy vile language to this man. I can't stand it any longer."<sup>66</sup>

Though this Quaker keeps his head along with his plain speech, he recognizes that only the world's *you!* (presumably combined with some additional profanities) will serve the present purpose. Other passions besides anger could provoke momentary neglect of plain speech. An affair of the heart leads to an angry confrontation in Bayard Taylor's 1866 "Friend Eli's Daughter," which finds a fervent young man of the world in conflict with his lady's Hicksite father:

"When I want to lose my daughter, and can't find anybody else for her, I'll let thee know."

"What have you against me, Friend Mitchenor?" Richard sadly asked, forgetting, in his excitement, the Quaker speech he had learned.<sup>67</sup>

Though young Richard has "learned" plain speech to please his maid (and her family), it is a mere semblance, covering the worldlier language of anger and ardor.

The most surprising instances of dropped plain speech, however, were not accidental but deliberate. Occasionally, Quakers were depicted disregarding the plain speech in order to be better integrated with the world. In Josiah Barnes's 1855 *The Old Inn; or, The Traveller's Entertainment*, a Quaker joins in the general round of storytelling that comprises the trajectory of the novel. This Friend intentionally neglects his *thees* and *thous*:

There was more silence. "By the by," said the lawyer, "before you begin again—you've got to begin, sir!—I want to indulge in something personal. Why is it you don't say thee and thou, being a Quaker?"

"When among Romans, be a Roman."

"That's all, is it?"

The Quaker bowed assent, saying "When I am away from home I never indulge in things calculated to reveal the social and religious

relations in which I have been reared—except as my dress may betoken them.” This satisfied the lawyer.<sup>68</sup>

This Quaker’s use of the world’s language is prompted by a desire to veil his religious affiliation, to better integrate with his fellows, even though his dress always gives him away. He characterizes the plain language as a home-bound custom. In polite circles, such as the one we see depicted here, a question about religious practice is figured as “something personal”—as is the practice itself. The Quaker’s attitude prefigures those of actual late-century Quakers who began to restrict their plain speech to Friendly spheres alone, and this fictional exchange indicates a new reticence to reveal the peculiarities of sectarian practice in the public space.

Many other imagined Quakers left their plain speech behind. When fictional Quakers laid aside their religious pacifism to take up arms, they usually took up the world’s pronouns too. As we will see in the fourth chapter, creators of “fighting” Quaker characters often enjoyed imagining the repercussions of such manly disobedience, and plain language was among the first casualties in a fighting Quaker’s war. For example, Charles Hazlewood, the dashing Quaker hero of John Richter Jones’s popular 1858 novel *The Quaker Soldier*, inquires of a friend: “By-the-by, do you think me a pretty quakerish Quaker?”

“Very much so, until the last five minutes. When you began to talk of fencing, you gave up the Quaker language.”

“No wonder! Except a few weeks, I have lived in the world for six years past; no wonder I sometimes forgot my native Quakerism. But it is a curious fact, when I talk with Quakers, the plain language—as we call it—comes naturally; but talking it with the world’s people, as we call you, seems forced and unnatural.”<sup>69</sup>

Most fictional “fighting Quakers” found a similar incompatibility between their violence and plain speech. Like Charles Hazlewood, even the “talk of” war was often sufficient to divest these men of their *thees* and *thous*. In Edward H. Williamson’s 1869 novel *The Quaker*

*Partisans*, a tale of fighting Quakers in the Revolutionary War, the plain language is occasionally depicted as absolutely incompatible with taking the sword:

“I understand, sir,” said the lieutenant, who, though a Quaker, had dropped his plain language when he put on his sword-belt. “We’ll try to convince them.”<sup>70</sup>

In Levi the lieutenant’s case, the abandonment of the plain language is total—this soldier has adopted even the titled address—“sir”—that would have been anathema to plain-speaking Friends.

As we will see in Ned Buntline’s 1858 fighting Quaker novel *Saul Sabberday*, even the most patriotic women (in this case, those most eager to support the war) retained their plain speech while their brothers and sons shed it as they took up arms. As S.R. Elliott remembered of the Civil War in 1893, “the Pennsylvania mother in Quaker garb would be sending forth her sons to battle for a cause, while the tremulous blessing which fell from her faltering voice to the gesture of uplifted hands was couched in the ‘plain language.’”<sup>71</sup>

Later in the century—as the plain language declined even more quickly—some who remembered Civil War era fighting Quakers attempted to recast them as more faithful to their *thees* and *thous*. J.G. Nicolay and John Hay wrote an article for *The Century* in 1899 on “Lincoln and the Churches,” wherein they saluted the perceived consistency of the plain-spoken fighting Quaker of the Civil War.

Those who entered the army illustrated in their plain speech and quiet courage the virtues of their lineage no less than those who, refusing to bear arms, bore uncomplainingly all that the law could inflict upon them by way of punishment for their contumacy.<sup>72</sup>

For Nicolay and Hay, it was the “plain speech and quiet courage”—plain and quiet—that linked Quakers who enlisted with their brothers who followed the meeting-sanctioned path of nonresistance. For these historians, “the virtues of their lineage” as Quakers occurred

equally in the “quiet” of fighting valor, the grief of persecution for pacifism, and the spoken *thee* and *thou*.

### VIII. Silence

In 1850, Godey’s *Lady’s Book* ran a serious article covering the impressive subject of “Language.” The opening words of H. T. Tuckerman’s study cast a broad net:

To appreciate this subject in all its meaning, let us recall and compare the associations of a Quaker meeting, where impressive silence broods over a human assemblage; a school of mutes, where recourse to signs gives touching evidence of the absolute need of communication; and a Jewish synagogue, where are chanted the holy records of a primitive faith in the original language which has survived intact the utter dispersion of a race!<sup>73</sup>

Quaker silence typically was rendered as an “impressive” and impossible standard for worship. It was important that someone, somewhere, was holding a silent meeting—but such a gathering was too taxing for the ordinary worshipper. In 1863, the Hicksite *Friends’ Intelligencer* quoted a description of Quaker worship originally featured in *The Presbyterian*. This account provides a helpful glimpse into a Protestant tradition’s perspective on the silent meeting—and its appearance in the *Friends’ Intelligencer* suggests the self-conscious pride Friends took in being thus observed:

We see here a peculiar people, so far as dress can make them so. . . . While we cannot endorse their sentiments with regard to cheerful colors and ornament in attire, we yet may gather useful lessons from their moderation. . . . The brethren and sisters are departing. *Farewell*, Friends! We trust your “*silent meeting*” has not been without benefit to us, as well as to you.<sup>74</sup>

This reporter clearly hopes for a proxy blessing, a sanctification afforded simply by attending the meeting once and enjoying that “*silent meeting*” as visitors. The full account of the meeting is taken up by observations about the dress and “moderation” of the Quakers present, rather than a meditation on the theological impetus for the silence found there.

Hicksite Quakers still clung tenaciously to the silent meeting in the face of the programmed meetings arising around them, so it is not surprising that they would take pride in reprinting such a flattering account of the silent meeting. The visiting Presbyterians, however, take no interest in the source of the silence—rather, it is the silence itself that is imagined to be beneficiary to all comers, whether or not they return the following week.

Quaker silent meetings, too, had a touch of the romantic about them. As we have seen, outside observers were much interested in the courting and marrying habits of the Society. This fascination was, perhaps, prompted by both the traditional silent meeting framework for marriages and the well-known (but seriously compromised) disciplines against marrying outside the meeting. In 1866, the *New York Times* ran a column on “A Quaker Wedding. Beautiful Bride and Interesting Ceremony,” courtesy of a reporter from the *Richmond Dispatch*. The account of the wedding concentrated on the twin charms of the silent meeting and the beautiful (and almost as silent) bride.

Much of our population consists of that class known as “Quakers.” In their mode of worship, manner of dress, and many other customs, they differ from other denominations, but more particularly in the matter of marriages.

. . . Always bright and beautiful, she was doubly so on this occasion. Dressed in purest white, emblematic of her spotless character, with no ornaments save those supplied by nature, she walked in with the bridal party and took the seats prepared for them.

After a short season of silence, the bride and groom, with their waiters, rise to their feet, and the gentleman, in a clear and distinct voice, repeats the vow which is prescribed by the discipline: “In the presence of the Lord and before this assembly I take L.J. to be my wife, promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto her a loving and faithful husband, until death shall separate us.” And immediately following him, the lady, in a soft and tremulous voice, but still loud enough to be audible to all within the room, repeated her portion of the vow.<sup>75</sup>

This reporter asserts that the unadorned beauty of the bride attests to her inner virtue, much as, perhaps, the silence of the ceremony bears out the sincerity of the participants. As we will see in Chapter Five, a world where Fashion carried ever-increasing sway over the

appearance and pursuits of American women ironically made the simplicity of Quaker plain attire (particularly the rich but simple white of the Quaker bride) all the more attractive. Likewise, in a society that was increasingly loud—where the noise of industry drowned out the silence of the countryside and the singing of hymns threatened even the Quaker meeting—Quaker silence had become romantic, worthy of reverence and preservation.

### **IX. Historiography of Quaker Plain Speech**

As we will see in the matter of dress, American observers became most attentive to the outward peculiarities of Quaker life just as they were disappearing. Plain speech was no exception. The earliest American historians of Quakerism were little concerned with the Friends' anachronistic pronouns or ordinal dates. For example, although she addresses the Quaker disdain for titles and compliments, Hannah Adams does not mention *thee* or other plain forms of Quaker speech in her 1801 *A View of Religions*.<sup>76</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, however, a spate of articles on Quaker *thees* appeared in the new journal *American Speech*. Kate Watkins Tibbals opened the conversation in 1926, remarking on a surprising lack of scholarship on the speech habits of plain Quakers. In a library dedicated to Quakeriana, Tibbals declared, “no book, pamphlet, or article upon their speech can be found. Nor are scholars in the fields of English speech and dialects aware of the existence of such a study.”<sup>77</sup> Tibbals was so alarmed that she issued a call for quick and fervent study of Quaker speech; she believed that “like the Indian languages, it is sinking into silence and straightway will be heard no more. . . . Scholars therefore should bethink them to gather up the fragments in the moments that remain, lest any be lost forever.”<sup>78</sup> Several of Tibbals' contemporaries were gripped by a similar fear; in September of the same year, *American Speech* featured an article by linguist Ezra Kempton Maxfield on “Quaker

‘Thee’ and Its History.”<sup>79</sup> In June of 1929, alongside Vernon W. Saul’s “The Vocabulary of Bums,” *American Speech* published two more articles on the *thee* and *thou* of Quaker speech, one by English professor Atcheson L. Hench and yet another by E.K. Maxfield.<sup>80</sup> In 1933, the journal published a short catalog of Quaker speech “peculiarities” by Anne Wistar Comfort, who drew on her father’s Philadelphia Quaker history to legitimate her list.<sup>81</sup> Comfort recorded not only the pronouns but also other distinctive Quaker phrases like “to feel the sense of the meeting”<sup>82</sup>—an expression which defied Tibbals’ dire predictions and has survived to the present day.

Not surprisingly, an obsession with grammar characterized these first *American Speech* forays into Quaker speech histories. Some Friends were deeply conflicted over the grammatical correctness of the rapidly disappearing *thee* form and its use for both the nominative and accusative. As archaic pronouns fell out of the Friendly vocabulary, the scholars noted above spilled much ink over the genesis and history of Quakers’ apparently ungrammatical speech. E.K. Maxfield suggested two possibilities: that early American Quakers had, out of a democratic impulse, adopted a less grammatical form of speech, or that the elision produced when quickly pronouncing “thou” ended in a commonly heard (and spoken) *thee*.<sup>83</sup> Some insisted that colonial Quakers and their descendents had regularly and properly used *thou* in speaking; in a 1928 letter to the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Carroll Frey cited S. Weir Mitchell’s popular 1896 novel *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker* as sound evidence that they did. Maxfield attempted to referee the debate thus:

As for Weir Mitchell’s use, that can hardly count as evidence one way or another. He was not a Friend, but he must have been exposed to a good deal of Quaker language in the course of a lifetime in Philadelphia. So many mistakes have been made by well-meaning persons who use Friends in their fiction, by persons who should know better, that one learns to place but little dependence upon the Friendly speech found in books,



unless their writers are Friends themselves.<sup>84</sup>

It seems clear that some Friends used both *thou* and *thee* with fair regularity in both fiction and life, although some authors, in an attempt to be realistic, often represent the use of the *thee* form only. It is the impulse of all those “well-meaning persons who use Friends in their fiction” we have seen here. They were intent on recording these pronouns, and other Quaker patterns of silence and speech, to highlight attractive (or, occasionally, unattractive) features of the uniform, public Quaker “character”—and to draw a clear association between that personality and an American religious heritage.

## **X. Conclusions**

American children have been fascinated with versions of a game called “Quaker Meeting” for well over a century. You may have played a “Quaker Meeting” game yourself or with your children. One current version of the game begins with a circle of silent children and the declaration that “Quaker meeting has begun, no more laughing, no more fun. If you dare to crack a smile, you may have to walk a mile.”<sup>85</sup> The participants then call up their best comic faces in an attempt to provoke laughter from the other participants. Weary parents on long car trips have developed a variant of the game, sometimes referred to as “Quaker Meeting,” promising a treat to the backseat child who can keep quiet the longest.<sup>86</sup> In the 1880s, “Quaker Meeting” was played like this:

The members of meeting are seated soberly in a circle, when the Head of the Meeting turns calmly to his next neighbor, and asks with the utmost possible gravity of demeanor, while shaking his own right hand up and down like a paw:

“Quaker, Quaker! How art thee?”

The person addressed must answer in the same manner:

“Very well, I thank thee.”

The Head then inquires:

“How is the neighbor next to thee?”

The second player replies:

“I don't know, but I'll go see!  
Then waving his right hand in the same grotesque manner, he propounds the same questions to the player sitting next. This is continued round the circle until the Head is reached, when he leads off with the same questions, only waving both hands.

At the third turn the Head stamps his right foot; at the fourth his left one; at the fifth wags his head, and finally rises up and down on his chair.

The sobriety of the meeting is by this time utterly destroyed, and the Quakers disperse usually in the most admired confusion.<sup>87</sup>

The editors of Godey's *Lady's Book* assured their readers that “despite its name, this game is specially popular as providing a noisy frolic for young children.” These enduring games attest to a persistent American fascination with Quaker speaking and silence, which continues decades after most Friends abandoned the silent meeting and their well-known *thees*.

By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Quaker speech and the silent meeting had long since ceased to be read as leveling affronts to hierarchy, passing (for observers) into a charming dissent against informal speech patterns. Quaker speech (while occasionally derided for its divergence from standard usage), happily, both dissented against and contained early modern English speech styles; it was, then, quintessentially American and fashionably highbrow. As Tibbals asserted:

Lordly but democratic America, under the influence of the French Revolution perhaps, preferring to adopt the aristocratic *you* as a form of address among all classes, . . . has lost, but for the Friends, that beautiful plain tongue of Bunyan and Bacon, of Cotton Mather and Governor Winthrop.<sup>88</sup>

Tibbals' happy equation of the plain language of Friends with the language of Mather and Winthrop links Quakers explicitly to the American origins myth. Though Winthrop used *thou* in sermons, he likely would have avoided it in everyday speech simply to avoid association with the detested Quakers. Mather employed *you* even in his religious addresses.

“Lordly but democratic America,” instead, was looking for the still and unchanging in a rapidly changing society—an anachronistic and aristocratic remnant of its earliest piety and unity—and found that relic in the rapidly-disappearing speech of plain Friends.

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or: The Whale* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Letter dated November 1, 1856, F.B. Sanborn, "The Emerson-Thoreau Correspondence," *The Atlantic Monthly* 69, no. 416 (June 1892): 752.

<sup>4</sup> Kate Watkins Tibbals, "The Speech of Plain Friends: A Preliminary Survey." *American Speech* 1, no. 4 (January 1926): 194.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> George Fox, *Journal*, A rev. ed. by John L. Nickalls (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1952), 36. Jesus directs his followers thus: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Matt. 5:34-37 (KJV).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:34-37: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne; Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (KJV).

<sup>9</sup> As Richard Bauman points out, the earliest Quakers rejected many other conventional features of speech (common greetings such as "good evening" and "farewell"), prompted by their horror of idle speech and their insistence on absolute truth in speaking. *Let Your Words Be Few*, 44-45. The "thee" and "thou" and the abandonment of titles such as "Mr." and "my lord" stemmed from the Quaker interpretation of Acts 10:34: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (KJV).

<sup>10</sup> A. R. Barclay, *Letters &c. of Early Friends* (London, 1841), 19.

<sup>11</sup> H.L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943, c1919), 450.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 171.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>14</sup> Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 53.

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<sup>15</sup> J.E., "Plainness of Dress and Address," *The Friend* 32, no. 24 (Seventh-day, Second month 19, 1859): 189.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988), 85.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Ellwood for *The Friend*, "Conformity to the Ways of the World," *The Friend* (8<sup>th</sup> month 16, 1873): 412.

<sup>18</sup> D.H., "Conformity to the World," *The Friend* (3<sup>rd</sup> month 31, 1888): 275.

<sup>19</sup> Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin F. Trueblood, "Two Views of the New Quakerism. A Friendly Exposition of It," *The American Friend* 1, no. 4 (Eighth mo. 9, 1894), 78-81, 80.

*The American Friend* began publication on 7th month 19, 1894 as successor to the Friends' Review, founded 1847, and the Christian Worker, founded 1871.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Wistar Comfort, "Some Peculiarities of Quaker Speech," *American Speech* 8, no. 1 (Feb., 1933), 13.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth F. Shipley, "Farewell to 'Thee,'" *Bridges Between Psychology and Linguistics: A Swarthmore Festschrift for Lila Gleitman*, edited by Donna Jo Napoli and Judy Anne Kegl (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 171-181.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Clare, e-mail message to author, June 12, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Ezra Kempton Maxfield, "Quaker 'Thee' and Its History," *American Speech* 1, no. 12 (Sep. 1926): 638-39.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee* (New York: Harper, 1836), 36-37.

<sup>27</sup> Review of *American Society*, *The North American Review* 81, no. 168 (July 1855): 26-51, 41.

<sup>28</sup> "Home and Society," *Scribners Monthly, An Illustrated Magazine for the People* 14, no. 2 (June 1877): 260-263, 260.

<sup>29</sup> "The Galaxy Club-Room," *The Galaxy* 12, no. 4 (October 1871): 579-589, 589.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Representative Men: Plato, or The Philosopher," *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays & Poems* (New York: The Library of America), 650.

<sup>31</sup> John N. Norton, *Full Proof of the Ministry* (New York: Redfield, 1855), 88-89.

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<sup>32</sup> Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1990), 63.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>34</sup> As Frederick B. Tolles points out, colonial Quakers quickly secured their reputation for business acumen. Their wealth and facility often drew ire from critics. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*.

<sup>35</sup> Advertisement, *Harper's Weekly* (September 28, 1872): 760.

<sup>36</sup> Advertisement, *Harper's Weekly* (October 26, 1872): 840.

<sup>37</sup> In the interest of full disclosure, I just finished my third Quaker Oatmeal bar of the day. October 22, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> "71-Year-Old Alleged Swindler: *Special to the New York Times*. Chicago, July 19." *The New York Times* (Jul 20, 1902): 1. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *The New York Times (1851-2001)*.

<sup>39</sup> "The Quaker Shop Girl," *The New York Times* (Dec. 19, 1909): SM11. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *The New York Times (1851-2001)*.

<sup>40</sup> Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 91.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Wistar Comfort, "Some Peculiarities of Quaker Speech," 14.

<sup>44</sup> Richard W. Bailey, *Nineteenth-Century English* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 311.

<sup>45</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (January 13, 1872): 35.

<sup>46</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (April 15, 1871): 339.

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 2:23 (KJV).

<sup>48</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (December 15, 1877): 983.

<sup>49</sup> 1 John 2:4: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." James 5:20: "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while

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some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” For the story of the prodigal, see Luke 15:11-31 (KJV).

<sup>50</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline*, edited by Lewis B. Semple (Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Company, 1999), II:V, 99.

<sup>51</sup> “Contributor’s Club,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 47, no. 281 (March 1881): 433-446, 440. *Making of America*, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn, “A Great Naturalist. Edward Drinker Cope,” *The Century Magazine* 55, no. 1 (November 1897): 10.

<sup>53</sup> H.M. Alden, “The Pennsylvania Coal Region,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 27, no. 160 (September 1863): 465-466.

<sup>54</sup> John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams* L.H. Butterfield, Ed., Vol. 2 (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1962), 126-27.

<sup>55</sup> Jennie Betts Hartswick in the February *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “A Colonial Valentine,” *The New York Times* (Feb 5 1899): 21. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *The New York Times (1851-2001)*.

<sup>56</sup> Alice Morse Earle, “Among Friends,” *New England Magazine* 25, no. 1 (Sept 1898): 18-23.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> In September of 1870, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* published “A Day Among the Quakers,” the story of a man and his wife who went to see the President and persuaded him to draft the Emancipation Proclamation. This article remarks on a particularly select and (and presumably aristocratic) “little colony of Quakers, not very far off—anti-progressive ones—who held on tenaciously to the faith of their fathers, and had no companionship with the villagers who worshiped once a month in the Methodist chapel” (537). Mrs. Nellie Eyster, “A Day Among the Quakers,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 41, no. 244 (September 1870), 537. *Making of America*, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>.

<sup>59</sup> Barry Gray, pseud. of Robert Barry Coffin. *My Married Life at Hillside* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1865). Despite his last name, Coffin was an Episcopalian.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>61</sup> Frank R. Stockton, “The Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander,” *The Century* 58, no. 1, (May 1899): 11.

<sup>62</sup> “The Night of Terror,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 63 (September, 1861): 206.

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<sup>63</sup> Rebecca Harrington Smith Taylor Pollard, *Emma Bartlett: or, Prejudice and Fanaticism* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, Keys & Overend, 1856), 358.

<sup>64</sup> Augusta de Bubna, "An Old-Time Love," Godey's *Lady's Book* 101 (November, 1880): 445.

<sup>65</sup> Mrs. J.L. Hallowell, "A Quaker Woman," *The Atlantic Monthly* 30, no. 178 (August 1872): 223. Mrs. Hallowell refers to Matt. 23:23, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone," King James Version.

<sup>66</sup> "Editor's Drawer," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 42 no. 251 (April 1871): 795.

<sup>67</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Friend Eli's Daughter," In *Atlantic Tales* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 381.

<sup>68</sup> Josiah Barnes, *The Old Inn; or, The Travellers' Entertainment* (New York: J.C. Derby, 1855), 236-37.

<sup>69</sup> John Richter Jones, *The Quaker Soldier; or, the British in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1858), 278-279.

<sup>70</sup> Edward H. Williamson, *The Quaker Partisans: A Story of The Revolution* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1869), 48-49.

<sup>71</sup> S.R. Elliott, "The Courage of a Soldier," *The Atlantic Monthly* 71, no. 424 (February 1893): 237.

<sup>72</sup> J.G. Nicolay and John Hay, "Abraham Lincoln: A History. Lincoln and the Churches," *The Century* 38, no. 4 (August 1899): 563.

<sup>73</sup> H.T. Tuckerman, "Language, Part I," Godey's *Lady's Book* 41 (July, 1850): 5.

<sup>74</sup> A.G.W., "Reflections in a 'Friends' meetinghouse.": From *The Presbyterian*," *Friends' Intelligencer* (Third month 28, 1863): 39.

<sup>75</sup> "Quakers. A Quaker Wedding in Virginia," *New York Times* (June 19, 1866): 2, col. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Hannah Adams, *A View of Religions, in Two Parts* (Boston: Manning and Loring, Printer, 1801), 235-241.

<sup>77</sup> Tibbals, "The Speech of Plain Friends," 193.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>79</sup> Ezra Kempton Maxfield, "Quaker 'Thee' and Its History," *American Speech* 1, no. 12 (September 1926): 638-644.



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<sup>80</sup> Atcheson L. Hensch, "Nominative 'Thou' and 'Thee' in Quaker English," *American Speech* 4, no. 5 (June 1929): 361-363. E.K. Maxfield, "Quaker 'Thou' and 'Thee,'" *American Speech* 4, no. 5 (June 1929): 359-361.

<sup>81</sup> Comfort, "Some Peculiarities."

<sup>82</sup> Comfort, "Some Peculiarities," 13.

<sup>83</sup> E.K. Maxfield, "Quaker 'Thou' and 'Thee.'"

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>85</sup> Jill Chambers, "Quaker Meeting."

[http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/circle\\_games/honey\\_do\\_you\\_love\\_me.htm](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/circle_games/honey_do_you_love_me.htm). Accessed 4 October 2005.

<sup>86</sup> "Car Games." <http://www.beachnet.com/~jeanettem/car.html> Accessed 4 October 2005.

<sup>87</sup> "Home Amusements and Juvenile Department," Godey's *Lady's Book* 101 (September 1880): 29.

<sup>88</sup> Tibbals, "The Speech of Plain Friends," 199.

A clergyman, thinking to puzzle a Quaker, asked him, "Where was your religion before George Fox lived?"

"Where thine was," said the Quaker, "before Harry Tudor's time. Now," added the Quaker, "pray let me ask thee a question—Where was Jacob going when he was turned ten years of age? Canst thou tell that?" "No, nor you either," said the clergyman. "Yes, I can," replied the Quaker; "he was going into his eleventh year."

"Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (October 14, 1865): 647.

## CHAPTER 3

### REFORMERS

Friends were well known for their charming anachronisms in speech. But their commitments to social causes formed an equally significant part of the Quaker public persona in the mid-nineteenth century. Many American Quakers were active supporters of American Indians' rights, temperance, prison reform, the abolition of the death penalty, nonresistance, and—most familiar—women's rights and the abolition of slavery. Represented Friends, depending on their creator's commitments, often evidenced their dedication to these issues in a variety of lights and settings. In this chapter, I will examine several carefully crafted Quaker characters: the recurring, momentary Quaker assistant appearing in mid- to late-century slave narratives, the reforming Quaker woman in fiction, and the abolitionist and women's rights advocate Lucretia Coffin Mott. These Quaker characters (including the mythologized Mrs. Mott) were fashioned to demonstrate the power of individual over institutional change, and to transform transgressive Quaker witnesses into more appealing reforms. Moreover, these characters were associated strongly with a rural setting in which the individual contact made such change possible, as opposed to the grimy institutionalism of the city—where, in fact, many actual Quakers lived. These values brought the Quaker reformer fashioned by the popular literature of the late nineteenth century much closer to an imagined Protestant paradigm for effecting social change. The examples of represented Quakers I examine in this chapter highlight the ways in which Quaker political

witnesses—when they were noticed—became entwined and confused in the public imagination. Moreover, these represented Friends point to the political fissures throughout American society, easily revealing the political stances of their creators. When authors and artists supported abolition and women's rights in their encounters with the Quaker sphere, they represented them positively; when such movements seemed incongruous, inconsistent, or threatening, abolition and women's rights were questioned and depoliticized.

### **I. Quaker Abolition**

Representations of Quaker reformers are among the simplest to read in terms of their creators' intent and sympathy for the reform at hand. For example, in the 1836 text *Sheppard Lee*, Robert Montgomery Bird (an apologist for slavery) creates an abolitionist Quaker that is pompous, inconsistent, and ill-spoken (as we saw in the last chapter).<sup>1</sup> In this bizarre novel, Bird's title character (a feckless Van Winkle type) escapes his sorry situation in life by inhabiting the bodies of the recently deceased, including a dandy and a henpecked husband. In the last and most surprising sections of the text, he inhabits the bodies of the Quaker Zachariah Longstraw—who is lynched for his abolitionist beliefs—and then a nearby slave. Longstraw is a stock Quaker character portrayed from a distinctively Southern, pro-slavery perspective; both his behavior and beliefs mark him as unrealistic, unmanly, and ostentatiously pious. It is his sympathy for the slave that unmans him, Byrd suggests, and eventually leads to his demise.

Quakers also became significant characters in the abolitionist literature of later decades. Friends quickly became part of the stock company of characters in some slave narratives and freed slave autobiographies. The authors of slave narratives developed and followed a set of conventions as deeply entrenched as those of the sentimental novel or any

other popular genre of the period; the Quaker assistant was a key component of the genre. Literary scholar Frances Smith Foster, in an exploration of the conventions of the slave narrative, explains that the narrative of the flight from slavery might be extended or quite brief, but “[t]he interest at this point is in the details, the pitfalls and obstacles, the sufferings and moments of bravery encountered in the process of achieving freedom.”<sup>2</sup> As they did in life, Quakers often played a crucial role in the flight portion of the narrative.

Ex-slave narratives, like so many other cultural and literary expressions where Quakers appear, were enormously popular during the antebellum period. As Foster points out, slave narratives enjoyed wide audiences not only because of the abolitionists eager to support their publication, but also because of the readers keen to consume the “scenes of violence and cruelty . . . which could not only awaken moral outrage against slavery but at the same time . . . satisfy the public’s appetite for sensationalism.”<sup>3</sup> Foster underscores the rapid repeat editions of the most popular narratives as the best evidence for their extensive audiences.<sup>4</sup>

The 1843 narrative of Moses Grandy, a freed slave from North Carolina, hints at the ways in which some African Americans interpreted and fashioned the figure of the Quaker on the page. Grandy explains that when he encountered public difficulties or injustices in his new situation in the North, he looked about for “some well-known abolitionists, and if none that we knew were there, we addressed any person dressed as a Quaker; these classes always took our part against ill usage.”<sup>5</sup> Grandy’s mention of the Quaker dress as a friendly indicator is not surprising. More interesting is the brief appearance and rapid disappearance of the Quaker as a figure in Grandy’s narrative—a pattern repeated in slave narratives throughout the second half of the century. Quakers popped up in the stories, gopher-like,

when fugitive or freed slaves needed assistance or direction—but then tended to vanish completely from the narratives.

In narratives like Grandy's, Quakers became stock characters, but it is crucial to note that their creators did not render them without complexity. Glenn Nelson Cummings has made a recent study of Quaker figures as they appear in the narratives of James W.C. Pennington, William Wells Brown, Moses Grandy, Moses Roper, and James Williams. Cummings argues persuasively that Quakers occasionally exerted a problematic level of influence over some slave narratives, thereby according Friends a peculiar authority over both the texts and the escaped slaves themselves. "One can also see how good Quakers," he writes, "while benevolent and surely preferable to the Southern master, assume the role of a new master, as it were."<sup>6</sup> And yet, Cummings also asserts that in the texts, Quaker figures are "rendered with remarkable economy," making them simple saints:

In texts written by the slaves themselves, Quakers signify only generous, and genuine, benevolence. The simplicity with which their goodness is represented allows for easy identification and indisputable meaning. Called simply "broad-brims" by many of their authors, they adhere to a set of well-delineated moral properties which readers of the slave narrative come to expect.<sup>7</sup>

Though Cummings rightly recognizes that the Quakers in slave narratives make surprisingly brief appearances, he links this concision with wholehearted admiration and the simple signaling of a compassionate stock character. Rather, Quakers' roles in slave narratives secured them a place in the conventions of the genre—and, while depictions of them were often affirmative, they were not uniformly so. The Quakers in these narratives did often act individually, and in the rural landscape which formed the background of the slave's flight.

Among the most significant themes and impressions former slaves attempted to convey was a lack of control—not only over their own persons but also over their relationships with others. As literary scholar Raymond Hedin observes,

The disconnectedness of slave life . . . was one of the cruelest and most pervasive aspects of slavery; to expose it accurately was one of the narrator's purposes. The narratives are therefore filled with loose ends, with incidents whose outcomes remain unknown, especially with characters who drop out of the narrator's ken and whose fate we never learn.<sup>8</sup>

Bearing this desire to express an episodic experience in mind, it is clearer why Quakers crop up and disappear, often only once, over the course of slave narratives. William Wells Brown first published his widely-reprinted *Narrative* in 1847, and a Quaker serves a crucial but fleeting role in his escape. Although he does not mention a prior knowledge of Friends in the body of the narrative, Brown recognizes his potential benefactor by his plain clothing alone:

I observed an old man walking towards me, leading a white horse. He had on a broad-brimmed hat and a very long coat, and was evidently walking for exercise. As soon as I saw him, and observed his dress, I thought to myself, "You are the man that I have been looking for!" Nor was I mistaken. He was the very man!<sup>9</sup>

Brown's narrative is somewhat unusual in that he revisits the Quaker influence on his flight throughout his text—most notably, in his assumption of the Quaker's name.

Quaker figures typically provide escaping slaves with money, advice, information, and shelter when they appear in slave narratives. A Quaker makes a brief appearance in the narrative of Leonard Black, who escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1837 and published his narrative the same year as William Wells Brown. Once Black resolved to escape, his journey began with calamity—under pursuit by his master, he dropped his clothing bundle and all the money he had saved, leaving him nearly penniless.

All the money I had with me was 75 cents; that a Quaker gentleman gave me that afternoon. I had told this gentleman that I was going to run

away that night, and he told me which way to start to get clear. I started for Boston.<sup>10</sup>

After traveling thirty-five miles overnight, Black found himself at the door of a tavern, where the tavern keeper (who hailed from Georgia) offered him breakfast. Black demurred: “‘No, sir, I thank you, I would as soon sit here;’ for I thought he was most too kind to be honest; the Quaker man having told me to avoid Georgia men.”<sup>11</sup> For Black, the Quaker has provided three crucial advantages—money, directions, and advice, warning him away from those who might betray him.

One of the most derisive and dismissive mentions of Quakers occurring in a slave narrative appears in Aaron’s *The Light and Truth of Slavery: Aaron’s History*, published in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1845. This narrative begins with an open acknowledgement of Aaron’s illiteracy: “Aaron cannot read a word. There are very few full blooded blacks at the South that can read a word, Aaron says.”<sup>12</sup> This admission both prepares the way for the dizzying shifts from first to third person throughout the narrative and tacitly concedes the profound involvement of Aaron’s assisting patron in crafting the text. John W. Blassingame cites Aaron’s narrative as one of a series of unreliable slave narratives, claiming that such narratives included

long dialogues which could only represent approximations of the truth. . . . Many of [the abolitionists] also penned long digressions on the duplicity of northerners in maintaining slavery. Similarly, the most complicated philosophical, religious, and historical arguments were sometimes attributed to the slaves to show that bondage violated divine law and the natural rights of man. . . . Sometimes the accounts were so romantic and focused so heavily on the flight from bondage that they were more akin to Indian-escape literature than slave autobiographies . . . . [T]hey generally reveal few of the details of slave life.<sup>13</sup>

Aaron’s narrative reflects all of these complications. But Aaron’s editor was clearly at pains to maintain the “realism” of the account via the inclusion of Aaron’s image on the first page,



Aaron's dialect and through a citation of the many public appearances Aaron made in the north after his escape. Moreover, the shifts between first and third person tend to reinforce the offhand nature of the narrative—a more artful editor, we might imagine, would have maintained Aaron's first person voice throughout to uphold the narrative's semblance of authenticity. For our purposes here, however, the “reliability” or “authenticity” of Aaron's narrative is less important than it might be otherwise; what is significant is that this slave narrative records and scornfully dismisses the indifference of a Quaker.

Narrating his escape, Aaron expresses deep admiration for the “Universalists” he meets along the way:

I staid seven days with them. And I bid 'em good bye, and wished the blessing of God upon 'em. Aaron says he wonders there arn't a thousand Universalists to where there is one. He wonders there arn't a thousand infidels in the world to where there is one, because the white brethren believe in the true light and gospel, and sentiments of the Holy Ghost, and yet set a bad example for their white brethren to stumble over. That is what makes me say it is a wonder there is not a thousand infidels and Universalists to where there is one.<sup>14</sup>

Further along his journey, Aaron encounters another kind Universalist who attempts to advise him:

I fell in with a Universalist. Aaron did not learn his name, he treated me as a brother, but I never shall forget his form . . . . He helped him to lodging and to victuals and in money. He told of a quaker man who was a great abolitionist, he lived in Uxbridge. Aaron went to him and he took my letter and read it, and then told me to go about my business. Aaron says it did not astonish me, the Quaker brethren is like one half of the Methodist brethren, they are complete wolves clothed in sheep's clothing.<sup>15</sup>

Whether these are Aaron's own ruminations or the sentiments of a Universalist editor (as certainly is possible), is less interesting than the representation of the “quaker man who was a great abolitionist.” This Quaker, who abruptly sends Aaron on his way without help, is depicted as inconsistent at best and a wolf in sheep's clothing at worst—reminiscent of

Jesus's warning in the Sermon on the Mount: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."<sup>16</sup> (Aaron's asserted familiarity with scripture, despite his illiteracy, is affirmed by this metaphor.) In Aaron's narrative, the plain clothing of the Quaker—and even his reputation as "a great abolitionist"—is insufficient to guarantee free and needed help. In this one instance, Aaron dismisses Friends (along with Methodists) as entirely unreliable, particularly when contrasted with the generous and ready Universalists.

Later in the century, other ex-slaves recounted less dismissive but still vexing encounters with Quakers. Amanda Smith, an independent holiness missionary and former slave who evangelized throughout the world from the 1870s through the 1890s, was widely recognized in the United States for her plain dress and her adopted Quaker bonnet.<sup>17</sup> In her 1893 autobiography, she spares a moment to tell that bonnet's story, sighing, "How I did hate to give up my nice Quaker bonnet!"<sup>18</sup> She goes on to explain her motivation for wearing it in the first place:

I always admired the Friends' dress, so this was at once my choice, and at that time many of the Christian sisters among all the colored churches in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore, dressed like the Friends, and were generally called Band Sisters, and, as a rule, were noted for their deep piety and Christian character. I loved them for this, as well as admired their very plain dress, for the height of my ambition was to be a consistent, downright, outright Christian.<sup>19</sup>

When she traveled to England in 1890, however, Smith was overwhelmed with probing questions from Friends about her connections to the Society. Smith defended her plain bonnet, explaining that in America, "no one felt bound to wear any set garb; that Methodists or Presbyterians, no matter who, if they liked to dress like the Friends, or anybody else, if they had the money, just got the article, whatever it was, and no one had any thought about

it.”<sup>20</sup> In the end, Friendly accusations of dissembling led the anxious Smith to buy a new bonnet, too small and too fashionable to suit her taste but sufficiently unlike the Quaker style. English Friends had abandoned the bonnet three decades before, and they took issue with hers. As Smith records, English Friends would “kindly say: ‘Well, I think if I were thee, I would not do it.’”<sup>21</sup> When she returned to the United States, her friends there were dismayed to see that she had abandoned her Quaker bonnet. Frustrated, she “felt so sick of explaining that I felt like starting a new style and wearing no bonnet at all!” Clearly, in England, the combination of the by then obsolete Quaker bonnet and Smith’s dark skin elicited Friends’ questions about both her family and her relationship to the Society.<sup>22</sup>

As Amanda Smith’s experience made plain, former slaves often emulated (whether by dress or, in Brown’s case, in name) or admired their Quaker benefactors. But their representations of Quakers in the text were neither simple nor uniform. For example, though Frederick Douglass does not mention Quakers in his 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he does include them in his 1855 *My Bondage and My Freedom*:

My first afternoon, on reaching New Bedford, was spent in visiting the wharves and viewing the shipping. The sight of the broad brim and the plain, Quaker dress, which met me at every turn, greatly increased my sense of freedom and security. “I am among the Quakers,” thought I, “and am safe.”<sup>23</sup>

In his 1881 *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, Quakers make a fuller appearance in New Bedford and thereafter. Douglass provides a context for his life in the North and prepares the reader for his relationships with Quakers narrated later in the text. When he arrives in New Bedford, the reader is offered a greater level of detail:

I had not money enough to pay our fare, and stood hesitating to know what to do. Fortunately for us, there were two Quaker gentlemen who were about to take passage on the stage—Friends William C. Taber and Joseph Ricketson,—who at once discerned our true situation, and in a peculiarly quiet way, addressing me, Mr. Taber said: “Thee get in.”<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, Douglass's relationship with Quakers had evolved since the publication of his earliest *Narrative*, and his inclusion of richer portraits of Quaker actors reflected his desire to acknowledge (and encourage) their support of the abolitionist cause. But as his own shifting narratives make plain, it was the perspective of the author that determined the shape and extent of Quaker appearances in the text.

## **II. Woman's Rights**

In addition to their widespread support of abolitionism, many Quakers were well-known advocates of "woman's rights" throughout the nineteenth century. Representations of these activists, however, are missing from the most popular Quaker characters and images created in the latter half of the century. The nineteenth century marked a period of transition in the public reputation of many female Friends. Most Americans had forgotten the memory of the itinerant public woman Friends of the early eighteenth century. Their sphere had been restricted considerably by the tightening of meeting disciplines and the concurrent decline in Quaker evangelism. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, the reputation of women Friends in the broader public was forced to encompass their new roles as advocates of abolition and often of women's rights. By mid-century, Hicksite and Orthodox Friends were abandoning the plain dress witness in large numbers; as we will see in Chapter Five, this change had the greatest effect on the public's perception of Quaker women.<sup>25</sup> All these changes occurred as Quakers continued to insist on the religious equality of the sexes.

From the earliest flourishing of Quaker theology, Friends acknowledged the spiritual parity of women and men.<sup>26</sup> Although early Quakers varied in their conceptions of Christ, humans, and the relationship between those two parties, most first Friends believed that the light of Christ was present in and expressive through all people irrespective of gender. As

early as 1653, George Fox wrote to Friends that “the Son of God is but one in all, male and female; and the Light of God is but one.”<sup>27</sup> Early Quakers interpreted women’s subjection as a corruption, rather than a reflection, of the divine plan for community. As Quaker historian Catherine Wilcox explains, “Fox came to hold that woman was created equally in the image of God with man, that subordination of woman to man was a consequence of the fall, not a feature of the creation, and that . . . Christ restored women and men to pre-fall perfection in this life.”<sup>28</sup> Women, then, were as likely as men to be chosen as divine instruments for preaching, ecstatic spirituality, and other ministries, and the earliest Friends insisted that Paul’s restrictions against women’s participation in the church had been badly misunderstood.<sup>29</sup> Margaret Fell’s 1666 *Women’s Speaking Justified, Proved, and Allowed of by the Scriptures* cited the earliest evangelism after the Resurrection as powerful evidence that women *must* participate in the life of the community, particularly in preaching: “What had become of the Redemption of the whole Body of Mankind, if they had not cause to believe the Message that the Lord Jesus sent by these Women, of and concerning his Resurrection?”<sup>30</sup>

Over the course of the nineteenth century in the United States, the Quaker insistence on gender equality (in both spiritual matters and within the meeting structure itself) led to widespread Friendly support for woman’s political and social rights. Neither Hicksite nor Orthodox Friends could agree to support women’s rights wholeheartedly, however, particularly at mid-century. The Hicksite *Friends’ Intelligencer* published on “woman’s rights” on the first page of the March 1852 issue, remarking that

The subject of woman’s rights is now agitating the public mind, and some of our members have taken hold of it, desirous to wake the sleeping energies of the multitude, and bring them to act in removing old customs, and setting in right order what usage has deranged. Whilst we feel there is some ground for this

contest, we remember there are rights women have always enjoyed, and were these fully appreciated and improved, many of the grievances complained of would disappear, and what is desired be achieved by a force as irresistible as the power that propels the heavenly bodies, and regulates the planetary system.<sup>31</sup>

The author (identified only as “S.H.”) went on to explain that woman’s “rights” included, for example, her roles as an instructor and teacher of children. S.H. clearly advocated gradualism in achieving woman’s (full) rights, and pressed instead for the full appreciation and improvement of those rights women already enjoyed. A year later, in the same journal, an anonymous Friend published on “Woman,” a column printed just under a celebratory remembrance of eighteenth-century Quaker preacher Patience Brayton. This rhapsody illustrates the tension between spiritual egalitarianism and the heady demands of a sentimental age:

It has been said by the Poet “an honest man’s the noblest work of God;” and we think that a woman, clothed in the “Christian robe of purity, possessed of an amiable, sweet disposition, and gifted with a sympathising heart,” is no less to be admired and commended.

