

**'ABSOLUTE AND LEGITIMATE NECESSITIES':
FEMALE QUAKER READERS IN YORK, C. 1885-1925**

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JULY 2013

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on communities of female Quaker readers in York c.1885-c.1925, and makes three interrelated arguments. In a corrective to current historiography on late-Victorian and Edwardian Quakerism – which tends to concentrate on Friends’ entrepreneurial activities, politics, reform work, and social activism – the thesis reveals that engaging with artistic culture, and more specifically literature, was an important component of the belief, identity and practice of turn-of-the-century Quakers. In so doing, the thesis challenges Marxist accounts of the rise of literary studies by demonstrating that literature came to complement rather than replace religion in late-Victorian and Edwardian society. Focussing on the reading practices of female Friends, the thesis also contends that in an era prior to female enfranchisement reading was a significant means by which women cultivated a sense of citizenship.

The introduction situates York’s female Quaker readers within the context of Quaker historiography, gender theory, and reader history, and shows how the assembled archival material can be used to develop, and problematise, these broader narratives. The subsequent chapters explore the relationship between reading, education and citizenship at the Mount School, with particular relation to the school diaries of Hannah Hodgkinson (1869-1958) and Gertrude Nicholson (1869-1955); reveal how the work of the neglected educationalist and literary critic Lucy Harrison (1844-1915) positions Quaker readers at the centre, rather than the margins, of the national cultural imagination; and details how the minute books of York Friends’ Sewing Meeting (1906-1927) demonstrate the ways in which private reading practices feed into public philanthropic and political activities. The thesis maintains that the practice of reading what is termed ‘imaginative literature’ performed an important social function for York’s female Quaker community, enabling female Friends to develop collective forms of belief and identity through which Quaker women might become integrated and prominent members of society.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Imaginative work [...] is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; [...] But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.

I should like to thank my Ph.D supervisors, Trev Broughton and Emma Major, who have been so generous with their time, ideas, and expertise. Talking with them was always stimulating and often great fun, and their guidance has been instrumental in helping me to shape my thoughts and produce this thesis.

Over the course of my research I have been fortunate enough to present at a number of conferences. I am grateful to the organisers and delegates of the Quaker Studies Research Association (2011), Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies (2012), and Friends' Historical Society (2012) for providing useful comments on early ideas. My research has been ably assisted by the archivists and librarians of: the Bar Convent; the British Library; Bootham School; the Borthwick Institute for Archives; the Brotherton Library Special Collections; Hull History Centre; University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections; and the City of York Archives. The online resource archive.org proved invaluable. I am thankful to the Chapman Trust, the Crowther Fund, and the English Department at the University of York for financial awards that facilitated my research trips.

Along the way many people have generously shared their knowledge, expertise and stories: Christine, Denise and Richard Edmondson, Hilary Evans, Rod Harper, Marion Maule, John Punshon, Tony Stoller, Barbara Windle, Sue Wright, and Sheila Wright. Collaborating with Naomi Carle on the Edwardian Culture Network project has been a pleasure. Hazel Shaw loaned books, rummaged around Ancestry.com, and generally took an interest. Warm thanks to all.

Studying at York has been an exciting and fulfilling experience: I shall always be grateful to the marvellous Open University for enabling me to get here.

Dave Allen, Jasmine Allen, Rebecca Barnes, Mildrid Bjerke, Kate Compton, Emma Cooper, Kirstin Donaldson, Jason Edwards, Amy Harris, Tai-Chun Ho, Claire Jones, Philip Kerrigan, Eoin Martin, Stef Lambert, Lucy Pell-Walpole and Gabriel Williams made my post-graduate experience one of fun and fellowship. Simon Iley ensured my pretentiousness remained in check. Annie Milles kept me well. Jane Barlow, Helen Fitzhugh, Ben Rake, Sue Roberts: glad you're still around.

For Samuel Shaw – husband, colleague, pal, confidante, lover, cheerleader – there are not words.

My biggest thanks are reserved for my parents, Jim and Ruth Iley, without whose practical assistance my Ph.D research would have been impossible. In an era that values demonstrable 'impact' and financial return, they've remained committed to supporting learning for learning's sake. Their interest in and enthusiasm for this project has been unfailing, and deeply humbling. For never telling me to get a 'proper job' – and everything else besides – I am perennially grateful to them.

Reader, lover of books, lover of Heaven,

And of that God from whom all books are given.

William Blake, *Jerusalem* (1804-1818)

English literature is full of pleasant places.

Lucy Harrison, 'Some Old Essayists' (1903)

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

INTRODUCTION

‘Absolute and legitimate necessities’: Quakers and reading

Responding to a Friend who had characterised reading as ‘a luxury’, the influential Quaker educationalist and literary critic Lucy Harrison (1844-1915) declared:

My notion is that you need not call anything a luxury that you can share – and reading, music, art in general, if they make you ready to share them and pass them on are not luxuries but absolute and legitimate necessities.¹

Harrison’s defence reminds us that appreciating imaginative art and literature was a contentious pursuit within nineteenth-century Quakerism. For much of the century those Friends (as Quakers are also known) who chose to read imaginative literature could be charged with neglecting the Quaker commitment to plainness and self-preservation from the influences of wider society.² Harrison’s statement encapsulates a turning point in these debates. As I argue in this thesis, towards the end of the nineteenth century a Quaker suspicion of imaginative literature gave way to newfound appreciation. This could be seen as symptomatic of a widespread current of secularisation, or simply as a loosening and liberalisation of Quaker belief and practice; yet Friends came to value imaginative literature, I argue, primarily for the important social function it could play within their religious community. In Harrison’s words, literature became celebrated precisely because it ‘make[s] you ready to share [it] and pass

¹ Undated quotation; in Amy Greener, *A Lover of Books: The Life and Literary Papers of Lucy Harrison*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd, 1916), p. 66.

² I explain my use of the term ‘imaginative literature’ rather than ‘secular literature’ below. The section on ‘Christian Simplicity’ in *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends* (1911) reproduced an extract from an epistle of 1691 that urged Friends ‘to avoid pride and immodesty in apparel, and all vain and superfluous fashions of the world’. The Religious Society of Friends, *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends: Doctrine and Practice*, (London: H. D. & B. Headley), [1883, 1900] (1911), p. 91. For more on the lengthy Quaker tradition of favouring a simple and plain aesthetic, see Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, ‘The ‘Plain’ and the ‘Positive’: Ritual, Experience and Aesthetics in Quakerism and Charismatic Christianity’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 15: 13, (2000), pp. 317-329 (especially pp. 322, 325); Frances Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, (The I. B. Taurus History of the Christian Church, London: I. B. Taurus, 2008) p. 9; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: University of California Press, 1992), p. 166; John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers*, (London: Quaker Books, 1984), p. 129; Frederick B. Tolles, “‘Of the Best Sort but Plain’: the Quaker Esthetic”, *American Quarterly*, Vol. 11 No. 4, (Winter 1959), pp. 484-502. I discuss the ways in which eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Friends chose to set themselves apart from wider society as a self-defined ‘peculiar people’ below.

[it] on'. Throughout her essays and lectures of the 1890s and 1900s Harrison presented imaginative literature as a means to bind Quakers together and unite their dissenting community with mainstream culture. In her talks and articles Harrison invited her Quaker audiences to join her on literary pilgrimages across the pages of English literature. They needed little encouragement. By the end of the century the practice of reading imaginative literature was becoming an important component of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, and thus Harrison expressed what was emerging as the majority view when she identified reading as an 'absolute and legitimate necessit[y]'.³

Arriving in York in 1890 as the newly-appointed superintendent of the Mount, the Quaker girls' school established in 1831, Harrison brought with her an air of cosmopolitanism. She had grown up amongst pioneering circles in mid-nineteenth-century London that included Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and social reformers such as Octavia Hill (1838-1912), had received a path-breaking education at Bedford College in the 1860s, and had been at the forefront of female education at schools in Bloomsbury throughout the 1860s and 1870s. Joining York's Quaker community proved to be a continuation rather than a cessation of Harrison's lively literary activities. As this thesis shows, from the 1880s onwards York Friends had been making imaginative literature increasingly central to the belief, identity and practice of their religious community. Between 1885 and 1925 reading essays, novels, plays and poetry became the backbone of the female Quaker community in the city: from education at the Mount, where reading was promoted as a means of cultivating citizenship; to Harrison's own essays and lectures, which presented literature as the lifeblood of spiritual experience; and in the collective reading practices of York Friends' Sewing Meeting, where reading aloud served to bolster members' philanthropic and political campaigning and collective identity.