It was no doubt designed by our beneficent Creator that man should have such a companion as would be a *help-meet* to aide and comfort him through life’s journey. He needs such an one to soothe him when worn by toil and in his seasons of discouragements to revive his drooping spirits and direct his thoughts to a higher and holier existence than the present life. If he [has] hotter trials through which to pass, she can and should sweeten them by kind offices and endearing sympathies. Thus would she render his home a little paradise, where he would delight to shelter from the bustle, confusion and noise of a life of business and toil.<sup>32</sup>

This perspective on woman’s role in the home might have been drawn directly from the pages of a sentimental novel (were it not for the Quaker predisposition against them).

Quoting Alexander Pope on “an honest man,” the author proposes purity, amiability, and sympathy as the feminine analogues. Woman, the author suggests, is to “be admired and commended” in her role as a “*help-meet*” to her husband; she is a beacon on the hearth, sacralizing the home while her husband passes through the “hotter trials” of life outside the

Quaker abode.

Popular magazines and newspapers with the widest audiences also echoed institutional Quakerism's skepticism about Quakers engaged in the woman's rights question. For opponents of women's rights, it was, apparently, no less (and perhaps more) improper for Quaker women to advocate for such social changes. In September of 1865, Godey's *Lady's Book* published on "Dress—In a Man's Point of View." In the article, an anonymous British "man" gives his own assessment of Fashion for the readers of Godey's:

Wherever taste is checked, love of mere expense comes in; and wherever women are educated with ultra strictness in matters of dress, and forbidden any exercise of their own will and fancy in this sphere, they grow up to find some other and larger field of independence. This is so conspicuously the case in the Quaker sect, that it is notorious the women in their plain garb have ever taken the spiritual conduct and the preaching of the society into their own hands, and utterly quenched the men. If they were circumscribed in skirts and flounces, at least they would be 'very large in the ministry,' and so indemnify themselves.

. . . [T]he present touch of the masculine costume, imported by hat and paletot, and booted ankle to our ladies' toilets, must surely have had some connection, as it has been coincident with, the talk and clamor about Woman's Rights; while we gladly accept the hoop and sweeping skirts as an admission that they are very woman after all, unfitted by nature and constitution to move easily or to feel in their place in the bustle of crowds and the stir of active outdoor life.<sup>33</sup>

In the estimation of this "man," it is the strait Quaker dress that has allowed Quaker women to have "utterly quenched the men," and their lack of "skirts and flounces" has given them the upper hand in the Society. Moreover, he strongly associates the "masculine costume" with "the talk and clamor about Woman's Rights," congratulating the readers of Godey's that their "hoop and sweeping skirts" were not only fashionable but appropriately, modestly restrictive. The woman of the second half of the nineteenth century, he implies, will be more at home in a bustle than in "the bustle of crowds," and the Quaker woman should provide adequate warning of the dangers of an unconfining or unadorned costume.

Occasionally outside observers sidestepped the question of Quaker involvement with the religious and political campaign for women's rights altogether. As a columnist writing on "Women, Quaker and Mohammedan" in the *New York Times* observed on July 30, 1876:

With regard to the vexed question of the rights of women, the position of women is undoubtedly higher among the Friends than in any other society. From George Fox's time an equal place has been assigned them in the family of God as in the human family, in the Church as well as in human society.<sup>34</sup>

The same author looked askance at a scriptural basis for such equality, humorously questioning the "bold rationalizing exegesis of the Quakeress, who, when hard pressed by certain Pauline texts relative to women keeping silence in the church, replied, 'Thee knows Paul was not partial to females.'" In this tongue-in-cheek observation, the reporter equates the historical spiritual equality within the Society of Friends with the "vexed question of the rights of women," failing to consider the real (and varied) positions of Quakers with respect to women's rights. An 1853 item on "Woman's Rights" in the "Editor's Table" of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* declared that Paul's teachings "manifest the most tender feeling of regard for women":

How kind and manly, too, his regard for the "widows who were widows indeed"—holy and heavenly women—not scolding for "female rights" like some in our day, who, under a Quaker bonnet, can show more fight than many a brigadier-general.<sup>35</sup>

There was something incompatible, it seemed, in the domestic, anachronistic, and rural image of the aproned and bonneted Quaker speaking before a 'promiscuous' audience on the question of women's rights—leading the most popular depictions of Quaker women to neglect such a character altogether.

In popular fiction, the rural Quaker woman lending aid to her working sisters in the city provided a happy alternative to more troubling depictions of advocates for woman's



rights. These connections often asserted the superiority of an imagined rural Quaker life over the clamoring and inhospitable life of the city—particularly for the single woman. Single Quaker women were imagined as protected (as, indeed, they often were) by a large network of family and Friends, secured—despite their assertion of woman’s self-determination—by the safety net of the meeting. It apparently was pleasant, then, to imagine the rescue of the downtrodden city seamstress or mill worker by the personal altruism of such a Quaker. Such contacts suggested that individual commitment could undo the ills caused by institutional change, and the morals of these stories could be extrapolated easily from their Quaker heroines to their potentially evangelical readers. Moreover, these tales asserted positive and explicit associations between Quaker women, the economic security still associated with Friends, and rural life.

One of the best-known examples of such a work is Rebecca Harding Davis’s novella *Life in the Iron Mills*, first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in April of 1861. Deborah’s Quaker savior (known only as “the Quaker”) is noticeable for her gray dress, and the first indication we have that her charge Deborah has become a Friend by conviction is a similar redemptive attire. Literary scholars have dissected endlessly the tale and the implications of Deborah’s ‘happy’ ending among the Quakers. Literary critic Sheila Hassell Hughes, for example, has observed that “Davis’s conclusion is troublesome, because there are actually three endings to her tale: Hugh’s tragic death; the rescue of his body and of Deb by the Quaker; and the narrator’s final, sentimental appeal to the coming ‘Dawn.’”<sup>36</sup> Hughes suggests that if the “coming dawn of the story’s conclusion is meant to placate those still in the mills, then, indeed, the whole story does disintegrate.”<sup>37</sup>

Taking a closer look at the Quaker *deus ex machina*, the model for the Friend Deborah

eventually becomes, can illuminate the power for change the rural Quaker woman was imagined to possess. Harding Davis describes her thus as Deborah kept watch with fallen Hugh:

Only one woman. She came late, and outstayed them all. A Quaker, or Friend, as they call themselves. I think this woman was known by that name in heaven. A homely body, coarsely dressed in gray and white. . . . After they all were gone, the woman, in the same still, gentle way, brought a vase of wood-leaves and berries, and placed it by the pallet, then opened the narrow window. The fresh air blew in, and swept the woody fragrance over the dead face.<sup>38</sup>

The Quaker's attire, in this unusual instance, performs its theological purpose of leveling the Friend with her humble comrades. Her presence effectively brings Hugh's beloved countryside to the city—and she makes good on her promise to return Deborah herself from the city to nature, where ““thee shall begin thy life again,—there on the hills.””<sup>39</sup> This return to the countryside is figured as an explicitly feminine, individual, and Quakerly undertaking.

Likewise Christie, the much-beset heroine of Lousia May Alcott's 1873 novel *Work*, is rescued from the despair and oblivion of a seamstress's life in the home of an elder Quaker widow (and her more worldly son). When Christie meets her benefactress, Mrs. Sterling, it is the plain language that immediately sets her at her ease—a language that seems a very part of the feminine and domestic “furniture” of the home:

“I am she; come in, friend; I am glad to see thee,” said the old lady, smiling placidly, as she led the way into a room whose principal furniture seemed to be books, flowers, and sunshine. The look, the tone, the gentle “thee,” went straight to Christie's heart . . . she stroked the cat and said to herself: “Surely, I have fallen among a set of angels.”<sup>40</sup>

Christie is rescued from the life of the city by the gentle (read: Quakerly) elixir of the flowers, the life of outdoor work and domestic charms that her new Quaker redeemer makes possible.

Quakers themselves were occasionally depicted as working women, but they are never

far from their rural setting or their true heart's desires—a simple home and family. In November 1879, Godey's *Lady's Book* published Margaret B. Harvey's "All About It," the story of a diffident and lovely Quaker doctor, "Lucy Jones, M.D." Lucy was there to save the day when none of the "old doctors" were present:

An old lady had fallen down stairs and broken her arm. Immediate surgical attendance was necessary—but the old doctors were engaged or away, and somebody thought of the modest young Quakeress, Lucy Jones, M.D.

...So the plain gray dress and cottage bonnet, which showed to advantage a graceful form and a sweet face, were often seen at the bedside of the sick. Dr. Lucy, though a woman, was succeeding. ...

But the world did not know, as it never does, all. She was said and supposed to be completely wedded to her profession, a real old maid 'to the backbone.' Yet deep in her secret heart, through all these years, had she faithfully cherished the image of William.

Yes! Dr. Lucy, though a physician, and a good one at that, was first of all, and with all, a woman.<sup>41</sup>

As we will see in Chapter Five, it is no surprise that Lucy's bonnet and dress "showed to advantage" her feminine form; what is most interesting about this story is Lucy's place in the rural, cottage-dotted countryside, and her longing for a family life with "William." She was never fully "wedded to her profession" but "was first of all, and with all, a woman." In Lucy's case, it seems to be her Quaker heritage that helps to preserve her from the severity and isolation implied by her career and education. Dr. Lucy's femininity and marriageability are preserved by the "plain gray dress and cottage bonnet," and her nurturing career has not abated, but rather quickened, her desire for a home and family. Considering Dr. Lucy in concert with Mrs. Sterling and the nameless Quaker of *Life in the Iron-Mills*, a clearer picture of the working Quaker woman emerges: she must be nurturing, feminine, and devoted—but ever an advocate of individual redemption, not radical political change.

#### **IV. Lucretia Coffin Mott**

In the 1881 edition of his *Life and Times*, Frederick Douglass spent his eighteenth chapter, “Honor to Whom Honor,” paying tribute to those “special friends” who had helped him and the cause of abolition over the course of his life.<sup>42</sup> Douglass devoted much space to celebrating the women who had been most helpful to the cause, and declared: “Foremost among these notable American women, who in point of clearness of vision, breadth of understanding, fullness of knowledge, catholicity of spirit, weight of character, and widespread influence, was Lucretia Mott of Philadelphia.”<sup>43</sup> Douglass went on to praise Lydia Maria Child, the Grimké sisters, Abby Kelley, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among others. But it is for Lucretia Mott that Douglass reserves a detailed description of his first vision of her, and of her physical appearance:

Great as this woman was in speech, and persuasive as she was in her writings, she was incomparably greater in her presence. She spoke to the world through every line of her countenance. . . .

I shall never forget the first time I ever saw and heard Lucretia Mott. It was in the town of Lynn, Massachusetts. It was not in a magnificent hall, where such as she seemed to belong. . . .

The speaker was attired in the usual Quaker dress, free from startling colors, plain, rich, elegant, and without superfluity--the very sight of her a sermon. In a few moments after she began to speak, I saw before me no more a woman, but a glorified presence, bearing a message of light and love from the Infinite to a benighted and strangely wandering world, straying away from the paths of truth and justice into the wilderness of pride and selfishness, where peace is lost and true happiness is sought in vain.<sup>44</sup>

Douglass takes pains to communicate the details of Mott’s clothing and appearance. Her “presence” and her “countenance” are greater still than her printed and her spoken words. (As we will see in Chapter Five, Douglass’s delight in her appearance and his read of her dress as particularly feminine and attractive is not surprising.) Her dress is “free from startling colors, plain, rich, elegant, and without superfluity”—her appearance, for Douglass, is given equal weight with her beliefs—indeed, her dress and self-presentation becomes a

deeply effective means for expressing her convictions. Her self-fashioning through dress made her, for those who saw her, “no more a woman, but a glorified presence.”

Douglass was not alone in his admiration and fashioning of Lucretia Mott as a feminine heroine of the abolitionist movement. She was among the best-known American women of the nineteenth century, and she was an enormously powerful figure—a woman, a feminist, an abolitionist—the marriage of several of the most politically charged Quaker witnesses. By the time of her death, however, she was considered to be a model of public Christian virtue; indeed, her elegy in *Harper's Weekly* observed that “[o]f all the prominent American women of this century, there is probably not one so little associated with that which is disagreeable in publicity, and yet there is none who has been more prominently before the public.”<sup>45</sup> Mott was well known for her work on behalf of both abolitionism and woman's rights throughout the century; it is useful to see how her life in these roles, at home, and as a birthright and practicing Friend were represented in the public press.

Though her praise in the *Harper's* remembrance verged on the extravagant, the paper was not always so kind to Lucretia Mott. In November of 1866, the “Correspondent On-the-Wing” filed a ‘report’ in its pages from a fictitious women's rights convention in Philadelphia:

*FROM OUR “CORRESPONDENT ON-THE-WING.” Continental Hotel, Philadelphia, Nov. 26, 1866.*

Friend Weekly: . . . I feel I must address thee in the plain language, for I have just been to the Woman's Rights and Lefts and Equal Suffrage Convention, held here last Saturday, and I heard some very plain language. On the platform, which was very broad, was Mrs. *Elizabeth Arcady Standing*, Mrs. *Lucy Longstone*, Mrs. *Susan Beanthony*, and Rev. Miss *Oblivion Dark Brown*. Among the gentlemen were Mr. *Frederick Dugout* and others, to give color to the affair. As soon as I made my appearance one of the Equal Suffragessers accosted me, and asked me if I was not the flying correspondent to *Harper's Weekly*. I owned the soft impeachment. Then said she: “I suppose thee is among those that think women ought to do nothing but nurse babies, and other household duties.” . . .

Mrs. *Elizabeth Arcady Standing*, the *non-elect*, as you may remember, was the first speaker. She was dressed very nice. I don't know the names of the moire antiques and things, but she looked beautiful. *Elizabeth* came forward and said: "I am sorry that our venerable Presidentess, Mrs. *Lucretia Mott*, is not here, as our Mott-oh is for equal suffrage." Mr. *Frederick Dugout* here rose and said that was a joke. (Great Applause.)<sup>46</sup>

The broad jokes in this 'account' rely heavily on humor at the expense of Quaker idiosyncrasies, as well as wordplay directed against both "Equal Suffragessers" and African-Americans. The plain speech of Quakers is associated strongly with woman's "Rights and Lefts" here, both in the equation of plain language with "plain speech" (an association explored further in the previous chapter) and in the redress of the woman who directly addresses the reporter. Lucretia Mott herself escapes a witless nickname—but not being 'present' at the gathering, she becomes the subject of a lame joke delivered by "*Elizabeth Arcady Standing*" and dutifully explained by "*Frederick Dugout*." (Douglass's nickname indicated a mean, low and temporary dwelling—it did not take on the meaning of today until the twentieth century.) Mott, although 'absent,' is present in the Quakerish details rendered of the affair and in the "Mott-oh" of the assembly gathered there.

As time passed, however, Mott's reputation softened somewhat, couched in the memory of the infamous September 1853 New York Woman's Rights Convention. Mott presided over the convention, interrupted two days running by a Tammany Hall gang partially spurred by the leadership of Captain Isaiah Rynders. On the second day of the convention, Wednesday, September 7, the assembly was completely broken up by these rioters as Mott—true to her principles of nonresistance—refused to call for law officers.<sup>47</sup> Mott was left behind in the growing fray as her comrades questioned how she would safely escape the hall. What happened next became the stuff of a rather mixed-up legend. Much like Sojourner Truth's "Ar'n't I a Woman?" speech of 1851,<sup>48</sup> Mott's words and actions have

been reported differently by different sources—some more dramatic than others. In 1869, *Harper's Weekly* remembered that:

In the golden age of the Republic, Captain *Rynders* and his mob silenced Mrs. *Lucretia Mott*, in the Broadway Tabernacle, because of her indecent and incendiary declaration of the equal right of innocent Americans to personal liberty. But Captain *Rynders* and his mob, although characteristic defenders of the true Democratic faith and heroic champions of public decency, failed to save the great Goliath for whom they fought. The gentle words of Mrs. *Mott* were more powerful than all the oaths and shillalahs of the Empire Club, and, like the smooth stones from the brook, slew the huge giant of the Captain's idolatry.<sup>49</sup>

Here the purpose of the gathering is left vague: “her indecent and incendiary declaration of the equal right of innocent Americans to personal liberty.” Given Mott’s calcifying reputation as an abolitionist first, women’s rights advocate second (and the very real combination of those movements on a stage where Sojourner Truth spoke too), this haziness is not surprising. Moreover, these rioters were equally associated with opposition to woman’s rights and with the antislavery Democrats of New York.

These “gentle words” of Mott and her means of escape from the riot were reported differently depending on the source. By 1885, five years after her death, *Harper's Weekly* remembered an account of her serenity and her safe departure from the hall.

During one of the *Rynders* riots in New York, when he and his gang were engaged in breaking up one of the antislavery meetings, Mrs. *Mott* was asked, in the height of the tumult, how she expected to escape. “Oh,” she replied, quietly, laying her hand upon the shoulder of one of the most active rioters. “this gentleman will see me to the door.” And “this gentleman” was so overwhelmed with amazement at her serene self-possession that he escorted her safely through the mob to the street.<sup>50</sup>

In this account (included—somewhat incongruously—as part of the obituary for Mrs. Maria Weston Chapman), the event is remembered explicitly as “one of the antislavery meetings”—which had, in fact, taken place the Sunday before (September 4, 1853). Moreover, Mott’s words and actions are directly quoted.

The circumstances of Mott's escape remain a part of the Quaker mythology up to the present. Margaret Hope Bacon, Mott's late twentieth-century biographer, opens her book with a dramatic exposition of the New York assembly. Bacon narrates the escape thus:

Seeing their trouble, Lucretia asked her own escort to see several of them safely out.

"But who will take care of you?" he asked.

"This man will see me through," Lucretia said, tucking her hand under the arm of the nearest bully.

It was, some say, Captain Rynders himself. . . . Clearly he was taken aback, but after a moment's pause and a glance into that cameo face an impulse of courtesy took over. Gravely he conducted the little woman through the hall, which had been thrown into an uproar by his own doing.<sup>51</sup>

Bacon admits in a footnote that "This story, which is told by Lucretia's contemporary biographers, is hard to pin down."<sup>52</sup> The second edition (1889) *History of Woman Suffrage*, edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, does not mention the incident, although full accounts of the assembly, the mob, and its depictions in local papers are collected there.<sup>53</sup> Neither does Anna Davis Hallowell, the Motts' granddaughter, recount the story in her 1884 biography, *James and Lucretia Mott: Life and Letters*.<sup>54</sup> What is curious about the story (and its staying power) is that the anecdote both reinforces Lucretia Mott's peaceful power over the rioting mob while simultaneously emphasizing her frailty and essential womanhood, exemplified by her need for a male escort from the hall. Though the purpose of the gathering—and Lucretia Mott's presence there—was to garner support for women's rights, emphasizing Mott's Quakerly ("quietly" and "serene") femininity became a crucial part of her growing reputation.

In 1870, *Harper's Weekly* ran a beautiful image of Lucretia Mott in her Quaker cap, accompanied by a brief biography. In this item, Mott is imagined as an example of the "loveliest womanliness" in her tireless advocacy:



In 1833 she was among the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society. And when Pennsylvania Hall was destroyed by the mob in Philadelphia, because of the abolition meetings, Mrs. *Mott* was present, sharing the peril and exhorting her friends steadily to bear their testimony whatever fate befell. . . . Indeed, the loftiness, the purity, the tranquility of her mien and manner will be always memorable to those who have heard her. The precision peculiar to her society of believers is in her only elegant repose and a simplicity as lovely as it is severe. In 1848 Mrs. *Mott* was a leader in the first Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls; and her active interest in the subject is unabated. . . . Time seems not to have touched her intellectual vigor; and her clear and profound moral insight, the nobility of her nature, the inexpressible sweetness of her manner, the consecration of a spotless life to the welfare of the oppressed—a life showing that the most active interest and participation in the common interests of society may enhance the loveliest womanliness—all these inspire the most affectionate reverence for *Lucretia Mott*.<sup>55</sup>

In this biographer's assessment, Mott escapes the heaviest charges one might level against Quakers ("precision") with her elegance and "inexpressible sweetness." This report of Mott's life applauds her activity on behalf of "the common interests of society," suggesting that such pursuits may "enhance the loveliest womanliness." This beauty treatment was unusual, however; an advertisement for "Magnolia Balm" appearing in *Harper's* the same year claimed that

THE LADIES' SOROSIS CLUB,  
of New York, recently changed their discussions from woman's suffrage to Hair Preparations and Pimple Banishers. They declared that where nature had not endowed them with beauty, it was their right—yea, their duty—to seek it where they could. So they all voted that *Magnolia Balm* overcame Sallowiness, Rough Skin, and Ring-marks, and gave to the complexion a most distingué (Sorosian) and marble-like appearance (dangerous to men, no doubt): and that *Lyon's Kathairon* made the hair grow thick, soft, and awful pretty, and, moreover, prevented it from turning gray. If the proprietors of these articles did not send the sisters an invoice, they are not smart.<sup>56</sup>

Although Lucretia Mott's womanly efforts on behalf of women's rights only enhanced her native Quaker charm, it was clear that the broader culture was still in on the joke of woman's suffrage. The producers of "Magnolia Balm," at least, realized that women who were not Mrs. Mott needed homelier enhancements for their loveliness, and turned the attention of this

fictive group to such remedies.

In 1871, *Harper's* ran a little note drawn from a "Massachusetts paper" on Mott's doings:

Mrs. Lucretia Mott, who is now drawing near her eightieth year, has lately undertaken to make with her own hands, and present to each of her children, a rag-carpet. As a protest against the too prevailing gray of the Quaker style of ornamentation, Mrs. Mott is making these carpets of bright rags. She entertains a good deal of company, to whom she talks with her accustomed wisdom and vivacity, all the while sewing her rags into the weaver's balls, her busy fingers keeping pace with her fluent tongue.<sup>57</sup>

Mott's home pursuits were deemed newsworthy for good reason. Mott was becoming, as the previous year's biographical sketch made clear, a model of pious and domestic womanhood. Mott's well-known love of bright colors (in her home, not her attire) was often commended as a small and appropriate mutiny against the perception of strait Quaker taste. (The item went on to mention Mott's love of music in the home, and her vigorous attempts to introduce it into the Swarthmore College curriculum despite the traditional Quaker prejudice against music in general.) Mott no longer played an active role in the leadership of the women's rights movements, but she was leader indeed of her own home and dedicated to glorifying it, despite, the author implies, the meeting's prejudices against such colors and melodies. Mott was becoming, in this rendering, ever more like an 'ordinary' Protestant woman—a suitable model for any to emulate. As she grew older, and as her image as a powerful and potentially sexual woman was defused, her image became less threatening.

When Mott joined the great majority in 1880, *Harper's* elegy was joined by others in the *Nation*, the *Baptist Weekly*, and other national periodicals.<sup>58</sup> *Harper's* remembrances of Mott provide a useful model for understanding the ways in which her reputation as an activist was being shaped by popular expectations for women and for Quakers during the period.

The elegy included a long description of her youthful beauty, her feminine littleness, and the charm of her Quaker costume. Her eyes were described as gray, a typical feature of Quaker heroines, as gray eyes made a happy match with gray attire (other sources designate Mott's eyes as hazel).<sup>59</sup> The description offered underscored her slightness and femininity at the side of her husband:

As a young girl, Mrs. *Mott* was very beautiful. Her face had the charm of delicate and regular features combined with great strength of character; her eyes were peculiarly bright and intelligent, and ordinarily seemed gray. When she became animated in conversation, however, they would deepen and darken until they appeared to be almost black. By the side of her husband, who was an unusually tall and muscular man, she appeared like a sprite, so small and slight was she of stature and figure; and in the simple dove-colored Quaker dress, with the crossed white muslin kerchief at the neck, and the prim little Quaker cap, she made a picture which was very pleasing to look at.<sup>60</sup>

The article continued about the business of making Mott a “picture which was very pleasing to look at” with a commentary on Mott's advocacy for women's rights, combined with a crucial however:

When the question of women's rights came up, *Lucretia Mott* advocated the theory, but neither in the words she uttered on this subject, nor, in fact, on any other, was there anything but what was suggestive of the highest refinement and modesty. No one ever heard, for no one ever breathed, a word in contradiction of the gentle womanliness of *Lucretia Mott*. She spoke in public because she was conscious of a power which impelled her to do so. Like the noble Methodist woman in *Adam Bede*, it was “as if speech came to her without will of her own, and words were given to her that came out as the tears come, because our hearts are full, and we can't help it.” This was the secret of her eloquence, and possessing this gift, she never made use of notes. Of all the prominent American women of this century, there is probably not one so little associated with that which is disagreeable in publicity, and yet there is none who has been more prominently before the public.

Yet her home was in no way neglected. She was a housekeeper of the good old school, and her four daughters were brought up to be the same. In the home life there was an atmosphere of peace and harmony that was almost ideal; and that this was greatly due to the absolute union and sympathy existing between herself and her husband, on whom, strong woman as she was, she leaned greatly, and whom she always revered as stronger than herself, there can be no doubt. She was fond of all domestic occupations.

Of course, the author's assertion that no one dared to speak against Mott's "gentle womanliness" was too positive. Opponents of women's rights and abolition were always eager to assert that Mott's advocacy had "unsexed" her. For example, in 1854, soon after the Rynders riots, *The United States Democratic Review* published on "Abolition and Sectarian Mobs," claiming that

Our divine country women—for such they are beyond all doubt—will do well to recollect that lions, tigers, and husbands are a sort of aristocracy among wild animals, and cannot easily be tamed either by curtain-lectures, or lectures on woman's rights, coming even from the lips of those awful mysterious oracles, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, or Abby Folsom, who, beyond all doubt, if properly investigated, would be found to be no more women, than the good old man in the moon.<sup>61</sup>

This biography of Mott, however, strongly asserts her womanly beauty and the feminine modesty of her speaking in public. Like George Evans's Dinah Morris, Mott was imagined to have spoken "in public" on women's rights without planning and without volition. This description resonates with the widely-recognized Quaker expectation that those who speak in silent meeting only do so when inspired by supernatural guidance. Additionally, it suggests that Mott retained her "refinement and modesty" in the midst of woman's rights advocates only by speaking words that were given to her to speak—words that were not her own.

Most curious, however, was the "yet," which led to an extended series of paragraphs on Mott's talents in the home. "She was a housekeeper of the good old school," intent on baking her own pies and tending her own house. Her "home was in no way neglected," and James Mott was ever at the head of his household. "At the age of eighty-six she threaded her own needle easily," the author assures the reader. This biography lends the most space to Mott's household joys, so close to those of the 'typical' *Harper's* reader—"She also was so far emancipated from the prejudices of Quakerism as to permit a piano in her house and

paintings upon her walls.”

## **V. Conclusions**

Adelaide Johnson’s imposing sculpture of Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony—copied from her busts of the same women for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, and still standing in the Capitol rotunda—marks Mott unmistakably by her Quaker cap.

Lucretia Coffin Mott’s image there—and in the popular press—was defined by accounts of her Quaker piety and her associated domestic virtues. The potential danger of her witness on behalf of women’s rights was defused by the emphasis on her divine inspiration, her individual action, and most of all, her devotion to home and family in an idyllic setting.

Likewise, Quaker reformers and abolitionists appearing in the fiction of the period tended to sidestep the associated question of woman’s suffrage in favor of depicting Quakers offering individual aid in a rural sphere. The narratives of ex-slaves provide a crucial window for occasionally ambiguous depictions of Quakers who typically acted individually and in rural settings on behalf of fleeing slaves. Sometimes, however, the boundaries of Quaker ‘goodness’ were negotiated by ex-slaves—who interrogated both the consistency of the Quaker abolitionist witness and the visible hedges around the Society. When Quaker politics were noticed in the text, Quaker ‘individuals’ provided obliging ambassadors for their creators’ beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), Vol. II, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 85. This broad framework encompassed a dizzying variety of themes, including, as literary critic Marva J. Furman observes, “the theme of the tragic mulatto, the theme of miscegenation, and the concern with the ironic contrast between the colonists’ fighting for their freedom while denying it to blacks.” Marva J. Furman, “The Slave Narrative: Prototype of the Early Afro-American Novel,” *The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory*, Edited by John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner (Macomb, Ill.: Western Illinois University, 1982), 122.

<sup>3</sup> Foster, *Witnessing Slavery*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Moses Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy*, (London: C. Gilpin, 1843), 67. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>. This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It may be used freely by individuals for research, teaching and personal use as long as this statement of availability is included in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Glen Nelson Cummings, “Exercising Goodness: The Antislavery Quaker in American Writing, 1774-1865.” Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1996: 61.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Hedin, “Strategies of Form in the American Slave Narrative,” *The Art of Slave Narrative: Original Essays in Criticism and Theory*, Edited by John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner (Macomb, Ill.: Western Illinois University, 1982), 29.

<sup>9</sup> William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave* (Boston: The Anti-slavery office, 1847), 99. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>10</sup> Leonard Black, *The Life and Sufferings of Leonard Black, a Fugitive from Slavery. Written by Himself* (New Bedford: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 24. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Aaron, *The Light and Truth of Slavery. Aaron’s History* (Worcester, MA.: The author, 1845), 1. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>13</sup> John W. Blassingame, “Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,”

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*The Journal of Southern History* (1975): 473-492, 478.

<sup>14</sup> Aaron, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Aaron, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 7:15 (KJV).

<sup>17</sup> Smith had company among many earlier Methodists who wore a plain Quakerish “Methodist bonnet” and dress (already long obsolete among Methodists by mid-century). Elisha W. Green saw such a bonnet in 1855: “While preaching, I discovered in the congregation an old lady sitting in the middle portion of the church with an old fashioned Methodist bonnet on. At the time I never knew who the woman was, but took good notice of her bonnet.” *Life of the Rev. Elisha W. Green* (Maysville, KY: The Republican Printing Office, 1888), 8. At the height of the plain dress debate, Quakers later pointed to the Methodists as sad examples of declension from godly clothing.

<sup>18</sup> Amanda Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord’s Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist* (Chicago: Meyer & Brother Publishers, 1893), 493. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 493-94.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 494.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Smith’s experience also reinforces Jean Soderlund’s argument that many white abolitionist Quakers of the period (on both sides of the Atlantic) failed to translate their social activism into reconciliation, maintaining “paternalistic” and discriminatory relationships with African Americans. Jean R. Soderlund. *Quakers & Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), 12.

<sup>23</sup> Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom. Part I. Life as a Slave. Part II. Life as a Freeman*. (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 345. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, Conn.: Park Publishing Co., 1881), 206. *Documenting the American South*. <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>25</sup> J. William Frost photographic evidence from the late 1860s and early 1870s to identify the shift in clothing styles. J. William Frost, “From Plainness to Simplicity: Changing Quaker Ideals for Material Culture,” *Quaker Aesthetics*. Edited by Emma J. Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 34.

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<sup>26</sup> For more on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quaker theology and the status of women, see Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism*, and Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light*.

<sup>27</sup> *No More but My Love: Letters of George Fox 1624-91*. Selected and edited with an introduction by Cecil W. Sharman. London: Quaker Home Service, 1980.

<sup>28</sup> Catherine Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism: Handmaids of the Lord* (Lewiston, NY : E. Mellen Press, c1995), 154.

<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Larson, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Fell, *Womens Speaking Justified; Epistle from the Womens Yearly Meeting at York, 1688. A Warning to all Friends*, Mary Waite ; introd. by David J. Latt (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1979), 7.

<sup>31</sup> S.H. *Friends' Intelligencer* 9, no. 1 (7<sup>th</sup> day, 3rd Month 27, 1852).

<sup>32</sup> "Woman," *Friends' Intelligencer* 10, no. 22 (8th Month 20, 1853): 347.

<sup>33</sup> "Editor's Table. Dress—In a Man's Point of View, Godey's *Lady's Book* 71 (September, 1865): 264.

<sup>34</sup> "Women, Quaker and Mohammedan," *New York Times* (July 30, 1876):4, col. 2.

<sup>35</sup> "Woman's Rights—Editor's Table," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 7, no. 42 (November 1853): 841.

<sup>36</sup> Sheila Hassell Hughes, "Between Bodies of Knowledge there is a Great Gulf Fixed: A Liberationist Reading of Class and Gender in *Life in the Iron Mills*." *American Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1997) 113-137, 131.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>38</sup> Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron-Mills*. Edited by Cecelia Tichi. Bedford Cultural Editions (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), 72.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>40</sup> Louisa May Alcott, *Work: A Story of Experience* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1873), 221.

<sup>41</sup> Margaret B. Harvey, "All About It," Godey's *Lady's Book* 99 (November, 1879): 458.

<sup>42</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times*, 473.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 477.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



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- <sup>45</sup> “Personal Reminiscences of Lucretia Mott,” *Harper’s Weekly* (December 4, 1880): 779.
- <sup>46</sup> “Winglets,” *Harper’s Weekly* (December 15, 1866): 795.
- <sup>47</sup> Margaret Hope Bacon, *Valiant Friend: The Life of Lucretia Mott* (New York: Walker and Company, 1980), 5.
- <sup>48</sup> For a helpful analysis of the varying reportage of Truth’s most famous words, see Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), Chapter 18, “Ar’n’t I a Woman?” 164-178.
- <sup>49</sup> “Young Medical Gentlemen,” *Harper’s Weekly* (November 27, 1869), 755.
- <sup>50</sup> “Mrs. Maria Weston Chapman,” *Harper’s Weekly* (August 1, 1885): 487.
- <sup>51</sup> Margaret Hope Bacon, *Valiant Friend*, 5.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, n6.1.16, 234.
- <sup>53</sup> *History of Woman Suffrage*. Edited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage. ([New York]: Source Book Press [1970], c1889).
- <sup>54</sup> Anna Davis Hallowell, *James and Lucretia Mott: Life and Letters* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company), 1884.
- <sup>55</sup> “Lucretia Mott,” *Harper’s Weekly* (May 21, 1870): 325.
- <sup>56</sup> Advertisement, *Harper’s Weekly* (March 12, 1870): 176.
- <sup>57</sup> “Home and Foreign Gossip,” *Harper’s Weekly* (May 27, 1871): 483.
- <sup>58</sup> Bacon, *Valiant Friend*, 229.
- <sup>59</sup> Bacon, *Valiant Friend*, 26.
- <sup>60</sup> “Personal Reminiscences,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 779.
- <sup>61</sup> “Abolition and Sectarian Mobs,” *The United States Democratic Review* (August 1854): 103-104.

A Methodist and a Quaker having stopped at a public house, agreed to sleep in the same bed. The Methodist knelt down, prayed fervently, and confessed a long catalogue of sins. After he rose the Quaker observed, "Really, friend, if thou art as bad as thou sayest thou art, I think I dare not sleep with thee."

"Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (July 8, 1865): 423.

## CHAPTER 4

### FIGHTING QUAKERS

They are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance.  
Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*<sup>1</sup>

In October of 1862, an indignant Quaker wrote a letter to the editors of *The Friend* on “Fighting Quakers.” Baffled and insulted by the expression’s very existence, the author fumed:

This is a phrase, which has gained place with some—perhaps many, but it is in fact an absurdity—a wild contradiction of terms. As well might we talk of a blunt sharpness, a jet black whiteness, or a sinful godliness. If a man is a fighting one, he has not the remotest claim to be a Quaker in principle.<sup>2</sup>

This eloquent Friend spoke to the rising popularity of the imagined “fighting Quaker”—who, during the long years of the United States Civil War, became an object of persistent examination and fantasy in the American cultural imagination. Despite—and, as we will find—*because of* the “wild contradiction” embedded in this trope, the fighting Quaker became a popular and compliant interpretive tool for Northerners struggling to articulate a response to the violence of the Civil War.

Though only relatively few Friends risked disownment for military offenses during either the American Revolution or the United States Civil War, that small number seized the imaginations of mid-century illustrators, exhibitors, writers, and readers. Fighting Quakers, who opposed their meeting’s precepts in the face of discipline and disownment, were imagined to embody an admirable democratic ideal. They were peace-loving, but patriotic.

They were holy and temperate, but undeniably ready to fight. I argue here that during the Civil War era, imagined fighting Friends in both Revolutionary and Civil War settings enabled a consuming public to refashion and comprehend an abolitionist religious group unwilling to bear arms against the entangled offenses of slavery and disunion. More important, however, the figure of the “patriotic” fighting Quaker provided a broader sanction for civil violence. If these holy people—pacifists in imitation of a Christian savior—will make war when provoked, purveyors of popular culture must have supposed, why should we not? Quaker pacifism was recast as the fond but realistic love of peace residing in the hearts of all true Americans. Quaker meeting discipline was represented as a weak hedge against the mounting tide of patriotism. Deep and disquieting public anxiety about civil violence could be soothed by the evidently widespread willingness of fighting Friends. The trope of the fighting Quaker became a cornerstone in the unsteady altar imploring divine blessing on the war itself.

In this chapter, I will examine fighting Quakers featured in a variety of Civil War era cultural contexts: jokes and tales from *Harper's Weekly*, the proliferation of the widely-publicized “Quaker gun,” and printed patriotic envelopes upending the Quaker peace witness. I also will analyze Revolutionary Friends from novels published during the Civil War era, in particular Ned Buntline's 1858 thriller *Saul Sabberday*.<sup>3</sup> I choose these motley cultural artifacts to demonstrate both the wide influence of the fighting Quaker trope during those years and the myriad ways that image was circulated. Jokes published in *Harper's* and accounts of “Quaker guns” bridged and refashioned oral and print culture. Printed envelopes featuring “patriotic” Quakers, meant to be mailed and shared, drew the rhetoric of a broken pacifism into the more intimate (and yet still public) arena of private correspondence. Of all

these representations, fighting Quakers in popular novels provided the broadest context for interpretation. Since fighting Quakers only appear in novels with real, historical war settings, the characters assume an existence that seems even closer to authenticity.

As I will argue in the next chapter, in the nineteenth century popular imagination, most Quaker women were confined to the space circumscribed by their bonnet's lovely, domestic shadow. Quaker men were liberated from the rule-bound, communal discipline of the meeting and imagined to fight, lone, on behalf of their families and their country. During the years surrounding the Civil War, popular writers, illustrators, and photographers (all Northerners) were captivated with this fictional fighting Quaker. As the conflict descended, fighting Quakers were widely resurrected in the cultural imagination from their nascence during the pre-Revolutionary period, and they remained popular characters into the twentieth century.

## **I. Quaker Pacifism in the United States**

Fighting Quakers owe their ironic resonance in popular culture to the well-known history of pacifism in the Religious Society of Friends.<sup>4</sup> From the earliest decades of the Society in England, Friends heard the Spirit prompting them individually to pacifism; George Fox advocated avoiding “any carnall sword” in a letter to Oliver Cromwell as early as 1654.<sup>5</sup> The peace testimony was rising among scattered English Friends when both Fox and his future wife Margaret Fell issued clear statements encouraging nonresistance in 1660.<sup>6</sup>

Nonresistance continued to be a crucial component of Quaker witness in the American colonies, and what troubles Friends faced were often prompted by fighting over peace. The Quaker-dominated Assembly of Pennsylvania was mired in conflicts over the peace

testimony throughout the 1740s and 50s; dissent with “war” Friends and pressure from without prompted the eventual erosion of Quaker political supremacy.<sup>7</sup>

In the next decade, the Friends who took up arms against the Paxton rebels marching on Philadelphia in 1764 became the most infamous early examples of real fighting Quakers.<sup>8</sup> Holed up in the meeting-house, these young Quakers intended to defend themselves against the advancing “Paxton boys,” who had murdered a group of Conestoga Indians in December 1763. The Paxton boys were incensed with Philadelphia Friends—not only for their attempts at fair dealings with the surrounding Indian tribes (by way of Israel Pemberton and Anthony Benezet’s “Friendly Association for Gaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Means”) but also their refusal to supply arms for frontier defense. About two hundred young Quakers took up arms to defend themselves. “It was matter of sorrowful observation to behold so many under our name,” wrote Friend James Pemberton, “acting so contrary to the ancient and well-grounded principle of our profession . . . [their defense] furnished our adversaries with a subject of rejoicing.”<sup>9</sup> As Quaker historian Margaret Hirst points out, many of these young dissidents fought again in the Revolution, nine years later.<sup>10</sup>

Despite internal dissent and occasional disownment, most Quakers maintained uncompromised the peace testimony throughout both the Revolutionary War and the antebellum nineteenth century. But Friends’ intensifying theological quietism, near total retreat from politics, and preoccupation with the Hicksite controversies of the 1830s made them the least vocal in an increasingly diverse assembly of antebellum pacifist societies.<sup>11</sup> Confident in the ever rising progress of humanity, many non-Quaker perfectionist reformers took up the banner of pacifism; they formed passionate and occasionally volatile peace

groups like the Massachusetts and American Peace Societies and William Lloyd Garrison's infamous New England Non-Resistance Society.<sup>12</sup>

Friends' long witness against the violences of slavery and warfare provided crucial inspiration for these new groups. The pacifist societies were consistently perplexed, however, by American Quakers' reluctance to join wholeheartedly in their noisy campaigns for peace. Skeptical of the wide latitudes these groups permitted in belief and action, most Friends declined or even penalized involvement in nondenominational peace societies.<sup>13</sup> As Peter Brock explains, "Friends' testimony for peace in the period . . . often lacked the vital spark. It was . . . traditional, conservative, hostile to new ideas and to new strategies for peace."<sup>14</sup> When Civil War broke out, joke tellers, illustrators, and authors sought colorful, converted pacifists to prove the inevitability of the Union cause. But they rarely combed the ranks of the well-known and more outspoken pacifist reformers. Instead, they chose Quakers.

Despite widespread appreciation for the figure of the fighting Quaker during the Civil War years, the vast majority of Friends retained their practical and ideological pacifism throughout the period, along with their well-known antislavery principles. But as historian Rufus Jones observed of the antislavery crusade, "Friends, and especially the younger members of the Society, had for more than a generation been champions of the freedom of the slaves. They had gradually come to feel that *this* cause of freedom was the supreme cause of their age."<sup>15</sup> Though every branch of the splintered Society maintained its stance in favor of pacifism, many Friends still struggled with and staggered under the pressure of open violence.<sup>16</sup> North and South, male Friends were subject either to conscription into military service or the equally problematic options of paying fines or securing substitutes.<sup>17</sup> As with

other testimonies, internal divisions within the Society of Friends reechoed in controversies over the acceptability of serving in military hospitals and providing care for those affected by combat.<sup>18</sup> All the U.S. Quaker Yearly Meetings, however, were unified on their discipline and disownment of those who fought. And although many Quakers (particularly those in the South) wavered on the “hard line” of avoiding all financial and aid entanglements in warfare, those who took up arms and faced the discipline of the meeting comprised a substantial minority.<sup>19</sup>

Those Quakers who refused *all* military service and disbursement were often arrested and abused. The diary of Friend Cyrus Pringle of Vermont recalls distressing violence after he was impressed into noncombatant duty and required by his commander to clean a gun:

I replied to him that I could not comply with military requisitions, and felt resigned to the consequences. ‘I do not ask about your feelings; I want to know if you are going to clean that gun.’ ‘I cannot do it,’ was my answer. . . . Two sergeants soon called for me and . . . bid me lie down on my back, and stretching my limbs apart tied cords to my wrists and ankles, and to these four stakes driven into the ground, somewhat in the form of an X. . . . I wept, not so much from my own suffering, as from sorrow that such things should be in our own country, where Justice and Freedom and Liberty of Conscience have been the annual boast of Fourth-of-July orators for many years.<sup>20</sup>

The Union cause, ringing all around Pringle, urged men to fight. He records that his own colonel reckoned that “a man who would not fight for his country did not deserve to live.”<sup>21</sup> And yet, for Pringle and other nonresistant Quakers, patriotism possessed meanings distinct from the conformity required by military service: “Justice and Freedom and Liberty of Conscience.” As Rufus Jones points out, resistant Friends like Pringle exhibited “supreme bravery”—not in answering the call to military service but in resisting it.<sup>22</sup> The stories of these consistent pacifists are reverently retold in nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories of Quakerism. But it was not the Cyrus Pringles who captured the imaginations of Civil War



era commentators from outside the tradition. Rather, those Quakers who did compromise to combat were enlisted—not only for their willingness to serve in the military, but for their colorful propagandic appeal and their comforting, sacralized reassurance that the fight was right.

## **II. More than a Joke**

While multitudes suffered, the editors of *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization* worked to lift their readers' spirits throughout the days of the Civil War. They kept their popular columns—"Humors of the Day" and "The Lounger"—filled with pointed jokes and harebrained wordplay. Warfare pressed heavily on even these diversions, however, and often cast a little pall over the comedy. A joke from the "Lounger" in the April 27, 1861 issue evidences the strain just days into the conflict: "We laugh at the story of the Quaker who told his opponent, 'Friend, I will not kill thee, but I will hold thy head under water until the breath departs from thy body.'"<sup>23</sup> Jokes do not always live long, but this gallows humor is still easily accessible for readers of today. The Friend in this anecdote is a fighting Quaker. Though his plain speech and preemptive justifications make his sectarian commitment to pacifism clear, this invented Friend easily sheds his peace principles in the face of incomprehensible total war.

Jokes like this one asserted obvious expectations for Quakers during war. Such jokes suggest that pacifism, while admirable during times of peace, was an impossible (not to mention spineless) alternative to violence on behalf of home and republic. The "Lounger" goes on to interpret thus the anecdote of the Friend who cleverly drowned his enemy:

And yet the story covers more than a joke. 'Friend,' the Quaker says, 'I will not lose my temper, nor hurt thee vindictively; but I will take good care that thou shalt do no more mischief.' If the doctrine of peace were literally interpreted as pure non-resistance, human experience seems to

prove that civilization would not advance very rapidly.<sup>24</sup>

The Lounger places a plain spoken justification in the mouth of the martial Quaker. His interpretation suggests that the “thee” of plain speech is a Friendly habit more consistent than pacifism; moreover, he applauds this Quaker’s willingness to lay pacifism aside when sufficiently provoked. “It is so natural to believe in peace,” the Lounger sighs in the same article, “to suppose that state affairs can be arranged as placidly as the spring work of the garden or the family details of the household.” Refusing to bear arms is, for this commentator, a hopeless and domestic daydream. Pacifism implies that political affairs are as simple as the work of keeping house. Reality requires a violent response.

Many Americans coped with the anxieties and horrors of the Civil War through the distance created by wartime jokes and comic stories like this one. The anecdote above was published in the first issue of *Harper’s* acknowledging that open war had begun.<sup>25</sup> This story cleverly contains both the unexpected twist and the gallows-humor of a typical wartime joke. But the wit (and the point) of the joke lies in its double incongruity. The humorous conflict between the Quaker’s words and his actions is evident, and might be understood by a reader or a hearer unaware of the Society of Friends. The deeper disconnect lies in the difference between the aggressor’s actions and the well-known peace testimony of his religious group. The Lounger himself acknowledges that this tale, like so many funny stories, is “more than a joke,” and his explanation is clearly meant to guide the reader’s own laughter. This and other war-era jokes about fighting Quakers play on the contradictions embodied in violent nonresistants. Moreover, these little stories assert a firm boundary for religious pacifism, and explore the provocations considered too great for a peace testimony—in George Fox’s words, a “witness against all violence”—to bear.<sup>26</sup>

Civil War-era fighting Quaker jokes speak to the tensions surrounding at least three social phenomena: pacifism, the statistically marginal and distinctive Society of Friends, and the horror of the war itself. These incongruities, when paired in opposition, are the source of the jokes' comedy. As Peter Berger suggests, "the essence of the comic is discrepancy."<sup>27</sup> Such discrepancies are particularly useful when comedy is used to comprehend and defuse the tragedy of violent conflict. Humor theorist Elliot Oring hypothesizes that jokes dealing with disasters (like conflict) are particularly effective because they "conjoin an unspeakable, and hence incongruous, universe of discourse to a speakable one."<sup>28</sup> War comedy could translate the horrific as well as point out the preposterous. Civil War historian Alice Fahs writes that humor at the expense of the war effort and its principle players "made the simple but profoundly subversive point that war was ridiculous."<sup>29</sup> The fighting Quaker jokes I will examine here betray a complex array of anxieties surrounding the Civil War and the pacifist's role in that conflict.

Humor at the expense of religious people is a badly neglected lens on the interpretation of religion. A *Harper's* cartoon at the Quaker's expense, published on the eve of the war, joined a long line of humorous drawings poking fun at Quaker surface idiosyncrasies. It depicts a man in an enormous outsized hat, and wittily suggests that the plain dress was maintained for idiosyncrasy's sake.<sup>30</sup> Jokes at the expense of religious people tend to lend credibility to the widely-debated assertion that jokes provide a release prompted by hostility.<sup>31</sup> But *fighting* Quaker jokes differ from the wry needle against the Friendly broadbrim hat. From 1860 through 1865, *Harper's Weekly* cartoons and jokes remarking on the surface distinctives of Friends were joined by jokes focusing on the

admirable but ultimately accommodating peace testimony of Quakers, under assault from a hostile attacker close at hand.

Between *Harper's* first issues in 1857 and December of 1859, nine Quaker jokes appeared in the humor columns of the magazine. Of these, only one (appearing July 18, 1857) lays the scene in an antagonistic exchange—but violent conflict is averted by the witty counter of a Quaker:

A day or two ago a Quaker and a hot-headed youth were quarreling in the street. The broad-brimmed friend kept his temper most equably, which seemed but to increase the anger of the other. "Fellow," said the latter, "I don't know a bigger fool than you are," finishing the sentence with an oath. "Stop, friend," replied the Quaker, "thee forgettest thyself."<sup>32</sup>

This Quaker defuses a mounting conflict with plain-spoken but gentle cleverness in a joke that is still funny today. His forbearance was not celebrated for long.

As open war drew closer, Quakers who yielded in violence to provocation crept steadily into *Harper's* "Humors of the Day" column. Between 1860 and Appomattox, fifteen Quaker jokes appeared in *Harper's*; of these, five found their punch line in the violent response of a Friend. On February 11 of 1860, the following joke appeared:

A genuine bully called upon a "Friend" avowedly to thrash him. "Friend," remonstrated the Quaker, knocking down the visitor's fists, "before thou proceedest to chastise me, wilt thou not take some dinner?" The bully was a glutton, and at once consented, washing down the solids with libations of strong ale. He rose up again to fulfill his original errand. "Friend," said the Quaker, "wilt thou not first take some punch?" and he supplied abundance of punch. The bully, now staggering, attempted to thrash his entertainer, but quoth the Quaker, "Friend, wilt thou not take a pipe?" This hospitable offer was accepted, and the bully, utterly weak, staggered across the room to chastise the Quaker. The latter, opening the window, and pulling him toward it, thus addressed him: "Friend, thou camest hither not to be pacified. I gave thee a meat-offering, but that did not assuage thy rage; I gave thee a drink-offering, still thou wert beside thyself; I gave thee a burnt-offering, neither did that suffice; and now will I try thee with a heaven-offering;" and with that he tossed him out of the window. That sufficed him.<sup>33</sup>

The Quaker in this tale is styled as a clever protagonist, pitted against a “genuine bully,” a “glutton” intent on whipping him for no stated cause. The Quaker maintains both his plain speech and his composure, as he cunningly plies his opponent with dinner, drink, and pipe in the well-known tradition of Friendly hospitality. As in many fighting Quaker jokes, he consistently addresses his antagonist as “Friend,” honoring to the Quaker practice of substituting this egalitarian handle for honorific titles. The joke’s nod to this tradition introduces its first layer of incongruity—the Quaker is engaged in combat with a “friend,” a near companion.

The tale’s punch line verbally links the Quaker’s conciliatory measures with Old Testament “offerings,” and then fetches the joke: a “heave-offering,” pitching the bully out the window. This joke’s deepest level of humor and meaning lies in the Quaker as protagonist; the triumph in the Quaker’s “heave-offering” would be muted or lost altogether on a Methodist or Presbyterian hero. Humor theorist Ted Cohen observes that “you need your audience to know something *in advance of the joke*, and you need them to know it without your telling them.”<sup>34</sup> In this case, that context knowledge is pacifism—but pacifism conceived as a changeable custom. The Quaker has borne much, but his pacifism finds its limit, the joke supposes, in a bully who will not be “pacified.”

When the Quaker strikes back, he is presumably accompanied by the laughter and cheers of his new ally: the reader. Oring suggests that a “joke is not a recounting of what happened to certain fictional characters. A joke is something that is *happening* to the hearer at the moment of telling.”<sup>35</sup> In this case, as with any good story, the hearer (or reader, in this case) experiences the joke from the perspective of the protagonist. Bewildered by a crisis that cannot be averted, the reader experiences the comic *relief* of a clever and violent

response.

The “Humors of the Day” for September 22 of the same year revisits the War of 1812 for a forbearing Quaker who finally, comically, succumbs to violence too.

During the last war a Quaker was on board an American ship engaged in close combat with an enemy. He preserved his peace principles calmly until he saw a stout Briton coming up the vessel by a rope that hung overboard. Seizing a hatchet, the Quaker looked over the side of the ship, and remarked, “Friend, if thee wants that rope, thee may have it!” When, suiting the action to the words, he cut the rope, and down went the poor fellow to a deep and watery grave.<sup>36</sup>

Like the Quaker who hefted his bully out the window, this Quaker’s defensive actions are rendered funny by both the disconnect between the Friend and his “Friend” as well as his clever defensive wordplay. In both jokes, the Quakers retain their “peace principles calmly” until the danger is clearly too great to be avoided. In both, the antagonists take a tumble through the efforts of the Quakers. The violence effected is not quite at their hands; rather, it lies at the end of a rope or in the shrubbery outside a window. In the wartime joke, however, the fall possesses fatal consequences, casting the soldier to a colorfully worded “deep and watery grave.”

Once open civil war had begun, fighting Quaker jokes in the pages of *Harper’s* became considerably bloodier. In the first days of the war, the *Lounger’s* Quaker had neatly drowned his aggressive opponent by holding his head under water; seven months later, another Friend responded to a violent attack in the November 11 “Humors of the Day”:

There was an old Quaker who had an unfortunate reputation of non-resistance. It was said that any one could jostle him, tread on his toes, or tweak his nose with impunity; until one market-day a blustering fellow, being told that yonder was a man who, if he was smitten on one cheek would turn the other also, thought it would be sport to try him. Stepping up to the sturdy, good-natured Friend, he slapped his face. The old man looked at him sorrowfully for a moment, then slowly turned his other cheek, and received another buffet. Upon that he coolly

pulled off his coat. “I have cleared the law,” said he, “and now thee must take it.” And he gave the cowardly fellow a tremendous thrashing.

This joke explicitly describes religious pacifism as “unfortunate” but (fortunately for this hearty Quaker) bound only by the literal directive to turn the other cheek found in Matthew 5:39.<sup>37</sup> His ultimate response is a “tremendous thrashing.” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* joined the fray in March of 1862 with this joke, leaving a theological loophole for the “wicked” and violent Friend therein:

A SECESSION minister comes into the store kept by a Quaker, and talks loudly against the country, until the Broadbrim tells him he must stop or leave the store. The clerical brawler keeps on, till the Quaker tells him he will put him out of the store if he does not go out.

“What!” exclaimed the minister, “I thought you Quakers did not fight?”

“The sanctified do not fight, but I have not been sanctified yet; and I will put thee out of the store in a minute !”

The minister fled from before the wicked Quaker.<sup>38</sup>

Another Quaker appearing in *Harper’s Weekly’s* “Humors of the Day” for July 30, 1864 is even more violent than the ones before: “A Quaker said to a gunner, “Friend, I counsel no blood-shed; but if it be thy design to hit the little man in the blue jacket, point thine engine three inches lower.”<sup>39</sup> His verbal nod to pacifism, like the joke itself, is clipped and perfunctory; his unsolicited advice guides a firearm to a fatal shot. For the first time, too, the uniform places the action of the joke in the Civil War—and the Quaker on the wrong side.

What do the shifts and eddies within these *Harper’s* jokes over time indicate about Northern perceptions of the war—and of Quakers—during the period? In every story, Quakerly speech and pacifist *rhetoric* remains consistent. In every story, too, the Quaker protagonist lashes out at a clear and aggressive enemy. For the most part, the fighting Quakers in these jokes employ defensive violence, during a period in which Northern readers and humorists alike would have sought a holy justification for violent warfare against a near

but rebellious aggressor. The Quaker serves as symbol for the perceived traditional and profoundly American love of peace; his use of the term “Friend” in addressing his enemy gives away both his sectarian affiliation and underscores the intimate relationship between North and South. These jokes lampoon the age-old disconnect between what people say and what they do, but they betray more serious fears. The Lounger saw in the fighting Quaker joke a critique of pacifism—which it certainly was. But the rhetoric of the fighting Quakers in these jokes betrayed deep desires to justify striking back against a “friend” turned foe.

The Quaker himself is hero in most of these jokes, but his peace testimony shifts from innocently inconsistent to potentially menacing. The jokes follow a noticeable trajectory over the course of the war: the Quakers in them initially employ reluctant self-defense, but they end by advocating violent combat. The final fighting Quaker joke published during the war situates the Friend *against* the Union; he no longer stands for a beleaguered North, striking back under duress. Why the change? One reason may be the well-publicized petitions of Friends to gain conscientious objector status en masse. The Lounger wrote disdainfully of those efforts in 1862 even as he stressed the patriotism of “many” brave Quakers:

The law in regard to the exemption of Quakers is of no great importance in itself, because they are not a large class, and because many of them practically disregard it, and are as gallant soldiers as any in the field. But the principle of the law is very important. It favors one sect. It discriminates between equal citizens.<sup>40</sup>

Another commentator in the *New York Herald* voiced a similar complaint that same year, sounding the alarm for the draft dodger:

Why are the religious sects known as Quakers and Shakers exempt from military duty and the draft? Why should they be exempted any more than



the Catholic, the Methodist, the Presbyterian or the Mormon? . . . an outside shaker may be come a Quaker, and vice versa, to escape the chance of being called to shoulder a musket, and thus not only the country, but the Shakers and the Quakers, may be seriously defrauded by artful dodgers.<sup>41</sup>

As we have seen, despite the Lounger's approbation, most Quakers did maintain the peace testimony—often at great cost. Moreover, derisively named “war-Quakers,” or Quakers who joined a meeting during the conflict (who probably would have fallen, for most observers, into the “artful dodgers” category) rarely found themselves better off than before, particularly in the Confederacy.<sup>42</sup> A commentator in *The Friend* the same year noticed these “unkind efforts of some editors to create an issue between the people at large, and the Society of Friends, with regard to the performance of military duties.”<sup>43</sup> But those efforts, if the joke is any measure, were at least somewhat successful.

After the war, fighting Quaker jokes all but disappeared from the pages of *Harper's*. Though the “heave-offering” joke was reprinted in 1874 and the other cheek joke in 1874 and 1877, respectively, no new violent jokes appeared in the twelve years after the war. Quaker jokes returned to witty wordplay garbed in plain speech, like this one appearing on April 20, 1867:

During a great storm on the Pacific Ocean a vessel was once wrecked, and a Quaker, tossing to and fro on a plank, exclaimed, over the crest of a wave, to another who was drifting by on a barrel, “Friend, dost thou call this ‘Pacific?’”<sup>44</sup>

Even this joke suggests, in plain speech, a sinister undertone to the power of nonresistance—suggested by the ocean's misnomer compared with its actual violence. But the fighting Quaker himself has disappeared. As this little joke shows, plain speech persisted throughout Quaker jokes, even up through the 1870s, when swelling numbers of evangelical Friends had come to abandon “thee” and “thou,” questioning their implications and their relevance. But

unlike the calcified plain speech, the fortunes of the peace testimony shifted according to the needs and anxieties of the joker. As Oring suggests, “witticisms . . . can speak to the character of an individual, the concerns of a community, or the worldview of a society.”<sup>45</sup> In these jokes, Quaker peace principles were refashioned as mutable and occasionally commendable—just like the peace principles of every other American in times of concord. After the war, the threat of pacifism receded and the need for fighting Quakers eased. Two months after Appomattox, Friends had receded once again into harmlessness:

*A Friend in Need.*—A Quaker out at elbows.<sup>46</sup>

### **III. The New Quaker Bonnet: Pictorial Envelopes**

Like jokes, stationery became a popular way to collect, proclaim and disperse patriotic messages through a simultaneously public and private arena. During the Civil War, printed envelopes in particular became a popular and collectible means for communicating national pride. Decorated with engravings of mottoes, state seals, memorials, cartoons, and aggressive parodies, these envelopes—like funny stories—provided almost all citizens with still another inexpensive way to comprehend and comment on the well-known figures and shared feelings surrounding the war. Fighting Quakers sprang up here as well.

Envelopes provided a new, clean, inexpensive, and mobile surface (already often used by antebellum advertisers) for patriotic sentiments, and were printed North and South from the earliest weeks of the war.<sup>47</sup> North and South, envelopes and their mobility also asserted the continuity of the much-praised antebellum mails despite their fractured republic.<sup>48</sup>

Patriotic envelopes were sometimes exceptionally utilitarian. Some envelopes were pre-marked for addressing to fighting men, with specific camp and regiment information and blanks left for the name. Some weren't useful at all—a few purely decorative series featured

two- and four-color engravings covering the whole face of the envelope, leaving no space for an address.<sup>49</sup> As Fahs points out, “within months patriotic envelopes had accrued an additional meaning as ‘collectibles.’”<sup>50</sup> Series of four, five or as many as ten left the viewer in Burma Shave style suspense for the next—one 1861 series entitled “Champion Prize Envelope Lincoln & Davis in 5 Rounds” depicted the presidents battling hand-to-hand in a boxing ring.<sup>51</sup> Attractive and cheap, the envelopes were printed in huge numbers; one journalist remembered that “enthusiasm over the fad ran so high that it is said more than 4,000 different kinds of envelopes were issued in three weeks.”<sup>52</sup> Low estimates for the total variety of envelopes printed range between 5,000 and 6,000.<sup>53</sup>

Common decorative motifs for patriotic envelopes on both sides of the conflict included flags, shields, eagles, a floating head of Washington (or Washington’s tomb), clasped hands, a modestly attired Columbia, and the devil. Religious mottoes were widespread, and often figured the conflict in cosmic terms. One Union envelope decorated with a bestarred and striped shield pointedly quoted Genesis 15:1: “Fear not Abraham, for I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward.—*Genesis*.”<sup>54</sup> Another depicted a robed minister at the pulpit with the devil at his back: “AN EMINENT SOUTHERN CLERGYMAN, During an eloquent discourse, is wonderfully assisted in finding scriptural authority for Secession and Treason, and the divine ordination of Slavery.”<sup>55</sup>

Friends appeared on these patriotic envelopes as a religious group with particular interest in the fighting. One envelope series published by Philadelphia stationer and bookseller James L. Magee featured woodcuts of fighting Quakers answering the Union call. One of the most prolific producers of Civil War envelopes, Magee favored caricatures with explanatory captions.<sup>56</sup> Unlike many patriotic envelopes depicting a simple noble eagle or a

starry flag, an image was insufficient here to communicate the uplifting message. The fighting Quaker woodcuts were all accompanied by dialogue making plain the Friends' religious identity and carefully explaining their resolution to join in the fight. On one of these Magee envelopes, a Quaker maid converses with a short-coated musketeer; he appears to be a typical Union soldier, except for his ridiculously outsized broadbrim hat (Fig. 1). In the background, a group of soldiers stand in training. Their play runs thus:

*Friend Susan*—Why, Friend Broadbrim, what is thee a doing with a musket and soldier clothes on!

*Friend Broadbrim*—I am going to the Friends' Meeting.

*Friend Susan*—Well, if thee does go, I hope the spirit will move thee to do something.<sup>57</sup>

This exchange winks at the Friendly expectation that “the spirit will move” during the worship, and sets up the comic disconnect of a soldier going to Friends' Meeting. Friend Susan's meaning is somewhat obscured—will the spirit move Broadbrim to recruit others? Or speak a concern to the meeting while showing off his firearm and new short coat? But her gentle surprise quickly gives way to approbation, and her words are meant to reflect and direct the responses of the reader. A similar but more frank Magee envelope in the same series features another pair of Friends in conversation. Plainly dressed Quaker Jane holds out a rifle and a soldier's cap to a broadbrimmed, long-coated Quaker man leaning on a walking stick. “Friend Jane” boldly speaks her purpose: “I have brought thee a Staff and a Hat, which I hope will prove serviceable in these times.”<sup>58</sup> *These* times, she suggests, require that the Quaker lay aside his walking stick and broadbrim, along with his pacifism.

Jefferson Davis coming to a bad end was yet another favorite theme for Union envelopes.<sup>59</sup> He appears at the end of a noose on another Magee envelope, where a plainly dressed male Friend surveys and addresses him (Fig. 2):

Figure 1:

James L. Magee envelope, c. 1861

Courtesy of the Earl G. Harrison, Jr. Quaker Rare Book Collection at Sidwell Friends School.

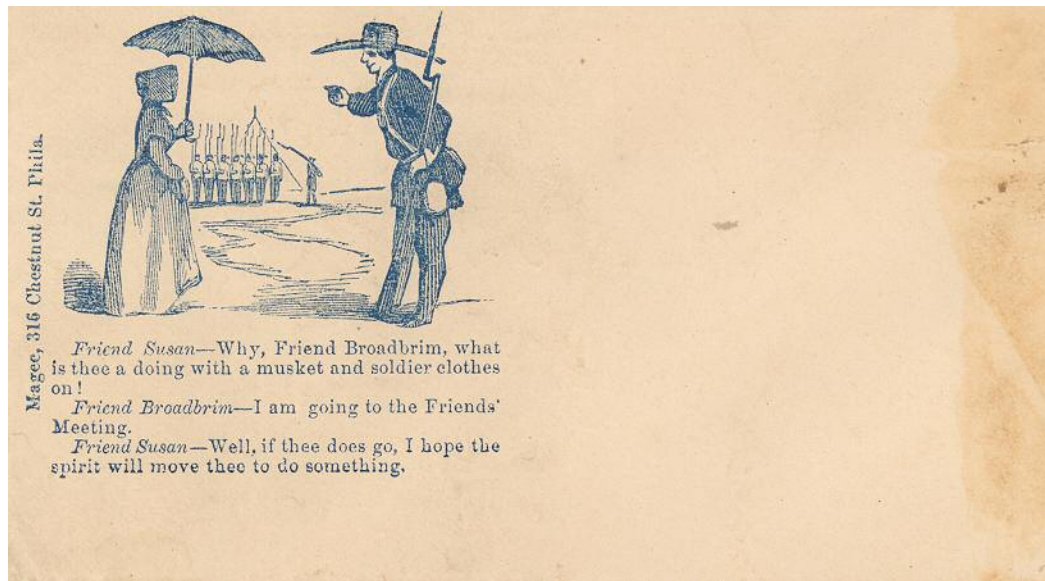
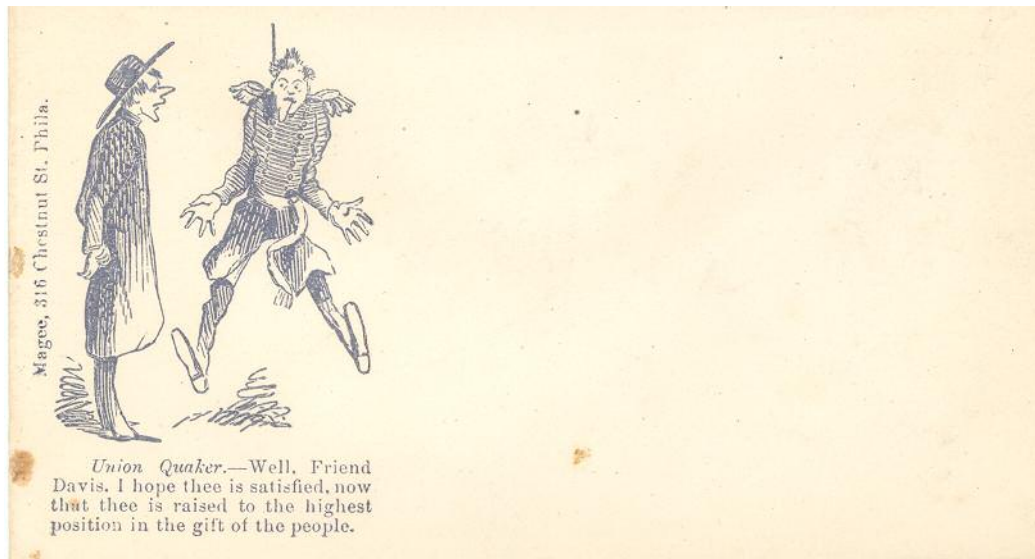


Figure 2:

James L. Magee envelope, c. 1861

Courtesy of the Earl G. Harrison, Jr. Quaker Rare Book Collection at Sidwell Friends School.



*Union Quaker.*—Well, Friend Davis, I hope thee is satisfied, now that thee is raised to the highest position in the gift of the people.<sup>60</sup>

The signal of the Quaker's plain dress (indicated by long coat and outsize hat) contrasts with his designation as a "Union Quaker" and his tranquil enjoyment of the gruesome scene, which the artist has attempted to render comic through Davis's surprised expression and lolling tongue. All the Magee fighting Quaker envelopes, including this one, suggest a clear consensus among Quakers to fight for and revel in the victories of the Union. Their punch, like those of the fighting Quaker jokes, derives from the unexpectedness—and, more important, the *rightness*—of seeing "Friend Broadbrim" march off to war.

One of the simplest and most attractive fighting Quaker envelopes was printed in at least two versions, created in 1861. Marked with the motto "The New Quaker Bonnet, 1861" the envelope is printed with an engraving of a plain, deep-brimmed bonnet in modest Quaker fashion. The envelope was reprinted the same year with a variant on the same slogan: "The New Quaker Bonnet, (Stars and Stripes Pattern.) 1861." The bonnet itself is unchanged in both designs, and features no superfluous flounces, flowers, or decoration—except for the bright red and white stripes on the brim and ties, and the starry field of blue on the crown (Fig. 3).<sup>61</sup> As I will discuss in the next chapter, Quaker bonnets were among the most recognizable mid-century features of women's plain dress. The "new" starred and striped Quaker bonnet imagined by this illustrator simply and elegantly communicates a host of assertions about Quaker patriotism at the start of the Civil War. Like the shed peace principles in Quaker jokes, this illustration implies that the constraints of plain dress are easily altered to suit the patriotism and violence of the times. This "new" bonnet suggests that the transformation is complete.

Figure 3:

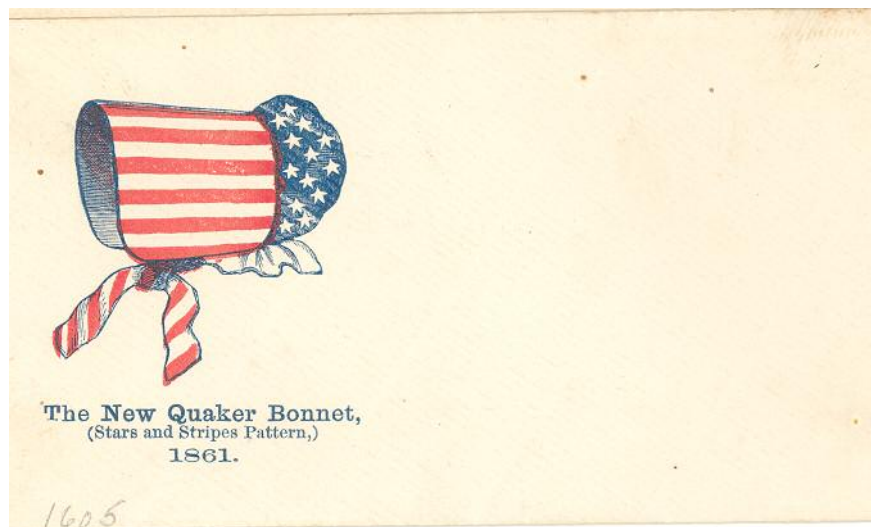
“The New Quaker Bonnet, 1861”

Courtesy of the Earl G. Harrison, Jr. Quaker Rare Book Collection at Sidwell Friends School.

Also available in *Civil War Treasures from the New-York Historical Society*. Available from

*American Memory*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/nhihtml/cwnyhshome.html>.

Digital ID, e.g., *nhnycw/ad ad04004* [19 September 2005].





#### IV. Quaker Guns

Fighting Quakers took a different and more obscure turn as the war intensified. As Southern supplies ran short, one of the great curiosities of the war gained an eager audience throughout the North: the “Quaker gun.” The term designates an artificial firearm of any kind, and today is well-known only by Civil War buffs. During the Civil War, “Quaker gun” was applied mainly to dummy cannons—logs painted or charred black on the “firing” end, and mounted on wheels. These logs, interspersed with live cannons, were used to suggest to the opposing force a vast battery of firepower. As the war dragged on, Northern interest in this dual marker of Southern deception and demoralization flourished in song, photography, newspaper articles, and traveling exhibits. Curious travelers today can still see a “Quaker gun” on exhibit at the preserved Mayfield forts in Manassas, Virginia.<sup>62</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* finds the earliest mention of the term in Washington Irving’s (Diedrich Knickerbocker’s) 1809 *History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*.<sup>63</sup> There is an earlier use of the term in Nathaniel Fanning’s privately published 1806 *Narrative of the Adventures of an American Navy Officer, Who Served During Part of the American Revolution under the Command of Com. John Paul Jones, Esq.* Unlike Irving, Fanning defined the term in his narrative, suggesting that it was not widely recognized. He wrote of boarding a captured British ship, observing that “she was pierced for eighteen guns, but carrying at the time only eight carriage guns, and ten wooden (or Quaker) guns.”<sup>64</sup> In 1862, amateur wordsmith Richard Manning Chipman added the term to the margins of his copy of John Russell Bartlett’s *Dictionary of Americanisms*, defining it thus and quoting a newspaper source:

Quaker, Quaker-gun. A fictitious cannon; a wooden gun; a dummy.  
‘The fancied impregnability of the position turns out to be a sham . . . some

of the forts have maple logs painted to resemble guns. . . . Some of our soldiers cried when they found out that “quakers” were mounted on the Rebel breastworks . . .’ *New York Tribune*, March 13, 1862.<sup>65</sup>

The term first came into wide use during the Civil War. As Chipman’s definition demonstrates, the term was often shortened simply to “quaker;” it inspired both fear and fierce shame among duped soldiers, as evidenced by the poignant news report of their weeping. “Quaker” and “Quaker gun” became peculiar phrases signaling incongruity, ineffectiveness, violence, and artifice. The term deserves further examination here because of its unlikely etymological marriage and because of the strong reaction it roused from Union observers.

Quaker guns made their best-known appearance at Manassas and Centreville early in the war, in the Spring of 1862. Stung after a crushing defeat at Manassas in 1861, Union troops under the command of George McClellan avoided combat again there until August of 1862. But in March of that year, General Joseph E. Johnston’s Confederate troops (encamped at Centreville for the winter) fell back to Fredericksburg under threat of attack from McClellan. When General McClellan’s Union troops arrived in Centreville March 10, they found Quaker guns throughout the fortifications; reports and photographs of the logs followed in a flurry to the Northern press. In the weeks that followed, it became clear that Union troops had dodged a relatively small retreating Confederate force at Centreville—and that the Confederates probably had been rendered more menacing by an impressive stash of Quaker guns. The *New York Herald*, desperate for good news—any news—of McClellan’s hesitant campaign—reported on March 17 that

Upon examining the place and its defences the Prince De Joinville remarked that in Europe, to have compelled an enemy to evacuate such a stronghold without the loss of a man, or even without firing a gun, would have been considered the most brilliant achievement of the whole campaign.

The story of the Quaker guns turns out to be entirely a joke of our own troops.

Among the earliest in entering the works at Centerville and Manassas were Colonel E. H. Wright and Colonel J. J. Astor, of General McClellan staff. These officers rode all through the works soon after they had been entered by the advanced guard of the federal army, and they state most positively that there were neither Quaker guns nor painted logs, nor logs of any kind, in the embrasures at that time.<sup>66</sup>

As this dishonest denial makes plain, Quaker guns carried mixed meanings during the opening year of the war. They clearly made a good story; the *Herald* reported on April 12 that last month there “was then such a clamour about ‘Quaker guns,’ and a mere handful of rebel troops at Manassas and Centreville, that nobody would believe the figures.”<sup>67</sup> The discovery of Quaker guns at Centreville provided evidence that the South was faltering and duplicitous—but they also served as a reminder that Union troops could be fooled. These mingled implications undoubtedly had an effect on the term itself. As the war continued, reports of “Quaker guns” were consistently more derisive and even dismissive, as the words came to suggest Southern failure, deceit, and artifice.<sup>68</sup>

If the *Herald*’s vehement denials were not enough to confirm the existence of Quaker guns at Centreville, the substantial photographic evidence of these “cannons” would. Several photographs taken of Quaker guns at Centreville remain extant. Though it is difficult to imagine less compelling subjects for wartime photographs than logs, the battlefield setting at Manassas—as well as the name, “Quaker guns”—lent these logs a peculiar charm for Northern observers. George N. Barnard, a well-known professional photographer, took several photographs of Quaker guns at Centreville. Barnard’s taste and flair for staging action (where there truly was none) is evident in these photographs. As Barnard himself asserted, “How much does the **multiplication** of pictures tend to enlighten and unite the Human family! Read and understood by the infant and the aged; scattered from the hovel of

the poor to the palace of the great, it extends a humanizing influence wherever it goes.”<sup>69</sup> These images, however, require the help of a Friendly caption to interpret the logs.<sup>70</sup>

One of Barnard’s photographs appeared as No. 305 in Brady’s Album Gallery series of collectible cartes-de-visite in 1862; it was also reproduced as a stereograph. The card is printed “Quaker Gun, Centreville” on the reverse with the accompanying guarantee below: “The Photographs of this series were taken directly from nature, at considerable cost.” The image features the log itself, half painted black where it was visible outside the fortification, and fitted with a wooden ring where the muzzle swell would be (Fig. 4).<sup>71</sup> (To compare with a live cannon photographed by Barnard, see Fig. 5)<sup>72</sup>. The log is propped up on a platform, with an unidentified Union soldier crouched and pretending to ‘light’ the ‘cannon’ at a safe distance. Alan Trachtenberg has observed of Civil War era photographs that “staging of scenes . . . suggests the photographer’s desire to satisfy a need (his own and his audience’s) for order, even that of theatricality.”<sup>73</sup> The broad staging of *this* scene is obvious, and appears almost comic to today’s sensibilities.

The other three artillerymen needed to load any cannon are missing from the Quaker gun photograph, as are, of course, the hooked lanyard and other apparatus needed to fire the log. Another photograph of the same log, also published as a stereograph, lacks the soldier—but his “lighting stick” remains behind on the ground. Another image features a landscape with the logs in profile, with only the whittled and chopped “butts” visible behind the fortification. This wide view intimates Barnard’s later fascination with wartime picturesque.<sup>74</sup> But the staged “firing” scene betrays serious anxieties. Trachtenberg writes that “staged compositions enact unstated ideologies and betray unconscious wishes; their motifs often clash with countervailing details.”<sup>75</sup> The posed scene depicts a Union soldier—

Figure 4:

Quaker gun

George N. Barnard, ca. 1862. "Quaker Guns, Centreville [stereograph]." In *Civil War Stereographs*, New York Historical Society. Available from [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwnyhs:6:./temp/~ammem\\_mCdE::@@@mdb](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwnyhs:6:./temp/~ammem_mCdE::@@@mdb); Digital ID nhnycw/ad ad30026. [19 September 2005].



Figure 5:

Live Cannon

George N. Barnard 1 July 1862. "Yorktown, Va. Confederate naval gun; in background is Nelson Church, used as a hospital." [1 negative : glass, stereograph, wet collodion.] In Selected Civil War photographs, 1861-1865 (Library of Congress). Available from <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.00184>; Digital ID cwpb 00184 [20 September 2005].



posing as a Confederate soldier—and “firing” a defused gun. He, like his “Quaker” gun, is imagined as clearly duplicitous but ultimately harmless, despite the threatening stick he holds to a nonexistent fuse.

Photographic evidence and mingled interpretations of Quaker guns prompted Northern curiosity to see the guns in person. In April of 1862, the Old “Press” Office at 417 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia proudly exhibited a captured Quaker gun for all comers. Local printers Ringwalt & Brown developed an eye-catching bill advertising the event:

THE QUAKER GUN, Now on exhibition, was brought from the  
REBEL WORKS AT MANASSAS, And wishing the public to witness  
the Artillery used by the aforesaid Rebels, it WILL BE EXHIBITED  
FOR A FEW DAYS ONLY, AT THE OLD “PRESS” OFFICE, 417  
CHESTNUT STREET, Between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sts. Admission, 1 Dime.  
Hours, from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M.<sup>76</sup>

The long hours and the high price of admission (admission to Barnum’s American Museum cost only 25 cents in 1861) indicate an exhibitor deeply confident in the Philadelphia public’s curiosity to see a log.<sup>77</sup> But then, this relic of war provided a three-dimensional alternative to Brady’s photographic war galleries. Though the conflict lived on in image and even in reconstructed tableaux for decades after the end of the war,<sup>78</sup> 1862’s Quaker gun provided the Northern public an immediate, meaningful, and defused symbol of the fight. It was the perfect wartime curiosity—educational,<sup>79</sup> inexpensive, portable, and sanitized for public display—suitable for all to see, and open to myriad interpretations.

Once they had seen it in person or in photographs, Union faithful also memorialized the Quaker gun in song. The lyrical broadside of “The Battle of the Stoves-Pipes,” an undated Civil War era tune, tells the tale of a Union commander searching for a new rallying cry to cheer his weary troops. He surveys his men, remarking on the nearness of friend and enemy: “Here are my countrymen, and there my foes,/On cod fish these were reared, and

corn-fed those.” Hitting upon an ideal cheer, he encourages the troops to cry, “No more Bulls-run” in remembrance of the Union rout at Manassas. But the Union troops mount Munson’s hill near Centreville in Virginia to find a surprise:

Up the steep hillside, over ditch and mound,  
The summit gained, they breathe, and look around,  
Decamped--sold,--humbug'd,--worse than a Bull-run,  
STRAW, STOVE-PIPE CANNON, AND A QUAKER GUN.<sup>80</sup>

This otherwise comic ditty characterizes the Quaker guns’ deception at Centreville as *worse* than the crushing defeat at “Bull-run” a year before, widely acknowledged as one of the most humiliating Union losses of the war.<sup>81</sup> In this song (clearly published after the exposure at Centreville in the spring of 1862), Quaker guns have begun their transformation from appealing curiosities to souvenirs of folly.

The Quaker guns fiasco at Centreville and Manassas was remembered for years after. Henry Moford’s 1864 *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, a series of fictionalized military reminiscences, featured Quaker guns as an emblem of duplicity in a conversation between a Christian lieutenant and his sergeant.<sup>82</sup> Urging his sergeant to fight the Confederate forces in earnest, rather than “firing at a respectful distance, doing no damage,” the lieutenant declares that the imminent press reports of their cautious efforts will be a sham.

Now this humbugging an earnest people is unfair, unworthy of a great commander, and if he be humbugged himself again as with the Quaker guns at Manassas, the sooner the country knows it the better for its credit and safety.<sup>83</sup>

A similar usage appeared the same year in Edmund Kirke’s (a pseudonym for James Roberts Gilmore) *Down in Tennessee, and Back by Way of Richmond*. Borne of a “desire to study the undercurrents of popular sentiment at the South,” Gilmore’s ‘expose’ tracks his experience traveling throughout the South during the war.<sup>84</sup> In one chapter, he references the recent unofficial (and apparently double-dealing) peace efforts of Southerners C.C. Clay,



Jacob Thompson, J.P. Holcombe, and G.N. Sanders at Niagara in July of 1864. Gilmore defends the innocence of Jefferson Davis, “the *great* Rebel,” in their duplicity:

If this were true, and were proven to be true—if the *great* Rebel should reiterate this declaration in the presence of a trustworthy witness, at the very time when the *small* Rebels were opening their Quaker guns on the country—would not the Niagara negotiators be stripped of their false colors, and their low schemes be exposed to the scorn of all honest men, North and South?<sup>85</sup>

Ten years later, Alice Hatch’s 1874 romance *Under the Cedars* vividly recalled the Quaker guns at Manassas. In a long-awaited letter from her brother, the heroine reads:

We have moved, at last, far enough to verify the evacuation of Manassas, and examine the insignificant earth-works mounted with ‘Quaker guns,’ made of wood, which have kept the national army at bay so long. Till we face more dangerous weapons, you need have no fears that your brother’s services will be needed in this vicinity.<sup>86</sup>

The lapsed decade meant that Hatch had to explain the term, but the sting of the Quaker guns’ pretense was still fresh.

“Quaker guns” were charged with meaning, if not with gunpowder. Union responses to Quaker guns varied wildly, ranging from curiosity to denial, shame, and disdain. During the years of open warfare and beyond, the reinterpretation of the logs at Centreville and Manassas continued; “Quaker guns” were finally equated with humbuggery, “low schemes” devised to make an “insignificant earth-works” appear menacing. The term itself marks a space where cultural expectations for Quaker military service collide with an acknowledgement of Quaker pacifism, implicit in the dummy arm. But compare the term with an example better known to readers of today—Quaker Oats. As I will argue in Chapter Six, these cereal grains have been transformed by their association with the “Quaker” adjective. And yet, more important, the cultural understanding of the religious people known as Quakers has been altered, in turn, by the oats. Quaker guns, too, no doubt had an impact

on the way in which Quakers were understood during the war. Quaker jokes and envelopes show that Quaker nonresistance was both admirable and easily reversed for the sake of the cause. If the implications observed in the examples above follow, the objects known as Quaker guns or “quakers” were understood during the first part of the war as curiosities—later as follies, and still later as deceptive and treacherous. Did the public’s response to Friends themselves echo this trajectory? It is impossible to trace the way these conceptions of the term were reflected in observers’ conceptions of Quakers themselves. But the term certainly commandeered Friendly identity, and could never be as ‘neutral’ as the weapons themselves.