³ The biographical evidence suggests that some individual Friends had been reading imaginative literature during the first half of the nineteenth century. See for example Sandra Stanley Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780-1930*, (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 105-106, 116-117. However, as I explore below, such reading practices were not common amongst members of the Religious Society of Friends at this stage.

Quakerism and literary culture at the turn of the twentieth century

The years between 1880 and 1920 remain under-researched in Quaker studies, as Alice Southern complained in 2011, and the bibliography for this area of research is frustratingly short.⁴ The turn of the twentieth century is dealt with only briefly in introductory surveys of Quakerism such as John Punshon's *Portrait in Grey* (1984). Biographies of individual Friends are numerous, as are studies of specific family networks such as John Fothergill Crossfield's *A History of the Cadbury Family* (1985). But discussions of the broader Quaker community at the turn of the century remain few. One of the three most comprehensive works on the period, Rufus M. Jones's *Later Periods of Quakerism*, was published in 1920 and has yet to be revised, despite the fact that, as Southern points out, Jones's study was part of a wider project to validate contemporary ideological shifts within the Religious Society of Friends.⁵ To date, Elizabeth Isichei's *Victorian Quakers* (1970) remains the most authoritative work on nineteenth-century Friends. There is much yet to be said on the subject of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Quakerism.

A significant oversight in scholarship has been Friends' engagement with artistic culture in its broadest sense (art, literature, music, philosophy). Discussions of late-Victorian and Edwardian Quakers tend to focus on Friends' entrepreneurial activities, politics, reform work, and social activism.⁶ For example, the volume whose chronological focus is closest to my own, Thomas C. Kennedy's *British Quakerism 1860-1920* (2001), provides a detailed examination of the ideological changes within the Religious Society of Friends, but focuses on how these shifts affected Quaker politics and social reform. The Quaker histories that mention art and literature tend only to

⁴ Alice Southern, 'The Rowntree History Series and the Growth of Liberal Quakerism', *Quaker Studies*, Volume 16 Issue 1, (September 2011), p.13.

⁵ Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', pp. 7-8.

⁶ Mark Freeman, "'No finer school than a settlement': the development of the educational settlement movement", *History of Education* xxxi, (2002), pp. 245-62; Mark Freeman *The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust: a study in Quaker philanthropy and adult education 1904-1954*, (York: William Sessions, 2004); Brenda Harrison, 'The religious and business practice of the 19th-century Quakers, with special reference to the Clarks of Street', 1998, unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Bristol, 1998; Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, (London: Oxford University Press), 1970, pp. 258-279; Carol Kennedy, *The Merchant Princes: Family, Fortune and Philanthropy: Cadbury, Sainsbury and John Lewis*, (London: Hutchinson, 2000); Ian Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism: The Rowntree Family, Quakerism, and Social Reform', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 236-257; Brian Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation, 1890-1910', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Cambridge University, 1989).

gesture towards the subject rather than tackle it in any depth. Sandra Stanley Holton's important *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780-1930* (2007) provides welcome glimpses into the private appreciation of fiction by the women of the Priestman-Bright-Clark circle, but these are subsidiary to Holton's primary focus on the importance of Quaker kinship networks in the formation of family identity.

Yet across this period Quakers were increasingly becoming involved in artistic and literary culture: as audiences, practitioners, and patrons. In 1875 the Leeds Quaker Emily Ford (1850-1930) headed off to study at the Slade School of Art, entering into the bohemian London art scene before going on to enjoy a successful career as a painter and glazier.⁷ The York-born Quaker Henry Scott-Tuke (1858-1929) also arrived at the Slade in 1875, subsequently spending time in Paris amongst artists such as John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) before joining the Newlyn School of artists in Cornwall in the 1880s.⁸ By the late 1880s the Nottingham-based Quaker Mary Howitt (1799–1888) was able to boast a lifetime spent publishing and moving in literary circles that included Charles Dickens (1812–1870), Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) and Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892).⁹ Around the same time the successful Birmingham artist and Friend Joseph Southall (1861-1944) could be found spearheading a tempera revival and painting portraits of Birmingham's Quaker socio-cultural elite.¹⁰ Down in London, younger members of the Pearsall Smith family were playing up the fact that they could

⁷ Judy Oberhusen and Nic Peeters, 'Evelyn de Morgan and Emily Ford: The Aesthetics of Spiritualism', *Victorian Spiritualities*, ed. by Jane de Gay, (Leeds: Leeds Trinity University College), 2012, pp. 205, 208-209; June Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 9, 14-15, 20-21, 25, 88.

⁸ Catherine S. Wallace, 'Tuke, Henry Scott (1858–1929)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36573>, accessed 8 May 2013].

⁹ Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography*, (London: W. M. Isbister Ltd., 1889), Vol. I, pp. 224-225, 271, Vol. II, pp. 27-28, 41, 58-59, 66, 71-72, 114-115, 282, 348-349. William (1792–1879) and Mary Howitt were the aunt and uncle of Lucy Harrison. In chapter two I discuss in more detail the literary activities of the Howitts.

¹⁰ Southall was a pupil at Bootham School under the art teacher Edwin Moore (1813-1893), and later met both Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) and William Morris (1834–1896); when John Ruskin (1819–1900) viewed Southall's paintings and drawings he is reported to have 'praised them highly and said he had never seen architecture better drawn'. See George Breeze, 'Southall, Joseph Edward (1861–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, May 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64535>, accessed 9 April 2012]. Southall's artistic life did not alienate him from the Quaker community: many Quaker families commissioned Southall to paint their portraits, and he was remembered by Friends at his local Meeting as possessing 'a shattering way of evoking the memory of George Fox at any moment'. *Testimony Concerning Joseph E. Southall* (1945); quoted in Britain Yearly Meeting, *Quaker Faith and Practice: the Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*, (London, 1999), 18.15.

claim artistic and literary affiliations alongside their Quaker heritage.¹¹ By the beginning of the twentieth century the artist and critic Roger Fry (1866–1934), who came from a Quaker family, was championing post-impressionism in Britain.¹² Fry’s ‘Manet and the Post-Impressionists’ exhibition of 1910 prompted his friend Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) to declare famously that ‘on or about December 1910, human character changed’, a tongue-in-cheek statement whose wry grandiosity nevertheless gestures towards the exhibition’s cultural significance.¹³ The London-born Quaker and long-standing newspaper critic Walter Bayes (1869-1956) also pioneered post-impressionism, becoming a member of the Camden Town Group collective which included Spenser Gore (1878-1914) and Walter Sickert (1860-1942).¹⁴ While Fry and Bayes were championing avant-garde art, the wealthy Cheshire-born Quaker Harriet Shaw Weaver (1876-1961) was supporting the work of modernist writers including James Joyce

¹¹ The Pearsall Smiths moved in transatlantic circles that included Walt Whitman (1819-1892), Isabella Gardner (1840-1924), and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), whom Alys (1867-1951) married at the Quaker Meeting House in St. Martin’s Lane, London in 1894. Alys evidently sensed that a Quaker wedding would arouse interest amongst her London contemporaries, writing to Russell in November 1894 of how ‘Everyone is consumed with curiosity about a Quaker wedding’. Quoted in Sheila Turcon, ‘A Quaker Wedding: the marriage of Bertrand Russell and Alys Pearsall Smith’, *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies*, McMaster University, Vol. 3, Iss. 2, Article 3, (Winter 1983/4), p. 103. While the Pearsall Smiths eventually broke from their Quaker background, Hannah (1832-1911) was considered a significant enough Quaker figure to warrant an entry in Thomas D. Hamm’s recent collection *Quaker Writings: An Anthology, 1650-1920*, (London: Penguin Books, 2010). See also Barbara Strachey, *Remarkable Relations: the Story of the Pearsall Smith Women* (1980).

¹² Frances Spalding argues that despite Fry’s break in adulthood from his Quaker background, his artistic career was propelled by the Quaker ideals that he had inherited and could never fully ‘shrug off’. The ‘Quaker distrust for display, an inclination for hard work, a disregard for establishments, a willingness to stand apart from mass opinion’, Spalding suggests, all contributed to Fry’s cultural daring. Frances Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, (Norwich: Black Dog Books, [1980] 1999), p. 14. Fry’s sisters Joan (1862-1955) and Margery (1874–1958) remained life-long Quakers. Through Roger Joan and Margery spent many hours with the Bloomsbury group, though these associations could be rather strained. Spalding describes how Vanessa Bell (1879-1961) relied upon Joan as a dependable source of childcare and stability, but that because these women were, in different ways, ‘women of great power’, some ‘friction’ between the two was ‘inevitable’. Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell*, (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., [1983] 2006), pp. 102, 263. Hermione Lee describes how Woolf found Margery ‘solid, clever, well-informed, but suspicious of Bloomsbury and lacking in charm’. Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, (London: Vintage, [1996] 1997), p. 632. Nevertheless, when Roger died in 1934 the Frys were adamant that Woolf should write his biography, and she recorded with trepidation how Margery, in true Quaker fashion, showered her with documents and papers pertaining to Roger’s life. See Virginia Woolf, *Selected Diaries*, (London: Vintage Books, 2008), pp. 376, 381. Woolf’s *Roger Fry: A Biography* was published in 1940.