## **V. Fiction**

As the shadow of deception, disunion, and open warfare fell, observers grasped for comparison a war that time and tradition had polished to an unambiguous radiance: the American Revolution. Only two weeks after shots were fired at Fort Sumter, the *Lounger* reflected in *Harper’s*:

How few of us who studied about the Deerfield massacre, and the Schenectady slaughter, or later, of the battles of Lexington and Saratoga, or still later, of the battles of North Point and the British march on Washington, supposed that in our day we should see or hear any thing to remind us of those scenes?<sup>87</sup>

Fictional representations of Friends just prior to and after the Civil War reflect this longing.

They evidence a clear desire to situate fighting Quakers in the more distant and comprehensible landscape of the Revolution. The sheer number of novels with fighting Quaker protagonists published during this period is striking. 1858 saw the publication of John Richter Jones’s *The Quaker Soldier* and Ned Buntline’s *Saul Sabberday*. (In 1865, Augustus Jones and Edward S. Ellis each published dime novels related to the theme, entitled respectively *Sly Sam, the Quaker Spy* and *The Fugitives; or, The Quaker Scout of Wyoming*.)

*A Tale of the Massacre of 1778*.) Augustine Duganne's *The Fighting Quakers* followed in 1866, and Edward H. Williamson's *The Quaker Partisans* in 1869. These novels stood in the bloody tradition of the Quaker hero in Robert Montgomery Bird's 1837 *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay*, and their theme resonated throughout the century into the best-loved Revolutionary fighting Quaker novel of all: S. Weir Mitchell's *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker* (first published in *The Century* in 1897).<sup>88</sup> Before considering the themes and implications of a representative Civil War era fighting Quaker novel—*Saul Sabberday*—it will be useful to reflect on the cultural resilience of remembered fighting Quakers from the Revolutionary period.

When the Revolution began, American Major General Nathanael Greene was probably the best-known early recipient of the “fighting Quaker” nickname. This premier soldier and strategist was memorialized in at least five biographies during the nineteenth century, and continues to generate lively interest among historians and students of the American Revolution.<sup>89</sup> “Even in an army filled with inexperienced officers and citizen soldiers,” begins Terry Golway’s celebratory 2005 biography, “Nathanael Greene was an unlikely warrior.”<sup>90</sup> Undeniably. Greene drifted away from the East Greenwich meeting in his youth and was disowned in 1773 for attending exercises at a military base.<sup>91</sup> But in his martial career, he was in the company of only a tiny fraction—6 percent—of male Friends disowned for military offenses during the Revolutionary period in all of New England.<sup>92</sup>

The abundant representations of Revolutionary-era fighting Quakers are centered around those very real but very few Friends who dissented from official statements of neutrality issued by the January 1775 Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings and the September 1776 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. As war with Britain had come to seem inevitable,

Friends faced a bewildering array of impossible choices. Drink smuggled tea or English tea? Accept Continental paper money or British pounds (both used to sponsor war efforts)? Observe the new-minted Independence holiday or continue business as usual? Actively oppose British rule or remain impassive?<sup>93</sup> The most critical choice, however, was whether or not to fight. Though the overwhelming majority of colonial Friends maintained the peace testimony, some Quakers risked the disapproval of the meeting to make war.

Greene's New England escaped widespread meeting disownments for Revolutionary military offenses, but Pennsylvania Friends faced greater pressure. Quaker historian Arthur Mekeel estimates that in Pennsylvania, 19 percent of male Friends were disowned for war-related offenses over the course of the conflict. Fifty-four percent of those were disowned for military offenses, while the remainder were disciplined for consenting to war taxes or pledges of allegiance, or some combination of these lapses in the peace testimony.<sup>94</sup> "Fitting out an armed vessel which may prove the cause of shedding human blood," read the cause of one such disownment; "making weapons of war for the destruction of his fellow-men," read another.<sup>95</sup> Mekeel suggests that these fighting Quakers typically fit one of two patterns. Some, like Greene, were birthright Friends with only tenuous social or familial connections to meeting; some had drifted away gradually prior to the crisis, and later supported the Revolutionary cause. Others were Friends in close association with their meetings sincerely torn between pacifism and partisanship—and who eventually chose the latter.<sup>96</sup>

When violent conflict broke out, some disowned Philadelphia Quakers organized into like-minded groups. The "Quaker Blues" organized their own regiment, approvingly remembered almost one hundred years later in Williamson's *The Quaker Partisans*: "Whether they were drilled in 'plain' language, or whether their drill-master ever indulged

himself in swearing at them while they remained an ‘awkward squad,’ as drill-masters have a bad habit of doing, I am not able to say.”<sup>97</sup> As the war drew to a close, some martial Friends gathered for spiritual support as well, assembling as the “Religious Society of Friends, by some styled the Free Quakers” in a meeting-house at Fifth and Arch Streets—a group with fewer than one hundred members.<sup>98</sup> Betsey (Ross) Claypoole and Samuel Wetherill, Jr. were among the Free Quakers’ most eminent adherents. Although the society had ceased to meet by 1836, it lived on in philanthropic and publication efforts into the twentieth century.

Charles Wetherill’s 1894 history of the Society explains that

they held, contrary to the discipline of Friends, that a man, might forcibly resist any bodily violence offered to himself or to any one to whom he owed the duty of protection. While their views as to warfare and resistance were precisely the same as that of nearly all Christians, they were in such striking contrast to the well-settled doctrines of the Friends that they were commonly known, and are still sometimes spoken of, as “*fighting*” Quakers.<sup>99</sup>

Even Quaker historian Rufus Jones sympathetically acknowledged the dilemma of the Revolutionary era fighting Quaker: “now,” he writes, “the Quaker testimony came into violent collision with the fundamental instinct of patriotism.”<sup>100</sup> Patriotism and pacifism had ceased to be reconcilable.

Remembered accounts of fighting Quakers, decades later, reinforced this ideological divide—though Quakers themselves attempted to counter it. When a Free Quaker recruiter scouts the neighborhood for troops in *The Quaker Partisans*, he finds a gently surprised but ultimately eager audience. ““Well, father, what’s thee think?”” asks one willing potential soldier. His father replies without hesitation:

‘A Quaker troop of horse, with a Quaker captain. Well, I never!’ said the old man. ‘What do I think? Why, I think the cause that has made that sort of fightin’ men is a good one, and *must* succeed.’<sup>101</sup>

Friends did their best to counter this comforting and sanguinary cultural memory from within the fold. Beginning in Twelfth Month 1860, the Orthodox *Friend* ran a series entitled “On the Sufferings of Friends in the Revolutionary War,” which continued—through the next four numbers—to the eve of the Civil War. The articles were expressly intended to revive those distressing scenes before the eyes of Friends, in anticipation of the coming conflict:

It is a long time since Friends in this country have had to undergo much loss of property, or personal restraint on account of their testimony against war, and all military demands or proceedings; but circumstances may speedily change, and the sincerity of our profession be tested in a manner we little anticipate.<sup>102</sup>

While others focused on the Revolution’s fighting Quakers, Friends self-consciously examined their pacifist witness through the lens of that war, and saw an example rendered even more valuable for its coming reiteration.

Several literary historians have already noticed *The Quaker Partisans* and other fighting Quakers in nineteenth century literature.<sup>103</sup> Most recently, James Ryan has written specifically on the hero of *Hugh Wynne* as a character against the grain of typical depictions of Quakers; he suggests that “in nearly every important respect, [Wynne] diverges from the qualities that had long been associated with Quakerism: piety, thrift, selfless benevolence, and refusal of worldly activities.”<sup>104</sup> Analyses of these fighting Quakers have marked them as anomalous figures in the vast landscape of represented Friends. As I noted in the first chapter, Ryan writes of fictional Friends that their “unshakable pacifism”<sup>105</sup> is among their most noteworthy features. And yet, fighting Quakers’ imagined responses to the Revolution are consistently combative, ready, natural, and welcome. Moreover, these fighting Friends cluster markedly around the Civil War era. They no more existed in isolation than did their flesh and blood counterparts, and their Revolutionary exploits signal clear expectations for

pacifists of the mid-nineteenth century—and an anxious desire to comprehend and justify the new fight.

At first glance, dime novelist, adventurer, and ardent nationalist Ned Buntline (Edward Zane Carroll Judson) seems an unlikely voice to interrogate the combative path leading up to the Civil War. From his early childhood in Philadelphia, Buntline was steeped in the cultural memory surrounding the American Revolution. His combative loyalty to the United States and his disdain for the British led him to provoke a riot against British actor William Charles McCready on May 7, 1849 (whose *Macbeth* played opposite that of American Edwin Forrest on the same night). But Buntline's nationalism soured further into nativism, and he became a ringleader among the Know-Nothings (where he gained credit for coining the name). Like most of his comrades, he opposed the abolitionism rising during the years before war descended. But he finally volunteered to serve in the Union Army, at the age of 39, in September of 1862.<sup>106</sup>

Just before the war, Buntline penned his 1858 *Saul Sabberday; or, The Idiot Spy* (republished in 1869 as *Quaker Saul, the Idiot Spy; or, Luliona, the Seminole*). One of over 400 Buntline shilling shockers and dime novels, *Saul Sabberday* unfolds in a Revolutionary setting, one of the author's favorite themes. *Saul Sabberday* tells the tale of the pitiful young “idiot” Quaker Saul Sabberday who longs to fight the British alongside his brothers and against the wishes of his marginally reluctant mother. He finally does so (as readers might have guessed from the title). In the meantime, golden-haired, blue-eyed, fairy-formed Ruth, the loveliest maiden in the town” and Saul's sister, is kidnapped by (who else?) the traitor Aaron Burr. She falls in company with a local friend, Lizzie, and Luliona, a Seminole maid; the three violently defend their honor through a series of misadventures. Saul Sabberday's

military service not only mends his faculties but wins him the love of the Seminole princess. He ends, in the words of his brother, “still eccentric, but he is sagacious, devoted, patriotic,” one of the many heroes who had ensured that “America was free and triumphant” (92).

*Saul Sabberday* features the most important common denominators of Civil War era fighting Quaker novels: adulation of Washington, excoriation of traitors, thrilling battle scenes, and the immediate and ready willingness of Quakers to fight in the Revolutionary cause. No fictional fighting Quaker ever evidences any reluctance to resort to violence, and the Sabberdays are no exception. The voice of peace, usually depicted as mere prudent caution peppered with “thees” and “thous,” is often left to female relatives. In this novel, the widow Sabberday is easily persuaded to allow all three of her sons to enter battle. And when she sees off her eldest sons (the biblically and alliteratively named) Seth and Simeon, she does not petition a peaceable divinity: “When they were gone, that good widow and mother knelt, and prayed to the God of battles, that He would spare her sons, and not take them from her.”<sup>107</sup>

Although fighting Quakers are typically male, *Saul Sabberday* features two female Friends willing to defend their lives and their virginity with violence. The widow Sabberday is consistent in her abhorrence of violence—and in her willingness to employ it. ““War is a dreadful thing!”” observes Mrs. Sabberday to her son. ““Woe to the tyrant who has forced this thing upon a peaceable and God-fearing people!””<sup>108</sup> Later in the novel, when her daughter’s honor appears to be in immediate danger, she violently and readily responds to the dastardly and one-dimensional Aaron Burr:

‘Never while I live!’ cried the undaunted mother of Ruth, seizing a heavy oaken chair, and raising as if it was a feather, she whirled it around her head, and added, ‘if thee advances one step, I will brain the[e] on the spot!’<sup>109</sup>



Ruth, in her subsequent adventures, shows a similar willingness to combat. Surprised in the project of stealing a boat for her escape, she deals cruelly with the boat's poor black owner:

Seeing that he was discovered, he scrambled out, knife in hand, but in a second two pistols were levelled at his head, and he came too on all fours, rather suddenly, as Ruth said in a clear, calm voice:

‘If thee moves another inch, thee dies!’

‘Oh, Gor amighty—don’t shoot old nigger!’ said the black, shaking with terror.

‘Cast that knife overboard!’ said the Quakeress.<sup>110</sup>

The Quakers in *Saul Sabberday*, male and female, consistently celebrate *peace* as an ideal, but Buntline ensures readers realize that *pacifism* is ultimately unworkable. Other war-era texts drew similar conclusions. As Charles Hazlewood, the enigmatic hero of 1858's *The Quaker Soldier*, remarked (after he “dealt a heavy left-hander on the pit of his opponent's stomach”), “We Friends are not strikers; but sometimes the flesh gets the better, and we hold people very hard:--even strike occasionally.”<sup>111</sup> The Friends of Williamson's 1869 *The Quaker Partisans* do have the helpful explanation of the Free Quaker context—all other fictional fighting Quakers are assumed to be representative Friends—but they still pay passing tribute to peace. Indeed, the preface explains that

Members of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia, still claiming to be ‘Friends,’ actually withdrew themselves from the great body of the Society, and organized troops, composed of their own members, to assist in the great struggle.

In all respects, except taking up ‘carnal weapons,’—and making good and vigorous use of them too, —I believe they maintained all the religious usages of the Society.<sup>112</sup>

The text of the novel places readers under the steady command of a “captain and lieutenants all of the same peaceful persuasion.”<sup>113</sup> Fictional fighting Quakers, no matter how sanguinary, keep their caps and broadbrims, and retain unmarred the bond of community with their fellow Quakers. Friends' impractical and unpatriotic beliefs must, like Saul Sabberday's broken mind, be rehabilitated—but the spiritual consequences for martial

Friends are never a stumbling-block. Fictional fighting Friends are never, in short, subject to the judgment of their community or their God for abandoning the pacifist witness. Their valor wins only applause.

## **VI. Conclusions**

The “fighting Quaker” has been a significant personality in the U.S. cultural landscape since before the Revolutionary War, and the nickname persists in the American vernacular.

Quakers in public life have occasionally reclaimed the title with a swagger. It was famously adopted in the twentieth century by a campaigning Richard Nixon and by A. Mitchell Palmer, tireless and terrified Attorney-General during the “red scare” of the 1920s.

Occupying a confused space between peacemaking and team sports, “Fighting Quakers” serve as the mascots of the University of Pennsylvania, Guilford College, and a host of Quaker institutions. A witty and well-known cheer of Earlham and Guilford colleges claims the trope of the fighting Quaker with the peculiar motivation of the Friends’ meeting for business: “Fight, fight, inner light! Kill, Quakers, kill! Knock ‘em down, beat ‘em senseless, do it ‘til we reach consensus!”<sup>14</sup>

Imagined fighting Quakers, far more than a joke, reached their greatest notoriety during the United States Civil War. In the Christmas Eve, 1864 issue of *Harper’s Weekly* among the “Interesting Items” is recorded the story of a “venerable Quaker lady” who travelled among wounded Union soldiers, reviving their deathbed faith. The author ends this moving item with a stirring tribute to the benevolence and compliant good sense of the Quakers:

Time will never record the many deeds of Christian love which these good people are constantly performing in their quiet, simple way, but eternity will show a record as brilliant as the crown they seek. Opposed to both war and oppression, they see that the latter can only be overthrown

by the former; and while unwilling to surrender their peculiar views, are heartily with us in the desire that both rebellion and slavery may be overthrown.<sup>115</sup>

In the widely-disseminated material culture of the Civil War, Quaker pacifism ultimately was figured as a “peculiar view,” easily adaptable to a sufficient cause. For Quakers, the agony of the Civil War lay in their deep and immediate commitment to abolition—a devotion they hoped was not incompatible with pacifism. But as Quaker historian Meredith Baldwin Weddle points out, the widespread belief that “the psychological nature of human beings is incompatible with sustained avoidance of fighting and war” means that pacifism is understood by most as a beautiful pipe-dream.<sup>116</sup> The same was clearly true during the Civil War, so imagined Quakers of the period easily shed their pacifist witness, taking up arms in deft reassurance that their God was on the Union’s side. Jokes, envelopes, and countless fictional characters witnessed to the natural inconsistency assumed inherent in nonresistance; “quakers” loomed from deceptive fortifications, a visible and lexical testimony both to neutrality and to the disloyalty implied by pacifism. Pacifism is no more a live option for most Americans today than it was one hundred and fifty years ago, and it is crucial to consider the ways in which this testimony—like any other religious belief—is altered in representation. Resistant to their represented selves, Friends continued throughout the war to issue plaintive cries against the fighting:

On each side they have publicly offered up prayers to Him whom they profess to be their common Lord and Master; who has solemnly reiterated his command, to love their enemies. . . .  
What a picture of the last acts and dying emotions of hundreds of professed followers of Him who declared that his kingdom was not of this world and therefore his servants could not fight?<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, or, The Whale* (New York: Penguin, 2001, c1851), 82.

<sup>2</sup> “Fighting Quakers,” *The Friend* (18 October 1862): 52.

<sup>3</sup> Ned Buntline, *Saul Sabberday, or, The Idiot Spy: A Tale of the Men and Deeds of '76* (New York: F.A. Brady, 1858).

<sup>4</sup> For more on the early peace testimony in the Religious Society of Friends, see Peter Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony: 1660-1914* (York, England: Sessions Trust, 1990), Margaret E. Hirst, *The Quakers in Peace and War* (London: The Swarthmore Press Ltd., 1923), and Meredith Baldwin Weddle, *Walking in the Way of Peace: Quaker Pacifism in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Hirst, *Quakers*, 45, 532.

<sup>6</sup> Brock, *Quaker Peace Testimony*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Hirst, *Quakers*, 380.

<sup>8</sup> “Philadelphia Quakers had been shocked by the number of Friends who had taken up arms” against the Paxton rebellion, writes Arthur J. Mekeel. “None were ultimately disowned, despite their openly voiced support for the defensive bearing of arms.” *The Quakers and The American Revolution* (York, England: Sessions Book Trust, 1996), 108. Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost report that almost 200 “young Quaker males armed themselves [and] used a meetinghouse as barracks.” *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 137.

<sup>9</sup> Qtd. in Hirst, *Quakers*, 386.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Valerie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992), 24.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Brock, *Radical Pacifists in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968), 269-71.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Lucretia Mott, however, became deeply and famously engaged with the work of the New England Non-Resistance Society.

<sup>14</sup> Brock, *Quaker Peace Testimony*, 164.

<sup>15</sup> Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, vol. 2 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970), 728-729.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>17</sup> For more on the policies of the Davis and Lincoln administrations in regard to conscientious objectors, see Brock, *The Quaker Peace Testimony*, 166-183.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 171-172.

<sup>19</sup> As Peter Brock points out, the work of assessing the numbers of those disciplined for military offenses is possible, due to the scrupulous records kept by Friends' meetings, but has not yet been done. Ibid., 179. Rufus Jones has tallied some numbers of dealings and disownments, and finds that "the 'deviations' from the historical testimony of Friends were more numerous than one would have expected in a conservative body which made the testimony an absolutely essential feature of its faith. But even so, when all the cases are counted, especially when one considers the powerful patriotic appeal and the devotion of Friends to the freedom of the slaves, the total number appears small." *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 737.

<sup>20</sup> qtd. in Hirst, *Quakers*, 432.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Pringle himself finally faced court-martial and a sentence of execution; he was eventually paroled by an order from Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 733.

<sup>23</sup> "The Lounger," *Harper's Weekly* (27 April 1861): 259.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *Harper's Weekly* for April 20, 1861 opens with a notice reading: "In view of the momentous events which are impending, and of the possible outbreak of civil war, the proprietors of *Harper's Weekly* beg to draw public attention to the following list of engravings which have been published in this journal within the past few weeks." *Harper's Weekly* (20 April 1861): 241. The lead story for the following issue on April 27 is "The Bombardment of Fort Sumter." *Harper's Weekly* (27 April 1861): 257.

<sup>26</sup> qtd. in Hirst, *Quakers*, 532.

<sup>27</sup> Berger here draws on the work of Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud. Peter Berger, "Christian Faith and the Social Comedy" in *Holy Laughter: Essays on Religion in the Comic Perspective*, ed. M. Conrad Hyers (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), 123.

<sup>28</sup> Elliot Oring, *Jokes and Their Relations* (Lexington : University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 35. The power of such jokes is evident, to use Oring's example, in the gruesome jokes following the explosion of the Challenger Space Shuttle in 1986. Similar incongruities referencing tragedy or uncertainty are present in jokes referencing the 2001 bombings in the United States or in jokes referencing natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina of 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 224. Fahs explores the

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uses of war humor in several Civil War-era publications on both sides of the conflict, including *Phunny Phellow*, *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*, *Southern Punch*, and *Bugle Horn of Liberty*.

<sup>30</sup> *Harper's Weekly* (18 December 1858): 816. An earlier (1809) English example exists in the satiric drawing "A peep at the Gas lights in Pall Mall." The drawing depicts a group of amazed people reacting to a street lamp; a dour Quaker remarks "Aye Friend but it is all Vanity what is this to the inward light." Christopher Hibbert, *London* (Harlow, Longmans: 1969), 158.

<sup>31</sup> For more on this debate (and Sigmund Freud's role in it), see Oring, *Jokes and their Relations*, 16-28.

<sup>32</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (18 July 1857): 462.

<sup>33</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (11 February 1860): 83.

<sup>34</sup> Ted Cohen, *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 27-28.

<sup>35</sup> Oring, *Jokes and their Relations*, 92.

<sup>36</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (22 September 1860): 595.

<sup>37</sup> "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," Matt. 5:39 (KJV).

<sup>38</sup> "Editor's Drawer," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 24, no. 142 (March 1862): 563-574, 567.

<sup>39</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (30 July 1864): 491.

<sup>40</sup> "The Lounger," *Harper's Weekly* (13 September 1862): 579.

<sup>41</sup> "The Quakers and Shakers," *The New York Herald* (18 August 1862). *Accessible Archives* <http://www.accessible.com> (19 September 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Hirst, *Quakers*, 440.

<sup>43</sup> *The Friend* (4 October 1862): 38.

<sup>44</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (20 April 1867): 247.

<sup>45</sup> Oring, *Engaging Humor*, 145.

<sup>46</sup> "Humors of the Day," *Harper's Weekly* (10 June 1865): 359.

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Kernan, "Pushing the Envelope." *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 1997) <[http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/smithsonian/issues97/oct97/mall\\_oct97.html](http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/smithsonian/issues97/oct97/mall_oct97.html)> (19 September 2005). The patent envelope had only been introduced in 1853. For more on Union envelopes, see Steven R. Boyd and Elaine Prange Turney, "Union Civil War Patriotic Covers: An Overview." *Journal of American Culture* 21, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 1-12. For more on Union and Confederate covers generally, see Stephen Berry, "The Lithographers' War: Union and Confederate Patriotic Covers." *North & South* 8, no. 3 (May 2005): 12-18.

<sup>48</sup> For more on the role of the mails in American life, see Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Fahs, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> This and other envelopes are visible in The University of North Carolina's fine collection of unused Civil War covers. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (#3409). ("Collected specimens of unused envelopes, decorated with Union and Confederate patriotic and polemic sentiments, mottos, cartoons, and emblems, mounted in an album. There are 350 Union items, 215 Confederate. The spine of the album is imprinted 'Envelopes of the Great Rebellion, 1861-1865.'")

<sup>52</sup> "The War-Time Envelopes of 1864 that Preceded Cartoons of Today," *The Sun*, Baltimore, (Sunday Morning, 8 October 1916).

<sup>53</sup> Michel Fabre, "La Representation du Noir sur les Enveloppes de Propagande Patriotique pendant La Guerre de Secession," *Revue Francaise d'Etudes Americaines* 4, no. 7 (1979): 9.

<sup>54</sup> Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (#3409).

<sup>55</sup> Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (#3409).

<sup>56</sup> Philatelist Robert W. Grant writes that "Magee was prolific indeed! He produced a large variety of covers [envelopes] ranging from caricatures to regimental insignatures. The quality of his printing varies from fine to mediocre. He issued more cartoons and caricatures than any other publisher." *The Handbook of Civil War Patriotic Envelopes and Postal History: Volume I*. (Published by the author, 1977), 26.

<sup>57</sup> Courtesy of the Earl G. Harrison, Jr. Quaker Rare Book Collection at Sidwell Friends School.

<sup>58</sup> Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (#3409).

<sup>59</sup> One fancy envelope depicts "Jeff Davis" hung from a palm, and read: "SOUTHERN EAGLE. JEFF. DAVIS IN SUSPENSE. LONG MAY HE WAVE." Another, entitled "A Warm Reception for Jeff. Davis" portrays Davis in hell being roasted by the devil on a long

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flat grill. An African American peers over the edge of the abyss and smiles, “De Debil Claims His Own.” Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (#3409). Michel Fabre has also noted this trend, observing that the envelopes’ themes vary “from stickiest sentiment to bitter vituperation. . . . It takes only one step further to reach real outrage and satire with ‘The Fate of Traitors’ illustrated by Jefferson Davis hanging from a limb.” “Popular Civil War Propaganda: The Case of Patriotic Covers,” *Journal of American Culture* 3, no. 2 (1980): 225.

<sup>60</sup> Courtesy of the Earl G. Harrison, Jr. Quaker Rare Book Collection at Sidwell Friends School.

<sup>61</sup> “The New Quaker Bonnet, 1861.” In *Civil War Treasures from the New-York Historical Society*. Available from *American Memory*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/nhihtml/cwnyhshome.html>. Digital ID, e.g., *nhnycw/ad ad04004* [19 September 2005].

<sup>62</sup> Historic Manassas, Inc., Museums and Attractions: “At the recently restored Mayfield Fort, Civil War history comes alive along the fort’s walking trails with interpretative markers, reproduction cannons and ‘Quaker Gun.’” *Museums and Attractions*, [http://www.visitmanassas.org/museums\\_attraction.htm](http://www.visitmanassas.org/museums_attraction.htm) (18 September 2005).

<sup>63</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2005, < <http://dictionary.oed.com/entrance.dtl> > (18 September 2005). Knickerbocker uses the term at least twice, once in this glorious opening description of Peter Stuyvesant: “Nor did he stop here, but made a hideous rout among the ingenious inventions and expedients of his learned predecessor---demolishing his flagstaffs and wind-mills, which like mighty giants, guarded the ramparts of New Amsterdam---pitching to the duyvel whole batteries of quaker guns---rooting up his patent gallows, where caitiff vagabonds were suspended by the breech, and in a word, turning topsy-turvy the whole philosophic, economic and wind-mill system of the immortal sage of Saardam.” Washington Irving, *A History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, Volume 2 By Diedrich Knickerbocker [pseud] (1809). *Early American Fiction Full-Text Database* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia 2000), 12 (19 September 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Nathaniel Fanning, *Narrative of the Adventures of an American Navy officer, Who Served During Part of the American Revolution under the Command of Com. John Paul Jones, Esq. Copy-right secured.* (1806), 142-143, Early American Imprints, 2nd series, no. 10385 (filmed).

<sup>65</sup> Louis T. Milic, “Chipman: A Little-Known Student of Americanisms.” *American Speech* 25, no. 3 (October 1950): 179.

<sup>66</sup> “Our Army at Manassas,” *New York Herald* (18 March 1862), *Accessible Archives* <http://www.accessible.com> (19 September 2005).

<sup>67</sup> “The Numbers of the Insurgents in Arms and Preparing for the Field,” *New York Herald* (12 April 1862), *Accessible Archives*, <http://www.accessible.com> (19 September 2005).



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<sup>68</sup> Later mentions of Quaker guns appear: "Latest Reports," *Harper's Weekly* (5 April 1862): 221. "Port Hudson," *Harper's Weekly* (8 August 1863): 497-98. "General Sherman," *Harper's Weekly* (17 September 1864): 594. "Major-General George H. Pendleton B. M'Clellan," *Harper's Weekly* (1 October 1864): 626. "General M'Clellan," *Harper's Weekly* (17 October 1868): 658.

<sup>69</sup> Qtd. in Timothy Sweet, *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990), 141.

<sup>70</sup> For more on the significance of ordering and captions as significant in the interpretation of Civil War era images, see Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 99-111.

<sup>71</sup> George N. Barnard, ca. 1862. "Quaker Guns, Centreville [stereograph]." In *Civil War Stereographs*, *New York Historical Society*. Available from [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwnyhs:6:./temp/~ammem\\_mCdE::@@@mdb](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwnyhs:6:./temp/~ammem_mCdE::@@@mdb); Digital ID nhnycw/ad ad30026. [19 September 2005].

<sup>72</sup> George N. Barnard 1 July 1862. "Yorktown, Va. Confederate naval gun; in background is Nelson Church, used as a hospital." [1 negative : glass, stereograph, wet collodion.] In *Selected Civil War photographs, 1861-1865* (Library of Congress). Available from <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpb.00184>; Digital ID cwpb 00184 [20 September 2005].

<sup>73</sup> Trachtenberg, *Reading*, 83.

<sup>74</sup> For more on Barnard's depiction of the picturesque on Sherman's march, see Sweet, *Traces of War*, 138-164.

<sup>75</sup> Trachtenberg, *Reading*, 84.

<sup>76</sup> "The Quaker Gun." Philadelphia, 1862. *Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division*. Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 157, Folder 30. Available from: <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.15703000>> ; Digital ID: rbpe 15703000 [20 September 2005].

<sup>77</sup> "Barnum's American Museum. THE LIVING HIPPOPOTAMUS, or RIVER HORSE, from the RIVER NILE IN EGYPT, now at the Museum. . . .He is the First and only Real Hippopotamus ever seen in America, is engaged at an immense cost, for a short time only, and should be seen by every man, woman, and child. For fuller description, and other curiosities, see Daily Papers and Small Bills. Admission to all, 25 cents. Children under 10, 15 cents." *Harper's Weekly* (7 September 1861): 576.

<sup>78</sup> Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: NYUP, 1997). Dennett writes that "depictions of the Civil War were found in museums throughout the remainder of the century. In the Eden Musee's American Gallery, for example, just to the left of the entrance all, there were several Civil War-related groupings." Dennett, 55.

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<sup>79</sup> As Dennett observes, “To lure patrons who otherwise would not partake in such ‘popular’ amusements, managers promoted the educational value of their dime museums.” *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>80</sup> “The Battle of the Stoves-Pipes.” n.p., n.d. In *Civil War Song Sheets, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress*. Available from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amsshtml/amsshome.html>; Digital ID cw200190 [20 September 2005].

<sup>81</sup> As Andrew Coopersmith points out, “as a military event, the Battle of Manassas was far less monumental or death-dealing than others that would come later in the war. Psychologically, however, it was tremendous in its consequences.” *Fighting Words: An Illustrated History of Newspaper Accounts of the Civil War* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 83.

<sup>82</sup> A Citizen Soldier [Henry Moford], *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals: As Seen from the Ranks during a Campaign in the Army of the Potomac*. (New York: Carleton, 1864), 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103.

<sup>84</sup> Edmund Kirke [James Roberts Gilmore], *Down in Tennessee, and Back by Way of Richmond* (New York: Carleton, 1864), 9.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>86</sup> Alice J. Hatch, *Under the Cedars, or, What the Years Brought* (Boston, Lee and Shepard, 1872), 212.

<sup>87</sup> “The Lounger,” *Harper’s Weekly* (27 April 1861): 259.

<sup>88</sup> Hugh Wynne, *Free Quaker* was the runner-up best seller for the year 1898; as Frank Luther Mott observes, “Dr. Mitchell’s masterpiece was perhaps the best of the novels of its type in the period, and for a two-volume book it had a remarkable sale.” *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 211, 324.

<sup>89</sup> Charles Caldwell, *Memoirs of the life and campaigns of the Honorable Nathaniel Greene* (Philadelphia: Robert Desilver and Thomas Desilver, 1819). Francis Vinton Greene, *General Greene* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893). George Washington Greene, *The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1867-1871). William Johnson, *Sketches of the life and correspondence of Nathanael Greene: Major General of the Armies of the United States, in the War of the Revolution* (Charleston: Printed for the author, by A.E. Miller, 1822). William Gilmore Simms, *The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution* (New York: George F. Cooledge and Brother, 1849). Greene remained a well-known figure throughout the century. Buntline, following in a long tradition, quotes Greene’s mother as having responded to his enlistment thus: “‘I like not thy going into battle, to shed the blood

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of thy fellow men, Nathaniel; but, if thee thinks it is thy duty, go, and if thee is wounded, come not home to me with a wound in thy back!" Buntline, 3. Hirst, 393.

<sup>90</sup> Terry Golway, *Washington's General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 1. Despite his acknowledgement of Greene's peculiar history, Golway readily accepts Greene's characterization of pacifist misconduct. "The pacifist Quakers," he writes, "clinging to the dogma that had stunted his intellectual development and deprived him of the education he so sorely missed, especially infuriated him." Golway, 136.

<sup>91</sup> Hirst, 393.

<sup>92</sup> Arthur Mekeel, *The Quakers and the American Revolution* (York, England: Sessions Book Trust, 1996), 274.

<sup>93</sup> For more on the choices Quakers faced during the Revolution, see Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers*.

<sup>94</sup> Mekeel, 229-230.

<sup>95</sup> Qtd. in Hirst, 401.

<sup>96</sup> Mekeel, 231.

<sup>97</sup> Edward H. Williamson, *The Quaker Partisans: A Story of the Revolution* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1869), 37. The provenance of the "Quaker Blues" remains somewhat uncertain; Barbour and Frost list the group in the context of "patriotic Quakers," but Steele claims that their existence is unsubstantiated. Barbour and Frost, 141. Steele, 29.

<sup>98</sup> Barbour and Frost, 144. Charles Wetherill, *History of the Religious Society of Friends, Called by Some the Free Quakers, in the City of Philadelphia* (Printed for the Society, 1894).

<sup>99</sup> Charles Wetherill, *History*, 23.

<sup>100</sup> Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, 150.

<sup>101</sup> Williamson, *The Quaker Partisans*, 30.

<sup>102</sup> "On the Sufferings of Friends in the Revolutionary War," *The Friend* 34, no. 17 (7<sup>th</sup> day, Twelfth month 29, 1860), 135-36.

<sup>103</sup> Along with James Ryan, Betty Jean Steele and Thomas Kimber have written on the imagined Quaker man of the nineteenth century.

<sup>104</sup> James Ryan, "Imaginary Friends," 208.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

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<sup>106</sup> Jay Monaghan, *The Great Rascal: The Life and Adventures of Ned Buntline* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1951).

<sup>107</sup> Buntline, *Saul Sabberday*, 4.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>111</sup> John Richter Jones, *The Quaker Soldier; or, the British in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1858), 53, 57.

<sup>112</sup> Williamson, *The Quaker Partisans*, iii.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>114</sup> The first verse of this cheer appears on the commemorative (glow-in-the-dark) Guilford College Homecoming Weekend cup for October 29-31, 1999. Thomas Hamm notes that Earlham's first cheer was the equally witty 1892 couplet: "Rah-rah-rah-ri-ro-rem/E-A-R-L-H-A-M Thee Thou Rah!" Thomas Hamm, *Earlham College: A History, 1847-1997* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997), 59.

<sup>115</sup> "Interesting Items," *Harper's Weekly* (December 24, 1864): 823.

<sup>116</sup> Weddle, *Walking in the Way of Peace*, 232.

<sup>117</sup> *The Friend* 35, no. 26 (7<sup>th</sup> day, Third month 1, 1862): 206.

Not many months ago, a Philadelphia friend, who rejoiced in the name of Comfort, paid his devoirs to a young and attractive widow, named Rachel H—, residing on Long Island. Either her griefs were too new or her lover too old, or from some other cause, the offer was declined. Whereupon a Quaker friend remarked that it was the first modern instance he had known where Rachel refused to be Comforted.

“Humors of the Day,” *Harper’s Weekly* (February 28, 1863): 131.

## CHAPTER 5

### QUAKER BONNET

Nothing so visibly marked a Quaker woman of the mid-nineteenth century as the deep shade cast by her unadorned bonnet. Observers often noticed the Quaker bonnet's compelling simplicity and appeal, dedicating crooning verses to the "simple bonnet's tie—That makes me sigh in spirit," as in James T. Fields's 1851 ditty "Quaker Girls."<sup>1</sup> Even the almighty Godey's *Lady's Book* bowed to the charm of the plain Quaker bonnet, so different from the magazine's typically colorful, beribboned recommendations. "Those white bonnet-strings have bewitched me ever since I first saw a pair glistening above one of the most enchanting faces," Fields sighed in the *Lady's Book*; "white ribbons are taking: there is nothing beautish or artificial about them: they serve for bonnet-strings, and nothing more, yet have I seen them arrayed with a maximum of taste, seldom met with in costlier colours glittering around brocade!"<sup>2</sup> Many shared his sentiments, and widespread appreciation for the fetching Quaker bonnet transformed it into a fashionable, enduring—and comfortably Protestant—icon of the feminine religious.

From the beginnings of the Religious Society of Friends through the late nineteenth century, plain dress was the most visible American Quaker distinctive for real and represented Friends. By the 1850s, American Quaker dress was more strongly associated with women than men, since the only distinctives remaining in the costume of Quaker men were the "broadbrim" beaver hat and the long collarless coat.<sup>3</sup> Widespread popular

representations of Quaker women from that decade through the 1920s and '30s consistently call attention to their picturesque dresses and modest bonnets. These depictions of plain bonnets—in fiction, image, film, and music—invested in them something greater than cloth and pasteboard. Bonnets became a convenient and fetishized shorthand for Quaker women in general; wherever a Quaker woman appeared, descriptions of her fetching, outsized bonnet usually were privileged over any notice of her person. These admiring descriptions invested the bonnet with a host of attractive traits while muting the potential spiritual and political virtuosity of the Quaker woman beneath it.<sup>4</sup> Observers asked of Quaker women that they be and remain, like the imagined bonnet, static and traditional, even as expectations of women altered in a new century. While Quaker women changed along with and even ahead of their broader society, representations begged that they remain the same—erotic representatives of the imagined femininity of a simple and explicitly American past.

In the years following the Civil War, American Friends began to abandon their distinctive bonnets in large numbers—and yet, “they” retained it outside the Society for sixty more years in popular music, stories, and films. During this period of quickening immigration and rapid social change for women, Quaker women, marked by their anachronistic dress, served as anchors to an imagined past. Standing for both an ethnic and religious costume that was of ancient American vintage—unlike equally distinctive but recent imports of ethnic costumes from abroad—and a homespun alternative to newly available mass-produced clothing, represented Quaker bonnets in the United States carried a multivalent allure. Dress historian Ruth Rubinstein conceives of uniformed “gatekeepers” as those who occupy positions of cultural authority: “Nursery-school teachers, judges, ushers, . . . and supervisors, among others, are guardians of tradition who formally or informally

identify the boundaries of acceptable appearance. They are gatekeepers, in that they prevent those inappropriately dressed from entering or ask them to leave.”<sup>5</sup> Building on her analysis, I suggest that Quaker women were figured as temporal rather than spatial gatekeepers, even as they shed their distinctive costume. Seductive depictions of the bonnet promoted in the United States served as correctives to rapidly changing cultural possibilities for the expression of women’s sexuality. The feminine Quaker costume was also an attractive anachronism, a reassuring referent to an imagined and idyllic American past. What S. Weir Mitchell described as her “kiss-defying bonnet” defied time as well, marking the imagined Quaker woman as an appealing and stable gatekeeper, guardian of a fantasy past where women were small, silent, tempting, unattainable, and interchangeable.<sup>6</sup>

Though analyses of historical religious dress and the internal meanings of communal dress are vital, it is also crucial to consider the ways in which that religious dress is received, understood, and altered by the larger public.<sup>7</sup> Assessing the responses to and characterizations of Quaker clothing can illuminate the ways in which Quakers—and religious people more generally—are received and fashioned even today. As Linda Arthur explains, “[s]ymbols, such as dress, help delineate the social unit and visually define its boundaries because they give non-verbal information about the individual;” in representation, these boundaries were adapted to suit the desires of the observer.<sup>8</sup> Recovering the imagined boundaries implied in representation can help scholars to understand the cultural response provoked by the plain dress witness: Did the messages Quakers attempted to communicate through their dress reach observers? Though the history of the Quaker bonnet was quite short—only a century or so—the public memory of it has been long, and the Quaker woman it covered came to represent a host of virtues entirely unrelated to Friends’ intended witness.



Thinking about the ways the bonnet functioned for observers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can provide new perspectives on the ways observers receive and interpret religious women and religious dress in the United States.

The Quaker bonnet, conceived within the Society as an identifying badge and a witness against fashion, was nevertheless an ambiguous sign for its myriad admirers outside the fold. Leigh Eric Schmidt points out that “for those disaffected by the fineries of the genteel, religious groups that invested simplicity with virtue and identified plainness with godliness clearly trumpeted an appealing and subversive message.”<sup>9</sup> Some observers must have seen such piety and broadmindedness in the Quaker woman’s bonnet. But, after all, Quakers were understood as both plain and genteel. So a vast consuming public interpreted the bonnet instead as a cover to a lovely and conservative woman: a fashionable, erotic, domestic—but above all, quiet—representative of America’s past during an era of immigration and upheaval.

Sources that reached the widest audiences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide the best chance to reconstruct commonly held conceptions about the Quaker bonnet. The Quaker woman did appear as heroine in a variety of nineteenth century novels, though none were best- or even better-sellers; these works have been adequately catalogued and examined elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> But the bonnet—and the woman wearing it—proliferated in fashion news and fiction from Godey’s *Lady’s Book*, *Harper’s Monthly* and *Harper’s Weekly*, and as well as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s twice- and thrice-told tale “The Gentle Boy.” That best-known Quaker lady of all, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s magnanimous Rachel Halliday, glories in the covering of her plain cap. Popular music—authored by men—from the 1850s through the 1920s, noticed the Quaker millinery, and developed a clear set of

associations between the bonnet and the bonneted. First inspiring and later inspired by the success of the popular 1910 English operetta *The Quaker Girl*, which played in Philadelphia in 1913, songs about charmingly dressed Quaker women were commonplace during the period.

All the magazines listed above enjoyed circulations above 100,000 by the close of the Civil War, and Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were over-all best sellers in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Although it is more difficult to gauge the audiences for popular music during this period (as it was disseminated not only through sheet music but also through opera houses, parlors, recordings and radio, "clean" vaudeville shows, and other less reputable venues), the sheer number of songs remarking on the charming dress of an alluring Quaker maid suggests that the trope was wildly popular.<sup>12</sup>

After a long postbellum decline, the bonnet itself had disappeared almost completely at the turn of the century; and yet, it seemed to bloom and increase all the more in music, letters, and throughout the American imagination. Friendly controversies and the increasing sway of evangelical and holiness Quakers certainly brought about the demise of the plain dress. Outside observers took full advantage, however, of the Quaker bonnet's ambiguous witness, perceiving in it a blank slate for a range of pious feminine virtues even as they mourned its demise.

## **I. Plain Dress**

A witty *New York Times* item describing an 1882 Quaker wedding bemoaned the tedium of silent waiting before the marriage with only a single comfort: "One consolation, at least—no detail of a fine costume is likely to be lost!" The writer goes on to describe the bride's attire, remarking on the "best sort but plain" paradigm Frederick Tolles reiterated nearly seventy

years later:

The lovely bride, who might serve as a painter's ideal of the pure, refined Quaker maiden at her best estate, sat quietly with downcast eyes, but very pale. Friends, in spite of "plainness," have always been noted for indulgence in rich fabrics, and she was no exception, her dress being of the finest creamy satin . . . She wore a small bonnet of white straw, trimmed with white silk, but without veil or strings, this forming the main departure from the conventional wedding costume.<sup>13</sup>

This bride's dress exemplified a moment of transition between plain and worldly clothing. Her dress is, it seems, no different from the typical late-century wedding gown; for the writer, it is her meek, refined attitude—veiled beneath her remarkable bonnet—that makes her a pattern Quaker maid. After her marriage, however, *this* bride became the best-known historian of Quaker plain dress. In her well-received 1901 book, *The Quaker Costume*, Amelia Mott Gummere approached the subject of the weighty Quaker bonnet, "already a matter of history," reverently and discreetly, with "a certain solemnity that was born of terror."<sup>14</sup> Gummere's most significant contributions to the study of Quaker costume were twofold. First, she insisted that the plain dress was relevant for study; second, she asserted that historical Quaker costumes were but simpler reflections of the fashionable attire they sought to deny.

Since Gummere, much work has been done on the history of Quaker religious dress. Folklorist Don Yoder and costume historian Joan Kendall have written brief analyses of Quaker plain costume and its meanings within the Society; Leanna Lee-Whitman's dissertation study of plain and gay Quaker dress as depicted in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century portraits has recovered some of the most persistent features of plain dress among wealthy Friends.<sup>15</sup> Suzanne Keen has written on the implications of Quakerish dress on non-Quaker heroines in nineteenth-century English literature.<sup>16</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt noted a lack

of scholarship on dress and religion in early America in a 1989 article, when he cited the significant “religious meanings” signaled by clothing—and identified Gummere’s study as a rare example of a history of religious dress.<sup>17</sup> The work of Linda B. Arthur and others on the significance of dress as a crucial lens on religious belief—and particularly on the ways in which women’s behavior and belief systems are molded and controlled through standardized dress—has served as an important corrective to the need for studies of religious dress.<sup>18</sup>

## **II. The Bonnet**

The decline of the intense and bracing period of early persecution in England had prompted Friends to proclaim their identity in a peculiar style of dress.<sup>19</sup> Quakers secured in their new plain uniforms what Nathan Joseph has called “the legitimating emblem of membership within an organization.”<sup>20</sup> For English and American women Quakers, one of the first elements of this uniform was a widely-recognized green apron, which enjoyed its heyday at the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Distinctive hats soon followed.

Although it is with the bonnet that this analysis begins, early Quaker women favored a once widely-fashionable straw or silk hat with a wide brim and a low flat crown.

Fashioned of straw or beaver, this “flat hat” produced the tunnel-like effect of the later bonnet when its sides were tied under the chin with ribbon. The flat hat gave way to the poke-bonnet in the 1770s.<sup>22</sup> When fashion first produced the bonnet, Quakers had serious questions about its propriety, retaining the flat hat for years longer than most colonial women. “Why the flat hat should have seemed more plain to the dear Friends,” Gummere wondered, “than the small and modest affair at first introduced as the ‘bonnet,’ it would puzzle us to determine.”<sup>23</sup> But the bonnet finally carried the day. As first worn by Quakers, it possessed a high, angled, soft crown, shifting at mid-century to the stiff quilled bonnet with

a long plain brim. This last incarnation of the Quaker bonnet was the most celebrated, and remains the most persistent in the cultural imagination. Quaker Bonnet Eatery, the New York gourmet catalog service (known for their chocolate-dipped macaroons) features a drawing of this version of the bonnet as their corporate logo today. Like the Quaker Oats company, unnamed Quaker ancestors clutching delicious recipes and shrouded by the mists of time people the Quaker Bonnet company's mythology.<sup>24</sup>

The silk Quaker bonnet of the late nineteenth century was only static in the cultural imagination; it represented the nonconformity wrought by clinging to tradition. It was what Linda Arthur has termed "fossilized fashion," creating a visible hedge between the Society and the world.<sup>25</sup> Early manifestations of the Quaker bonnet did change, remaining only a few years behind the latest fashions.<sup>26</sup> Stiff and shaded by a long brim—evocatively termed "coal-scuttle" bonnets by outsiders—mid-century Quaker bonnets were typically dark grey or tan, but could range in color from pink to ivory.<sup>27</sup> (Black—often perceived as plain by non-Quakers—is often remembered as the Quaker bonnet's most common color, but the Quaker protest against mourning practices and their expensive fashions cut into black's popularity at mid-century.) Designed for outdoor wear, the bonnet was usually silk, which required an additional hood to protect it from rain. The more fashionable straw bonnet occasionally made an appearance, and as the bonnet's demise drew closer, straw became even more popular. The silk bonnet covered a smaller white cap, worn indoors; both altered substantially over the decades of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries according to the dictates of fashion. As Gummere wittily observed, "the clue to all the changes within the Society may be found without; and not a pleat of the bonnet as now worn by the plainest Friend . . . but had its origin at some remote day—let us whisper it softly—in Paris!"<sup>28</sup>

Most Quakers, however, were studiously unconscious of the bonnet's fashionable appeal, as we will see. How did Friends themselves conceive of the Quaker bonnet? Most Friends conceived of plain dress as both a hedge around the Society and a witness to the world at large—a witness against the expense, attention, and lasciviousness they perceived in fashion's dictates. Many Quakers perceived their plain dress and bonnet as a crucial and ancient testimony, not to be shed lightly. When Friends began to abandon the plain dress in large numbers, Quaker periodicals like *The Friend* attempted to shore it up by pointing to tradition, to scripture, and even to the Mennonites as still unfallen representatives of that witness.<sup>29</sup> In 1879 *The Friend* honestly and sorrowfully quoted the Mennonite *Herald of Truth*, which opined that “among the Friends (Quakers) there is a manifest looseness at present, and many . . . could not be identified by their appearance with Friends of a few years in the past. It is a sad circumstance in their history.”<sup>30</sup> The same item reflected, self-satisfied, that the Mennonites had yet to face any such troubles with regard to their own old-fashioned plain dress.

Although the *Quaker* bonnet was particularly anachronistic, it is important to note that caps and bonnets were standard for ladies throughout the nineteenth century—so Quakers' bonnets were only the simplest in a sea of fashionable millinery. At mid-century fashionable bonnets varied in size from season to season, and were decorated with ribbons, flowers, feathers, birds, embroidery, and lace. Quaker bonnets were distinguished from other bonnets only by their very large size, plain pattern, lack of ornamentation, and anachronistic persistence.<sup>31</sup> For stylish ladies, bonnets only lost their place to hats in fashion magazines in the 1870s—also the same decade that the Quaker bonnet began its most rapid disappearance.<sup>32</sup>

After the end of the Civil War, Quakers engaged in a deeply-felt discussion over the plain dress testimony. The London Yearly Meeting, under concerns over hypocrisy and works, abandoned the disciplinary query enjoining plainness in 1860, but American Friends took years longer even to consider the question.<sup>33</sup> Absorbed by the pressures of the Civil War, Quakers had little time to think about their bonnets and broadbrims—unless, as John Woolman famously worried, their clothing dyes and fabrics contradicted their antislavery testimony. The debate over whether or not the plain dress should stand did not begin in the United States until two years after the war had ended. Although all bodies of Quakers were distressed and divided by the eroding plain style, Gurneyite Quakers—comprising the largest branch of the Society during the last half of the century—possessed an evangelical mistrust of dead works that shaped the American conversation about dress. By the turn of the century, American Friends were reaching a consensus that plain dress in general—and the bonnet in particular—embodied, as Friend Catharine DePeel remarked in 1906, a “few peculiarities which built up a wall between us and our fellowman.” DePeel and other Quaker women with her abandoned the bonnet, obeying a light directing them to ““Lay it aside; because of it your light is hid under a bushel.””<sup>34</sup>

Though the Quaker bonnet passed into history, headcoverings persist among some twentieth and twenty-first century Christian plain women. The bonnets of nineteenth century Quakers and twenty-first century Amish and Mennonite women share a peculiar parallel. The varied cap and bonnet styles of today indicate distinct geographic or theological locations; likewise, the intricate gathers required for the crown of the Quaker bonnet often indicated the wearer’s city, meeting, or even her milliner. Unlike the headcoverings of today’s plain dressing Christians (Anabaptist women and even some Conservative Quakers),

however, the original Quaker cap and bonnet did not indicate women's submission, and was never founded in Pauline restrictions against uncovered hair.<sup>35</sup> Though it was not based in scriptural dictates about women's attire, the Quaker bonnet did become a marker for a lovely, old-fashioned constancy; as Gummere affirms, "when a synonym was wanted for conservatism, for stability, for all things that endure, it was found in the Quaker bonnet."<sup>36</sup> The Quaker bonnet, like the broadbrim for men, came to represent by synecdoche Quaker women and all the traditional and attractive virtues associated with them.

Before considering the ways in which these bonnets were described and fetishized by observers, it is helpful to ask: Who wore the Quaker bonnet? Curiously, the bonnet was not exclusive to Friends, for at least two other groups enjoyed its shade. Partygoers were one such group. English ladies of the Victorian period adopted the Quaker plain dress as a popular staple party costume.<sup>37</sup> This trend transferred to the United States: a recommendation from the *Lady's Book* in 1885 suggested as an economical fancy dress option the Puritan costume—which could be easily adapted for a second party into the dress of a Quakeress. The author hinted that although such a Quaker costume would not suit everyone,

A fair little lady with a demure little face looks very well in this style; the gray is also very becoming to anyone with a high color. The gray of "Sister Tabitha's" dress must nearly approach to dove color, and she should wear a Quaker bonnet of the same sober hue.<sup>38</sup>

Literary critic Suzanne Keen perceives in such a costume—highlighted in English novels like Richardson's *Pamela*—an implied invitation; she suggests that the contrast between the demure silk dress and the outspoken body it contains is "flirtatious by implication."<sup>39</sup> More incongruous than this inferred eroticism, of course, is the appearance of a Quaker at a fancy dress party at all. Some of the other costume personalities recommended in the American



*Lady's Book* might reasonably be expected to appear at a fancy dress ball: historical beauties, the old woman who lived in a shoe, even the ambiguously themed “Good Luck” maiden. But the popular stereotype of the sober Quaker and the reality of Friends’ restrictions against fancy dress converge to make the Quaker’s presence at a costume party impossible, a visual joke. Though the plain dressing Quaker was still a contemporary reality in 1885, she had been grouped with the Puritan into an attractive but nebulous past, her bonnet the crucial key to interpreting her whole person. Moreover, the fancy dress party gave young women an opportunity to “play” Quaker—assuming the bonnet even as Quakers were giving it up.

Religious women from other traditions often admired the virtues associated with the Quakers, and adopted the Quaker bonnet for themselves. As we saw in Chapter Three, Amanda Smith was one of these women. Smith’s intriguing claims about the spirit of plain dress among varied American religious women during the period deserve further excavation elsewhere, as she perceives plain dress styles as determined purely by a free market of preference and affordability rather than by church discipline alone. But her story does point to the charged meanings of the bonnet for Quakers and non-Quakers alike. The bonnet was perceived as a conservative hedge and a permeable, shifting symbol of a time already past—at once a matter of personal style and a witness against all fashion.

### **III. Fashion and Taste**

Any mid-century Friend who peeped into Godey’s *Lady’s Book* would have been surprised to see how regularly her clothes were featured in its modish pages. Godey’s writers regularly and approvingly cited a Quakerish sensibility in dress as tasteful, modest, and old-fashioned—but somehow ever new. The feminine community created by *Lady’s Book*

readers and writers perpetually recreated a usually friendly relationship between “Quaker” and the newest fashions, the most refined taste. This relationship blithely missed the Friends’ functional opposition of plain dress to fashion’s folly.

At mid-century, most Orthodox Quakers steadfastly refused to see what the world plainly recognized—the modish potential of their simple and often rich attire. American Friends frequently cited the endless, dangerous and “arbitrary commands of Fashion” as evidence enough that their own plain garb, in opposition, was godly.<sup>40</sup> Quaker plain dress was figured by Friends as day to the wretched night of fashionable dress, which wrought financial ruin, spiritual and moral decay, disease and even death. In Second Month 1874, for example, *The Friend* excerpted from Penn’s *No Cross, No Crown* a tale recounting the death of a female Friend after “delighting in the finery and pleasures of the world.” Fortunately, she was subjected to a last-minute deathbed redress from Penn, and she ordered her family to remove her fine laces before the final passage.<sup>41</sup> Later Friends cherished these stories of plain dress victories over fashion’s vagaries.

Despite the functional opposition of Quaker plain dress and fashion, many worldly fashion writers cited an apparently widely-recognized Quaker aesthetic in their recommendations to smart ladies. In 1862, an article offering thoughtful guidance on “Color in Dress, Furniture, and Gardening” suggested Quaker dress as the apparent exception which proved a stylish rule: “In dress, as well as in Nature, colors are rarely seen singly. The Quaker costume may seem an exception to the first, but even the aged Quakeress mixes her buffs and drabs.”<sup>42</sup> Fashionable percale colors for April 1870 included “soft Quaker drabs,” and in August 1871 *Godey’s* heralded a new simplicity in outerwear:

Taste and fashion combined have remodelled our travelling public into Quaker-like simplicity. . . . expend a little more upon a good article, such as

the fine English mohair, pongee, and twilled foulards, soft in texture, and simply plain in colors, as greenish gray, and all the other shades of gray and browns. . . . All this makes an ensemble calculated to produce a perfect spirit of content in the heart of woman.<sup>43</sup>

This author describes the feeling of a Quakerly new traveling costume in language Quakers themselves might have used to describe the movement of the Spirit in meeting. This plain but expensive dress invested its wearer with “a perfect spirit of content” while silently waiting—for her train.

Godey’s writers also found “Quaker” to be a useful adjective for fashions, just as others soon would for breakfast oats.<sup>44</sup> Fashions described in its pages as “Quaker” or “quaker” were meant to suggest simple, useful, crisp, unpretentious styles that suggested refinement and the good taste that came with affluence. Eighteen sixty-three, for example, ushered in the “Quaker skirt,” a contrivance “much smaller than the usual hoop, tapering most gracefully from the base to the top. It is especially suited to light summer, and airy ball dresses.”<sup>45</sup> The next year saw the new and indispensable raincoat capped with a “Quaker” hood.<sup>46</sup> In 1874, Godey’s advised elderly ladies (“on that side of fifty”) about suitable trimmings: if “her means are moderate, the proverbial Quaker snowiness of cambric and muslin” would make an appropriate substitute for laces and silks.<sup>47</sup> Thus fashionable “Quaker” styles were at once simple and refined. Their very simplicity suggested perfect taste and a kind of economic leveling which borrowed from the Friends’ persistent reputation for wealth; simple “Quaker” fashions could either incorporate excellent materials or compensate for the lack of them. “Quaker” dress was clearly regarded as useful and attractive antifashion. It was widely acknowledged as behind the times, and because so outdated, perfectly and ironically *à la mode*.

Mid-century women, then, were not unconscious of the seemingly austere appeal of the Quaker bonnet itself.<sup>48</sup> After all, the “broad-brimmed hat and a quaker bonnet are fashionable in the society of Friends,” reasoned one 1839 Godey’s commentator on “Fashion;” “and those persons who are most remarkable for the plainness of their apparel, are often scrupulously exact in conforming with some standard which they conceive to be most expressive of decorum and good taste.”<sup>49</sup> Like the plain silks of Philadelphia’s departed but long-remembered “Grandeess,” the new century’s plain bonnet indicated neither a lack of taste or respectability (read: means).<sup>50</sup>

Fashionable women of the world kept careful tabs on the evolving shape of the Quaker bonnet within the Society. In January of 1854, the *Lady’s Book* quoted an approving Mrs. Merrifield, who noted that the bonnet’s style had changed for the better in recent years:

Some few years back, the Quaker ladies might have been reproached with adhering to the letter, while they rejected the spirit of their code of dress, by adhering too literally to the costume handed down to them. The crowns of their caps were formerly made very high, and for this reason it was necessary that the crowns of the bonnets should be high enough to admit the cap crown; hence the particularly ugly and remarkable form of this part of the dress. The crown of the cap has, however, recently been lowered, and the Quaker ladies, with much good sense, have not only modified the form of their bonnets, but also adopted the straw and drawn-silk bonnet in their most simple forms.<sup>51</sup>

For Mrs. Merrifield, good sense finally erased the “particularly ugly” component of the Quaker bonnet, eroding the former high-capped bonnet into a less obtrusive and more fashionable form. Religious principle is one thing; an unbecoming costume is quite another. Matters continued to improve four years later, when the “Chitchat” on May fashions decreed that

MAY is decidedly the month of fashions, as June is of roses. Fresh toilets bloom and brighten on all our promenades, from the rich robe and crape bonnet of a costly carriage-dress to the modest black silk mantle and straw bonnet of the plainest little maiden of the Quaker City.<sup>52</sup>

In this rhapsody, the fashion writer sees a Quaker maiden as conscious of the changing fashions as her worldly sister, and reads in her new straw bonnet a testimony to “fresh toilets” rather than plainness of attire. Her attire is not “costly” because, unlike the woman in the “rich robe and crape bonnet,” she has the weight of the Society’s prosperous history behind her. As this observer recognized, this little “maiden” resided in a city which was home to both high fashion and the most conservative Yearly Meeting. She was firmly entrenched (if on one end) on a fashionable continuum.

Quaker women were deemed most attractive, however, when they assented to the influence of good sense and taste on their bonnets. For example, just after the Civil War, Harriet Beecher Stowe saw in the shifting plain dress a space where the “modern” feminine ideal and Quaker taste were commingled—a space where good taste transformed Quakers into modern women, and, perhaps, modern women into right-feeling Quakers. In 1868, she observed—in a chapter entitled “Dress, or, Who Makes the Fashions”—that

The Quaker dress is imperceptibly and gracefully melting away into a refined simplicity of modern costume, which in many cases seems to be the perfection of taste. . . . —if the heart be right with God and man, the bonnet ribbon may be of any shade you please.<sup>53</sup>

So altered, such a Quaker bonnet could be at once stylish and delightfully old-fashioned. A short story by Augusta de Bubna, published in the March 1882 *Godey’s*, describes one of the “quaint old-fashioned new style costumes of the day”:

Phebe wore the half worldly, half sectarian dress of her Quaker ancestry; a prim close-clinging skirt of gray plush, with a little gray bonnet of the same—her blue eyes and golden hair the only bit of color about her.<sup>54</sup>

Phebe’s features provide the necessary color to her costume; her bonnet, while it completes her “Quaker” costume, is small enough to reveal her lovely features. Her “quaint old-

fashioned new style” dress is both conservative and up-to-the-minute. Phebe’s costume is appropriate for a young person like herself, and is richer in implication than detail, as it stylishly nods to her “half worldly, half sectarian” ancestry without overwhelming her personal charms.

Fashionable ladies were willing to adopt elements reflecting the simple tastefulness they perceived in the Quaker costume, but they had to be persuaded to adopt the Quaker bonnet itself. They found the bonnet stylish and attractive for Friends, but felt that it was surely too distinctive to enter the arena of worldly fashion. In the mid-1860s, however, bonnets took a turn for the larger to accommodate a new fashion for “waterfalls,” large puffs of hair or false hair rising high at the back of the head over a smooth parted front.<sup>55</sup> The *Lady’s Book* predicted in 1865 that the change in hairstyles would usher in “a bonnet with high, wide face, and hood-shaped Quaker-like crown. Loud will be the complaints against these bonnets, which we can hardly imagine becoming, and to ladies not favored with height, they will be positively frightful.”<sup>56</sup> The new style came to pass. *Harper’s Weekly* noticed the trend in October, and remarked that “they are a little Quakerish, and *may* make the young ladies look rather old; but style is every thing.”<sup>57</sup> These new bonnets evoked the large, “ugly,” high-hooded Quaker bonnet of the first half of the century, and their memory evidently still stung. *Lady’s Book* reader “N.G.” promptly wrote a heated letter in response to the trend, complaining that

I had heard rumors of our dear, comfortable, little handkerchief bonnets being supplanted by large poke fronts and Quaker crowns, but would not believe them until your trustworthy Book confirmed the reports. Now, Mr. Godey, can you wonder at my horror on hearing of this change? Were you a lady yourself, I am sure you would not care to look like a perfect fright just for the sake of following the fashions.<sup>58</sup>

This letter captures the sense of a hapless consumer, obliged to sacrifice comfort and utility,

unwillingly carried along according to the discipline of Fashion, a large society with few worries about dwindling membership. Though the recommendation was made reluctantly, and followed no less grudgingly, it was followed. “N.G.” might have asked (if not answered) with Roland Barthes, “Why does Fashion utter clothing so abundantly? . . . The reason is, of course, an economic one.”<sup>59</sup> Though the Civil War was little noted in the pages of the *Lady’s Book*, the end of its attendant hardships evidently permitted a larger, more lavish, expensive style.<sup>60</sup>

The victims of this uncomfortable new fashion apparently balked at the deep brims and full crowns, which they found lovely in the abstract—but unattractive, expensive, and impractical in reality. The deep crown of the bonnet could be, in fact, uncomfortable and even dangerous; it forced a true tunnel vision, restricting the wearer’s ability to see and hear on either side of her.<sup>61</sup> The little war over the larger bonnet of the mid-sixties suggests that fashionable “Quaker” virtues like taste, simplicity, cleanliness and prosperity could be assumed comfortably with a new raincoat, skirt, or collar. The uncomfortable and impractical bonnet, however, was only lovely on Friends or in the imagination, and best left to them—unless demanded by the discipline of fashion.

Answering to a different discipline, nineteenth-century Friends refused to acknowledge their own stylishness—but they did celebrate the aesthetic value of the plain dress. The Hicksite *Friends’ Intelligencer* echoed Godey’s applause for the bonnet’s tasteful simplicity in 1864, in an early article defending plain dress entitled “Simplicity not Incompatible with True Refinement.” The author asserts that plainness is, in fact, the most crucial Friendly testimony—but takes pains to assure Quakers that although “many of our members have failed to perceive their beauty and importance . . . [s]implicity and moderation are not

incompatible with true refinement.”<sup>62</sup> Friends did not openly acknowledge the clear links between their own attire and the fashions of the world until Amelia Mott Gummere wittily brought them to light in 1901. But they clearly cherished the “beauty” and “refinement” intertwined with their plain bonnets, promoting the private fashion of an “in” group. Mid-century Quakers certainly recognized privately that since the earliest years of the nineteenth century—as Leanna Lee-Whitman explains—“the plain Quaker costume was in reality a ‘chic’ plain dress, ‘of the finest sort but plain.’”<sup>63</sup>

After the end of the Civil War, few matters preoccupied plain Friends so much as shoring up support for their dress as a testimony against the cyclical extravagances of fashion. Pleading articles in *The Friend* and the *Friends’ Review* cited the journals of ancient Friends, the other plain testimonies, the diseases caused by fashionable attire, comparisons to the earliest Christians, and even scriptural decrees in support of plain dress. But above all, these journals pointed to plain dress as antidote to fashionable dress, to the “evil of the common profaneness and pollutions of the world.”<sup>64</sup> Friend H. sorrowfully asserted in *The Friend* in 1879 that many Friends were living “under the mistaken apprehension that they could be as good Christians and dress as the people at large.”<sup>65</sup> Impassioned testimonies on behalf of plain dress filled the pages of Quaker journals from 1867 onward, and did not noticeably decrease until 1890. By the 1870s and 1880s, however, even the staunchest supporters of plainness could not deny the obvious decline of the plain dress and the powerful influence of evangelical Quakers against it. In 1880, “A Plea for the Plain Dress” declared that although

the shape of a bonnet, does not make the Quaker, and this in part is correct; for it is only in the heart that the pure belief of Friends can be felt; yet experience has shown that the most spiritually-minded and sincere Friends, have generally felt themselves called upon to wear the distinctive



dress of the Society.<sup>66</sup>

In 1886, *The Friend* reprinted an anecdote from a young woman struggling with her old-fashioned bonnet:

One young Friend told me that when under concern on account of her bonnet, she pleaded that there were others older, and holding higher positions in the church, who did not dress plainly. The answer she received was, ‘This is for a help to others;’ and so it proved, for shortly after she gave up to the requirement, the very ones that had been thus in her way, were brought out in like manner.<sup>67</sup>

These poignant worries over the bonnet mark a clear turning point. By late century, the bonnet was an optional marker of Society membership, often forgone by even the most weighty and aged Friends. Although the “most spiritually-minded and sincere Friends” might hear a calling to plain attire, the holiness influence among Friends had marked explicitly the source of that spirituality as individual, rather than communal—inward, rather than external. At the turn of the century, some Quakers even figured the bonnet as a pretentious snare. Quaker Philadelphia, like Puritan Boston, had its great ladies—marked by their Quaker bonnets—which signaled in turn their wealth, leisure, “decadence and spirituality.”<sup>68</sup>

The world was most charmed by the fashionably old-fashioned Quaker bonnet and the imagined simplicity of the Quaker costume just as Quakers themselves were finally embracing the fashions of the world. But at mid-century, both Quakers and non-Quakers alike imagined “Quaker” clothing as morally superior. The dress and bonnet implied tasteful simplicity and refinement—it could even cover a lack of real means. The Quaker bonnet was fashionable because it suggested conservatism, virtue, wealth, simplicity, taste, and stylishness—within and outside the Society of Friends. And in the mid-sixties, fashion co-opted the Quaker bonnet itself—though some grumbled at its large size and very real

discomfort—at the very moment when Quaker women were laying it aside.

#### **IV. Domestic Economy**

Mid- and late-nineteenth century representations of Quaker women often linger over the attractive “snowy lisse crape cap” and the admirable thrift evident in “not indulging in costly dress . . . but regulating all their expenses by a just and careful economy.”<sup>69</sup>

Though Quaker caps and bonnets could be figured as peculiarly fashionable, their charm also was associated with domesticity, thrift, and prudence. Quakers retained their wide and deserved reputation for wealth throughout the period, but until the 1880s, most descriptions of Friends’ dress tended to omit rich fabrics and exquisite detailing in favor of simpler, more modest representations. The apparently unchanging Quaker cap and bonnet were often figured as a labor-intensive, cost-saving measure; the caps, as described, would have required much bleaching and starching, and the bonnets were imagined as attractive, but relatively unfettered by the merciless and unrelenting dictates of fashion.<sup>70</sup>

The Quaker cap often served as a badge of wealth gained by prudent and tireless domestic thrift rather than marriage or inheritance. For example, the lovely but doomed consumptive young mother Rebecca Lloyd of Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s 1822 *New-England Tale*, lived with her husband “after the plain way of their sect; not indulging in costly dress or furniture, but regulating all their expenses by a just and careful economy.”<sup>71</sup>

Often, too, both cap and bonnet were associated strongly with mothers in the home.

Although many Quaker women at mid-century were politically and spiritually active and outspoken, Quaker women in general came to serve as a useful shorthand for the quieter domestic virtues expected of mothers. A short piece on Quaker women in the *New York Times* in 1876 pronounced that although they were “Free to exercise any exceptional gift in

public, and taking their regular share in the business of the Church, the Quaker women are profoundly domestic.”<sup>72</sup> Barry Levy argues that eighteenth century Quaker families in the colonies were, in fact, the source for the cherished domesticity promoted by many nineteenth century reformers. Throughout the late eighteenth century, he writes, “Quakers melded women’s sexuality, spirituality, and maternal authority into a novel feminine mystique that later became the model for New England advocates of domesticity.”<sup>73</sup> Quaker emphasis on the family after the reforms of the mid-eighteenth century, as well as the Society’s ancient practice of prizing the spiritual and managerial virtuosity of women, made Quaker women—and their distinctive clothing—a convenient signal for domestic peace and right feeling.

The admirable—and even fashionable—simplicity of the bonnet still made a marked contrast to the feathers and furbelows of other, more rapidly changing styles. This distinction was made striking in the illustrated poem “The Quaker Widow,” which appeared in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in October, 1860.<sup>74</sup> In the poem, Quaker Jane mourns the loss of her husband and considers her coming life in the home of her daughter Ruth, lost to the “world.” At the poem’s close, Jane reflects that Ruth’s plain speech and her loving nature are enough to keep her “a Friend at heart,” and in a prescient mood, reflects that perhaps the Quakers “lay too much weight” on “dress and outward things.” The illustration of their reunion in Ruth’s well-appointed home points out the deep difference between mother and daughter. Jane’s hoopless skirt and simple shawl are transformed into emblems of old-fashioned and motherly domesticity, in contrast to the more ostentatious fashion of her daughter. Moreover, Jane’s face is absolutely obscured by the bonnet; her features are subsumed in both her clothing and her domestic role.

For Harriet Beecher Stowe, who articulated the cap’s best-known appearance on the

head of Rachel Halliday in her 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the Quaker cap was a simple signal for both Friendly abolitionism and the peace of mother at the tended hearth. Rachel, who has offered haven to the novel's runaway slave heroine, Eliza, is first introduced to the reader by a loving description of her impeccable house, a "quiet scene" with a "floor glossy and smooth, and without a particle of dust." Stowe goes on to describe the keeper of that house as a pattern for the "beauty of old women" in an enraptured catalog of her dress and face:

She might be fifty-five or sixty; but hers was one of those faces that time seems to touch only to brighten and adorn. The snowy lisse crape cap, made after the strait Quaker pattern,—the plain white muslin handkerchief, lying in placid folds across her bosom,—the drab shawl and dress,—showed at once the community to which she belonged.<sup>75</sup>

As literary critic Gillian Brown points out, for Stowe, "right feeling" ought to order relationships between sentimental mothers and their possessions.<sup>76</sup> The "snowy" Quaker cap is one of Rachel's most important possessions, and it speaks two messages. Its first, more explicit point is to provide ready evidence of "the community to which she belonged." Here, we understand, is safe haven for Eliza and her son, signaled by the immediately apparent uniform of abolitionism in Rachel's Quaker garb. Rachel *is* just as she *appears*; for Stowe, the Quaker costume is not only good in itself, as her Christopher Crowfield later averred, but it is goodness rendered visible. And yet, the cap also signals the primary significance of Rachel's housewifery—its crisp spotlessness is the result of endless domestic labor, and both cap and kerchief "lying in placid folds" emphasize not only her sect but her sacred chores. As Gladys Lewis points out, "cabin, temple, church kitchen, sanctuary, and nursery" are combined in the Halliday's comfortable home; indeed, all these institutions are signaled by the pretty cap on Rachel's head.<sup>77</sup> The charm of Rachel's dress and cap lies in their perfect echo of her immaculate home; both hearth and cap evidence the domestic bliss of cleanliness,

so near (in the Halliday home) to godliness.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* made plain Stowe's enchantment with Quaker women, but Friends themselves were somewhat more ambivalent towards Mrs. Stowe. Studies of the novel's reception have neglected the views of the group represented as most consistently pious (and clean) in opposition to the degradation and grime wrought by slavery.<sup>78</sup> In First Month 1853, just after the "Splendid Edition" had appeared, an editorial in the Orthodox American *Friend* sighed over Quakers' abundant departures from the testimony against novel reading occasioned by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>79</sup> Under the cover of a controversy with the British *Friend* (which loudly applauded the novel's usefulness in the fight against slavery) the American *Friend* carefully instructed its transgressing readers in the potential damage wrought by novel-reading. Its editors reasoned that if Stowe's story were so useful in stirring up Quakers' feelings against slavery, Friends might well continue down that path of good intentions, ending up in the "theatres, to have their feelings against slavery roused to the highest pitch by witnessing its scenes enacted before their eyes."<sup>80</sup> The argument between *Friends* carried on for months, and provides a crucial window into Quakers' increasing and varied responses to popular culture. Clearly, Quakers were reading the novel in the face of meeting discipline, perhaps drawn by the representation of their own role in the abolitionist movement.

Despite Friendly ambivalence toward Stowe, her apparent commitment to Quaker women as consummate dressers and housekeepers continued long past the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe was fond of describing these domestic Quaker women as birds, echoing the typical characterization of Quaker drab clothing as dove-colored. In 1871's *My Wife and I; or, Harry Henderson's History*, the gay Eva Henderson encounters such a bird, a kindred

soul and another immaculate housekeeper in Quaker Ruth Baxter:

Well, this morning I saw the sweetest little dove of a Quaker woman, in a gray dress, with a pressed crape cap, moving about as quiet as a chip sparrow among the flowers. And I took quite a fancy to her, and began to think how I should make her acquaintance. . . . Well, who should open the door but the brown dove in person, looking just as pretty as a pink in her cap and drab gown. I declare . . . I'd a great mind to adopt the Quaker costume right away. It's a great deal more becoming than all our finery.<sup>81</sup>

Stowe described the same character, “my little Quaker dove, with her white wings and simple faith,” in the same manner two years later, in *We and Our Neighbors*.<sup>82</sup> Ironically, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s first encounter with a Friend was not with a charming sparrow in the garden or a mother in the home but with reformer Angelina Grimké, who visited the Beecher family in July of 1831. When they first arrived on July 13, Grimké records that their distinctive attire did not go unnoticed: “We have been quite amused to find . . . what surprise our unique appearance occasioned.”<sup>83</sup> As Stowe biographer Joan Hedrick points out, Stowe clearly showed interest in the Quakers; three days into the visit Grimké notes that “H & myself had a long talk about Friends being now left by our other companions.”<sup>84</sup> That interest and admiration later found endless and domesticated expression in Stowe’s work.

How did Friends respond at mid-century to cultural expectations of domesticity expressed by Stowe and other popular authors? As we saw in Chapter Three, Quakers were far from uniform in their responses to what Barbara Welter has called “the cult of true womanhood,” a mid-century set of cultural expectations demanding that women be pious, domestic, and pure.<sup>85</sup> Quaker women at mid-century were active within and without the Society, and insisted on their practical as well as their spiritual equality with men.<sup>86</sup> The Orthodox *Friend* ran an article series on “The Position of Women” in 1857-1858, consisting of extracts from Catharine Beecher’s “The True Remedy for the Wrongs of Woman” and

Margaret Fuller's "Woman in the Nineteenth Century."<sup>87</sup> And yet, an 1854 article from the more liberal Hicksite *Friends' Intelligencer* placed "Woman's Influence" squarely at the hearth, where it "shines out from its own quiet and retired sphere of the household life, with steady, cheering, untroubled beam, upon the dark and outer sea of public life."<sup>88</sup> At mid-century, the same bonnet shaded the faces of these "steady, cheering, untroubled" women and that of outspoken women's rights advocate Lucretia Coffin Mott—whose silk bonnet was lovingly preserved by her family, and is now on display for all comers at the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>89</sup>

## V. Seduction

Pressed and clean, the Quaker cap and bonnet were associated strongly with motherhood and domestic talents. An 1883 story in the *Lady's Book*, "Samuel Levick's Daughter," speaks of such a Quaker mother:

Such a dainty form in the plain, straight dress and fair, sweet face in the close-fitting bonnet! No wonder Samuel Levick felt a thrill of pride, which he fain would have checked, as he helped his wife and daughter into the great old-fashioned family carriage.<sup>90</sup>

As Mrs. Levick's beguiling appearance makes plain, however, these sterling qualities did little to obscure the characteristic most often attributed to the Quaker bonnet: allure. Ino Churchill's story "Those Quakers," published in the *Lady's Book* in 1874, provides a cautious glimpse into the seductive space intimated by the well-known curve of the bonnet. Churchill sets his scene in a distracting meeting house:

The service was simple to novelty, and I was interested, and amused too, I am afraid, as I intercepted sly glances from 'masculine row' drab-bonnetward. A demure little Quakeress sat by my side with a cheek like the inner fold of the pink-lipped sea-shell. Ah! young Broadbrim, thee had best beware.<sup>91</sup>

Churchill's characterization of the alluring bonnet as the cover to a lovely, modest, and small woman—accompanied by a warning to her potential admirer—was a common trope throughout the late nineteenth century, and extended well into the twentieth.

Seductive depictions of the bonnet promoted in the United States typically served as conservative correctives to rapidly changing cultural expectations about women's sexuality. The feminine Quaker costume was an attractive anachronism, a reassuring referent to an imagined and idyllic American past. Standing for both an ethnic and religious costume that was of ancient American vintage (unlike equally distinctive but recent imports) and a homespun alternative to newly available mass-produced clothing, represented Quaker bonnets in the United States carried a multivalent allure that translated easily into eroticism.

Bonnets were not the first channel for an erotic read of Friendly bodies; Quaker women and men had long endured the fetishizing gaze of a curious world. During the heady days of going naked "for a sign," this ambiguous and multivalent testimony was often misinterpreted as sexual. Inspired Friends strode naked into streets and churches to represent, respectively, the shame of worldly congregations, God's coming judgment, and a variety of other messages. Speech historian Richard Bauman observes that this ancient (and quickly abandoned) Quaker practice was an ineffective performance—it was simply too muddled a signal to be successfully interpreted and absorbed by its intended audiences.<sup>92</sup> And as Barry Levy points out, many of the earliest reactions to the Quaker reorientation of spiritual and domestic influence around the religious virtuosity of women (as well as men) expressed sexual anxieties. Images of the Quaker rake, Quaker incest, and the dangers of seducing virginal Friendly maids abounded in early English anti-Quaker tracts and cartoons. Examining similar examples of *anti-Quakeriana* on both sides of the Atlantic, Michele Lise



Tarter argues persuasively that during the dark period of persecution, the quaking testimony of female bodies became a focal point for colonial Puritans' comprehension and abuse of Friends. Colonial law ordered the first Quaker missionaries whipped; women Friends were beaten naked to the waist, their bodies "objectified and their breasts mutilated as penal retribution for their female sexuality, social deviance, and religious dissent."<sup>93</sup> In the early colonial period, the dangerous and irrepressible testimony of Quaker women's bodies became more significant for observers than their convictions or their words, and the identity of Quaker women was subsumed, for their persecutors, in the representation of their flesh.

Levy argues that once the perceived threat of Quakerism had passed, "popular Quaker images became stripped of all sinister erotic connotations. Nowadays Quaker images are exploited to sell not erotica but breakfast cereal."<sup>94</sup> The Quaker Oats man is surely the best known public Friend, as we will see in the next chapter. And although represented Quakers after the mid-eighteenth century no longer appeared to embody a potentially threatening sexuality, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a flurry of images of sensual, appealing women Friends shaded by their long poke-bonnets.<sup>95</sup>

Writing at the turn of the century, the perceptive Amelia Mott Gummere was wide awake to the romantic possibilities of the veiling bonnet. She observes that

The plain bonnet, too, has had its romance. In the days when it concealed youth and beauty, and the broad-brim had to bend, in order to see within its depths, hearts were warm and faces gay, even in sober garb; and the old story was whispered just the same in the long tunnel of the bonnet.<sup>96</sup>

Gummere clearly assumes that the bonnet had passed from the heads of lovely young women; it now concealed only age and revealed only custom. More recently, literary critic Suzanne Keen has investigated the sensuality of depicted "Quakerish" dress or "Quaker" party costumes in Victorian British novels like Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and George

Eliot's *Adam Bede*. Keen is attentive to the eroticism implied by these costumes and reads into them a host of meanings: "Quakerish dress signifies marriageability and the promise of sexual fulfillment; respectability and reassurance about class boundary-crossing; reforming tendencies; social consciousness; and a body that may be moved by the spirit to speak, to travel outside the domestic sphere, and to act on feelings of desire."<sup>97</sup>

Keen points out that although Quaker plain dress had disappeared by mid-century in England, these erotic and political messages still inhered in the Quaker party costume and the "Quaker" simplicity of heroines' severe plain clothing. She suggests, however, that depicted plain dress had different meanings in literature in the United States "in part because Nathaniel Hawthorne uses Quakers to represent the victims of the colonial Puritans' persecution."<sup>98</sup> And yet in American novels, popular short stories, and most strikingly, in popular sheet music, the eroticism of the Quaker costume and the bonnet in particular remains unmistakable, despite some fictional depictions of suffering seventeenth century Quakers. Even more surprising, this alluring bonnet typically appeared in representation on fictive American Friends, and only rarely on masquerading non-Quakers. Because plain dress persisted among American Friends for many years beyond its disappearance in England—and because, as Gummere points out, the American bonnet was far larger and more distinctive than its English counterpart, the sensual bonnet evidently carried different meanings in the United States.

By mid-century, represented American Quaker women were strikingly noticeable for their youth and understated beauty. Though they were irresistible, they were rendered unattainable by conceptions of the rule against marrying outside the meeting, which were quickly disappearing from meeting disciplines. The imagined impossibility of marriage to a

Quaker sometimes led to merry accusations of coquetry. James T. Fields wrote a little piece for the *Lady's Book* in July of 1838 remarking on the veiled loveliness of the Philadelphia Friend:

Philadelphia hath its Quakeresses! who does not love to meet  
these small primroses . . . How daintily their little feet press the sunny  
pavement! I do not care for ribbons, but those white bonnet-strings have  
bewitched me ever since I first saw a pair glistening above one of the  
most enchanting faces, - after all it might have been the face that pleased  
me so mightily, - perhaps it was, but white ribbons are taking . . .<sup>99</sup>

Though captivated with their modest charms, so “unlike your smart dashing belles,” the author takes pains to dissociate his primroses from any reputation for coquetry. His halfhearted defense ends in a backhanded compliment:

I could muster courage sufficient to splinter a lance with the ill-judging  
exquisite who once intimated that quaker women were coquettish; such a man  
ought to be turned over to the moles, or wedded to the all-accomplished  
authoress of "domestic manners." Graham bread is too good for him!  
Decent young purities! coquettish indeed; the idea of entrapping a  
dozen gilt buttons would draw a smile over many a nice little primitive phiz,  
I dare say.

In short, for Fields, Quaker women are quiet, modest, “decent” and beautiful—but veiled beneath their lovely bonnets lies a little smile, signaling a clear pleasure in their ability to trap a well turned-out man of the world.<sup>100</sup>

The author ends his rhapsody with a set of creaky verses (which, as we will see, were later set to music):

WHO loves not Quaker girls?  
I'm thinking of a fair one now,  
With tresses dark, and sunny brow, -  
All stately as a nun . . .

The pleasant smile, the artless face,  
And all the nameless traits that grace  
The simple bonnet's tie . . .

Fields's poetry draws attention to some of the most persistent qualities of the seductive Quaker. In his verse, the veiled Friend is fair, but "stately as a nun"—she is an erotic woman religious.<sup>101</sup> Her bonnet shades a visibly pious person, rendered immediately recognizable by her distinctive garb. As Tracy Fessenden points out, the veil—both literal and figurative—was a crucial component of many Protestants' deeply sexualized interpretations of cloistered Catholic women.<sup>102</sup> The bonnet was occasionally specifically compared to the vows of the woman religious; in Mrs. J.L. Hallowell's 1872 "A Quaker Woman," she asserts that

'Putting on the plain bonnet,' which is the Quaker taking of the veil, means for married or single a more rigid consecration to the aims of the sect.<sup>103</sup>

In Fields's verse, this sensuality—hemmed in not by a fearsome and distant Church but by the homelier restrictions of modesty, family, and simplicity—is benignly arousing rather than threatening. Moreover, the bonnet, smile, eye, and "artless face" combine to render represented Quaker girls, like their fictional Catholic sisters, all alike and interchangeable. Though the verses conclude with the author's memory of escorting home one of these fair Friends under the shelter of his umbrella, one Quaker girl, it seems, will do just as well as another. It is the veil that lends charm to her face—the bonnet marks a hedge around her sensuality.