¹³ Virginia Woolf, ‘Character in Fiction’ (1924), *Selected Essays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 37-54 (p. 38).

¹⁴ Bayes’s siblings were the sculptor Gilbert (1872-1953) and artist Jessie (1878-1970), while his father was the painter and etcher Alfred Walter (1832–1909). See Mark Stocker, ‘Bayes, Gilbert (1872–1953)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38290, accessed 17 April 2013]; Philip Ward-Jackson, *Gilbert Bayes, 1872-1953: From Arts and Crafts to the Light Monumental*, (Leeds: Henry Moore Sculpture Trust), 1998.

(1882–1941) and Ezra Pound (1885–1972). Weaver played an instrumental role in the development of these writers' careers, bankrolling ventures such as *The Egoist* and providing important practical assistance.¹⁵ In 1932 T. S. Eliot dedicated his *Selected Essays* to Weaver 'in recognition of her services to English letters'.¹⁶ Thus the period under focus in this study saw many Quakers playing active and important roles in the nation's progressive artistic and literary cultures.

The Quaker involvement with artistic and literary culture at the turn of the century – as artists, writers, and associates – was rich and extensive, and deserves a study of its own.¹⁷ What I want to concentrate on here, however, are Quaker audiences for literature. In part this choice is due to a desire to capture a general trend amongst Quakers during the period; while few write and fewer publish many people read, and thus a focus on Quaker audiences enables me to consider the broader extent to which Quakers were engaging with imaginative literature at the turn of the century. More significantly, attending to readers allows me to explore the ways in which reading contributed to Quaker community dynamics, mediating the relationship between the individual and the community and shaping the corporate life of the Meeting.

This thesis centres on a select, but suggestively representative, community of Quaker readers in York. My decision to focus on this group stems in part from the existence of a body of previous research on York Friends (most notably by Sheila Wright) that enables me to build upon existing historiographical narratives.¹⁸ Further,

¹⁵ Rachel Cottam, 'Weaver, Harriet Shaw (1876–1961)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, May 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/57346>, accessed 17 April 2013]. For more on Weaver's relationship with Joyce, see John Firth, 'Harriet Weaver's Letters to James Joyce 1915-1920', *Studies in Bibliography*, Vol. 20, (1967), pp. 151-188.

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.), 1932.

¹⁷ The relationship between Quakers and the Arts and Crafts movement also merits focussed attention. As the footnotes above indicate, a striking number of Quaker artists worked within an Arts and Crafts tradition. Pamela Manesseh's recent Ph.D thesis has explored some of the ideological overlaps between the Religious Society of Friends and the Arts and Crafts movement. See Pamela Manesseh, *The Brynmawr Experiment 1928-1940 Quaker Values and Arts and Crafts Principles*, (Ph.D thesis, University of Plymouth, 2009), pp. 8, 35, 38. More work needs to be done, however, on the aesthetic appeal of Arts and Crafts to the Quaker community. It seems to me that both the Arts and Crafts movement and Quakerism share an aesthetic appreciation of simplicity, and fidelity to natural forms and imagery. As Geoffrey Peter Morries has discussed, over the course of the nineteenth century the Quaker interest in botany opened the door for Friends to appreciate beauty in the natural world. Geoffrey Peter Morries, *From Revelation to Resource: the Natural World in the Thought and Experience of Quakers in Britain and Ireland, 1647-1830*, (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Birmingham), 2010, pp. 9, 322-323.

¹⁸ Sheila Wright, *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780-1860*, (Keele: Keele University Press), 1995. See also Stephen Allott, *Friends in York: The Quaker Story in the Life of a Meeting*, (York: William Sessions Ltd., 1978); Freeman *Charitable Trust*; Mark Freeman, *Quaker Extension c. 1905-1930: The*

members of York Quaker Meeting played an instrumental role in guiding the Religious Society of Friends in a modernising direction at the turn of the century, and thus the activities of York Friends had repercussions for the Society as a whole.¹⁹ York Quakers were also prominent participants in the city's municipal life: assuming leading political positions and owning several regional newspapers; spearheading education in the city at Bootham School and the Mount School; pioneering psychiatric treatment at the Retreat; and providing employment for many of the city's residents at the Rowntree's Cocoa Works.²⁰ As I discuss in chapter three, as well as being related by marriage or blood to men who had prominent roles in these institutions, many of the women who figure in this thesis were themselves leaders of local political and philanthropic campaigning. The leading role played by York Friends in the city's municipal life provides opportunities to explore the relationship between Quaker women, reading, and citizenship during a period in which women still lacked the vote. Primarily, however, my decision to focus on Quaker readers in York is a result of the wealth of archival material I uncovered, which provides rare and fascinating insights into the dynamics of a reading community.

Throughout this thesis my discussions of female Quaker readers in York are underpinned by three interrelated arguments. First, I demonstrate that reading

Yorkshire 1905 Committee, Borthwick Paper 118, (York: Borthwick Institute, 2008); Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities 1770-1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', (unpublished PhD thesis, The University of York, 2000); David Rubinstein with Olivia O'Toole, *Faithful to Ourselves and the Outside World: York Quakers During the Twentieth Century*, (York: William Sessions Ltd., 2001).

¹⁹ See Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2001, pp. 148-156; Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', p. 20.

²⁰ Ian Packer has discussed how Arnold Rowntree (1872-1951), liberal M. P. for York between 1910 and 1918, became 'a minor newspaper baron' through his involvement in the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust, which bought up and supported both regional and national Liberal newspapers such as *The Nation*, *Northern Echo*, *Yorkshire Gazette*, *Malton Gazette*, *Morning Leader*, and *Star*. See Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism', pp. 251-252. Bootham School opened in 1823, while the Mount School began life in 1785 as Trinity Lane School and became known as the Mount following its relocation to new premises in 1857. For more on Bootham and the Mount see Francis E. Pollard (ed.), *Bootham School 1823-1923*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd.), 1926; H. Winifred Sturge and Theodora Clark, *The Mount School York: 1785 to 1814, 1831 to 1931*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd.), 1931. The Mount School is the subject of chapter one of this study. The Retreat was founded in 1792 by William Tuke (1732-1822). See Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1985. The origins of Rowntree's Cocoa can be traced back to a chocolate shop owned by Mary Tuke, which had been founded in 1725, but it was not until Henry Isaac Rowntree bought the company in 1862 that it assumed the Rowntree name. By the 1890s Rowntree's was operating from a twenty-four acre site Cocoa Works in the city. For more on the History of Rowntree's see Anon, *Joseph Rowntree, 1836-1925: Special Memorial Number of the "C. W. M."*, *The Journal of Rowntree's Cocoa Works, York*, (Leeds: Chorley and Pickerill Ltd.), 1925; <http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/victorian/rowntree-co-chocolate-manufacturers> [accessed 25.5.2013]. For more on the contributions of York Friends to the city's civil life during the nineteenth and early-twentieth century see Rubinstein, *York Friends*, pp. 2-3; Wright, *Friends in York*, chapter six.

imaginative literature – both privately and in community – was far more central to turn-of-the-century Quakerism than has been acknowledged by previous scholarship on the Religious Society of Friends. Second, I propose that histories of reading need to account for the ways in which literature complemented rather than challenged or replaced religion in late-nineteenth-century society. Third, I suggest that prior to female enfranchisement reading may have been an important means by which women, individually and collectively, developed a sense of citizenship and public identity.

Nineteenth-century Quakers and reading: from quietism to liberalism

By 1880 Quakers could look back on two centuries in which in-house print material had played a significant role in the construction of the Religious Society of Friends.²¹ Yet throughout the nineteenth century the official definition of what constituted acceptable reading material for Quakers remained circumscribed. Reiterating the sentiments of two earlier epistles of 1839 and 1869, the *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends* (1883; revised 1900, 1911) counselled Quakers to exercise caution and restraint in their reading. Precisely because ‘Books may be regarded as our companions; they become associated with our most retired thoughts, and insensibly infuse somewhat of their spirit into those who converse with them’,

It behoves us to exercise a sound discretion as to what publications we admit into our houses; that neither we nor our children might be hurt by that reading which would tend in any degree to leaven our minds into the spirit of the world, and to unfit us for the sober duties of life.²²

²¹ Stephen Allott, *Lindley Murray, 1745-1826: Quaker Grammarian*, (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1991); Mary Garman, Judith Applegate, Margaret Benefiel and Dortha Meredith (eds.), *Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women's Writings, 1650-1700*, (Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1996), pp. 3, 7-8; Hamm, *Quaker Writings*; Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Quaker Identities, 1650-1700*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 3-7; Mary Maples Dunn, ‘Latest Light on Women of Light’, in Elizabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard (eds.), *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women Over Three Centuries*, (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988), pp. 71-79 (pp. 75-76); Susan Mosher Stuard, ‘Women’s Witnessing: a New Departure’, in Potts Brown et. al. (eds.), *Witnesses for Change*, pp. 3-28 (p. 12); Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, [1989] 1995), pp. 19-20, 82, 156-157, 167-172, 177; Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing*, (London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), p. 5; Sheila Wright, ‘Gaining a voice: an interpretation of Quaker Women’s Writing 1740-1850’, *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 8 Iss. 1, (Birmingham: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2003), pp. 36-50 (pp. 36-37).

²² Religious Society of Friends, *Christian Discipline*, p. 108.

Implicit in this passage is the assumption that Quaker reading practices are at odds with those of the wider public. In a society that produces suspect reading matter, it falls to Quakers to ‘exercise a sound discretion’ about ‘what publications’ they ‘admit’ into their ‘houses’. Reading is a moral activity closely aligned with preparation for ‘the sober duties of life’, and Quaker readers are responsible for passing on their cautious and dutiful reading habits to the next generation. While this passage reveals that at an organisational level the Religious Society of Friends remained cautious about imaginative literature well into the twentieth century, in practice, as this thesis shows, Quaker readers began to approach reading as a pastime associated with leisure and sociability rather than as exclusively an act of devotion and instruction.

The term ‘literature’ remains a loaded one to use in relation to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century readers. During this period English Literature emerged as a discipline in schools and universities, an English literary canon was in the process of being defined, and debates raged as to how ‘literature’ should be used.²³ ‘Literature’ was by no means a fixed term at this stage, and for many York Friends the category was a broad one. As I discuss in chapter two, Lucy Harrison was unusual in the extent to which she took an active role in delineating an English literary canon and establishing theories about what she termed ‘the cultivation of literary taste’. While hers was a prominent voice within the York literary community – she lectured regularly at the Mount School and York Friends’ Book Society (YFBS), and published extensively in Quaker journals – her canonical ideal was not one shared by all York Friends. In the pages of the York Friends’ Sewing Meeting (YFSM) minutes novels and short stories jostle alongside tracts, letters, and pamphlets. During YFBS meetings discussions of travel experiences were as common as literary lectures, such as when ‘Mr. Frank

²³ Early studies of these developments tended to adopt a Marxist approach, viewing the rise of literary studies and the development of the canon as a social agenda designed to oppress the masses by flattening class, gender and race difference in order to transmit what these critics view as suspect ‘universal values’. See for example: Baldick, *Social Mission*, pp. 1-5; Bryan Doyle, *English and Englishness*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 3, 6, 8; Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell [1983] 2000), pp. 20-23; John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 133, 174-175. More recently Carol Atherton has challenged the fact that these narratives have gained ‘orthodoxy’, revealing their politicised accounts to be reductive and ‘highly problematic’. Atherton argues instead that the development of English studies was due more to ‘the process of professionalization and specialisation’ than with any ‘mission of national cultivation’. Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority, and Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 17, 20. See also Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing, and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 7-8; D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

Rowntree gave a talk on his journey to the West Indies, illustrated with lantern slides'.²⁴ Because York Friends read from a wide variety of genres I shall be using the term 'literature' in its broadest sense to include all forms of the written word, from letters and diaries to essays and lectures, pamphlets and tracts to minutes and notebooks. However, I shall be making a distinction between these forms and what I am calling 'imaginative literature' (poetry, plays, and in particular novels), not because I identify these forms as superior, but rather because this differentiation had been made by Friends throughout the nineteenth-century and continued to have repercussions for early-twentieth-century Quakers. I'm avoiding the term 'secular literature' because I find it misleading. 'Secular literature' divorces poetry, plays and novels from the ways in which they often carried a religious purpose (such as with the evangelical novels mentioned below), and lacks the necessary distinction between fictional and non-fictional works that had been so significant to nineteenth-century Friends.

As context for the case studies explored in the following chapters I shall offer a preliminary outline, based on a combination of primary evidence and recent historiography, of the ways in which Quaker reading habits shifted over the course of the nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, these developments broadly corresponded to changes in Quaker attitudes towards the Society's religious belief, identity and practice that have been identified in subsequent Quaker historiography, which has revealed how the Religious Society of Friends moved from quietism at the beginning of the century through to evangelicalism before arriving at liberalism in the 1880s.²⁵ To illustrate these changes I shall refer to the minute books of YFSM, which provide a representative glimpse into the development of Friends' attitudes towards reading and imaginative literature. Although, as I reveal in chapter three, the reading practices of YFSM were shaped by gender, nevertheless the group's chosen reading material during the nineteenth century was typical of Quakers more generally. This introductory sketch provides an important pre-history for the chapters that follow, establishing the contexts in which turn-of-the-century Friends in York developed, modified and challenged earlier Quaker attitudes towards reading.

²⁴ The York Friends' Book Society, *Record of York Friends' Book Society*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University, Manuscripts MS Dept. 1981/2 (Clifford Street Archive), 3 vols., 1852-1911, J. 2.2, 2.3; March 8th 1898.

²⁵ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. xxiii-xxiv; Rufus M. Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920); Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 5-8.

YFSM, or the Friendly Society of Benevolent Objects, as it was also known, was a cross-generational grouping of middle-class women which ran from 1834 to 1973. It was as much a social as a philanthropic venture, founded to create ‘more unity of feeling’ and ‘better knowledge of one another’.²⁶ The association’s Rules and Regulations of 1834 stipulated that in each session members would ‘employ themselves in sewing while one friend reads aloud, something of an instructive and interesting tendency’ (Vol. 1, p. 4). The minute books record the titles of texts that were read during each meeting. In chapter three I provide a detailed discussion of YFSM’s reading practices between 1906 and 1927. At this stage I want to use the first two volumes of YFSM minutes (1834-1844; 1844-1880) to explore how the groups’ definition of what constituted ‘instructive and interesting’ reading material changed over course of the century.

During the 1830s and 1840s the YFSM minutes reveal a community still preoccupied by quietist belief. Quietism had been the predominant mode amongst eighteenth-century Friends, an inward-looking form of belief emphasising mysticism and personal spiritual experience.²⁷ Quietism was not unique to Quakers – indeed, it captured the interest of Catholics and Protestants alike – but it proved highly influential to eighteenth-century Quakerism.²⁸ In *An Apology For the True Christian Dignity as Professed by the People Called Quakers* (1678) the Scottish Quaker Robert Barclay (1648-1690) famously maintained that quietism was the best form of religious belief, arguing that ‘divine inward revelations’ are ‘absolutely necessary for the building up of true faith’.²⁹ According to Isichei, Barclay’s *Apology* became the ‘*summa*’ amongst quietist Friends, ‘to be read and quoted the way evangelicals read and quoted the Bible’.³⁰ While YFSM don’t read explicitly quietist texts such as Barclay’s *Apology*, nevertheless what Isichei identifies as a quietist ‘reverence for the writings of the early Friends’ comes across

²⁶ The York Friends Sewing Meeting, *Record of York Friends Sewing Meeting*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University: Manuscripts MS Dept. 1981/2 (Clifford Street Archive), 4 vols., 1834-1973, vol. 1. All subsequent references are in-text citations.

²⁷ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 17-19; Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, pp. 120-121.

²⁸ Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, pp. 120-121.

²⁹ Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity as Professed by the People Called Quakers*, (London: Harvey and Darton, [1678] 1822), p. 4.

³⁰ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 16.

strongly at this stage.³¹ The first volume of minutes record the highest proportion of in-house publications and subject-matter, ‘a Chapter respecting the State of the Society of Friends’ (Vol. 1, 1836) providing a typical example. The sense of the group as a ‘socially exclusive and secluded community’, to borrow Stanley Holton’s phrase, is heightened by the way YFSM look exclusively to their own kind for models of exemplary *Lives*, such as Sarah Grubb (Vol. 2, 1843), Elizabeth Fry (Vol. 2, 1845, 1846) and William Penn (Vol. 1, 1835).³² Reading about notable early Friends alongside more recent celebrated figures such as Fry imaginatively enfolded YFSM within a self-contained Society that can claim a sustained genealogy and heritage. By 1915 such self-preoccupation seemed a world away, the Quaker historian Mary Richmond Brailsford looking back with some distaste upon the ‘drab uniformity’ of quietist Friends for whom recreational forms of reading had been ‘sternly forbidden’.³³ As I explore in this thesis, the Quaker embrace of imaginative literature at the turn of the twentieth century meant that community heritage and tradition began to carry less relevance for many female Friends.