Like Fields's primroses, the bodies of Quaker women were typically depicted as small, and the deep tunnel of the bonnet had the happy consequence of covering their faces and drawing attention instead to their tempting forms. 1847's "Some Changes," also published in the *Lady's Book*, finds the worldly John Marlow enraptured with a faithful but ordinary Quaker maiden, Sarah True. Sarah's ever-present bonnet is a signal of her domestic aptitude—she wears it while completing humble chores, which leads him to first mistake her

for a servant-girl. Moreover, the bonnet's neatness made Sarah a stark "contrast" to most of the girls John knew, and carried the additional benefit of lending loveliness to an otherwise plain face. John spies her from the men's side of the meeting house (a space as "little" and adorable as his future bride):

sat John Marlow in a little Quaker meeting house . . . with whole rows of broad-brims in senatorial gravity elevated before him, and with sly glances, the visual consciousness of a neat straw bonnet, with clean white strings tied beneath a not beautiful, but clear, bright-looking face on the other side of a partition. . . John thought of some of his intimates at the club—could they see him in a Quaker meeting!<sup>104</sup>

Likewise, *The New England Magazine* published in 1891 David Buffum's story of Quaker Dorothy, who glories in at least three simultaneous suitors. "Can it be that she is a flirt—this sweet, demure Quaker maiden?" asks the narrator. The answer seems to be yes, and her most ardent suitor, Friend Peter, ruins his life pining for her. Reunited after fifteen years, Peter attends the old meeting house to see an indifferent Dorothy:

Her face is hidden by the Quaker bonnet, but he would know her among a thousand. . . as with her old coquettish manner she took his hand and looked up from under the deep Quaker bonnet, for the first time in fifteen years he sees her face. It is a pretty face.<sup>105</sup>

Dorothy's obscured face renders her anonymous until she comes face to face with an interested party, a typical effect of the bonnet's shadow. Peter obviously knows her figure well, however; the depicted bonnet in this and all cases tends to deemphasize the wearer's face in favor the curves of her plainly dressed body. "The Quaker's Marriage," published in the *Lady's Book* in 1883, provides an even more explicit example of the body as focal point, when a young man spies his beloved, Ruth, at the gate, "perceiving her demure and spotless figure, for the face was hidden by the deep bonnet."<sup>106</sup>

These stories imagine the erotic effects of the bonnet's deep brim on Quaker women's interactions with men. In these examples, the shade of the bonnet forces women's gaze to appear downcast and modest; the bonnet is tipped up only for direct eye contact with a taller (male) observer, rendering every interaction coy and engaging. Dorothy and Peter's story ends unhappily. Predictably, he becomes entangled in the Revolution and is shot as a spy; more surprisingly, he falls out of love with his modest maid. When Peter looks down into the bonnet to see Dorothy's face, he realizes with a start that his passion for her has faded in the quiet procession of his own married life. In a very real sense, he has wasted his love on what he calls an "idealized" vision of the pretty but "insipid" face veiled by the bonnet's charming tunnel.

Quaker women were usually rendered as irresistible but unattainable, hedged by the persistent public memory of the old discipline against marrying outside the meeting. Celebrations of the Quaker maid from outside the Society often spoke of an "almost" willingness to become a Friend in order to lift that bonnet and draw nearer to her otherwise unattainable beauty. Miles O'Reilly's romping erotic poem "The Quaker Coquette," published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1864, attests to such boundless affection:

. . . O past belief! the lily's leaf  
In dark relief sets off the whiteness  
Of all the breast not veiled and prest  
Beneath her collar's Quaker tightness!

And milk-white robes o'er snowier globes,  
As Roman maids are drawn by Gibbon,  
With classic taste are gently braced  
Around her waist beneath a ribbon;  
And thence unrolled in billowy fold,  
Profuse and bold—a silken torrent  
Not hide but dim each rounded limb,  
Well turned and trim and plump, I warrant!

O Quaker maid, were I more staid,  
Or you a shade less archly pious;  
If soberest suit from crown to boot  
Could chance uproot your Quaker bias!  
How gladly so in weeds of woe,  
From head to toe my frame I'd cover,  
That, in the end, the convert "friend"  
Might thus ascend—a convert lover!<sup>107</sup>

O'Reilly's willingness to become a "friend" is sparked by the restraint lent by his Quaker's confining, veiling clothing. "The Quaker Coquette" exemplifies the unattainable (and so all the more desirable) nature of the Quaker maid. Here clothing acceptable in the eyes of the church—drab, unornamented, and concealing—makes a perfect marriage with alluring clothing figured by men on the body of this anonymous "Quaker maid."<sup>108</sup>

Though she was everywhere in verse and fiction, nowhere was the seductive, shaded Quaker woman more celebrated than in the popular music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although—as music historian Nicholas Tawa points out—God had disappeared from popular song in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Quakers remained persistent characters in romantic and comic songs up through the 1920s.<sup>109</sup> The sect's tuneful and distinctive name was one recommendation. Songwriters often took advantage of *Quaker's* happy consonance with *quaint*, *quiet*, and *Queen*; the word easily rhymes, too, suggesting "shaker" and "never forsake her." The rhyme with "her" is put to good use—Quaker women are the sensual focus of all these songs.

One of the earliest examples of such music uses Quaker garb to visibly mark its wearer as an American of long standing, an alluring and vague representative of America's Protestant past in full plain dress. Fields's *Lady's Book* verse was set to music for the piano by J.C. Beckel and published under the title "The Quaker Girls" by T.C. Andrews in 1851.<sup>110</sup> Using almost the same words as the original poetry, the song celebrates the quiet and nun-

like allure of the Quaker woman—but also identifies her as a lovely archetype of homegrown American beauty. A sentimental parlor-song, “The Quaker Girls” conforms precisely to the model Tawa identifies for such mid-century ditties: it voices the thoughts of a single, introspective and loving male, who celebrates “the idealized woman as a native American who is pious, gentle, pure, sweet and graceful.”<sup>111</sup> As in most early “Quaker” songs, however, it is difficult to draw too close to this chaste representative of colonial days; the heroine’s virginity is perpetually protected by her clothing, a hedge around the Society signaling the impossibility of marriage with a suitor from the world.

Fields’s opening verse also plays on a popular trope—that of the ‘quiet’ Quaker woman singing—privately—like a bird. This metaphor echoes the long association between women Friends and fowl; moreover, this hint at the Quaker’s hidden love of music was a common theme in songs and stories about Quakers, and remained a subdued joke in many “Quaker” songs into the twentieth century. As Quaker music historians John Anderies and Ann Upton point out, the Friends’ early horror at secular music “created a firm connection between Friends and anti-music sentiments within popular culture and the Society of Friends themselves.”<sup>112</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Quakers were widely (and in many cases, correctly) assumed to maintain a rigid distance from the popular music which found them to be such fascinating and sensual figures. When a song’s lyrics were intended to be sung from the perspective of a Quaker woman, or when they imagined a Quaker woman singing, crossing *that* boundary around the meeting implied a promise of future transgressions.

Popular songs also used Quaker women to comment on new behaviors, such as the postwar craze for couples dancing. The 1873 duet “The Dancing Quakers” was much more



upbeat and suggestive than “The Quaker Girls,” following general trends in popular music. The song plays on the stereotype of the sober Friend; it begins with the musical direction “very slow” but ends in a lively couples dance:

HE: O, we’re plain and sober folks as you may see,  
With the world we’ve naught at all to do! . . .  
BOTH: O, the very modest things for us suffice,  
As for dancing, Oh, it’s naughty but it’s nice.  
Yet I’d like to shake a toe my dear,  
Yea, verily dear!  
Yea verily dear!  
O, I’d like to dance with you my dear,  
For it’s naughty, yes it’s naughty but it’s nice!<sup>113</sup>

The song’s lyrics evidence anxiety about the sexually charged postbellum transition from contra dancing, in which men and women did not enjoy sustained physical contact, into the dances for pairs which became ever more popular after the war.<sup>114</sup> After only a little hesitation, these Quakers promptly sanction such dancing, with an anachronistic, old-fashioned and almost biblical “verily,” still attributed to the Quaker lexicon. The lyrics cleverly appropriate the spiritual language and religious experience of Friends to legitimate such a dance:

HE: When the spirit moveth us what can we do?  
We must only willingly obey!

Before the century’s end, ever more risqué “Quaker” songs sometimes examined women of the world against the example of maidens within the Society of Friends. George Kanski’s 1878 “The Quaker’s Courtship” outlined the troubles a Quaker man might encounter when attempting to stray outside the fold for a bride. The male part is directed to sing in a “slow and deliberate manner;” the worldly female part is more upbeat and “snappish,” in implied contrast to the more demure partners available within the Society. The Quaker man sighs in response to his cold lady:

HE: Must I give up my religion? Oh! Oh! Oh!  
Must I become a Presbyterian? Oh! Oh! Oh!<sup>115</sup>

Such women of the world were most dangerous, however, when they deliberately assumed the modest garb of the Society. Edgar S. Gaines's 1884 "Pretty Little Quaker" explicitly addressed and harnessed the seductive power of the Quaker bonnet and gown:

You all think I'm a Quaker, but such is not the case,  
I only wear this bonnet because it suits my face;  
This dress looks well upon me, and that's the reason why,  
The young men turn and look at me, When I am passing by!

. . . Now girls just listen to me, I'll give you some advice,  
To make the young men look at you, and think you're awful nice,  
Just get a dress and bonnet, like I wear ev'ry day,  
And all will turn and look at you, As you pass on your way!<sup>116</sup>

This masquerading Quaker is clearly aware of her bonnet's seductive power, and she spreads the gospel of plain dress to worldly women eager to attract attention. This "pretty little Quaker" was dissembling to fascinate suitors.

The dress of the "pretty little Quaker," at the time of the song's publication, would have indicated a deeply conservative Friend, resistant to the ever-widening departure from the plain style. As we have seen, by the time this song was published the Quaker bonnet in the Society of Friends was essentially a relic. In 1890, matters had deteriorated so far that the Orthodox *Friend* had retrenched its campaign on behalf of plainness and was reduced to quoting Elizabeth Stuart Phelps on the scandalous "Decollete dress."<sup>117</sup> By 1894, Gurneyite Quaker minister and peace advocate Benjamin Franklin Trueblood had proclaimed that plain dress was already a matter of history. "The forms of the past," he observed, "are considered as no longer of any binding force. It is now conceded that personal taste and preference in such matters should have entire freedom from human restraint."<sup>118</sup>

Despite the declining fortunes of the Quaker plain dress within the Society, a new spate of music celebrating its allure was prompted by the stunning success of Lionel Monckton's 1910 English operetta *The Quaker Girl*. The operetta played at the Adelphi in London and crossed the Atlantic to the Chestnut Street Opera House in Philadelphia in 1913.<sup>119</sup> Its story follows Prudence, a sheltered English Quaker, on a jaunt to Paris—where she becomes the toast of the city, converting everyone who sees her to the Quaker fashion. She leaves the city's stylish singing:

That's the style you have to copy,  
That's the dress the men will love;  
Not the scarlet of the poppy,  
But the plumage of the dove!  
Quakerism's our religion,  
So if men should come to woo,  
Like the modest little pigeon,  
We should simply answer Coo!<sup>120</sup>

While celebrating the seductive appeal of the Quaker costume, the operetta perpetuates the theme of woman as bird and pokes fun at the sober resistance of the Friends to music; in one scene, at the sound of a far-off waltz, the stage directions indicate that all the Quakers “*on the stage hold up their hands in horror*.” But the genre demands that modest Prudence sing, and she does so—crooning about her bonnet's charm in a song entitled “Little Grey Bonnet”:

I wore a little grey bonnet,  
Lots of eyes were fasten'd upon it!  
Though they wanted to look at me,  
They couldn't peep under my bonnet, you see!  
. . . I wore a little grey bonnet,  
All the while his eyes were upon it:  
Then I found he was kissing me,  
His face had slipp'd under my bonnet, you see!

Prudence set the stage for a series of American imitators who shared suitably old-fashioned names, meek demeanors, and supposed desires to be sought behind the bonnet's

veil. The phenomenon of the tempting and silent Quaker maid translated well to the increasingly popular medium of film, and Monckton's operetta surely inspired the pretty Quakers in *The Little Quakeress* in 1912 (with Mabel Trunnelle as "Patience"), *The Quakeress* in 1913, and later, screen siren Marion Davies' "Prudence" in 1922's *Beauty's Worth*. The modest Prudence of Alfred J. Lawrence and John P. Harrington's 1911 "I Like Your Bonnet and Your Apron (and Your Little Quaker Gown)," first published in England, was clearly inspired by the Prudence of the operetta. This song, too, points to the power of the Quaker maid's dress to entrap suitors—indeed, even "almost" to convince them into the Society:

Prudence was a Quakeress, In her modest Quaker dress,  
When she went out, young men follow'd her, Much to her distress.  
Verily, the maid was shy! Verily, the maid was meek!  
Coily blushing, when a gushing Fellow thus began to speak:

"I like your apron and your bonnet and your little Quaker gown,  
Your manner so demure, when your modest eyes look down,  
And, when you're walking out, on Sunday, every time I look at you,  
I almost feel I'd like to be a Quaker, too!"<sup>121</sup>

The English cover to this tune mimicked the covers to songs from *The Quaker Girl*. It featured an illustration of the kohl-eyed beauty ideal of the day, but dressed head to toe in the requisite bonnet, linen collar, and gown, looking up dreamily from a little book. In the lower corner of the cover was printed a photograph of English songbird Ethel Erskine, also wearing some costumer's fantasy Quaker bonnet, with an enormous black bow tied under her chin (Fig. 6). The American cover to the same sheet music was simpler, featuring a plain border of hearts and roses with a full length drawing of the Quaker maid in the center (Fig. 7). Though her bonnet and dress match those of her English sister, her gaze is downcast, and she

Figure 6:

“I Like Your Apron and Your Bonnet (And Your Little Quaker Gown)” (English)

John P. Harrington and Alfred J. Lawrance, “I Like your Apron and your Bonnet (And your Little Quaker Gown)” (London: B. Feldman & Co., 1911).

Courtesy Libbie Curry

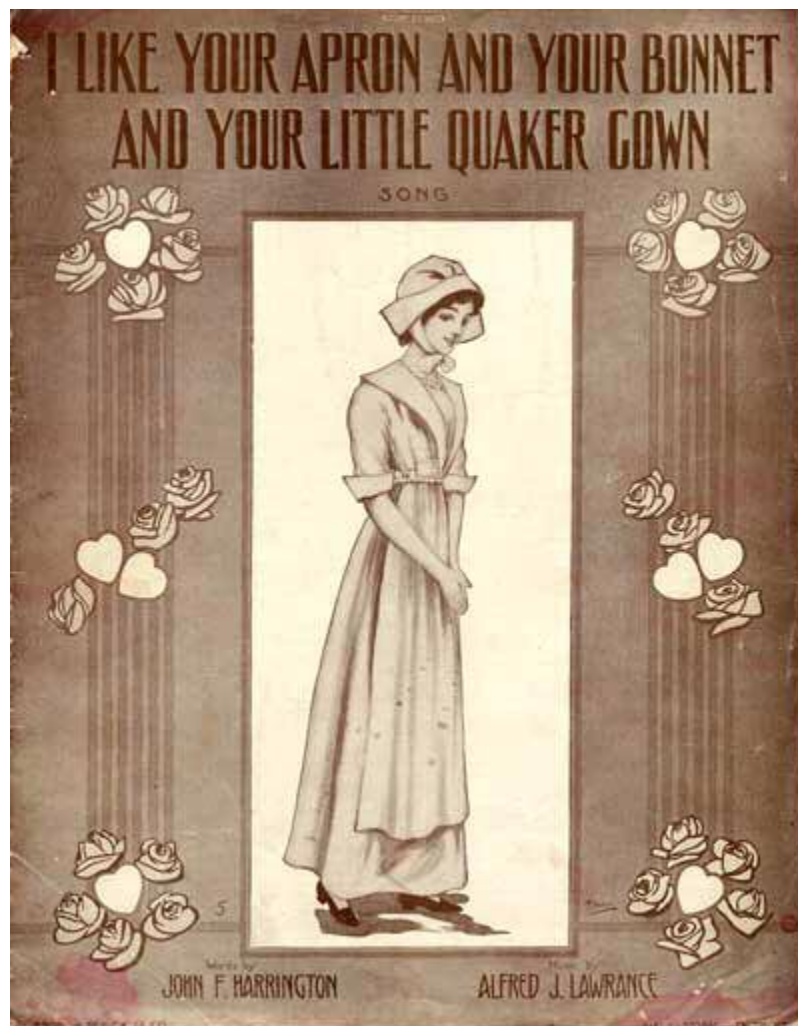


Figure 7:

“I Like Your Apron and Your Bonnet (And Your Little Quaker Gown)” (American)

John P. Harrington and Alfred J. Lawrance, “I Like your Apron and your Bonnet (And your Little Quaker Gown)” (New York and Detroit: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1911).

Courtesy John Anderies



lacks the obvious eye makeup, bee-stung lips, and insouciant curling hair of the English Quaker.

Like the shy Prudences, most homegrown American Quaker girls in song were as meek and “old-fashioned”—like their clothing—as they were desiring and desirable. Billy B. Van’s “Just a Little Quaker Girl,” also published in 1911, featured the longings of little Priscilla Lee, who plaintively (and awkwardly) trilled in plain speech,

I am a little Quaker girl as modest as can be  
Dost thou think thee could learn to love a quaint old fashioned girl like me?<sup>122</sup>

Five years later, David Berg and Alfred Solman’s “There’s a Quaker Down in Quaker Town” explicitly imagined sexual awareness in the modest covered gaze of the Quaker:

She has that “Meet me later” look,  
And oh, she knows her book,  
This little quaker down in quaker town.<sup>123</sup>

As the lyrics indicate, and like several other illustrations of Quaker women, the song cover depicts a woman clasping a small, unmarked book in silhouette (Fig. 8). A cursory glance, informed by the women’s assumed piety, might suggest they hold the Bible; in clutching the book so tightly, these Quakers might have been guardians not only of an old-fashioned ideal, but also of the new-fashioned Fundamentals of scripture. By rhyming this book with a “‘meet me later’ look,” however, Solmon suggests a volume containing a different sort of knowledge. The unnamed maiden on the song’s cover faces away from the viewer, but looks back over her shoulder to reveal a blushing cheek and full red lip under her stark white cap. Her full bosom is evident above a cinched waist, and the long line of her skirt does not conceal tiny ankles leading to feet clad in feminine shoes with outsize buckles (evidently borrowed from the Quaker Oats man himself). Like most of her fetishized sisters, this Quaker remained “little” despite shifting beauty ideals throughout the period.<sup>124</sup> She stands in

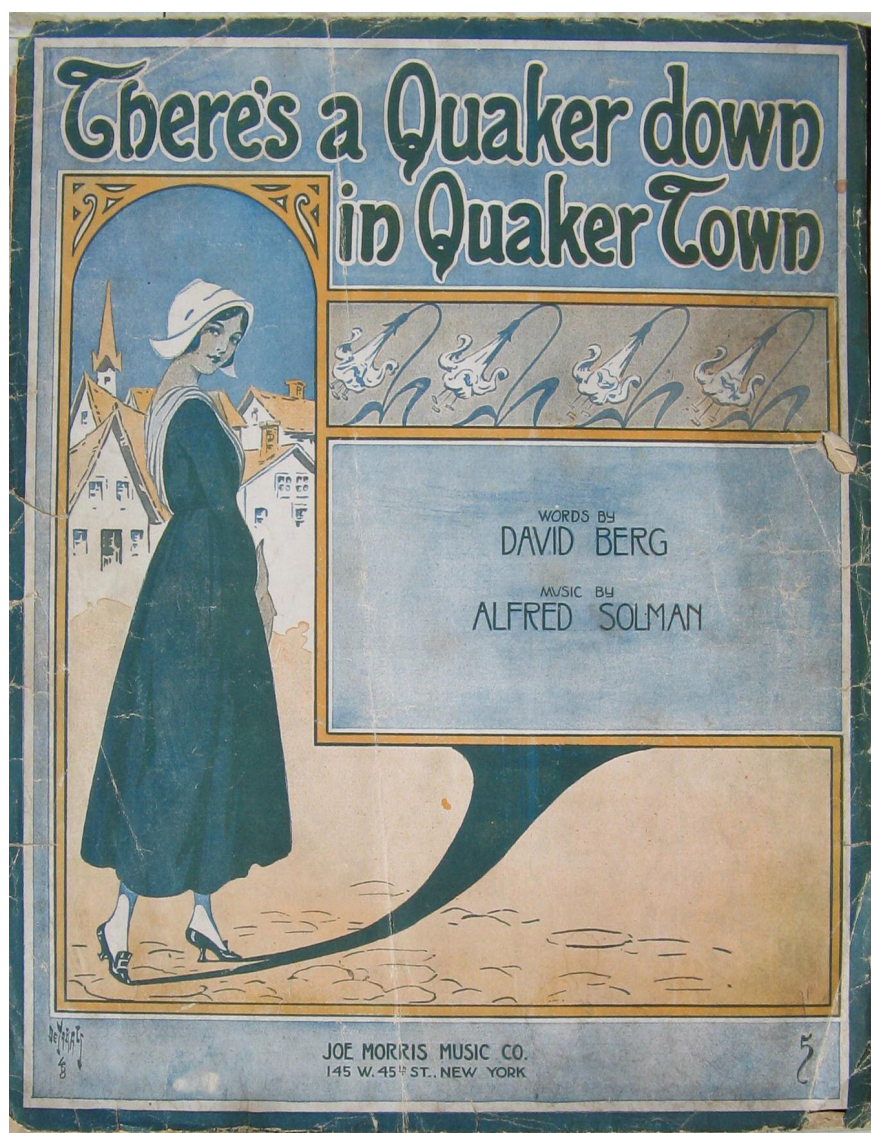


Figure 8:

“There’s a Quaker Down in Quaker Town”

David Berg and Alfred Solmon, “There’s a Quaker Down in Quaker Town” (New York: Joe Morris Music Co., 1916).

Collection of the author





silhouette against a village background featuring a prominent steeple—which, without attending to the sectarian details of an actual (steeple-less) meeting house, indicates in the broadest possible strokes her Protestant piety.

By the 1910s, the cultural memory of Quaker women's clothing, like that of the "little quaker down in quaker town," varied more widely than ever from worldly fashions. Bustles, hoop skirts, and tight lacing popular in earlier decades had long since disappeared, and the 1910s and 1920s celebrated a narrow, boyish, columnar silhouette, with very little emphasis on waist, hips, or bust.<sup>125</sup> Hats ranged in size, but retained their feathers and flowers; the bonnet had fallen out of use—for Quakers and for everyone else—decades before. Early-century song covers illustrating the ideal Quaker maid, however, typically attend to the bust and waist, emphasized either through lacing or by the tie of the common white apron. The apron, which is a regular feature of such illustrations, appears to be a fanciful indicator of domesticity or a lingering memory of the first Quaker dress distinctive—the green and blue aprons of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. And the persistent bonnet, of course, framed and covered her face—rendering her anonymous and uniform in a culture that increasingly prized the individualistic varieties of appearance available by combining store-bought fashions.

Songs about Quaker women proliferated into the twenties. As Tin Pan Alley gave way to the new craze for jazz-inspired dance tunes, the lyrics and music became even more raucous even as their heroines remained veiled and old-fashioned. Nineteen nineteen saw the publication of Bert Kalmar and Edgar Leslie's popular dance tune "All the Quakers are Shoulder Shakers (Down in Quaker Town)."<sup>126</sup> The cover of this tune featured an illustration of smiling Quaker maids—with bonnets and ankles blithely displayed—dancing in pairs with

dapper men of the world. A fair imitation of the Quaker Oats man, representing the staid past, looks on in shocked dismay. Sam Coslow and Harry and Charles Tobias's 1927 "Nay! Nay! Neighbor" for piano and ukulele continued the jolly theme with little Marie, whose gray bonnet shades charmingly anachronistic speech:

Like a girl of yesterday,  
She says "thou" and "thee" and "nay"  
In a cute old fashioned Quaker way.<sup>127</sup>

Every possible Quaker stereotype collided in 1929, with the publication of Lou Klein's "Oh! How that Quaker Knew her Oats." The cover's illustration features a lovely face boldly winking at the viewer against a muted background of shocked elders. Her bonnet's tie hangs loosely around her neck, while the bonnet itself has been shed, hanging behind her to reveal—*bobbed hair*. In this tune, Klein surmises that the fast, charming, and newly attainable Priscilla "must have gone astray" from the Quaker fold—she flirts openly with a suitor, wheedling out of him a series of expensive gifts. The lyrics make cheerful sport of the already firmly fixed association between Friends and Quaker Oats, observing in a catalog of brand associations that

Bankers know their notes,  
And Phillips Carlin knows his Mike  
And who doesn't know his Lucky Strike  
But none of them know their things like  
This Quaker knew her oats.<sup>128</sup>

One year later, religion, commercialism and sensuality were even more inextricably entangled with the publication of the sheet music to "An Armstrong Quaker Rug in Every Home: Signature Song of the Armstrong Quakers," featuring a cover photograph of the lovely and lipsticked "Armstrong Quaker Girl"—in a demure white cap—poised at the NBC microphone.<sup>129</sup>

## VI. Women Speaking

Half a century before, in her 1875 *We and Our Neighbors*, Harriet Beecher Stowe imagined that a domestic Quaker “dove,” Ruth, was visited by a “celebrated minister . . . one Sibyl Selwyn. She is as lovely as an angel in a pressed crape cap and dove-colored gown.”<sup>130</sup>

Almost certainly inspired by Stowe’s admiration of the English Quaker preacher Sibyl Jones, this Sibyl, who is “fifty or thereabouts,” enters the social circle of the novel with a compelling manner and a widely acknowledged ability to speak. Still, among her most notable charms is the beauty of her dress. Sibyl and Ruth enter a party like seraphs:

glided into the company the vision of two women in soft, dove-colored silks, with white crape kerchiefs crossed upon their breasts, and pressed crape caps bordering their faces like a transparent aureole.<sup>131</sup>

And when the party has ended, the men—most susceptible to their dresses’ charm—pronounce on the Quakers’ appearance: “‘By George,’ said Jim Fellows, ‘those two were the best dressed women in the room. That little Ruth was seductive.’”<sup>132</sup>

Stowe was hardly alone in her attentiveness to Quaker women’s dress, which often came at the expense of an interest in their words. The heady days of general interest in Quaker women preachers had faded along with Quaker influence on the public life of the new nation.<sup>133</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Quaker women were usually noticed first—and long remembered—for their charming dress and bonnets. Walt Whitman—whose precise relationship to the Society of Friends is still debated—noticed the Quaker woman’s cap first in his description of her from his best-selling 1855 *Leaves of Grass*:

Behold a woman!  
She looks out from her quaker cap . . . her face is clearer and more beautiful  
than the sky.<sup>134</sup>

Margaret Deland's more chaste poem, "The Quaker Lady," appearing in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1886, speaks to a similar restraint:

Oh, this quaint and quiet Quaker!  
Bended head would never make her  
More discreet or modester.  
. . . Still in sober dress she'll go,  
And her love of heaven will show.<sup>135</sup>

Deland's unfortunate rhyme on "Quaker" points to the bonnet's power to keep the Friendly face downcast and quiet.<sup>136</sup> In an 1845 article in the *Lady's Book* about a gathering of notable poets, John Ross Dix offered a charming description of the popular Mary Howitt:

The last personage I shall for the present notice, is Mary Howitt, who, in her prim Quaker's dress, presented a striking contrast to those around. She is a black-eyed, merry, good-humoured creature, and not without very fair pretensions to prettiness.<sup>137</sup>

The words of the women depicted in such representations became secondary to the emphasis on their attractive attire—their voices were muffled in the long tunnel of their bonnets. Quaker women usually were depicted as some appealing combination of stylishly old-fashioned, domestic, and erotic—but they were consistently imagined as quiet. The quiet colors of her clothing, her modesty, and her downcast gaze all mingled to render the represented Quaker woman as silent, anonymous, and collective. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the public's emphasis on the Quaker bonnet as a repository for honorable and attractive virtues not only quieted the Quaker woman's occasionally dangerous and outspoken witness, but also helped to fashion her place in public memory.<sup>138</sup> These representations came thick and fast at a time when most Quakers had begun to question and abandon the apparently unsuccessful witness of plain dress. Like the practice of going naked "for a sign," the late-nineteenth century witness of plain dress, so bound up in the plain but deeply distinctive, uncomfortable poke-bonnet—which, in representation,

erased individuality and utterance by obscuring the Quaker face—badly missed its intended mark. Observers took thorough advantage of the bonnet’s perceived openness to interpretation. Surely embedded in its allure was the charm of the covert, the irony of a sexual allure veiled by strait and modest clothing. It could also function as a stylish emblem of resistance to fashion and a homespun marker of admirable republican economy, as opposed to imported luxury. It might be a visible sign of religious commitment at a time when such signs were usually derided as the marks of “popery” or, at the very least, recent arrival in the United States. But among the most widespread interpretations was the cultural perception of Quaker dress as the marker of a quiet, alluring, and old-fashioned American maid. Although it would be difficult—and imprudent—to mark any of these as the most significant or widely held readings of the bonnet, it is clear that the Quaker bonnet was transformed in the popular imagination from a plain witness and a hedge around the faith to a lovely, seductive, but substantive shorthand for Quaker women themselves.<sup>139</sup>

It is likewise difficult to assess the influence that these myriad representations had on Quaker women and their feelings about plain dress. The deep influence of holiness and Gurneyite Friends certainly eroded support for the bonnet as a hedge around the Society, but it is possible that popular representations not only coincided with but also contributed to the bonnet’s demise. Friends were consistently well-acquainted with popular representations of themselves, even when those images occurred outside the material sanctioned for consumption by the Society.<sup>140</sup> Dress historians Beth Graybill and Linda B. Arthur observe that religious “dress influences the establishment and projection of identity, especially gender. Moreover, dress encourages women to internalize a prescribed set of gendered expectations for behavior.”<sup>141</sup> In the case of the Quaker bonnet, it was representations of the

bonnet that attempted to inscribe a set of feminine virtues and limitations, just as Quaker women laid their plain dress aside.

The image of the bonneted Quaker woman became a marketable commodity during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and it is no accident that her male counterpart was created and registered as a trademark in 1877. As we will see in the next chapter, the image of the Quaker Oats man always accompanied his oats. This union clearly linked Quakers' implied piety and virtues to the extraordinary packaged food product, separated out from a mass of burlap bags and made pure by the "Quaker" company. (Quaker Oats' success with the name prompted a spate of imitators, including Quaker Tires, Quaker Beer, and Old Quaker Rye Whisky.) Like the archaic garb of the Quaker Oats man, the image of the eroticized Quaker bonnet was fashioned into a saleable commodity; though her product was more ethereal than oats, it was, evidently, just as popular and satisfying. In public discourse, Quakers became a powerful selling tool. The image of the demure Quaker woman was used to sell a vision of demure, pious, and peculiarly American femininity from the late nineteenth century up through the 1930s, decades when changes in women's fashions began to reflect rapid changes in women's opportunities and boundaries. The Society's thornier beliefs of gender equality and nonresistance were blended together into a more palatable—sensually veiled—woman.

This quiet woman was explicitly American. The veil of the bonnet might well have served as a simple indicator of an American woman of unquestionable pedigree, in an era when she might otherwise have been confused with any number of plain-dressing immigrants. After all, by the 1920s, the Quaker Oats Company had developed advertisements recasting the "American" origins story with Quakers in place of pilgrims, who would have

starved but for the aid of their Indian friends.<sup>142</sup> The Quaker maid was undoubtedly a “native” American, and there seems to have been a desire to perpetuate and eroticize the shared society her American Quaker veil implied.<sup>143</sup>

The eroticism, domesticity, and fashion of the Quaker bonnet raises several questions: What, if anything, is gained and lost when religious dress and practices are co-opted for other purposes? How do the memories of abandoned religious practices persist? And how do religious groups respond to the ways they are fashioned in the public sphere? The bonnet itself indicated sensual and old-fashioned Quaker women in general, and today provides a helpful lens for understanding the ways in which public memory shapes the religious feminine in American culture. Alison Landsberg’s concept of “prosthetic memory” is helpful in illuminating the ways mass media shapes public memories of events and peoples.<sup>144</sup> The public memory of Quakers, at the turn of the twentieth century and even today, was fashioned and bound by the idea of the bonnet, by the endless proliferation of the Quaker Oats man, and by innumerable other factors beyond Friends’ control. It is inevitable that this public memory of the clothing of Quakers long gone has influenced the self-fashioning and presentation of Quaker identity from within the Society.

In May of 1893, the *New York Times* published an item titled “Where is the Quaker Maiden: She at the Hicksite Convention Wears Paris Gowns.” The article was ostensibly a report on the one hundredth Yearly Meeting of the New York Society of Friends, but the column spent much of its space mourning an absent figure:

Looking round, during the meeting, one could not help wondering what had become of the Quaker maiden; she of the gray gown and white kerchief, with decorously parted hair, down-drooping eyes, and becoming scoop. She wasn’t there at all. But in her place a young lady whose gown was made in Paris, whose hair was much becrimped and waved, and whose hat came from a Fifth Avenue milliner.<sup>145</sup>

This report evidences a clear lack of interest in the theological and social business of the meeting, overcome instead by a longing for this missing girl. At the turn of the century, the rapidly shifting culture of the United States had come to prize individuality, fashion, self-determinism, and the role of a bold new woman—but retained a hazy love affair with a woman imagined, by virtue of her covered body and face, as the potential antithesis of all these new values. This missing Quaker woman was neither a feminist nor even outspoken; she was an open and compliant symbol for pious femininity of the past. Though most Quaker women had long since replaced their bonnets with Fifth Avenue millinery, their shadowy, imagined sisters lived well into the twentieth century, quiet and alluring in their bonnets' persistent shade.



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<sup>1</sup> James T. Fields and J.C. Beckel, "The Quaker Girls." (Philadelphia: T.C. Andrews, 1851).

*Library of Congress American Memory: Music for the Nation: American*

*Sheet Music.* <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/sm1851.500250>> (25 August 2005).

<sup>2</sup> James T. Fields, "Way Marks: Written for the Lady's Book," Godey's *Lady's book* (July 1838): 34.

<sup>3</sup> "There is not so much difference between the plain and fashionable dress of the male as the female sex," observed Friend M.R. in "An Address to the Younger Members of Canada Yearly Meeting and others." *The Friend* (Ninth month 11, 1886): 45.

<sup>4</sup> As Amelia Mott Gummere points out, Quaker bonnets were "known among the irreverent as the 'coal-scuttle,' or 'sugar-scoop,' or 'stiff-pleat,'" in recognition of their peculiar shape. Gummere, *The Quaker: A Study in Costume* (New York: B. Blom., 1968, c1901), 190.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Rubinstein, *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2001), 55.

<sup>6</sup> S. Weir Mitchell, "The Quaker Lady," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 81, no. 486 (1890): 87.

<sup>7</sup> In her 1901 study of *The Quaker*, Amelia Mott Gummere approached the subject of the weighty Quaker bonnet, "already a matter of history," reverently and discreetly, with "a certain solemnity that was born of terror." Gummere, 189. Gummere's most significant contributions to the study of Quaker costume were twofold. First, she insisted that the plain dress was relevant for study; second, she asserted that historical Quaker costumes were but simpler reflections of the fashionable attire they sought to deny. Since Gummere, much work has been done on the history of Quaker religious dress. Folklorist Don Yoder and costume historian Joan Kendall have written brief analyses of Quaker plain costume and its meanings within the Society; Leanna Lee-Whitman's dissertation study of plain and gay Quaker dress as depicted in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century portraits has recovered some of the most persistent features of plain dress among wealthy Friends. Suzanne Keen has written on the implications of Quakerish dress on non-Quaker heroines in nineteenth-century English literature. Don Yoder, "Sectarian costume research in the United States," In *Forms upon the Frontier: Folklife and Folk Arts in the United States* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1969). Joan Kendall, "The Development of a Distinctive Form of Quaker Dress,"

*Costume* 19 (1985): 58-74. Leanna Lee-Whitman, "Silks and Simplicity: A Study of Quaker Dress as Depicted in Portraits, 1718-1855." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Linda B. Arthur, "Dress and the Social Control of the Body," *Religion, Dress and the Body*, ed. by Linda B. Arthur (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 1-8, 3.

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<sup>9</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, “‘A Church-going People are a Dress-loving People’: Clothes, Communication, and Religious Culture in Early America.” *Church History* (March 1989), 36-51.

<sup>10</sup> The best source for such a catalogue is Betty Jean Steele, “Quaker Characters in Selected Novels.”

<sup>11</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes*.

<sup>12</sup> For more on audiences of period songs, see Nicholas Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 8-14.

<sup>13</sup> “A Quaker Wedding,” *New York Times* (Sept. 21, 1882): 2, col. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Gummere, 189.

<sup>15</sup> Lee-Whitman, “Silks and Simplicity.”

<sup>16</sup> Suzanne Keen, “Quaker Dress, Sexuality, and the Domestication of Reform in the Victorian Novel” *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2002): 211-236.

<sup>17</sup> Schmidt, 38, n38.

<sup>18</sup> Linda B. Arthur, ed., *Religion, Dress and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 1999). Linda B. Arthur, ed., *Undressing Religion: Commitment and Conversion from a Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Joan Kendall, “The Development of a Distinctive Form of Quaker Dress.” *Costume* 19 (1985): 62.

<sup>20</sup> Nathan Joseph, *Uniforms and Nonuniforms: Communication through Clothing* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Kendall, “The Development.”

<sup>22</sup> Gummere, 214.

<sup>23</sup> Gummere, 214.

<sup>24</sup> Quaker Bonnet Eatery, 2002. <http://www.quakerbonnet.com/>. Accessed June 27, 2005. Other businesses take full advantage of the image. Quaker Maid Meats, for example, features a “Q” inset with a bonneted maid in their corporate logo. Quaker Maid Meats, <http://www.quakermaidmeats.com/>. Accessed August 17, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> “Fossilized fashion has been explained as a sudden ‘freezing’ of fashion whereby a group continues to wear a style long after it has become outmoded for the general population. This phenomenon has been explained as expressing dignity and high social status (Laver, 1969), or the group’s religious, old-fashioned, sectarian identity” (Gordon, 1986). Linda B. Arthur,

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“Dress and the Social Control of the Body,” *Religion, Dress and the Body*, ed. by Linda B. Arthur (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 1-8, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Gummere, 220.

<sup>27</sup> Gummere, 190, 200.

<sup>28</sup> Gummere, 191.

<sup>29</sup> “Evidences of Declension,” *The Friend* (12<sup>th</sup> Month 6, 1879); “Plainness and Simplicity,” *The Friend* (12<sup>th</sup> Month 12, 1885); “Mennonite Testimonies,” *The Friend* (11<sup>th</sup> Month 20, 1886); “Worldly Conformity,” *The Friend* (6<sup>th</sup> Month 16, 1888).

<sup>30</sup> “Evidences of Declension.—The *Herald of Truth* (Mennonite),” *The Friend* (12<sup>th</sup> Month 6, 1879): 131.

<sup>31</sup> For a helpful survey of nineteenth and twentieth century clothing and millinery styles, see Estelle Ansley Worrell, *American Costume: 1840-1920* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1979).

<sup>32</sup> Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 209.

<sup>33</sup> Keen, “Quaker Dress,” 224.

<sup>34</sup> Qtd. in Chuck Fager, “Beyond the Age of Amnesia: Charting the Course of 20th Century Liberal Quaker Theology,” *Quaker Theology: A Progressive Journal and Forum for Discussion and Study*. <http://quaker.org/quest/issue3-4A.html>. Accessed 1 June, 2005.

<sup>35</sup> For more on present day plain dress, see the aptly titled *Why Do They Dress that Way?* by Stephen Scott (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1986). For Paul on head covering, see I Corinthians 11:4-6 (KJV).

<sup>36</sup> Gummere, 191.

<sup>37</sup> Keen, “Quaker Dress,” 215.

<sup>38</sup> “Practical Hints Upon Dressmaking,” Godey’s *Lady’s Book* 111 (December, 1885): 618.

<sup>39</sup> Keen’s proof text is the effect of such a fancy dress costume on Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*. Keen, “Quaker Dress,” 216.

<sup>40</sup> *The Friend* (Tenth Month 11, 1873): 63-64.

<sup>41</sup> *The Friend* (Second Month 7, 1874): 199.

<sup>42</sup> “Color in Dress, Furniture, and Gardening,” Godey’s *Lady’s Book* 64 (October 1862), 367.

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<sup>43</sup> “Chitchat on Fashions for April,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 80 (April 1870): 397. “Chitchat on Fashions for August,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 82 (August 1871): 195.

<sup>44</sup> The magazine, published as it was in Philadelphia, was perhaps particularly liable to adopt such a usage.

<sup>45</sup> “Chitchat upon New York and Philadelphia Fashions for May,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 66 (May, 1863): 499.

<sup>46</sup> “Chitchat upon New York and Philadelphia Fashions for April,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 68 (April, 1864): 407. “Water-proof cloaks seem now to be a necessary article in a lady's wardrobe. They are generally made with the quaker style of hood, which can be pulled over the bonnet. They are buttoned all the way down the front with large black buttons stamped with butterflies, snakes, birds, grasshoppers, and other devices.”

<sup>47</sup> “Chitchat on Fashions for March,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 88 (March, 1874): 293.

<sup>48</sup> In the pages of Godey's, fashion was conceived at least partially as situational, rather than issuing solely from Paris (which was regarded by many Friends as the source of all fashion, a “city of harlots—that mother of abominations”). “The Despotism of Fashion,” *The Friend* (Eleventh Month 1, 1873): 81.

<sup>49</sup> “Fashion,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 18 (February, 1839): 94.

<sup>50</sup> For more on Philadelphia's Quaker “grandees,” see Frederick Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*.

<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Merrifield, “Dress as a Fine Art,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 48 (January, 1854): 25.

<sup>52</sup> “Chitchat upon New York and Philadelphia Fashions for May,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 56 (May, 1858): 479.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Crowfield [Harriet Beecher Stowe], *The Chimney-corner* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868), 224.

<sup>54</sup> Augusta de Bubna, “How Helen Got in the Papers: A Story for Girls,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 104 (March, 1882): 26.

<sup>55</sup> Joan L. Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840-1900* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995), 271.

<sup>56</sup> “Chitchat Upon New York and Philadelphia Fashions for July,” Godey's *Lady's Book* 71 (July 1865): 95.

<sup>57</sup> “Home and Foreign Gossip,” *Harper's Weekly* (October 14, 1865), 651.

<sup>58</sup> N.G., Godey's *Lady's Book* 71 (October, 1865): 365.

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<sup>59</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), xi.

<sup>60</sup> Severa, *Dressed for the Photographer*.

<sup>61</sup> “The English bonnets seem always to have had a shorter front, and a wider flare at the face; in fact, to have had a much more sensible shape, if comfort was to be considered at all, as it evidently was not in America! Nothing more dangerous could have been devised for an elderly person whose sight or hearing was somewhat defective than the long tunnel sides of the pasteboard front of a plain bonnet of the nineteenth century.” Gummere, 223.