The move from the narrow, self-reflexive forms of reading identified by Brailsford to late-Victorian and Edwardian Friends’ more outward-looking response to imaginative literature owed much to the influence of evangelicalism. Evangelicalism was the predominant current within nineteenth-century British Christianity for both Anglicans and Nonconformists, and by mid-century Quakers had been swept along by its wave.³⁴ Elisabeth Jay has discussed how evangelicalism became a ‘powerful literary force’, disseminated through a variety of forms including novels, tracts, and newspapers.³⁵ By the 1840s YFSM were listening to readings of many of these forms, enabling the group to bring a collective evangelical identity into being. From the 1850s to 1880, while Quaker texts continue to feature, the minute books record ever more ecumenical evangelical sources and subjects, the association reading publications such as

³¹ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 16.

³² Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 11.

³³ Mabel Richmond Brailsford, *Quaker Women 1650-1690*, (London: Duckworth and Co., 1915), p. 328.

³⁴ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 149, ix; Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 10-12.

³⁵ Elisabeth Jay, *Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 7, 2-3. See also David Bebbington, ‘Gospel and culture in Victorian Non-conformity’, in Jane Shaw and Alan Kreider (eds.), *Culture and the Non-Conformist Tradition*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 43-62 (p. 47).

The Christian Observer (which, according to David Bebbington, represented ‘moderate Anglican Evangelicalism’), or *The Revival*, which the minute books record as being ‘an advocate of Evangelical Truth’ (Vol. 2, 1866).³⁶ Throughout the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s YFSM read a variety of texts aligned with the evangelical concerns identified by Frank Prochaska in *Christianity & Social Service in Modern Britain* (2006): poor relief (Vol. 1, 1841, 1842, Vol. 2, 1847, 1867), district visiting (Vol. 2, 1863), temperance (Vol. 2, 1876, 1877, 1879), prison reform (Vol. 1, 1835, Vol. 2, 1848, 1878), and abolitionism (Vol. 2, 1845, 1846, 1848, 1850, 1852, 1853, 1854, 1867, 1878, 1879, 1880).³⁷ Of these, prison reform and abolitionism are particularly worth exploring in detail for what they reveal about the relationship between Quakers, evangelical philanthropy and reading.

Reading about prison reform suggests that YFSM were conscious of the common ground between themselves and women of other protestant denominations. This sense of shared Christian purpose and identity was, as social historians have shown, a significant feature of nineteenth-century philanthropy.³⁸ For Quaker women, participation in these interdenominational activities put an end to their image as a ‘peculiar people’ set apart from wider society.³⁹ In the 1840s the group read accounts of the evangelical Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry (Vol. 2, 1845 and 1846), an unsurprising occurrence given that Fry was a celebrated Quaker who became the second most popular figure in nineteenth-century female prosopography.⁴⁰ By the late 1860s and 1870s, however, Fry’s Anglican counterpart Sarah Martin (1791–1843) also makes several appearances, the minutes recording readings of ‘Memoir of Sarah Martin the prison visitor of Great Yarmouth’ (Vol. 2, 1862), ‘A Sketch of the Life of Sarah Martin the prison missionary’ (Vol. 2, 1866), and ‘A chapter from the Life of Sarah

³⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 99.

³⁷ Frank Prochaska, *Christianity & Social Service in Modern Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 11-12. During this period the minutes also reveal the group to be active in peace campaigning (Vol. 2, 1846, 1852, 1853, 1870, 1876). As Bebbington reminds us, ‘activism’ (or the ‘the expression of the gospel in effort’) was one of the central tenets of evangelicalism. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 3.

³⁸ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 87; Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 11-13; F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 23-25.

³⁹ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 10-12; Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ The most popular being Joan of Arc; between 1910 and 1930 Fry was surpassed only by Florence Nightingale. See Alison Booth, *How to Make it as a Woman: Collective Biographical History From Victoria to the Present*, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 139.

Martin, a prison visitor of Yarmouth' (Vol. 2, 1878).⁴¹ That Martin's occupation, rather than her Anglicanism, is mentioned on all three occasions suggests her interest to YFSM is as an exemplary philanthropic figure, while her denominational affiliation is an unremarkable point: a shared concern for prison reform erases any difference of religious conviction and identity.

The *Lives* of Fry and Martin offer YFSM models in which philanthropic activity was carried out in conjunction with reading, reflecting the practice of their own meetings. Alison Booth has shown how Fry was keenly aware of the public-relations potential of combining philanthropy and reading, the famous portrait *Mrs. Fry Reading to the Prisoners at Newgate* (1816) providing a 'scene of reading that would have been easy for many middle-class women to reenact'.⁴² Likewise *A Brief Sketch of the Life of the Late Sarah Martin, of Great Yarmouth* (1844) represented 'literacy and the proper interpretation of right texts' – in other words scripture rather than what Martin termed 'trash' novels – as 'stand[ing] at the heart of her mission'.⁴³ It takes an imaginative leap to assume that YFSM read such biographies with these ideals in mind, but the repeated appearance of these philanthropic readers seems highly suggestive. Fry and Martin provide YFSM with easy-to-follow models of evangelical femininity: as an evangelical act, reading aloud offers members an accessible means by which to perform these ideal images within their own meetings.

Between the 1840s and the 1880s YFSM read several texts relating to the abolitionist campaign, which, like prison reform, was close to the hearts of many evangelical women.⁴⁴ The group's reading choices in this regard are revealing, as they imply a collective antipathy towards novels at this stage. The YFSM minutes first record reading an abolitionist article in the 1840s (Vol. 2, 1845), and the group remained committed to the cause even after the emancipation of American slaves in 1863, reading

⁴¹ Initially suspicious of religion, Martin converted to Anglicanism at the age of nineteen. Bill Forsythe, 'Martin, Sarah (1791–1843)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18211>, accessed 24 June 2013].

⁴² Booth, *How to Make it*, pp. 150-153.

⁴³ Booth, *How to Make it*, pp. 154-156. See also Helen Rogers, 'The Way to Jerusalem: Reading, Writing and Reform in an Early-Victorian Gaol', *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. 205, Iss. 1, 2009, pp. 71-104; Helen Rogers, 'Oh, what beautiful books! Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 1, (Autumn 2012), pp. 57-84.

⁴⁴ Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Anti-Slavery Movement*, (London: The University of North Carolina Press), 1998, pp. 6, 246; Carol Lasser, *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Partisan*, (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2010), p. 43; Prochaska, *Christianity & Social Service*, pp. 11-12; Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 23.

from ‘a letter respecting an Orphan Asylum among the Freedmen’ (Vol. 2, 1869), ‘Portions of letters [...] respecting the Negro refugees in Kansas’ (Vol. 2, 1879), and ‘an interesting account of work among the free coloured people of America’ (Vol. 2, 1880).⁴⁵ Yet although YFSM read factual accounts of the plight of American slaves, the minutes do not feature Harriet Beecher Stowe’s crusading anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). This is a significant omission: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* famously gave Quaker abolitionists a favourable supporting role, and is widely regarded as the first novel Friends read on a wide scale.⁴⁶ Eschewing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, or indeed any fictional work, prior to 1880 suggests YFSM remained committed to the earlier Quaker belief that, in the words of the Quaker philanthropist William Allen (1770-1843) in 1818, such books were of an ‘an immoral tendency’ and acted like ‘poison to the mind’.⁴⁷ The absence of novels from the reading selections of YFSM prior to 1880 would have had little to do with the group’s evangelical commitment. The association of evangelicalism with an outright suspicion of fiction, such as that identified by Mark Knight and Emma Mason, should be treated with caution; evangelical novels had been a popular and influential genre from at least the 1830s, and to identify a decisive split between evangelicalism and the novel is misleading.⁴⁸ That no novels appear in the first two volumes of YFSM may be due to the context in which this group’s reading took place: away from the philanthropic focus of the sewing meeting, members could well have

⁴⁵ YFSM’s sustained commitment to the anti-slavery cause was typical of Quakers more generally. See Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, pp. 597-618; Jean R. Soderland, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁴⁶ Though Isichei dismisses this historiography as ‘undoubtedly an oversimplification’, noting that several liberal Friends had begun reading novels earlier in the century, it seems fair to state that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was the first widely- and publicly- read novel amongst the Quaker community. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 156, 154. Stowe’s novel presents Quakers as deeply dependable, providing an atmosphere of domestic and spiritual harmony to the heroine Eliza after her flight from a corrupt slave-trader. See ‘Chapter XIII: The Quaker Settlement’, Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1852] 1998), particularly pp. 139-147. Quakers made favourable appearances in a number of nineteenth-century novels. In Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Sylvia’s Lovers* (1863), for example, the local Quaker shopkeepers are held up as moral paragons, described as ‘all on ‘em right-down good folk’. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1863] 1999), pp. 75-76. In Sarah Grand’s New Woman novel *The Beth Book* (1897), Beth discovers a sense of self when she comes to the realisation that ‘she leant to Quaker-Catholicism, the name assumed for her religious principles by Caroline Fox – Quaker-Catholicism having direct spiritual teaching for its distinctive dogma’. Sarah Grand, *The Beth Book: Being a Study of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure A Woman of Genius*, (London: Virago Press, [1897] 1980), p. 499.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 154.

⁴⁸ Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Culture: An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 132-133. Jay argues that evangelical literature influenced the form and content of the nineteenth century novel, notably the *roman à thèse* tradition. Jay, *Religion of the Heart*, pp. 7, 2-3; see also Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 131.

been enjoying the odd novel or two. Though there is no surviving evidence of this for YFSM members, it is certainly the case that elsewhere at mid-century several Friends were reading novels, albeit often as a proscribed and therefore private activity.⁴⁹

Yet whatever their personal reading habits may have been, the evidence I have found suggests that as a community York Quaker readers did not publicly advocate the relevance of reading drama, novels or poetry prior to the 1880s. Following its establishment in 1852 (the same year as the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), the YFBS spent almost forty years listening to papers on Christian topics such as 'Christian art and symbolism'. It was not until the 1890s that the scope of lectures expanded to include subjects such as 'R. L. Stevenson – lectures on his novels, essays, and "The Child's Garden of Verses"' (November 2nd 1897).⁵⁰ Furthermore, in the 1930s the editors of *The Mount School York* recollected that up until mid-1880s the school had provided pupils with 'a circumscribed library' and that under the headship of the otherwise reforming Lydia Rous (1819–1896) 'even the reading of the staff was carefully supervised'.⁵¹ The available evidence suggests that the 1880s mark the turning point in the reading habits of this Quaker community and also, I suggest below, of the Religious Society of Friends as a whole.

Frustratingly, the minute books for the years 1880 to 1906 are not included in the Clifford Street Archives and when we pick up the threads of the YFSM reading record in the early twentieth century a significant shift has occurred. Among the texts chosen for reading aloud at the meetings there are few that could be described as either Quaker or Christian, while novels, poetry and plays appear for the first time. Partly this corresponds to changes in reading habits that had taken place within wider society during the period. As several cultural historians have shown, from the middle of the nineteenth-century onwards reading came to be regarded more widely and more consistently with entertainment rather than primarily as an act of educational advancement, moral instruction, or religious devotion and duty.⁵² But more significantly

⁴⁹ Holton, *Quaker Women*, pp. 105-106, 116-117.

⁵⁰ York Friends' Book Society, *Record*.

⁵¹ H. Winifred Sturge and Theodora Clark, *The Mount School York: 1785 to 1814, 1831 to 1931*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1931), p. 135.

⁵² Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain*, (London: HarperPress, 2006), pp. 164-205; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 11. The editors of *Edwardian Fiction* (1997) suggest that between 1895 and 1914 'lay twenty years in which fiction

for my purposes, the new forms of literature included in the YFSM minutes reflect the move towards liberalism that had occurred within the Religious Society of Friends over the intervening twenty years.

York's Quaker community played a central role in steering the Religious Society of Friends towards a liberal theological outlook at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵³ This liberal theology was doubtless associated with York Friends' political liberalism, in that both shared what Richard Bellamy identifies as liberalism's broad 'commitment to individual freedom and rational enquiry'.⁵⁴ Yet whatever their ideological overlaps may have been, political and theological liberalism need to be dealt with separately. Quaker liberal theology 'tended to follow broadly the same patterns as general Christian liberalism', Southern suggests, which had become a significant religious movement within wider society from the 1880s.⁵⁵ Throughout the nineteenth century liberal Christian thinkers 'argued that religion should be modern and progressive and that the meaning of Christianity should be interpreted from the standpoint of modern knowledge and experience'.⁵⁶ The Manchester Conference of 1895 is widely regarded as 'the clear turning point' in the decline of Quaker evangelicalism and 'the embrace of a self-avowedly liberal Quakerism' within the Religious Society of Friends, although Kennedy suggests that this move had been steadily gathering pace since the 1880s.⁵⁷ Liberal Quakers advocated a more scholarly approach to the Bible, re-emphasised the centrality of the Inner Light to Quaker belief and practice, called for an end to hiring ministers in favour of free and unprogrammed forms of ministry, and placed

was the most important section of the leisure industry'. Sandra Kemp, Charlotte Mitchell and David Trotter (eds.), *Edwardian Fiction: An Oxford Companion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xv.

⁵³ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 148-156; Southern, 'The Rowntree History Series', p. 20.

⁵⁴ Richard Bellamy (ed.), *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought and Practice*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 1. Bellamy goes on to argue that histories of liberalism need to account for its historic specificity rather than identifying a capacious liberal genealogy extending back into the classical age (p. 1). Quaker historians have discussed the politically liberal tenor of York Friends at the turn of the century. See Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism', pp. 236-257; Ian Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree to Mary Katherine Rowntree, 1910-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 12, 17, 22; Rubinstein, *Faithful to Ourselves*, pp. 15, 18; Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 137.

⁵⁵ Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', p. 9.

⁵⁶ Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), p. xiii.

⁵⁷ Hamm, *Quaker Writings*, p. 296. Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 7-8, 148-156. Kennedy points out that there remained a small residual evangelical presence within late-Victorian and Edwardian Quakerism, pp. 234-235.

importance on Quaker education and the writing of Quaker history.⁵⁸ Literature played an important role disseminating these new ideologies, and historians have documented how members of the Rowntree family and associated York Friends used the opportunities of print culture – taking over newspapers and initiating the Rowntree History Series – to promote Quaker liberalism.⁵⁹

The new emphasis on an interpretation of Christianity through the lens of ‘modern knowledge and experience’ enabled Quakers to incorporate imaginative literature into their reading in ways that informed their religious faith. In 1904 Joan Fry argued that while there had been a ‘widening of our horizon in matters of art and literature’ these were not incompatible with religious belief but simply needed to be approached with caution, for a ‘larger life needs a deeper faith’.⁶⁰ A new generation of Quakers began looking to essayists, novelists, dramatists and poets for inspiration instead. In the 1880s the Hertfordshire Friend Winnie Seebohm (1863-1885), one of the first Quaker students to attend the University of Cambridge, wrote excitedly to family and friends about having her horizons broadened by the Brontës, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861), and John Ruskin.⁶¹ By 1905 John Wilhelm Rowntree (1868–1905) could remark decisively that Quaker literature no longer captured the imagination of the young Friends. While the modern Quaker reader ‘has possibly dipped into Fox’s Journal’, Rowntree argued, only the notorious passages would be familiar to them: ‘more likely he knows the leather breeches and the “woe” to the bloody city of Lichfield, and nothing more’.⁶² Young Friends were not the only Quakers looking elsewhere in their reading. Members of YFSM now eschewed Quaker *Lives* in favour of fictional heroines, while Lucy Harrison’s published work contains only one article on a Quaker figure, John Woolman (1720-1772), and a single reference to George Fox (1624-1691), focussing instead on a genealogy of literary writers that stretches from Chaucer (1343-1400) to the contemporary poets Alice Meynell (1847-1922) and

⁵⁸ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 164-165, 171-210; Southern, ‘Rowntree History Series’, p. 10.

⁵⁹ Packer, ‘Religion and the New Liberalism’, pp. 236-257; Southern, ‘Rowntree History Series’, pp. 7-73.

⁶⁰ Joan Mary Fry, *The Way of Peace and Other Papers*, (London: Headley Brothers, 1904), p. 1.

⁶¹ Victoria Glendinning, *A Suppressed Cry: Life and Death of a Quaker Daughter*, (London: Virago Press Ltd., [1969] 1995). Together with her friend and fellow Quaker Margaret (also known as Meta) Tuke (1862-1947), Winnie went up to Newnham College in 1885. Winnie died of asthma later that winter; Meta later became principal of Bedford College.

⁶² John Wilhelm Rowntree, ‘The Present Position of Religious Thought in the Society of Friends’ (1905), in John Wilhelm Rowntree, *Essays and Addresses*, (London: Headley Brothers, 1906), p. 240.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941).⁶³ As I will show over the course of this thesis, drawing upon literature became an important means by which members of the Religious Society of Friends attempted to make their Quaker belief, identity and practice modern and relevant.