<sup>62</sup> “Simplicity not Incompatible with True Refinement,” *Friends’ Intelligencer* 21, no. 23 (8th Month 13, 1864): 360.

<sup>63</sup> Lee-Whitman, 89.

<sup>64</sup> “Conformity to the Ways of the World,” *The Friend* (8<sup>th</sup> Month 16, 1873): 412.

<sup>65</sup> H., “Line Upon Line,” *The Friend* (9th month 6, 1879): 29.

<sup>66</sup> “A Plea for the Plain Dress,” *The Friend* (1st Month 17, 1880): 178.

<sup>67</sup> “For ‘The Friend’: An Address to the Younger Members of Canada Yearly Meeting and Others,” *The Friend* (9th month 11, 1886): 46.

<sup>68</sup> Amelia Gummere closes her exhaustive analysis of the bonnet’s history with a similar judgment: “The study we have been making shows us how contrary to the true spirit of Quakerism the technical bonnet, for instance, really is. Adopted in the days of decadence and spirituality, when life was easy, and time permitted infinite attention to details, the bonnet became literally a snare, a fetish, a sort of class distinction, at once almost as exclusive in its work as the mark on the forehead of the high caste Brahmin.” Gummere, 227.

<sup>69</sup> Written of one of the best-known Quaker women of all, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1852 Rachel Halliday. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, 1852), 196. And, too, of Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s wilting Friend Rebecca Lloyd in the *New-England Tale* of thirty years earlier. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *A New-England Tale* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 27.

<sup>70</sup> This 1873 joke from *Harper’s Weekly* points to the sensible qualities of Quaker bonnets and shawls, in contrast to the world’s flimsy attire: “A Quaker gentleman, riding in a carriage with a fashionable lady decked with a profusion of jewelry, heard her complain of the cold. Shivering in her lace bonnet and shawl as light as a cobweb, she exclaimed, ‘What shall I do to get warm?’ ‘I really don’t know,’ replied the Quaker, solemnly, ‘unless thee should put on another breast-pin!’” “Humors of the Day,” *Harper’s Weekly* (March 15, 1873): 207.

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<sup>71</sup> Sedgwick, *New England Tale*, 27.

<sup>72</sup> “Women, Quaker and Mohammedan,” *New York Times* (July 30, 1876): 4, col. 2.

<sup>73</sup> Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988), 193. “Though the domesticated female role of ‘true womanhood’ . . . did evolve during the colonial period in the Delaware Valley and in New England, it clearly first reached full and unambiguous reality by 1750 in the Delaware Valley among the wealthiest and hegemonic | rural women of one of early America’s richest urban hinterlands. New England women would later use literary and economic talents developed in a society with a more variegated social role for women to create the fiction to nationalize, sadly or not, the Quakers’ more constrained and focused female role.” Levy, 229-230.

<sup>74</sup> “The Quaker Widow,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 21, no. 125 (October, 1860): 577-580.

<sup>75</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 196.

<sup>76</sup> Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 40.

<sup>77</sup> Gladys Sherman Lewis, *Message, Messenger, Response: Puritan Forms and Cultural Reformation in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: Lanham, 1994), 69.

<sup>78</sup> For reception of the novel by various audiences, see Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1985).

<sup>79</sup> *The Friend* (1st month 29, 1853): 159-160.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>81</sup> Stowe regularly cited the austere Quaker costume as an easy means for showing up the beauty of its wearers; her Christopher Crowfield avowed in 1868 that “the flowers, fruits, grass, hay, straw, oats, butterflies, beads, birds, tinsel, streamers, jinglers, lace, bugles, crape, which seem to be appointed to form a covering for the female head . . . are such, that we really think the people who usually assemble in a Quaker meeting-house are, with their entire absence of ornament, more becomingly attired . . . . For if one considers his own impression after having seen an assemblage of women dressed in Quaker costume, he will find it to be, not of a confusion of twinkling finery, but of many fair, sweet *faces*, of charming, nice-looking *women*, and not of articles of dress.” *The Chimney-corner*, 254.

<sup>82</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *We and Our Neighbors, or, The Records of an Unfashionable Street* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1875), 50.

<sup>83</sup> Diary entry, July 10, 1831. Charles Wilbanks, ed. *Walking by Faith: The Diary of Angelina Grimke, 1828-1835* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 154.

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<sup>84</sup> Diary entry, July 16, 1831. "H & myself had a long talk about Friends being now left by our other companions." Ibid., 164.

<sup>85</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151-74.

<sup>86</sup> For more on the work of Quaker women during the nineteenth century, see "Expansion and Change" in Margaret Hope Bacon's *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

<sup>87</sup> "The Position of Women" *The Friend* 31, no. 14 (Seventh-Day, 12th Month 12, 1857): 107. This series continued on through several numbers.

<sup>88</sup> "Woman's Influence," *The Friend* 11, no.10 (5th month 27, 1854): 152.

<sup>89</sup> Division of Social History, Costume. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Behring Center. Gift of Lucretia Mott Churchill Jordan.  
[http://www.civilwar.si.edu/slavery\\_mott2.html](http://www.civilwar.si.edu/slavery_mott2.html).

<sup>90</sup> Erskine Bell, "Samuel Levick's Daughter," Godey's *Lady's Book* 106 (April, 1883): 336.

<sup>91</sup> Ino Churchill, "Those Quakers," Godey's *Lady's Book* 88 (February, 1874): 125.

<sup>92</sup> Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 91.

<sup>93</sup> Michele Lise Tarter, "Quaking in the Light: The Politics of Quaker Women's Corporeal Prophecy in the Seventeenth-Century Transatlantic World," *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001), 154.

<sup>94</sup> Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 84.

<sup>95</sup> In the last decades of its existence, the bonnet might have been figured etymologically as explicitly sexual, since its most common nickname—"poke-bonnet"—was in wide use when a similar slang term for sexual intercourse gained currency in the 1870s.

<sup>96</sup> Gummere goes on to describe the felicities prompted by the bonnet's shade: "The little street urchins were once said to have chased a beautiful Quakeress some distance down the street of one of our great cities, in order to run around in front and peep up at the lovely laughing eyes that met their admiring glances. One young bride is said to have threatened to cut a slit in the side of her bonnet, in order to be able to see her new husband when driving beside him on their way to meeting!" Gummere, 225-26.

<sup>97</sup> Keen, "Quaker Dress," 212.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 233 n15.

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<sup>99</sup> J.T. Fields, "Way Marks—Written for the *Lady's Book*," Godey's *Lady's Book* 17 (July, 1838): 34.

<sup>100</sup> Anyone who saw that smile and accused them of coquetry, however, ought to pay for his crime by marrying Fanny Trollope, the outspoken—and therefore so unlike these modest Quaker maids—author of the 1832 hit *Domestic Manners of the Americans*.

<sup>101</sup> When the verse became a song a decade later, "the modest look these *maidens* wear" was changed to "the modest look the *sisters* wear" [emphasis added].

<sup>102</sup> Tracy Fessenden, "The Convent, the Brothel, and the Protestant Woman's Sphere," *Signs* 25, no. 2 (2000): 451-478.

<sup>103</sup> Mrs. J.L. Hallowell, "A Quaker Woman," *The Atlantic Monthly* 30, no. 178 (August 1872): 224.

<sup>104</sup> "Some Changes," Godey's *Lady's Book* 35 (October 1847): 166.

<sup>105</sup> David Buffum, "The Gould Island Mystery," *The New England Magazine* 11, no. 1 (September 1891): 82-83.

<sup>106</sup> Ella T. Morley, "The Quaker's Marriage," Godey's *Lady's Book* 106 (April 1883): 350.

<sup>107</sup> Miles O'Reilly, "The Quaker Coquette," *Harper's Weekly* (October 29, 1864): 690.

<sup>108</sup> Ruth Rubinstein perceives three crucial categories of alluring images in Western European (and American) clothing: clothing marked as alluring by church authorities, by women (often seeking to circumvent religious prohibitions), and by men (particularly in the rise of twentieth-century mass culture). Ruth Rubinstein, *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture*, 2d ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 137.

<sup>109</sup> Nicholas Tawa, *The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 126.

<sup>110</sup> James T. Fields and J.C. Beckel, "The Quaker Girls" (Philadelphia: T.C. Andrews: 1851). *Library of Congress American Memory: Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music*. <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/sm1851.500250>> (25 August 2005).

<sup>111</sup> Nicholas Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans: The Parlor Song in America, 1790-1860* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980), 128-129.

<sup>112</sup> "'Sing Ye in the Spirit': Music and Quakerism in Harmony." *Haverford College Libraries, Special Collections Exhibit*. <http://www.haverford.edu/library/quakermusic/1.html>. Accessed June 2005.



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<sup>113</sup> Charles E. Pratt's 1873 "The Dancing Quakers" (with words by Harry Miller) was published for a wide audience in New York by C.H. Ditson & Co, and promoted as "sung by Miss Lydia Thompson and Mr. Harry Taylor in the Burlesque of Sinbad the Sailor."

<sup>114</sup> Jon W. Finson, *The Voices that Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 67.

<sup>115</sup> George Kanski, "The Quaker's Courtship," (n.p., Alex Forbes, 1878).

<sup>116</sup> Edgar S. Gaines, "Pretty Little Quaker" (New York: T.B. Harms, 1884).

<sup>117</sup> "The Decollete Dress" *The Friend* (9th Month 6, 1890): 46.

<sup>118</sup> Benjamin F. Trueblood, "Two Views of the New Quakerism. A Friendly Exposition of It," *The American Friend* 1, no. 4 (8<sup>th</sup> Month 9, 1894): 78-81.

<sup>119</sup> Lionel Monckton, *The Quaker Girl* (with a story by James T. Tanner and lyrics by Adrian Ross & Percy Greenbank). Anderies and Upton, <http://www.haverford.edu/library/quakermusic/3.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> John P. Harrington and Alfred J. Lawrance, "I Like your Apron and your Bonnet (And your Little Quaker Gown)" (London: B. Feldman & Co., 1911, New York and Detroit: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1911).

<sup>122</sup> Billy B. Van, "Just a Little Quaker Girl" (Detroit and New York: Jerome H.

Remick & Co., 1911).

<sup>123</sup> David Berg and Alfred Solmon, "There's a Quaker Down in Quaker Town" (New York: Joe Morris Music Co., 1916).

<sup>124</sup> Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 154.

<sup>125</sup> For a helpful index of early 20<sup>th</sup> century fashions, see Estelle Worrell's *American Costume: 1840-1920*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1979.

<sup>126</sup> Bert Kalmar, Edgar Leslie, and Pete Wendling, "All the Quakers Are Shoulder Shakers (Down in Quaker Town)" (New York: Waterson, Berlin & Snyder, 1919).

<sup>127</sup> Sam Coslow and Harry and Charles Tobias, "Nay! Nay! Neighbor" (N.p.: Villa Moret Inc., 1927).

<sup>128</sup> Lou Klein, "Oh! How that Quaker Knew Her Oats" (New York: Haviland Publishing Company, 1929).

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<sup>129</sup> “An Armstrong Quaker Rug in Every Home: Signature Song of the Armstrong Quakers,” (N.p.: Armstrong Cork Company, 1930).

<sup>130</sup> Stowe, *We and Our Neighbors*, 171-172.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>133</sup> Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 294.

<sup>134</sup> Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, New York, 1855), 85.

<sup>135</sup> Margaret Deland, “The Quaker Lady,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 73, no. 437 (October 1886): 794.

<sup>136</sup> Even the heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s popular *The Gentle Boy* is shaded by the distinctive hood. She is quiet too, silenced by the realization that her roving preaching career has left her fragile son vulnerable to abuse and fatal illness. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Gentle Boy: A Thrice Told Tale* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan & Co., 1838).

<sup>137</sup> John Ross Dix, “Prosings About Poets,” Godey’s *Lady’s Book* 31 (December 1845): 237.

<sup>138</sup> Rubinstein, *Dress Codes*, 5. In this observation, Rubinstein leans on the work of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.

<sup>139</sup> Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s *New-England Tale* speaks to the equivalence of the bonnet and Quakerism in general. When her hero, David Lloyd, seeks a new wife, he looks outside the Quaker fold—manfully resolving to marry his new love Jane in the face of the meeting if necessary. David’s tiny daughter approves the match: “Jane looks like mother, all but the cap; dost not thee think, father, Jane would look pretty in a quaker cap?” Their engagement is carried through, and Jane affirms the equivalence of the attractive cap with membership in the Society: “a few days after their engagement, Jane said to him, ‘I have a mind to improve the fatal hint of my little mischievous friend, and see how becoming I can make a “quaker cap.”’” Sedgwick, *New-England Tale*, 159, 162.

<sup>140</sup> For example, in January 1853, just after the “Splendid Edition” of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had appeared, an editorial in the *Orthodox American Friend* sighed over Quakers’ abundant departures from the testimony against novel reading occasioned by the book. *The Friend* (1<sup>st</sup> Month 29, 1853): 159-160. Its editors reasoned that if Stowe’s story were so useful in stirring up Quakers’ feelings against slavery, Friends might well continue down that path of good intentions, ending up in the “theatres, to have their feelings against slavery roused to the highest pitch by witnessing its scenes enacted before their eyes.” Clearly, Quakers were reading the novel in the face of meeting discipline, perhaps drawn by the representation of their own role in the abolitionist movement.

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<sup>141</sup> Beth Graybill and Linda B. Arthur, "The Social Control of Women's Bodies in Two Mennonite Communities," In *Religion, Dress, and the Body*, edited by Linda B.

Arthur (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 9-30,10.

<sup>142</sup> For an example of this ad series, see the Quaker Oats advertisement appearing in *The Literary Digest* (23 October 1920): 56.

<sup>143</sup> Colleen McDannell has written a persuasive and helpful account of the secrecy and society created by wearing (if not displaying) shared religious clothing in her account of Mormon garments. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), 220.

<sup>144</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004), 20.

<sup>145</sup> "Where is the Quaker Maiden: She at the Hicksite Convention Wears Paris Gowns." *New York Times* (May 29, 1893): 8.

A Quaker being asked his opinion of phrenology, replied, indignantly,  
“Friend, there can be no good in a science that compels a man to take off his hat!”

“Humors of the Day,” *Harper’s Weekly* (July 11, 1874): 583.

## CHAPTER 6

### QUAKER OATS

The breakfast table is not a peaceful place in the typical U.S. household. Though the beaming face of the Quaker Oats man grins reassuringly at consumers, filling their bowls with a widening array of products, his own early success allowed other stereotypical product trademarks to pull up a chair. Joining him at millions of breakfasts nationwide are Tropicana, the Land O' Lakes Indian maid, and—most notorious and contested of all—the smiling face of Aunt Jemima herself.<sup>1</sup> Developed in 1877 as the trademark of a small milling company in Ravenna, Ohio, the Quaker Oats man is believed to be one of the oldest advertising logos still in use, and is the best-known example of a trademark drawn from a stereotype of a religious group.<sup>2</sup> But the Quaker Oats Company purchased Aunt Jemima Mills in 1925--and thus the trademark figure who recalls the best-known religious abolitionists of the nineteenth century became the owner of the twentieth century's most ubiquitous slave.<sup>3</sup>

There are other ironies to the Quaker Oats man's existence. When the Quaker Oats man was created and registered as a trademark in 1877, the plain-dressing Broadbrim he represented had all but vanished. And yet, his image resonated with buyers then and more than a century later. He quickly became the best-known and longest-lived "Friend" in United States history. He was created to evoke and recall an honest, healthful, pure, pastoral moment in American history, and became an aggressive and ever-present marketing icon.

Henry Parson Crowell, the mastermind behind the logo's early dissemination, had the "Quaker" image and name emblazoned on both the new-fangled cardboard box as well as barns and landmarks in the United States and abroad (most notoriously on England's Dover Cliffs). He dressed up generously proportioned volunteers to appear at trade fairs and cooking demonstrations in the guise of the honest "Quaker."<sup>4</sup> Crowell successfully initiated one of the very first "brand-driven" campaigns and thereby created a trademark with enormous value, using a religious icon already invested with sought-after qualities.

In this chapter, I will track the Quaker Oats man around the country and abroad as his fame—and the new style of marketing and consumption he represented—multiplied in the earliest decades of his company's history. Through his many public appearances, I will assess the anxious relationship between historical Friends and this famous "representative," and analyze the layered meanings of the Quaker Oats man in the context of his costume, name, and constructed connections with the Society of Friends. Many scholars have noted the complex and ever more intimate relationship between advertising and religion in American life.<sup>5</sup> Advertising can be understood as the sanctification of desirable consumer goods. If advertising becomes religion, then how are consumers to interpret advertisements that lay claim to the culturally constructed values implied by a smiling sectarian? Admiring marketing and business students often have analyzed and celebrated the Quaker Oats man as one of the most successful icons in marketing history; he has yet to be considered, however, in the context of the religious group that gave him his name.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest Quaker Oats advertisements tend to perpetuate the late nineteenth century stereotype—however benign—of a static, anachronistic eighteenth century Quaker. They use that image to claim culturally constructed "Quaker" values like goodness, purity, honesty,

plainness, and robust health for their own products. “Quaker” was a name given to Friends by a derisive seventeenth-century judge; a nineteenth century corporation, on the verge of a modern marketing campaign, took it back.

### **I. Company and Campaign**

The Quaker Oats man has become the most public of all Friends.<sup>7</sup> His existence initiated an extensive system of representations and brand-associated holidays, sold under the name of a religious tradition that once had neither.<sup>8</sup> He meets present day consumers not only at the breakfast table, but also at the gas station, in the snack aisle, and on the television. The figure has been ubiquitous since his inception, and has shouldered heavy responsibilities throughout his long career.

Conceived by his creators as a referent to Friendly honesty and reliability, he was charged with spreading the three-part message of the Quaker Mill Company. The first tenet was that consumers actually needed a separate kind of food for breakfast, rather than continuing in the long American tradition of consuming leftovers from the night before.<sup>9</sup> The second was that oats were good for people and not just horses.<sup>10</sup> The third, founded on the success of the other two, was that *Quaker* Oats were the only oats worth buying. “None ‘just as good as,’” an 1894 magazine ad assures consumers; you shall have no other oats before these.<sup>11</sup> The Quaker Oats man was, in short, a hard-working evangelist, dressed in the garb of a tradition whose converting missions were long since ended. One hundred twenty-seven years later, that same Quaker Oats man is still hard at work, persuading American consumers that only his oats are the healthiest and most appealing option for breakfast.

This amiable character’s history is deeply contested. Creation of the Quaker Oats trademark is attributed to at least three different entrepreneurs: Henry Seymour, William

Heston, and Henry Parson Crowell, who assumed control of the company in 1882. Seymour and Heston founded the Quaker Mill Company in 1877 in Ravenna, Ohio. They were joined in 1882 by Crowell and in 1886 by local “oat king” Friedrich Schumacher, whose German Mills American Oatmeal Factory in Akron burned down the same year.<sup>12</sup> The name of the company was inspired by their simple trademark: a Quaker man in eighteenth century plain dress.

Both Heston and Seymour attempted to claim credit for inventing this character and product name—Heston remembered inspiration from a picture of William Penn in a Cincinnati window, and Seymour insisted that he hit upon the new logo while leafing through an encyclopedia. Still other sources attribute the encyclopedia insight to Crowell, who did not join the company until after the trademark was chosen but quickly became the most aggressive promoter of the logo.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hine speculates that Crowell “might have been inspired by the plan, announced that year, to place a colossal bronze sculpture of William Penn atop Philadelphia’s city hall.”<sup>14</sup> Company tradition (in the shape of Arthur Marquette’s celebratory history) gives the credit to Seymour, and the “figure of a man in Quaker garb” became the first trademark registered for any American breakfast food.<sup>15</sup>

This “Quaker” man, despite his ever-widening smile, was probably lonely at Quaker Oats. None of his owners were Friends (though Heston claimed Quaker ancestors), and their new company was never associated with the Religious Society. Moreover, Quaker Oats was a trademark trailblazer; the company had no well-known religious brand name models to draw on.<sup>16</sup> Quaker food and beverage entrepreneurs such as the British Cadbury family typically had avoided using their own image to promote brand recognition; such image-making was forbidden in the early part of the century by meeting discipline.<sup>17</sup> Their fellow



iconoclasts, the Shakers, had no such reservations; “Shaker Seeds,” for example, were among the few comparable trademarks, and (among other products) were actually affiliated with Shaker manufacturers.<sup>18</sup> “Shaker Salt,” which did feature the full figure of a man in the sect’s plain dress (looking much like the Quaker Oats man himself), came along later in 1893, and was clearly inspired by a play on words.<sup>19</sup>

Crowell was quick to capitalize on his unusual and valuable trademark. As soon as he bought out Stuart and Heston at Quaker Mills, he raised the price of their oatmeal product and funneled the higher profits into advertising the logo. His enthusiasm was balanced by a levelheaded understanding of the new packaged food marketplace; advertising historian Mary Ellen Podmolik observes that because of “his painstaking attention to detail and relentless pursuit of brand exposure, Crowell is considered by many to be the father of modern advertising.”<sup>20</sup> He recognized the importance of making his logo both visually consistent and widespread to build a loyal following of consumers. As Marquette and Hine point out, this zeal for promotion was stoked by a youthful promise to God. Sparing his family’s curse of early death from tuberculosis, Crowell swore to become a business success and devote more than half his profits to evangelism. Hine wryly notes that Crowell “does not appear, however, to have given money to the Religious Society of Friends.”<sup>21</sup>

Eager to spread the word, Crowell scattered the Quaker Oats man’s name and image in newspaper and magazine advertisements (beginning national magazine ad campaigns in 1882), calendars, on sample size cartons, trading cards, barn sides and fence rails, and even on the famed cliffs of Dover in 1900 (where it was removed in 1901 due to complaints from locals).<sup>22</sup> The Quaker figure even showed up in (far from silent) city congregations, printed in advertisements on the back pages of church bulletins. In the summer of 1891, Crowell

attempted to drum up demand for the product by distributing sample size cartons throughout small towns, distributed via “a special fifteen-car freight train that operated like a heavy-metal medicine show, running from Cedar Rapids, Iowa to Portland, Oregon.”<sup>23</sup> The Quaker Oats man himself came along for that ride in costume. By 1893, the company was spending the enormous sum of \$100,000 per year for print advertising alone, above the costs for other, more creative marketing novelties.<sup>24</sup>

Via the Quaker Oats man, Crowell’s ingenuity brought the public the first recipes to appear on food packages (the first was 1891’s oatmeal bread), and the first premiums (table china) to appear inside. These included premiums gave rise to the mail-in variety in 1915, a shift that invested the Quaker Oats logo with economic value for consumers, too. By removing the Quaker Oats man from the package and mailing him in, shoppers could receive valuable “gifts,” including a double-boiler for quickly cooking—what else—Quaker Oats. The Quaker Oats man continued to appear in three dimensions, with the help of stout and willing costumed spokesmen. These representatives traveled the country, touting the healthful benefits of oatmeal at the Columbian Exposition, local fairs, and cooking classes. Through Crowell’s efforts, the Quaker Oats man began to take on value and to exist in the blurry interstices between image and reality.

The Quaker icon’s increased recognition accompanied and enabled another dramatic change in the history of the American market: the end of advertising bulk commodities directly to merchants. Individual customers, when given the choice, were gradually persuaded to prefer sanitary, standardized paperboard containers rather than rely on their local merchant’s open sack and scale. The first mass-produced cardboard boxes were

developed in 1879, just in time for Quaker Oats to become the world's first packaged cereal.

Thomas Hine points out that in the mid nineteenth century,

Those who knew about [oatmeal] at all thought it was mostly for horses and a few stray Scots. Yet what was animal feed in 1870 was effectively marketed two decades later as 'a delicacy for the epicure, a nutritious dainty for the invalid, a delight to the children.' What had happened in those twenty years was alchemy through packaging.<sup>25</sup>

This shift from bulk merchandising to individual packaging made the customer, not the merchant, the target of corporate marketing.

The figure of the Quaker Oats man, printed on individually packaged oats for the first time in 1884, projected an image of wholesome honesty marketed directly to an increasingly powerful individual consumer. As trademark scholar Thomas D. Drescher explains:

Suppose . . . that certain oats are taken out of the grocer's bulk bin and packaged neatly into a canister upon which appear symbols of purity and praise for their health-giving properties. Somehow, the attributes of that symbol, and the promises of that praise attach themselves to these particular oats as distinct from those sold by the barrel. These oats now have a distinct identity conjured up by a sign which embodies all those healthy properties proclaimed by the packaging. That sign, which is so critical to the distinct identity of those oats, is the trademark, in this case QUAKER.<sup>26</sup>

Like many present day trademarks, the Quaker Oats man's value soon outstripped that of the company's tangible assets. The values his owners associated with him through text and context were clearly both desirable and enduring. Now, as then, he is not relegated (like many logos) to a corner of the box. He remains at the center of the company's promotional missions.

The Quaker Oats man quickly became a ubiquitous marketing presence like the ones consumers see today.<sup>27</sup> As Charles Goodrum and Helen Dalrymple have pointed out, the logo was the center of a "full-dress corporate entity from the start," unlike the later efforts of

breakfast champions Dr. Kellogg and C.W. Post.<sup>28</sup> Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, rural consumers had relied on traveling peddlers or their local general store to supply them with necessary and status merchandise like soap, grains, and clocks. But the Civil War forced innovations in shipping, packaging, and production to fill the needs of far-flung troops. Building on these advances, enterprising salesmen like New York peddler Benjamin Babbitt perceived that even humble necessities like soap (formerly produced at home) could gain loyal customers when individually sliced, wrapped, and stamped with an impressive and memorable logo.<sup>29</sup> As media critics Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen observe,

Babbitt—and other innovators like him—wrought massive changes in the daily life of Americans. Taking a staple of home production and turning it into an attractive marketable commodity, he established a basic principle of American marketing—masking the ordinary in the dazzle of magic.<sup>30</sup>

The Quaker Mill Company incorporated at an auspicious moment in American history. The war had forever changed patterns of consumption. Cheap printed materials permeated American homes when national periodicals entered their heyday after a 1879 Congressional reduction in magazine postal rates. These magazines were increasingly reliant on advertising for profits—advertising for patent medicines, oatmeal, fancy soaps, and more magazines. Advertising for breakfast foods thrived in this growing market of make-believe necessities, and the Quaker logo was created to evoke, provoke, and then satisfy the emotional longings of a wide variety of consumers. Mass-produced products had to assume a distinct identity and personality to compete; Quaker Mills ensured that the Quaker Oats man cut a public figure that was at once encompassing and defined, intimate and everywhere.<sup>31</sup>

Crowell's marketing strategies and his popular logo quickly put an end to competition from the company's nearest rivals, including Great Western Cereal Company's Mother's

Oats, which Quaker Oats purchased in 1911. As their names imply, both companies (and breakfast food providers generally) centered their image and promotions around a vision of nourishment and perfect health. An 1897 ad pictures the Quaker oats man in bas relief under a looming tree, accompanied by the verse:

Strong and serene, as mighty forest tree  
That braves the blast and dares the storm, is he  
Who wisely lives, and living, learns to know  
The health and strength which Quaker Oats bestow.<sup>32</sup>

In 1898, an advertisement in the Quaker publication *The American Friend* touts Quaker Oats as “ten times cheaper than meat; far healthier as an article of steady diet, and more palatable and appetizing.”<sup>33</sup>

This promotional emphasis on physical wellbeing was the centerpiece of the first Quaker Oats holiday. Unlike practicing Friends, the Quaker Oats man had no qualms about celebrating holidays, especially when they promised a profitable return on the many gifts he had given the public. In 1911, Crowell carved out and promoted the first product-centered calendar celebration: “National Quaker Oats Month,” commemorated daily by health flyers brought round with home milk deliveries.<sup>34</sup> Quaker Oats breakfast foods retain this promotional focus on health (today garnering the endorsement of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration),<sup>35</sup> even as the company’s offering of individually packaged goods expands beyond the breakfast table.

Another curious result generated by Quaker Oats and the “Quaker” name phenomenon was the sanctification of a food product in the Quaker name. From the time of George Fox, Quakers have rejected the physical elements of Christian communion—bread and wine—as superficial and unscriptural.<sup>36</sup> By choosing the “Quaker” mark, the company nominally sanctified a breakfast product with the name of the lone Christian tradition that

abstained from a food sacrament. In addition to creating icons and a holiday under the “Quaker” name, Quaker Oats borrowed the “pure” banner or sanctity already associated with the religion and tied it to a consumable food.<sup>37</sup> The image of the Quaker Oats man always accompanied the oats. This union clearly linked his implied piety and virtues to the extraordinary packaged food product, separated out from the mass of burlap bags and made pure by the “Quaker” company.

The coded values of healthfulness, sanctity, simple honesty, reliability, and economy were already embedded in the Quaker Oats man, at least for his creators. It was Crowell’s job to communicate (over and over again) those standards to a newly empowered consumer, and thereby to increase the value of the Quaker logo. Crowell and his associates at the Quaker Oats company quickly realized that they could drape the ordinary—even the unnecessary—in the antiquated clothes of an American sectarian, and invited consumers to assume for themselves the values associated with the character.

As Drescher points out, this unique sign might have confused the very earliest brand marketers, who would probably have assumed a connection between maker and mark.<sup>38</sup> Though the company made no explicit attempt to lead consumers to believe they were purchasing a Quaker-made product, the association between their logo, name, and product quickly became too strong and too successful to deny. Marketing strategist David Aaker explains that such brand names allow consumers to define and express their self-perceptions via the products they use; so, “a person may define himself or herself as . . . [c]ompetent by using Microsoft Office [or a] nurturing parent by serving Quaker Oats hot cereal.”<sup>39</sup> Clearly, Crowell and his associates realized, the Quaker was a ready-made figure already imbued with desirable and marketable values—values consumers of the period were eager to assume.

## II. “Warms Your Heart and Soul”

The appearance of the Quaker Oats man, unlike that of other trademarked logos, has changed relatively little since his initial creation. He smiles on and is troubled only inwardly (if at all) by the bitter criticisms leveled against his trademark cousins: Rastus, Aunt Jemima, Betty Crocker. Like many other images of Quakers constructed during the nineteenth century, the Quaker Oats man is a stereotypical representation of a privileged group.

The original 1877 Quaker Oats man was not too different from the portrait image consumers see today, although his earliest appearances evidence a relatively slender full-length physique and a typecast sober face. Despite his static costume, the Quaker Oats man did grow stouter, however, presumably as a mark of his robust good health. Over time, he also became more consistently cheerful.<sup>40</sup> His current ad campaign, “Something to Smile About,” is clearly inspired by his broad, invariable grin. Despite his changing expression, he has always worn a popular interpretation of the eighteenth century plain Quaker costume. If his curls signal a wig, it is a modest one.<sup>41</sup> He is clean-shaven. In 1877, his bare face would have marked him as either Quaker or simply old-fashioned; it evoked the prevailing facial hair fashion of the eighteenth century, long lost in the postwar mania for mustaches and beards.<sup>42</sup>

Despite these stereotypical markers, the Quaker Oats man resembled practicing Quakers in 1877 almost as much as he does practicing Quakers today. His distinctive “broadbrim” (a common contemporary nickname for Quakers) was a recognizable but already dated emblem, and his anachronistic knee breeches, buckled shoes, simple buttoned vest, long plain collarless coat, and collar bands were lifted straight from the era of William Penn.<sup>43</sup> Late nineteenth century Friends had discarded knee breeches, long hair, and buckled

shoes with the rest of the population, and were teetering on the verge of abandoning the distinction of plain dress altogether.<sup>44</sup>

The company's interpretation of the Quaker plain dress came at a crucial juncture in Quaker history. As Thomas Hamm points out—and as was the case with the Quaker bonnet—the growing movement of holiness and other Friends were rejecting plain garb in greater and greater numbers. “To holiness Friends,” he writes, “the plain dress no longer even served the function of separating Friends from the world, since Hicksites also wore it. Plainness, in their view, had become a source of false security for many Friends, a snare from which they had to be set free.”<sup>45</sup> Some Friends were particularly sensitive about their reputation during this period of transition. A defensive 1878 article in the Hicksite *Friends' Intelligencer* responds to an “editorial in one of the leading newspapers of Philadelphia” entitled “Decay of Quakerism:”

The tone of the article would impress its readers that the absence of the plain dress and the decrease of the membership of the Society was evidence of the decline of the testimonies of Friends. This idea has long been forced upon public sentiment.<sup>46</sup>

The author goes on to explain that the plain dress (and even membership) is incidental to the Quaker testimony. The Quaker Oats man, then, was an anachronistic reminder—for both Friends and the culture at large—of the Quaker as he might have appeared in days of yore.

In his initial appearances, the Quaker Oats man typically carries a container of the product in one hand, and always bears a plain scroll reading the single word “Pure” in the other.<sup>47</sup> This scroll served as a written guarantee of the product's purity and an echo of the man's own innocent appearance. Arthur Marquette observes that “the equation was effective; the Quaker group was admired for its frugality, thrift, neatness, orderliness, and—above all—its integrity. The Quaker label capitalized on these assets through advertising.”<sup>48</sup>



These values, like the elements of the Quaker Oats man's image, were already embedded in American imaginations and provided a simple shorthand for selling an equally virtuous product.

In its advertisements, Quaker Oats stood to benefit from placing the logo's image alongside text celebrating the virtues of the oats. After all, the Quaker Oats man was the most prominent and recognizable feature on the box itself. So, the Quaker Oats man appears in most of the earliest national magazine advertising for the product. As advertising scholar M.M. Manring observes of Aunt Jemima, "[n]o historian can say with absolute certainty why the . . . campaign worked, because the voices extant are largely those of the creators of the campaign, not the targets."<sup>49</sup> In other words, assessing the values and anxieties suggested by a nineteenth century advertising campaign (like those of any other set of historical documents) is an uncertain pastime.

It is clear, however, that the earliest Quaker Oats advertising sought to create a strong association between their product and the man in Quaker garb. He was no flat and lifeless trademark. In the first decades of Quaker magazine advertisements, the Quaker Oats man often appears as the principal pitchman. In one November 1894 ad appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly* "Contributor's Club," the Quaker Oats man himself emerges from behind a fence painted with the name of the company. Such a fence (sans the man) would have been familiar to many readers, given the company's aggressive painting, papering, and sign campaigns. In an effective bid to suggest the widespread impact of Quaker Oats, this fence advertises the company's own advertising.

In the same ad, under the company's name, the rhyming motto "healthful and wealthful" suggests the well-known Franklin aphorism by associating the new breakfast meal

with health and economy. Though the Quaker Oats man's left hand is obscured, hiding the perennial scroll, his right hand reveals the Russian nesting doll effect of many Quaker advertisements: he holds the product, which is in turn decorated with a picture of himself holding the product, and on to infinity. Even the Quaker Oats man himself has bought a box of Quaker Oats, readers might suppose.

An advertisement in *Harper's New Monthly* at Christmastime a month later and reprinted in the January 1895 *Atlantic Monthly* reveals a man similarly eager to help his customers. In this advertisement, he's emerged from behind the fence—this time, emblazoned with both the painted name and a pasted poster—onto the cobbled walk. In his haste to assist his fashionably-dressed customer he has dropped his scroll on the walk where it lies between them; and yet its motto, "Pure," is still clearly visible. His hand rests, welcoming, on the fair consumer's shoulder, as he invites her to read the advertisement on the fence and to try the product in his hand. For the targeted consumer, the suggestion is clear—imagine yourself, gentle reader, in the modish shoes of this genteel shopper. Readers might expect this Gibson style lady to react with alarm at being accosted by an ordinary man on the street; the *Quaker* Oats man, however, is clearly a non-threatening emissary of shopping goodness. The purity of both his motives (selling) and his product lie between them, inscribed on the ground. His honest costume and his packaged oats, as well as the values implied by his vague theological associations, not only protect the lady from harm but expose her to the health and value of Quaker Oats.

As printing techniques improved and the product became more well-known, the Quaker Oats man's message got bigger, artistically and ideologically. In a series of advertisements by the Paul E. Derrick ad agency, the Quaker Oats man abandoned the line

drawing for dramatic, sculpted tonal illustrations. In November of 1895, he appears in *Harper's Magazine Advertiser* standing astride the globe. Already a little stouter, he clutches his scroll and the perennial box of rolled oats as he towers into space. In this advertisement, the Quaker Oats man has conquered the world in an imperial fantasy that was repeated up through the 1920s. "Mothers of 50 Nations Voted for Quaker Oats," declared the headline of a 1922 ad in *The Saturday Evening Post*. "Mothers compared them with the oats they knew. And they selected Quaker."<sup>50</sup>

That these advertisements assumed and noisily publicized the superiority of U.S. food products is not surprising; critics have noted similar imperial images penetrating British and U.S. advertisements for all kinds of products at the turn of the century.<sup>51</sup> Here, however, consumers were presented with an imagined representation of a pacifistic sectarian standing in for U.S. global—and cereal—dominance. These images and text suggest a Quakerly (read: kindly, honest, healthful) world dominion and resonate with similar struggles to celebrate imagined American Quakers while eliding the theology (including pacifism) embedded in that cultural image.

In the years between these 1895 and 1922 advertisements, S. Weir Mitchell's briskly selling two-volume 1896 "memoir" *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker* had captivated wide audiences with the exploits of a Revolutionary-era "fighting Quaker."<sup>52</sup> The United States had engaged in two major military conflicts, and practicing Friends had formed the American Friends Service Committee in 1917 in response to widespread criticism of U.S. pacifists during World War I. Though the Quaker Oats man was never officially affiliated with the Society of Friends, his costume and his name constituted an effective attempt to bridge the

gap between imagined Quakerly principles and the aggressive and assumed superiority of the American market in general and Quaker Oats in particular.

Despite this disconnect between Quaker practice and the vision of Quaker Oats, implied connections between the Quaker Oats man and Friends became more explicit as the decades progressed. As his product line expanded, the Quaker Oats man was made to share more than just his name and costume with the Society of Friends. In 1920, Quaker Oats ran a series of magazine advertisements directed at children for their new “Quaker Quakies” cereal. These ads (as well as the box front) often feature miniature Quaker Oats men (the “Quakies”) hefting and spilling out of the cereal box. Other advertisements feature images of “Quaker” children listening at the feet of Indian storyteller “Wawa-sa-mo” while the text details an Indian “legend” about the first Quakers in America. In these tales, the imagined connection between the Quaker logo and the religious sect is no longer suggested by the circumstance of name and costume but clearly cemented.

Even more surprising, Quakers are recast in the “Wawa-sa-mo” stories as the first intrepid pilgrims, who would have starved but for the aid of their Indian friends. In an October 23 full page ad in *The Literary Digest*, the text reads:

Dear Boys and Girls: When the Quakers first came to this country there weren't any homes where they went to live, and there weren't any grocery stores from which to get food.

And before they could plant the seed they had brought with them, to raise the food they needed, the cruel winter came upon them, and the little Quaker boys and girls had not enough to eat.<sup>53</sup>

Fortunately for the starving Quakers, their “friends” the Indians brought them baskets of corn, infused with the “Three Good Spirits of Beautiful Youth” (Fig. 9). The story ends with an assurance to the child consumer of 1920: “Now we have called these same Three Good Spirits for you—called them into a new kind of corn flakes named Quaker Quakies.” Clearly

Figure 9:

Quaker Quakies advertisement

Quaker Oats advertisement, *The Literary Digest* (23 October 1920): 56.

Collection of the author, gift of Kathryn Lofton

56 *The Literary Digest* for October 23, 1920

**And this is what the *Indians* told the *Quakers* when they taught them why the *Corn* was good**

**D**EAR Boys and Girls: When the Quakers first came to this country there weren't any houses where they went to live, and there weren't any grocery stores from which to get food.

And before they could plant the seed they had brought with them, to raise the food they needed, the cruel winter came upon them, and the little Quaker boys and girls had not enough to eat.

Then the Indians, the Quakers' friends, brought them baskets of food they had never seen before—baskets of golden Indian corn.

"Into this corn," the Indians said, "we have called the Three Good Spirits of Beautiful Youth—the Spirit of Strength, the Spirit of Courage, and the Spirit of Truth.

"They will save your starving children, because into him who eats the corn, the Three Good Spirits enter and he becomes strong and brave and true."

Now we have called these same Three Good Spirits for you—called them into a new kind of corn flakes named *Quaker Quakies*.

Corn flakes made crisp and firm by Chitani-wa-ganit, Good Spirit of Strength.

Corn flakes bravely colored by Ilau-wa-ganit, Good Spirit of Courage.

Corn flakes with a sweet deliciousness given by Wula-wa-ganit, Good Spirit of Truth.

Ask your grocer for the fairy box of *Quaker Quakies* in which these Three Good Spirits dwell. Then you too, like the little Quaker boys and girls of long ago, can become strong and brave and true from these Three Good Spirits of Beautiful Youth.

*The Quaker Oats Company, 1617M Railway Exchange Bldg., Chicago, U. S. A.*

the early “Quakers” in the first advertisement were bolstered enough by the Indians’ spiritual gifts not only to survive a landscape bereft of grocery stores but also to spread the benefits of the Three Good Spirits to twentieth century children.

With the same beneficence in mind, Quaker Oats placed another advertisement in the same magazine on December 18. The ad reinforces the relationship between the earliest “Quaker” settlers and American Indians. The text is accompanied by a large three color illustration of two white children gathered in front of the wizened, cross-legged “Wawa-sa-mo;” seated by a reed woven basket, he gestures dramatically to a stretched deerskin painted with crude totems representing the Three Good Spirits of Quaker Oats. The illustration and copy, as in the other advertisement, are capped with a title—“The Adventure of Two Little Quaker Children at the Wigwam of Wawa-Sa-Mo, The Legend Maker”—inscribed on an aged brown scroll of paper.

The ad text relates yet another version of the marketing legend. “Dear Boys and Girls,” the chummy copy begins again,

We wish every one of you could have the fun that little Ben and Laura Spencer had the day their Quaker father took them to the Indian Village. For they heard old Wawa-sa-mo, the Legend Maker, tell the story of the Three Good Spirits of Beautiful Youth and watched him draw pictures of these strange gods in Indian drawing.

Ben and Laura had come to love the Indians the first winter in their new home. You see their father and all the other Quakers had not time to plow the ground and grow any food. . . . And the Indians told the Quakers if they would come to their village they would show the Quakers how to plant the corn.<sup>54</sup>

These “Quakers” continue in their role as brave and beleaguered colonists, seeking both food and entertainment from their Indian neighbors. Again, an explicit connection is constructed between these “Quaker” children and the child reader of 1920: “When mother heaps your bowl with Quaker Quakies think of the Three Good Spirits, and you too will become strong

and brave and true like little Ben and Laura and the little Indian boys and girls.” The ad copy implies that although “the fun” little Ben and Laura had at the feet of Wawa-sa-mo is clearly no longer possible, the spiritual and physical nourishment they acquired from the Indians was now available in boxes from the Quaker Oats company.

These advertisements provide dramatic examples of the twentieth-century white consumer’s desire either to “play Indian” or to consume the mystical wisdom Indians were imagined to retain.<sup>55</sup> Like the Camp Fire Girls and Boys of the same period, the primary targets of marketed Indian spirituality and culture in the “Wawa-sa-mo” series are children.