Quakers' liberal outlook formed a natural partnership with the liberal humanist ideas that were also coming to prominence at the end of the nineteenth century. Stefan Collini has shown how mid-to-late-nineteenth-century liberal intellectuals such as the Anglican Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) and the atheist Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) advocated the moral lessons to be gleaned by studying literature.⁶⁴ These thinkers greatly informed Quaker responses to literature. Arnold and Ruskin were often referred to in the work of the influential Quaker historian Rufus M. Jones (1863-1948), and used as the epigraph to Joan Fry's *For Fellowship and Freedom: Some Aspects of the Society of Friends*, which outlined the central tenets of the new Quakerism.⁶⁵ Arnold is an implicit presence in much of what will follow, particularly the call in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) for artistic culture to occupy a prominent position within society.⁶⁶ Arnold was not advocating culture as a replacement for religion, but rather as its complement. For Arnold, culture encourages mankind to aspire to loftier things, 'culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world'.⁶⁷ Arnold argued that nonconformists miss out on the inspiring potential of culture due to their tendency to 'Hebraise' (to 'sacrifice all other sides of [their] being to the religious side'), and so have 'developed one side of their humanity at the expense of all others, and have become

⁶³ 'John Woolman', appeared in the Arts and Crafts journal *The Vineyard* in May 1912, and is reproduced in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 221-232. Harrison makes a brief reference to George Fox in 'The Practice of the Presence of God', a paper delivered to York Friends on 9th October 1904. Papers of Lucy Harrison, Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 5/1/4/3, 1896-1909.

⁶⁴ Stephan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 61-62, 64, 75-78. See also Matthew LaGrone, 'The Anglican Imagination of Matthew Arnold', *Journal of Anglican Studies*, Vol. 8. Iss. 2, (November 2010), pp. 200-218.

⁶⁵ In 1920 Jones argued that Quaker schools had long provided pupils with a strong grounding in 'genuine culture', which included a literary education. Jones, *Later Periods*, p. 684. I discuss Quaker cultural education in more detail in chapter one. Fry's pamphlet took as its epigraph the final stanza of Arnold's 'Monica's Last Prayer' (1867): 'Creeds pass, rites change, no altar standeth whole. Yet we her memory, as she prayed, will keep, Keep by this: Life in God, and union there!' Joan Fry, *For Fellowship and Freedom: Some Aspects of the Society of Friends*, York: c. 1914; reproduced in Hamm, *Quaker Writings*, p. 313. As chapter two reveals, Harrison's essays and lectures are peppered with allusions to Ruskin.

⁶⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1869] 1960).

⁶⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 6.

incomplete and mutilated men in consequence'.⁶⁸ To 'develop their full humanity more perfectly', Arnold suggested, nonconformists should add culture's 'sweetness and light' to their religious 'zeal'.⁶⁹ Arnold and Ruskin were hugely influential figures in nineteenth-century Britain, and greater attention needs to be paid to the impact of their thinking upon the Quaker community.⁷⁰ Although never defined as such, the pursuit of an Arnoldian 'sweetness and light' wafts through the following case studies. During the 1880s pupils at the Mount School can be found enjoying musical concerts, painting classes, and excursions to Castle Howard and York Minster. A decade or so later Lucy Harrison was championing the spiritual imperatives of artistic and literary beauty in her essays and lectures, and by the beginning of the twentieth century YFSM were holding meetings in the extensive gardens of Clifton Lodge on summer afternoons. By combining the religious and the literary, York Friends brought themselves into line with wider cultural discourses and drew them away from the marginal, self-enclosed position they had occupied at the beginning of the century.

Reading: history, theory, practice

As well as making interventions into Quaker historiography, this thesis contributes to reader history – a dynamic area of scholarship that has a history of its own.⁷¹ Following Roland Barthes's pronouncement of the 'death of the author' in the late 1960s there emerged an area of theoretical enquiry known as 'reader-response theory', which sought

⁶⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 11, 14.

⁶⁹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ For more on Arnold and Ruskin's significance to nineteenth- and early-twentieth century culture and readers, see Baldick, *Social Mission*, p. 60; Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, *The Social Impact of the Arts: An Intellectual History*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, [2008] 2010), pp. 27-28, 136; Simon Dentith, *Society and Cultural Forms in Nineteenth Century England*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 9, 75; Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement 1860-1900*, (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 3-4; Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, (London: Pimlico, [1968] 1991), p. 54; William R. McKelvy, *The English Cult of Literature: Devoted Readers 1774-1880*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), p. 2; Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day: Women Who Invented the Twentieth Century*, (London: Verso, 2010), pp. 28-29.

⁷¹ Stephen Colclough's illuminating introduction to *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695-1870*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) (pp. 1-28) pointed me towards several of the examples I discuss in the following pages.

to conceptualise readers as the creators of textual meaning.⁷² In her survey of the field in 1987, Elizabeth Freund listed ‘the mock reader (Gibson), the implied reader (Booth and Iser), the model reader (Eco), the super-reader (Riffaterre), the inscribed or encoded reader (Brooke-Rose), and the ideal reader (Culler), the literant (Holland), the actual reader (Jauss), the informed reader or the interpretive community (Fish)’.⁷³ The problem with all of these theories, as William Sherman pointed out in 1995, is that they include ‘every kind of reader except the real and historical’.⁷⁴ Over the past twenty years the focus has shifted from theory to history, with studies grounding their discussions in specific reader experiences. Nevertheless, reader history remains a nascent discipline. As William St. Clair put it in 2004, ‘The history of reading is at the stage of astronomy before telescopes, economics before statistics, heavily reliant on a few commonly repeated traditional narratives and favourite anecdotes, but weak on the spade-work of basic empirical research’.⁷⁵

One of the significant contributions of this study is the breadth of primary material it uncovers. Most reader historians will be lucky to work with a handful of diaries, letters, and notebooks recording the reading experiences of particular groups and individuals. Turn-of-the-century Friends in York, however, have left behind an array of materials documenting their personal and collective reading practices. For example, the minute books of YFSM offer suggestive glimpses into the dynamics of collective reading in action.

⁷² See Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, in *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142-148.

⁷³ Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism*, (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 7.

⁷⁴ William Sherman, *John Dee: the Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 55.

⁷⁵ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 10. Much ‘spade work’ is currently being carried out by the Reading Experience Database (RED) project at the Open University. According to the project website RED has ‘amassed over 30,000 records of reading experiences’ in Britain between 1450 and 1945, and RED’s online bibliography provides an impressive list of recent publications on reader histories from the Medieval Ages to the present day. See <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/index.html> [accessed 17.4.2013].