A September 25 advertisement concludes with the following recommended ritual:

Just ask your grocer for the fairy box of *Quaker Quakies* in which these Three Good Spirits dwell. And from it heap high your breakfast bowl with all their goodness. Then close your eyes and eat—and you, too, like the little Indian boys and girls of long ago will become strong and brave and true from these Three Good Spirits of Beautiful Youth.<sup>56</sup>

In this instance, the child consumers of 1920 are encouraged to develop their own Indian ritual, a kind of prayer before their “Quaker” breakfast. In each of the advertisements running monthly from September through December of that year, the “Quaker” children are placed at the foot of the ad near the illustration of the box itself—ready to consume the legend of the advertisement’s text along with a spiritually fortifying breakfast. Moreover, the fun of playing Indian does not prevent the advertisements from highlighting the unmistakable differences between the “Quaker” children and their Indian entertainers.

The “Wawa-sa-mo” ads also signal a desire to replace the Puritan/pilgrim myth of Plymouth Rock with a Friendly encounter between the earliest Quakers and the Good Spirits of America. These advertisements evidence both a clever understanding of the market and an anxiety about the genesis of that market in the beginnings of “this country.” Though early

twentieth century children inhabited a country spotted with grocery stores, they could still consume the spiritual gifts of the land. They were clad by proxy in the plain clothing (and implied virtues) of Quaker children. The relationship of practicing Friends and Indians was well-known and often celebrated. Replacing Puritans with Quakers must have made good marketing sense, not only because of the product name and the craze for all things Indian. What if, for example, Quaker Oats had developed a campaign centered around what *really* happened when “the Quakers first came to this country”? That ad campaign would have achieved at least two undesirable goals. It would have highlighted the fact that Quakers (even our Oats man) were not always celebrated, and interrogated the violence that accompanied the dream of colonial religious hegemony. Refashioning the Puritan myth through this series of advertisements casts the first pilgrim settlers—and, by proxy, the child consumers who read about them—as placid friends of the Indian, ready to receive and purchase the gifts of their new land. Moreover, these ads subtly commandeer Quaker identity along with the Quaker name, instructing the reader that the earliest American consumers were Quaker children. This switch from Puritan to Quaker helps to justify the American “Quaker” astride the globe; consumers could not only trust the honest, gentle, and true Quaker Oats man but also allow him to stand in for their imagined national origins and destiny.

As Samuel Hopkins Adams, an early critic of the new business of advertising, remarked in 1909,

They are decent and companionable myths, these folk of Ad-land; the smiling chef of Cream-of-Wheat, the frolicky Gold-Dust Twins, the gaily youthful, toothful Sozodont girl, the round-eyed chubs who fatten to bursting on Campbell’s Soups, and the hale old friend of Quaker Oats.<sup>57</sup>



In this group, the Quaker Oats man clearly serves as a steady, paternalistic and intimate figure in the motley and increasingly recognizable family of advertising characters. But the Quaker Oats man is different. By designating him a “hale old friend,” Adams unwittingly reconnects the Quaker Oats man to his theological source. Though it is impossible to know how many consumers assumed or constructed connections between Quaker Oats and Friends, it is clear that the Quaker Oats man and the campaigns he inhabited pointed to a set of signified values. These values were rooted in late nineteenth and early twentieth century popular conceptions of Quakerism, and were centered around dress, honesty, the good business practices colonial Quakers were known for. Moreover, Quaker Oats rehabilitated the evangelical, transatlantic Quaker of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and used him to signify the rightness of pilgrim progress and American global dominance.

#### **IV. Friendly Frustration**

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century American Friends began to bristle at the use of their name and imagined image, and quickly grew weary of hearing their name in conjunction with so many products and slogans. Quaker Oats’ success with the name had prompted a spate of imitators, including Quaker Tires, Quaker Beer, and Old Quaker Rye Whisky. Some imitations were just variations on the same theme—upstart rival Friends’ Oats employed a diminutive Quakeress logo whose scroll bore a message that was simultaneously more Quakerly and more aggressive than that of the Quaker Oats man: “Does Thee Eat Friends’ Oats?”<sup>58</sup> During the heyday of Quaker Oats promotion in the late 1910s and 1920s, advertisements for the product are conspicuously absent from *The American Friend*, the principal magazine for Gurneyite Friends (at that time, the largest

faction of American Quakers). Royal Baking Powder ads litter the pages, but the Quaker Oats man is nowhere to be found.

During that decade, the magazine rallied its readers to write their representatives in support of S. 666 and S. 667, H.R. 380 and H.R. 435—bills introduced in Congress to defend “Quaker” (and religious names in general) from commercial use. Though these measures ultimately failed, *The American Friend* advocated for them in multiple issues and fervently justified their complaint. An impassioned two-page article in *The American Friend*, dated First Month 13, 1916, asserts that

It needs to be said that there is no practical difference between the act of a man who would come into the home of another and steal his money, and the act of another man or firm which without consent would undertake to capitalize for private gain some quality which the man might possess. This is all the more serious, when the . . . reputation of a religious denomination is utilized for purposes of profit in the markets of the world by others.<sup>59</sup>

The author does address those who argued that “Quaker” products were “a testimonial” to Friendly honesty. “The fact that Friends have a reputation for honesty,” the writer retorts, “whether deserved or not, only serves to emphasize the robbery and usurpation of this valued and historic appellation.”<sup>60</sup>

Friends did not always find these uses of the Quaker name so objectionable. In the Second Month 3, 1898 number of *The American Friend*, a shining ad for Quaker Oats—featuring the Quaker Oats man’s face as a rising sun over the sea—appears just one page away from an advertisement for Friends Oats.<sup>61</sup> Why, then, fifteen years later, had Quaker logos become so troubling to Friends?

In a word: temperance. An anonymous 1916 “Protect the Quaker Name” editorial devotes half its space to reprinting a print advertisement for “Quaker Beer” and a photograph of an electric sign reading “Old Quaker Pure Rye Whisky.” (Both companies had capitalized

on the success of the name for Quaker Oats; Warren Corning, Old Quaker's distiller, had actually had a small stake in the earliest incarnation of the Quaker Mill Company.)<sup>62</sup> The reprinted 1917 advertisement for "Quaker Beer" read:

Quaker Beer:  
The world's best malt beverage and liquid food.  
The acme of perfection of the brewer's art.  
Made in America  
Made by Americans  
American in name  
And the Best on Earth.  
Brewed only by The Franklin Brewery (INDEPENDENT)<sup>63</sup>

This advertisement neatly achieves the signal connections suggested by so many early Quaker Oats advertisements. Naming a product "Quaker" clearly linked it to "America"—in this case, the two terms are frankly equated. Like Quaker Oats, the Franklin Brewery (itself associated with American ingenuity by its name) clearly sought to build a connection between their product and the honest, healthful and "wealthful" values borne by the image of a Quaker.

The anonymous Quaker author quickly apologizes for using these shocking images to get the reader's attention:

The only apology which we have to offer readers of the American Friend for presenting facsimiles of these offensive advertisements in a religious paper, is that in the judgment of the Friends Legislative Board of the Five Years Meeting the time has come to let Friends generally and Congress in particular know the real situation against which protest is made.<sup>64</sup>

The article blames only these alcoholic beverage brands and "Quaker Tires" by name, although the author sighs that the "entire list of articles of trade bearing the name 'Quaker' is too long to warrant publication in these columns."<sup>65</sup> A marketplace tradition begun by Quaker Oats in 1877 was clearly well-entrenched after thirty years.

A Friendly reaction (and even its delay) to this phenomenon is unsurprising. Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Friends were deeply concerned with their public reputation outside the meeting. In the decades preceding the turn of the century, *The Friends' Intelligencer* often noticed outside assessments of their society, and, like *The American Friend*, made a habit of extracting and responding to newspaper columns in which Friends were noticed.<sup>66</sup> An 1881 commentator in *The Friends' Intelligencer* observed that

It is pleasant, and not without a certain value to us, to hear ourselves kindly spoken of by critics in the great world outside our own communion; and we confess to a good degree of satisfaction in reading the remarks of the writer in "The Contributors' Club" of the *Atlantic Monthly* for Third month of this year upon a revival of Quakerism.<sup>67</sup>

As the Friendly critic of Quaker names suggests, it is possible that Friends were flattered by the association of their name with healthy and pure products. Once that name was tied to alcohol, however, Friends cringed for their good name and shuddered to think that consumers were embarking on "Quaker" spree.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the once strong associative tie between the most famous "Quaker" product and the Religious Society of Friends finally has broken for most consumers. Some contemporary consumers express surprise and confusion when reminded of the tie between the product name for Quaker Oats and the religious group.<sup>68</sup> Some present day Friends have turned the well-known associations of "Quaker" products and logos to their own purposes. Trish Edwards-Konic's letter to readers of the July/August 2001 issue of *Quaker Life* references and redeems the reputation of the "Quaker" name in the market:

For years firms have used the word Quaker to indicate honesty and integrity in business. As we enter into the 21st century, is the name Quaker still equated with integrity in the same way? What are your thoughts? This month three writers share their experience of Friendly integrity.<sup>69</sup>

Likewise, the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting still displays that handmade postcard bearing the image of the Quaker Oats man on the bulletin board by the door, recruiting Friends: “I want YOU for the Hundred Year Lamb’s War!” This postcard humorously reconfigures and repossesses a martial and a marketing image all at once.<sup>70</sup>

Most present day Quakers do, however, still register varying degrees of annoyance with the beaming man on the canister. As recently as 1990, American Friends quickly spoke out against a Quaker Oats ad campaign centered around the predictably violent (and oxymoronic) “Popeye the Quaker Man.” In one animated commercial supporting the promotion, Popeye—upon seeing Olive Oyl and baby Sweet Pea threatened by aliens from outer space—shouts “Can the spinach! I wants me instant Quaker oatmeal!” This nourishing food primes Popeye to sock the aliens; this and other punches, including one delivered to terrestrial villain Bluto, were the source of Friendly dismay over the “Popeye the Quaker Man” name.<sup>71</sup> In 1998, one Quaker web commentator bitterly objected to the product name and logo itself, urging consumers to “imagine a company today naming and marketing itself as ‘JEW FOODS – MAKERS OF THE CEREAL WITH THE JEW BOY ON THE BOX’ (!)”<sup>72</sup> Though Quaker Oats apologized and hastily halted the Popeye campaign, presumably they have no plans to change either the name or logo of their flagship product. Finally, it seems, the company has begun to monopolize both the market for breakfast oats and the Quaker name itself.

## **V. The Advertising Character in Context**

Advertising characters, despite their often bravely cheerful appearances, toil unending hours to press their products on consumers with more wants than needs. When a logo comes ready-made with a series of useful and desirable associations, the character’s job is that much

easier. Compare the images of the vaguely sinister smoking and bespectacled 1895 Mr. Bib, the Michelin “tire man,” and endearing Nipper, the RCA dog (developed in Britain in the 1890s for Victrola and trademarked in the United States in 1901). Although Mr. Bib has lost his humanizing cigar, his image has otherwise remained the same: he’s a man (good) made of tires (surprising and memorable, but peculiar). A cute dog—conveying embedded values of home, security, and joy—enraptured by a record player, however, persuades consumers to see both a good dog and “hear” a good Victrola. Victrola, and later RCA, were able to trade on the image of the dog and what his image already signified. Michelin, however, had to create a logo to signify, first, the company’s innovations in pneumatic tires. A man made of tires has, to start with, few culturally conferred characteristics outside his masculinity.

The Quaker Oats man had and retains the advantage of embedded values and is, in many respects, intimately related to other branded products which trade on the reputation or cultural memory of a person—particularly a male individual.<sup>73</sup> After all, as John Mendenhall blithely observes, “[m]en have dominated the genre of character trademarks as they have the world of business . . . Personifying wholesomeness, honesty, friendliness and strength, these trade characters have made an indelible mark on America.”<sup>74</sup> In 1878, J.D. Loomis of Suffield, Connecticut marketed “Davy Crockett Brand” cigars, branded with a serious and romantic imprint of Crockett in his ‘coonskin cap and encircled by his (probably apocryphal) motto: “Be sure you’re right then go ahead.” This trademark was clearly calculated to draw an association between the purchaser and the values of western romance and masculine intrepidity Crockett represented. Crockett was one among dozens of male logos, many of them political—in 1920, the Lincoln Paint & Color Company registered a penny-like circular logo with Lincoln’s face in profile and the unlikely motto: “Lincoln paints and varnishes.”

All these logos, though they lacked outright endorsements, communicate a strong association between the values of the figure and the values of the product.

And yet, advertising characters become more troubling when they serve as individual representatives of a group—in the case of Quaker Oats, a religious group. Quaker Oats was and remains the best example of such religious stereotyping. When relative upstart Kellogg's needed a logo for their "Rice Krispies" cereal in 1933, for example, they didn't choose a Seventh Day Adventist—a referent to the company's well-known Battle Creek beginnings. Instead they developed an imaginary, nonsectarian elf named "Snap." The only companies following in the wake of Quaker Oats' religious brand name success were making evident attempts to pilfer the mills' lucrative logo. Other companies chose ethnic or gendered stereotyped images to sell their products.

Much critical work has been done to illuminate the troubling histories of these advertising characters in American culture. Quaker Oats' own Aunt Jemima<sup>75</sup> is perhaps the most notorious and most pervasive such character; her placid smile and her patronizing name persists at the breakfast table despite episodic boycotts, questions, and protests.<sup>76</sup> M.M. Manring has described the promotions surrounding her image as attempts to market a "slave, in a box."<sup>77</sup> Her invented image (in association with the product) was shaped by racist expectations of happy servility and proscribed sexuality.<sup>78</sup> Aunt Jemima, in short, reflects and perpetuates racialized stereotypes long in place.

The persistent and fanciful advertising stories constructed around Aunt Jemima's image propped up these stereotypes. As Manring points out, the fantastical legends that accompanied Aunt Jemima's image in advertising up through the middle decades of the twentieth century cemented Aunt Jemima's expected and attributed roles. These tales, for

Manring, distinguish Aunt Jemima from other advertising characters, including Cream of Wheat's chef Rastus and the Quaker Oats Man:

There was no attempt by the makers of Cream of Wheat to create a biography for Rastus, the chef depicted on the cereal's box, and Rastus himself never spoke or, in fact, did anything in Cream of Wheat ads. There was nothing magical about his cooking ability, and his personality was unknown to buyers. No one knew where he lived or what he did there. Similarly, the Quaker on the Quaker Oats box acted only as a logo and did not engage the reader; indeed, he did not even appear in many of the company's ad campaigns. (116)

Despite Manring's appropriate attention to these very real differences in ways the characters were depicted, important questions about public consumption of advertising characters persist. As we have seen, however, the nameless Quaker Oats man did appear in person before his audiences, and both the man and stories of the Quakers do appear in the earliest ads for the product. Moreover, the Quaker Oats man does actively engage his public—inviting them to imagine and consume the purity and goodness he's been manufactured to represent.

The earliest Quaker Oats advertisements tend to perpetuate the late nineteenth century stereotype (however benign) of an eighteenth century Quaker. As advertising critic Susan Strasser writes, "Characters like the Quaker Oats Quaker, dressed for business in a bygone era, intimated a connection between new products and the presumed integrity of previous times."<sup>79</sup> Quaker Oats advertisements additionally use that image to claim culturally constructed Quaker values like goodness, purity, honesty, plainness, and robust health for their own products. Moreover, Quaker Oats advertisements achieve the dual work of refashioning the story of United States national origins and claiming these imagined Quaker values for Americans in particular and for the superiority of the United States in general. The spate of imitators spawned by the Quaker Oats name make it clear that "Quaker" was an



attractive, marketable, and desirable label in the late nineteenth century. Quaker Oats crafted an imagined “Quaker” into an aggressive and virtuous merchant American, the masculine purveyor of an honest and superior product.

## **V. The Brand**

The ubiquitous image of the Quaker Oats man clearly continues to work differently than that of Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, the Land O’ Lakes maiden, and dozens of other racist and sexist product logos. After all, like many other images of Quakers constructed during the nineteenth century, the Quaker Oats man is a stereotypical representation of a privileged group, closer at first glance to Kentucky Fried Chicken’s cartoon of Harland Sanders or even the attractive (though kitchen-bound) Betty Crocker than Aunt Jemima.<sup>80</sup> As Dotz and Morton admit, “[t]he Quaker Oats man represents a stereotype, but it is a relatively benign stereotype. Compare him to Aunt Jemima, whose origins date back to the minstrel shows of the last century. The prevalent white images of the supplicating Mammy and Uncle Tom were used as sources of ridicule by minstrel performers, both black and white.”<sup>81</sup>

It’s true—the Quaker Oats man is rosy and cheerful, and beams with health and unthreatened privilege from under his three-cornered black hat. Perhaps because of his apparent detachment from the bitter controversy surrounding his fellow trademarks, critics have studied this seemingly harmless trademark for his commercial success, but not for his constructed connections with the religious group known as Quakers. And yet, those associations were clearly suggested in the earliest advertisements for the product—and have been troubling for Friends ever since they ceased to be flattered by the appropriation of their name.

Though his image now litters the pages of marketing textbooks, Friends today continue to express their discomfort with the Quaker Oats man. This perpetually tiny but consistently vocal religious group continues to react to his persistent presence. It is worth considering the ways in which the cultural and theological impact of the Quakers has been modified or muted by the abstraction of their name and imagined image into a stout, patriotic, eighteenth-century American pitchman.

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<sup>1</sup> Tropicana is a composite name for the original company logo, “Tropic Ana,” a half-naked infantile charmer with a cheery smile, a grass skirt, and a bowl of oranges on her head. The Midwestern Land O’ Lakes Indian Maid was developed in 1928 ostensibly “because the regions of Minnesota and Wisconsin were the legendary land of Hiawatha and Minnehaha.” *Land O’ Lakes Corporate Web Site*, <http://www.landolakes.com/ourCompany/LandOLakesHistory.cfm> (May 27, 2004). For Aunt Jemima, see M.M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), and Margaret Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article, I will refer to the logo of the Quaker Oats Company as “the Quaker Oats man,” and the company as Quaker Oats (now owned by food and beverage conglomerate PepsiCo) or Quaker Mill Company, depending on the period. Most other sources (including company publications) often refer to both the logo and the company simply as “Quaker.” This usage gives rise to many ironies. For example, U.S. Army official Joel G. Holmes commented thus on the World War II conversion of a Quaker Oats facility into a munitions factory: “As I remember, . . . a bomb-loading plant was not exactly in Quaker’s line of business.” Qtd. in Arthur Marquette, *Brands, Trademarks and Good Will: The Story of the Quaker Oats Company* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 230.

<sup>3</sup> Though Manring points out that the Quaker Oats *Company* is Aunt Jemima’s “owner,” the irony of the Quaker Oats man’s own implied and imagined history gets lost in the troubling story of Aunt Jemima herself (in which the intractable Quaker Oats company is clearly the villain). Manring, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Goodrum and Helen Dalrymple, *Advertising in America: The First 200 Years* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), 58.

<sup>5</sup> See Jackson Lears for these connections and a cultural history of both advertising criticism in America and the ads themselves in *Fables of Abundance* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Media critic James Twitchell writes, in a chapter glibly entitled “American Culture Awash in a Sea of Advertising”: “Once we realize that magical thinking is at the heart of both religion and advertising, why magical symbolism and language have become such a productive approach becomes clear. Once we realize that the consumption of an object often has more to do with meaning than with use, we will appreciate the vast power of the amulets, icons, images, statues, relics, and all the assorted stuff of organized systems of transcendental barter. Advertising fetishizes objects in exactly the same manner that religion does: it ‘charms’ objects, giving them an aura of added value.” *Adcult USA* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 32.

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<sup>6</sup> For celebratory marketing analyses of the Quaker Oats man, see David A. Aaker, *Building Strong Brands* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 232-233; Mary Ellen Podmolik, "Quaker Oats Company." *Encyclopedia of Advertising*, ed. by John McDonough and the Museum of Broadcast Communications and Karen Egolf for *Advertising Age* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003), 1319-21; and, of course, the company history by Marquette.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas D. Hamm writes that "Edward Hicks (1780-1849) is, with the possible exception of the genial old man whose visage ornaments the Quaker Oats box, the most publicly visible Friend ever to live in North America." Review of *The Kingdoms of Edward Hicks* by Carolyn J. Weekley. *Quaker History: The Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 89, no. 1 (2000): 61.

<sup>8</sup> Many early Quakers supported restrictions against image- and holiday-making, especially in the first centuries of the Society's existence. Quaker minister and painter Edward Hicks wrote that "If the Christian world was in the real spirit of Christ, I do not believe there would be such a thing as a fine painter in christendom." *Memoirs of the Life and Religious Labors of Edward Hicks*, qtd. in Carolyn Weekley, "Edward Hicks: Quaker Artist and Minister," *Quaker Aesthetics*, edited by Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne Verplanck (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 219.

<sup>9</sup> See James B. Twitchell for a short description of breakfast traditions prior to the oat and cereal boom (he credits Kellogg and Post for the transition into specialized breakfast foods, but Quaker Oats preceded them by almost two decades). Twitchell, 161-62.

<sup>10</sup> The company faced not only disapproving popular opinion on oats as horse feed but also the competitive marketing of the Pettijohn company (manufacturers of wheat cereal). As Arthur Marquette describes them, 1892 ads for Pettijohn "cut into Quaker sales" and "showed a beautiful equestrienne holding a box of Pettijohn's. She stood beside a horse, its nose in a bag of oats. Caption: 'My horse eats oats.'" Marquette, 64-65.

<sup>11</sup> Quaker Oats advertisement. *Harper's Magazine Advertiser* (Christmas 1894): 140.

<sup>12</sup> Marquette, 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Hine, *The Total Package: The Evolution and Secret Meanings of Boxes, Bottles, Cans, and Tubes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 78-79. Hine also notes the similarity between the two figures: "Although there is scant facial resemblance between Crowell's package and Alexander Milne Calder's statue, it is striking that both are standing figures holding scrolls in their left hands. Calder's Penn is holding the charter of Pennsylvania; Crowell's Quaker scroll bears the word PURE. Crowell went to a stouter, friendlier-looking Quaker a few years later."

<sup>15</sup> Marquette gave the prize to Seymour, and other advertising historians have followed his lead. Marquette, 31.

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<sup>16</sup> Then, however, as now, advertising was bound up with religion. On page 82 in the June 1889 number of *Scribner's*, Henry Ward Beecher posthumously continued his endorsement of Pears' Soap. He writes (next to an engraving of his noble face), "If CLEANLINESS is next to GODLINESS, soap must be considered as a means of GRACE, and a clergyman who recommends MORAL things should be willing to recommend soap. I am told that my commendation of PEARS' Soap has opened for it a large sale in the UNITED STATES." *Scribner's Monthly* (June 1889): 82. For a full discussion of the connection between religion and packaging (trademarked and otherwise), see Hine, 37-41.

<sup>17</sup> Like other Friendly strictures, however, the rule against image-making did not stand inviolate and had begun to erode seriously by the 1870s. The famous medicine manufacturer Lydia Pinkham (of Lydia Pinkham's famous "Vegetable Compound") was a Friend. Beginning in 1879, her packaging incorporated an image of a Quakeress in plain dress; it is probable that she was inspired by the Quaker Oats man's seeming overnight success. For Lydia Pinkham's marketing techniques, see Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1984), 17-19.

<sup>18</sup> For examples of Shaker Seeds labels and a description of Shakers' entanglements with the world of business, see Stephen Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 279. Like those of the Quakers, positive Shaker attitudes toward the commodification of their name eroded over time.

<sup>19</sup> For the Crystalline Salt Company's "Shaker Salt" logo, see Hal Morgan, *Symbols of America* (New York: Viking, 1986), 237.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Ellen Podmolik, "Quaker Oats Company," 1319.

<sup>21</sup> Marquette, 28. Crowell made good on his promise: "For half a century, during which his income was impressive, he dedicated 65 percent of his earnings to Christian causes (chiefly Presbyterianism and the eclectic Protestant fundamentalism of the wide-ranging evangelist Dwight L. Moody." Hine, 78.

<sup>22</sup> Marquette, 50. Mark Frost of the Dover Museum writes that "the story has become a bit garbled over the years. Quaker Oats had a giant sign on the Western Heights, a small part of the Dover Cliffs, overlooking the harbour. It was there, with several others (although Quakers was the largest by far), in 1900/1901 and was removed due to public complaint.

In a meeting of Dover Corporation of 17 July 1900, Councillors' attention was called to the erection of large advertising boards on the cliffs behind Snargate Street. It was ordered that a report be made on who owns the property and if the signs were likely to be dangerous to passers-by or neighbouring properties.

On the 13 November 1900 the Corporation received a letter from the National Society for Checking Abuses of Public Advertising, protesting at the erection of the hoardings on the cliffs. The Corporation decided to ask the owners to remove them.

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The notices were ignored and in August 1901 the Corporation issued formal notices for the removal of all unlicensed hoardings on the cliffs. Quaker Oats Ltd. then applied retrospectively for a licence for their hoarding at the rear of 145 Snargate St. This was refused and an order was issued for its removal in September.

The hoarding had still not been removed in November 1901 and the Council sent a formal notice of legal proceedings to commence in 7 days. The hoarding was then removed.” Personal e-mail communication, July 20, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Hine, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 55.

<sup>25</sup> Hine, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas D. Drescher, “The Transformation and Evolution of Trademarks—From Signals to Symbols to Myth.” *The Trademark Reporter* 82 (1992): 322.

<sup>27</sup> Advertising critic Juliann Sivulka calls Quaker Oats “[m]arketing’s first success with brand-name, packaged goods;” the recognizable logo played a key role in the company’s success. *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), 49.

<sup>28</sup> Goodrum and Dalrymple, 57. For a detailed history of Kellogg’s efforts, see Gerald Carson, *Cornflake Crusade* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1957). For a history of breakfast cereals in general, see Scott Bruce and Bill Crawford, *Cerealizing America: The Unsweetened Story of American Breakfast Cereal* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 38.

<sup>30</sup> Ewen and Ewen, 38-39.

<sup>31</sup> As advertising characters gained distinct identities, ironically, their targets lost them. As James L. Winokur *et. al.* point out, although the delineation that defines market research possesses “a significant role in the operation of markets that have brought relative affluence, it also omits or de-emphasizes subjective, qualitative differences that would otherwise highlight an individual’s personal identity. As a result, many people feel alienated and personally powerless in the face of the powerful and impersonal marketplace that surrounds and molds us.” James L. Winokur, R. Wilson Freyeremuth, Jerome M. Organ, *Property and Lawyering* (St. Paul, Minn.: West Group, 2002), 8.

<sup>32</sup> Rptd. in Sivulka, 50.

<sup>33</sup> Quaker Oats advertisement, *The American Friend* (Second Month 3 1898): 117. An amusingly aggressive competitive ad on the same page promotes the health benefits of Franklin Mills’ Wheatlet cereal. Under a drawing of a wedding band oddly inscribed with

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the words “Married to Gluten,” the ad copy reads: “For breakfast, Wheatlet is preferable to oatmeal because Wheatlet is rich in gluten. Oatmeal is starchy. Many people cannot eat Oatmeal. Anyone can eat Wheatlet. TRY IT.” The Quaker Oats emphasis on their product’s value compared to that of meat dovetailed with a rising turn-of-the-century interest in vegetarianism in the United States. Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo, *Vegetarian America: A History* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Marquette, 83.

<sup>35</sup> The “heart-healthy” icon is becoming almost as familiar on Quaker packaging as the oats man himself. The Quaker company has centered its latest advertising campaigns on evidence that fiber from oatmeal can reduce cholesterol, claiming, “[i]n fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted the first food-specific health claim to Quaker Oats for use on oatmeal: Soluble fiber from oatmeal, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease.” *Quaker Oats Web Site*. “Quaker Oatmeal.” [http://www.quakeroats.com/qfb\\_OurBrands/BrandDetail.cfm?BrandID=5](http://www.quakeroats.com/qfb_OurBrands/BrandDetail.cfm?BrandID=5) August 30, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> “And I was to bring people off from . . . all their images and crosses, and sprinkling of infants, with all their holy days (so called) and all their vain traditions, which power was against, and in the dread and authority thereof I was moved to declare against them all, and against all that preached and not freely, as being such as had not received freely from Christ.” *Journal of George Fox* (Rev. ed. by John L. Nickalls, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1952), 36.

<sup>37</sup> Generally temperate Quakers had by default avoided the late-century wine vs. grape juice controversies ensnaring many Protestant congregations. But they were drawn into another, more public conflict when Quaker Oats’ imitators began assigning the “Quaker” name to rye whiskey and other hard liquors.

<sup>38</sup> Referencing the earliest history of trade marks, Drescher writes that “[a] Warden of the bladesmith’s guild, accustomed as he would have been to the maker’s mark, might assume that QUAKER oats were made by Quakers, but he would be mistaken.” Drescher, 323.

<sup>39</sup> Aaker, 98.

<sup>40</sup> The Quaker Oats man’s mood, while generally improving over the decades, did occasionally vary according to context. Two very similar portraits of him appear in half-page *Saturday Evening Post* advertisements in the early 1920s. The first, appearing August 5, 1922, pictures the Quaker smiling and displaying his product over the headline “Queen Oats Only” and the text:

Just rich, plump, flavory grains/ Oat lovers the world over—millions of  
them—have been won to Quaker Oats. The mothers of many nations send  
overseas to get them—to foster the love of oats. . . . You want children to  
love oats. The oat is the greatest food that grows. It has for ages held

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supreme place in the diet of the young.

The text and the smiling image complete the message addressed to mothers, a consistent one for Quaker during the period: this trustworthy, hearty, religious old fellow knows what's best for your American children—and the world's children as well. The next month's advertisement in the same magazine features a strikingly similar layout and portrait of the man—but in this image, his smile has faded to a somber expression. "Food Mistakes with growing children" intones the grim headline; "Children have small stomachs, but large food demands. . . . It is a mistake to fill such stomachs with bulky, innutritious foods. Or with incomplete foods, which in some ways leave them underfed." Lest mothers abroad make similar mistakes, the Quaker Oats man assures the reader—"Oat lovers of 50 nations—millions of them—send to get this flavor."

The Quaker Oats man's grin clearly has become one of his most recognizable features; the latest Quaker Oat tagline reads "Something to Smile About" on a banner under his smiling face.

<sup>41</sup> Wigs were contested but permitted in meeting up through the eighteenth century; though George Fox did not wear one, William Penn did. Amelia Mott Gummere, *The Quaker*, 106-115.

<sup>42</sup> For more on facial hair and late century ideals of manly beauty, see Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty*.

<sup>43</sup> "Broadbrim" was common shorthand for Quakers from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, and was popularized even further by the thrilling adventures of "Old Broadbrim" and "Young Broadbrim," the crack gunslinging detectives of Street & Smith's cheap 1884 fiction series *Old Broadbrim*.

<sup>44</sup> The Quaker Oats man underwent two dramatic redesigns in the previous century; one in 1946 by Jim Nash (who created the familiar head and shoulders portrait in a line drawing) and one in 1972 by Jim Mills for ad agency Saul Bass & Associates, bringing consumers a square, stylized blue ground with the Quaker's face highlighted in white. The scroll and knee breeches were lost along with the full-length portrait. In 1957, Haddon Sundblom fleshed out Nash's line drawing into the painted head-and-shoulders Quaker consumers know today. Morgan, 130.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988), 85.

<sup>46</sup> "The Decay of Quakerism," *Friends' Intelligencer* (Seventh Month 5, 1878): 309-310.

<sup>47</sup> Hannah Campbell, *Why Did They Name It . . . ?* (New York: Fleet Publishing Corporation, 1964), 37-40. Goodrum and Dalrymple, 57. Morgan, 130.

<sup>48</sup> Marquette, 27.



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<sup>49</sup> Manring, 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Harper's Magazine Advertiser* (November 1895): 47. *The Saturday Evening Post* (September 9, 1922): 53.

<sup>51</sup> Anne McClintock notes some of the best examples in the first chapter of her *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> "Dr. Mitchell's masterpiece was perhaps the best of the novels of its type in this period, and for a two-volume book it had a remarkable sale." Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 211.

<sup>53</sup> Quaker Oats advertisement, *The Literary Digest* (23 October 1920): 56.

<sup>54</sup> Quaker Oats advertisement, *The Literary Digest* (18 December 1920).

<sup>55</sup> For more on "playing Indian" and the consumption of American Indian culture, see Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) and Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> Quaker Quakies advertisement, *The Literary Digest* (25 September 1920): 101.

<sup>57</sup> Qtd. in Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 293.

<sup>58</sup> Hal Morgan calls Friends' Oats a "low attempt to steal the Quaker's limelight." Like the Quaker Oats man, she carried a box of her product in one hand and a parchment in the other. The Quaker Oats man's parchment was less sectarian and read, demurely, "Pure." Morgan, 130.

<sup>59</sup> "Protect the Quaker Name," *American Friend* (First Month 13, 1916): 24-25.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> The Quaker Oats ad features the now-famous man's face figured as the radiant sun rising over a sea and reads: "Quaker Oats: The Easy Food/Easy to Buy/Easy to Cook/Easy to Eat/Easy to Digest/Easily the Best Food. 'Waste Not; Want Not.' There is absolutely no waste or non-nutritive matter in Quaker Oats. In point of economy it is ten times cheaper than meat; far healthier as an article of steady diet, and more palatable and appetizing—especially for breakfast and supper. It is totally unlike all other foods in its wonderful delicacy of flavor and digestibility. When you ask for Quaker Oats see that you get Quaker Oats. At all Grocers. *Sold only in 2-lb. sealed packages. Every Package bears Quaker name and Quaker figure. ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTE.*" The Friends' Oats ad simply features a picture of the box, and reads: "Friends' Oats. Cost More To Make But Sold As Cheap as Inferior Goods. Kiln Dried Rolled Oats. Muscatine Oat Meal Co. Muscatine, Iowa." *The American Friend* (Second Month 3, 1898): 117, 119.

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<sup>62</sup> Marquette, 31-32.

<sup>63</sup> “Protect the Quaker Name,” 25.

<sup>64</sup> “Protect the Quaker Name,” 24-25.

<sup>65</sup> “Protect the Quaker Name,” 24. This lament is echoed almost a century later on the Quaker.org web site, a listing of many links related to Quakerism. The web master maintains a long list of “Quaker links totally (but *totally*) unrelated to the RSOF,” with amusing commentaries on many entries (“Quaker Oats gets its own section”). Accessible via: “The Religious Society of Friends.” <http://www.quaker.org>. Updated 4 August 2004, Accessed 9 August 2004.

<sup>66</sup> For Friendly interest in outsiders’ views, see “A Revival of Quakerism.” *Friends’ Intelligencer* 38, no. 16 (Sixth Month 4, 1881): 245-6; “The Census Report on the Friends,” *Friends’ Intelligencer and Journal* 49, no. 15 (Fourth Month 9, 1892): 225-26.

<sup>67</sup> “A Revival of Quakerism,” 245-6.

<sup>68</sup> One woman I spoke to was unaware that the brand name represented a religious group at all. Other consumers assume the Quaker Oats man is a real historical person, or are surprised when reminded of the connection between the product name and a religious group.

<sup>69</sup> Trish Edwards-Konic, “Dear Reader,” *Quaker Life* (July/August 2001): <http://www.fum.org/QL/issues/0107/>. Accessed 5 December 2004.

<sup>70</sup> Chuck Fager. “A Quaker Declaration of War.” 7<sup>th</sup> Month 30, 2003. <http://quakerhouse.org/declaration-01.htm>. Accessed 27 February 2006.

<sup>71</sup> If you have a fast internet connection and Windows Media Player, you can see this commercial online at <http://x-entertainment.com/articles/0909/>. “80s Commercials.” *X-Entertainment*. Posted 5 July 2004 by Matt. Accessed 3 August 2004.

<sup>72</sup> Jeff Palmer, “Some burning questions . . .” *QUAKER-ROOTS-L-Archives*. Posted 18 March 1998. Accessed 22 July 2004. Palmer goes on: “[No flames please! The inappropriateness and political incorrectness of that suggestion are acknowledged but are necessary to illustrate the outrage that the Quakers have been forced to accept.]”

<sup>73</sup> As Daniel Delis Hill points out, using men as marketing logos is simpler than using women, since cultural standards for female beauty evolve so rapidly. *Advertising to the American Woman: 1900-1999* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2002), 273. If men are less susceptible to the dictates of fashion and taste, a “Quaker” man—especially if assumed to be obsolete already—would possess still more staying power.

<sup>74</sup> John Mendenhall, *Character Trademarks* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990), 83.

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<sup>75</sup> The image of Aunt Jemima, like that of the Quaker Oats man, was eventually enacted by a real person: Nancy Green, born a slave in Montgomery County, Kentucky, in 1834. In 1893, Nancy Green appeared as the character at the World's Columbian Exhibition on behalf of the pancake mix, where she was crowned "Pancake Queen" and signed to a lifetime contract with the R.T. Davis Milling Company. Manring, 77-78.

<sup>76</sup> As Manring points out, journalist Cyril V. Briggs, writing in 1918, was among the first to call for a boycott of products using the "Mammy" image. Briggs writes bitterly: "Aunt Somebody or other with her midnight black, wrinkled face, thick red lips, and totally ugly and repulsive expression? And other advertisements that use the Race to represent ugliness, depravity, and subservience. You have seen them in the subway and 'L' and have burned red hot with impotent rage, no doubt." Manring, 153.

<sup>77</sup> Manring, 140.

<sup>78</sup> As Marilyn Kern-Foxworth explains, Aunt Jemima's original appearance was "totally the opposite of how white America traditionally defined beauty." Kern-Foxworth, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 118-119.

<sup>80</sup> Even Betty Crocker is aware of the troubling implications of racist logos, although her proposed solution is bizarre. In 1996, as Manring dryly points out, Betty shed her lily white skin when General Mills "used digital technology to 'morph' seventy-five women of different racial and ethnic group into a single 'super-Betty' and thus create an inoffensive image" (176). Betty did not take a similar leap into becoming transgendered; presumably, men do not possess a similar need to identify with the logo on their baking products.

<sup>81</sup> Warren Dotz and Jim Morton, *What a Character!: 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Advertising Icons* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), 9.

## EPILOGUE

“Keep the Goodness Going,” and “When Quaker’s on the Outside, There’s Goodness on the Inside” are the slogans for the current advertising campaign sponsored by Quaker Oats. The associated print and television advertisements feature a life-sized, full color statue of the Quaker Oats man holding a plate of snack foods. He is still and smiling in his colonial costume; he is hefted and toted from place to place—car to playground to school—by groups of children eager to consume his oatmeal bars.

The cultural needs and desires that made such a static and portable representative of the Religious Society of Friends possible and persistent arose early in the nineteenth century. The “Goodness on the Inside” of today’s Quaker Oats man is directly associated with the ubiquitous representations of Friends produced throughout nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. These images were particularly popular in the North, where represented Friends crossed geographic and economic boundaries, permeating dime novels, popular magazines, advertising, and music.

These images evidence a majority Protestant culture straining to define itself despite rapid religious change, increasing immigration and its answering waves of nativism, and changing roles for women. Representations of Quakers suggest a public struggling to create and perpetuate a friendly American origins story. This story was populated by charming, modest, alluring women, and brave, forbearing warriors; all these imagined Americans could be identified easily by their charming, old-fashioned attire and their biblical, aristocratic

speech. Moreover, their presence in the American landscape (and their calcifying reputation as founders) was burnished by their remembered reputation for honesty, piety, and wealth. Placed in a rural setting, these quiet created Friends allayed the anxieties of an increasingly noisy and urban age. Here was a piety and an authenticity one could see on the surface.

These created Quakers often seem attempts to answer the question: What does an authentic American look like? The Friends fashioned in popular culture were, of course, profoundly inauthentic. The outward testimonies of Hicksite, Orthodox, and other Quakers were changing rapidly, and they were becoming—at first glance—more and more like the white Protestants so charmed by their distinctive idiosyncrasies. The images of Quakers permeating popular culture point to an enduring need for the imagined simplicity and security implied by the meeting structure and the plain testimonies. These desires persist.

The images of Quakers created during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also highlight anxieties with regard to religious difference. The Quaker witness, which could be (but was not always) socially and politically transgressive, was attractive insofar as it did not contravene loyalty to the goals of the broader culture—and the self-defining nation. A little difference was charming, but too much was not to be tolerated. Images of Quakers during the period serve as a useful foil to images of Catholics, a group whose chief threat was imagined to be the result of allegiance to a religious authority abroad. Quakers divested of their reliance on the Inner Light, their pacifism, leveling speech, and gender egalitarianism—and suitably dressed in an old-fashioned costume—provided the perfect imagined remnant of a unified American Protestant piety that never existed.

Represented Quakers are not wholly peculiar in the history of American popular culture. The praises and alterations their public persona underwent in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries resonate—though they differ in scale—with conceptions about Shakers in the early twenty-first century. As Shaker historian Stephen J. Stein explains, the cultural idea of Shakers is “a national treasure”: “Once feared, hated, and persecuted, now the Shakers are darlings of American popular culture.”<sup>1</sup> Stein’s assessment of the Shakers’ place in the nation’s imagination rests on many of the same values prized in the mythology of Quakerism: simplicity and serenity, piety and quiet, rural life and a rejection of materialism. Ordinary Americans can remind themselves of these values by purchasing Shaker “artifacts” and placing them in the home. Likewise, as David Weaver-Zercher has pointed out, many Americans enjoy consuming the cultural productions of the Amish.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to say whether cultural perceptions of other religious groups will follow the same patterns of change and commodification. Latter-day Saints, for example, are no longer widely perceived as a threat to American society. Mormons no longer seek, as perhaps they once did, to provoke opposition from the broader culture<sup>3</sup>—and now Latter-day Saints, as much as any other religious group, might be classified as “All-American.”

During the period under consideration, however, there was something profoundly different about the overwhelming images of Quakers that pervaded popular culture. These represented Friends appeared in a flurry just as the Quakers who inspired them were beginning to look more and more like ‘ordinary’ Americans. Moreover, images of Quakers were extraordinarily widespread, compliant, and occasionally conflicting, representing in their turns a catalog of ‘native’ American characteristics. Represented Quakers provided a kind of Benjamin Franklin laundry list for practical and attractive virtues—it is no surprise that history began to mistake Franklin for a member of the sect. The perfectionism that charged much of the early nineteenth century religious landscape remained in the desire to

celebrate and retain an uncomplicated and attractive Quaker presence in a rapidly changing culture. Though ordinary people—and indeed, Quakers themselves—might never attain this ideal, it was crucial that it remain available.

The represented Quakers of the period effectively reduced the complex, bold, and often faltering and repressive Society witness into a set of symbols—as, of course, all images do. It is impossible to say how Quakers were challenged and changed by the symbols they became, but their persistent self-examination and reactions to popular culture indicate that they were widely aware of their constructed place in the myth of the American founding. What is gained and lost when religious people become static sketches in the minds of the public? How is the impact of the Friends Committee on National Legislation or the American Friends Service Committee changed as a result of a beaming man bearing purity and health?

As I write these words, Quakers mourn the death of Tom Fox, a member of Langley Hill Monthly Meeting in Virginia. Fox was found dead last week after months in captivity in Iraq. He was seized there as he worked to reduce violence through reconciliation as a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams. There is no danger that Quakers will cease, striving and stumbling, to work a witness in the world. But for the sake of all religious people it is crucial to consider how the needs of culture and nation shape the public face of religious practice and belief. Who will, in the end, “Keep the Goodness Going”?

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America*, 422, 423.

<sup>2</sup> David Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish in the American Imagination*.

<sup>3</sup> R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986), 31.



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