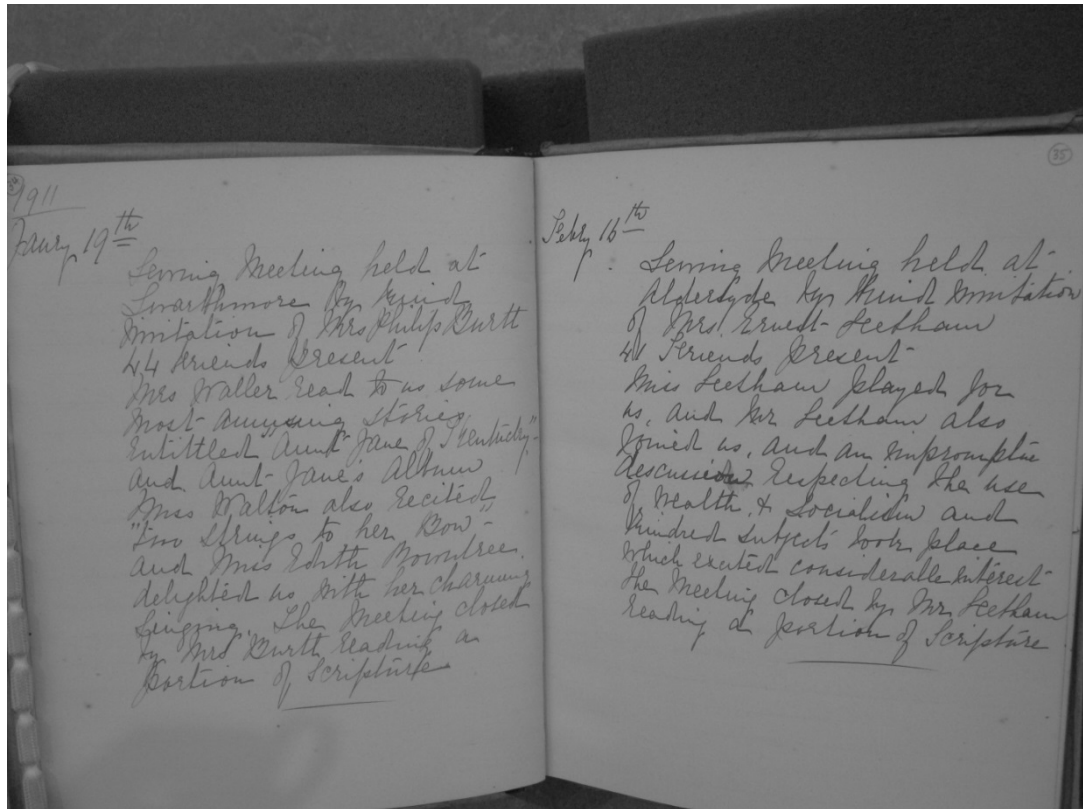


Figure 1: YFSM minute book

In chapter three I discuss in detail what these reading occasions suggest about the relationship between reading, the social and political, the public and private. What I want to foreground here is the revealing information these minutes provide about the dynamics of the YFSM reading community. The minute on page thirty-four (see *Figure 1*) provides comprehensive information about the proceedings: the date (January 19th 1911), location (Mrs Burt's home, Swarthmore), number of friends present (44), texts read aloud (*Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, in particular the chapter 'Aunt Jane's Album'; 'Two Strings to her Bow'), and who read them (Mrs Waller and Miss Walton). Cumulatively these minutes build up a picture of this reading community in action, textually mirroring the sequence of the meeting and hinting at the dynamics between members. One gets glimpses of individuals vying for a moment in the foreground, particular women emerging as prominent. Mrs Waller, for instance, is often recorded as reading aloud – particularly novels written in American dialect such as Eliza Calvert Hall's *Aunt Jane of Kentucky* (1909), suggesting Waller was a confident performer, perhaps, adept at doing accents (although she may just have been a poor seamstress). On the opposite page the minutes for February 16th 1911 demonstrate that reading took place alongside other activities such as piano-playing, sewing and debate during the course of a meeting,

combinations which, as I discuss in chapter three, shaped the ways in which YFSM responded to different texts.

Yet while they give the appearance of scrupulously recording the group's activities, the YFSM minutes are nevertheless peppered with frustrating ellipses. We learn that YFSM found *Aunt Jane* 'amusing', but are told nothing about their response to 'Two Strings to Her Bow'. Partly such ellipses serve as a reminder that reconstructing reader experience is a piecemeal process based on incomplete evidence. But they also reveal how any text-based reconstruction of reader experience is dealing with the representation of reading rather than the experience itself. This need not be a methodological shortcoming, I would argue, as representations of reading can unwittingly convey implicit assumptions and values. For example, a requirement of Quaker minutes is that they encode the consensus of the group (as anyone who has had to participate in a lengthy Quaker business meeting will attest), absorbing individual opinions into a unified community voice and providing a textual echo of Quakerism's emphasis on the close relationship between individual and community. As a representation of communal reading practices, then, the YFSM minutes reflect these Quaker values by presenting the group's response to particular texts as singular rather than heterogeneous.

Like all of the Quaker readers in this thesis, members of YFSM belonged to what Stanley Fish famously termed an 'interpretative community': a group of individuals 'who share interpretative strategies' through which they collectively constitute the 'properties' and 'intentions' of a text.⁷⁶ As this thesis shows, turn-of-the-century Quaker readers in York held a common set of assumptions about how to interpret texts, looking to books for moral messages, role models, and spiritual insights. Of course, this interpretative community wasn't a fixed entity. As Fish points out, over time interpretative communities 'grow larger and decline, and individuals move from one to another'.⁷⁷ Many of York's female Friends belonged to several reading communities at once, each of which offered slightly different ways of reading: the activities of YFSM, for example, were unlike those on offer at YFBS meetings or one of Lucy Harrison's lectures. Nevertheless, each of the interpretative communities contained within York

⁷⁶ Stanley Fish, 'Interpreting the *Variorum*', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1976), pp. 465-485 (p. 483). See also Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 303-321.

⁷⁷ Fish, 'Interpreting', p. 484.

Quaker Meeting was to some extent united by its members' similar class, political, and religious outlooks.

Quakers, reading and religion

A central argument of this thesis is that imaginative literature was integral to the belief, identity and practice of York's Quaker community at the turn of the century. This runs counter to the Marxist narratives which posit that literature came to replace religion as a primary agent of social control in late nineteenth century society.⁷⁸ As several religious historians have demonstrated, the idea that the nineteenth century saw a continual march towards secularisation is inaccurate, as religion remained a prevalent component of public and private life for many groups and individuals.⁷⁹ William McKelvy's important recent work has uncovered the overlaps between literature and religion across the period 1770 and 1880, defining the era as one in which 'literature assumes a religious vocation in modern Britain in concert with the creation of a reading nation'.⁸⁰ Yet McKelvy identifies an end to this narrative in the 1880s, making the claim that 'after

⁷⁸ Baldick, *Social Mission*, pp. 60-62; Dentith, *Cultural Forms*, p. 28; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, pp. 20-23; Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, p. 136; Peter Widdowson, *Re-Reading English*, (London and New York: Routledge, [1992] 2003), p. 5.

⁷⁹ There have recently been several important challenges to and correctives of the so-called secularisation thesis. Though he contentiously suggests that Christianity came to an abrupt end in the 1960s, Callum Brown maintains that during the nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Britain was 'a highly religious nation'. Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 9. Joy Dixon pithily maintains that 'It is increasingly clear that 'secularisation theory' [...] is untenable'. Joy Dixon, 'Modernist heterodoxy and the transformation of religious cultures', in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries (eds.), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*, (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 211. Frances Knight suggests that while Anglicanism lost some of its influence during the century, this was due not to people abandoning religion altogether but rather due to the increasing popularity of non-conformist denominations. Moreover, Knight argues, throughout the century 'Religion was an important element in the cementing of national identity, and Protestantism was a particularly effective form of glue'. Frances Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: I. B. Taurus, 2008), pp. 6-9, 64-65. Phyllis Mack contends that the history of secularization involves not the marginalization of religion but rather the interaction of religion with Enlightenment values: an interaction which fostered 'a culture in which religious values were fundamental'. According to Mack, the lives of Quaker women in particular exemplify this interaction. Phyllis Mack, 'Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism', *Signs*, Vol. 29 No. 1, (Autumn 2003, The University of Chicago Press), p. 161. Ian Packer has uncovered palpable cross-currents between the Rowntree family's nonconformist beliefs and their liberal politics, revealing in the process that Edwardian society was far less secularised than has previously been thought. Packer, 'Religion and the New Liberalism', p. 236. Charles Taylor traces a narrative in which religious belief neither tails off nor retreats into private life, but rather becomes 'one option among others'. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 1-3.

⁸⁰ McKelvy, *Cult of English Literature*, p. 4.

1880 the state no longer had a substantial religious identity for literature to challenge’, and contending that the Education Act of 1880 rendered the relationship between literacy and religious instruction obsolete, as literacy ‘became a kind of right guaranteed by the state’.⁸¹ In these contexts, McKelvy argues, literature and literary education became aligned with nation rather than religion.⁸² Yet as this thesis will show, the alignment of literature with nation did not preclude a continued close relationship between literature and religion. Indeed, for York’s Quaker readers literature became a means by which to bring together dissenting religious identity with an established – and in some ways establishment – vision of nation.

This thesis argues that literature both facilitated the private fellowship between York Quaker women and inspired them to pursue public activity. Reading was an important means by which Quaker women participated in the public sphere. Discussions of the public sphere usually take as their point of departure Jürgen Habermas’s influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962, trans. 1989), in which Habermas identified the rise during the eighteenth century of a ‘bourgeois public sphere’ in which individuals came together to engage in rational debate independently of the state.⁸³ This bourgeois public was, Habermas contended, ‘from the outset [...] a reading public’.⁸⁴ As historians subsequently remarked, *Structural Transformation* made ‘anti-religious assumptions’ and demonstrated a ‘neglect of religion’ in its theorising.⁸⁵ More recently, however, Habermas ‘has turned increasingly to questions of religion’ in his work, and scholars have begun attending to the ways in which religious practices and ideologies were never separate from the public but played – and continue to play – an influential role in shaping the public sphere.⁸⁶ Throughout

⁸¹ McKelvy, *Cult of English Literature*, pp. 2-3, 33-34.

⁸² McKelvy, *Cult of English Literature*, p. 34.

⁸³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by MIT, (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1962, trans. 1989] 1992), pp. 27, 30, 32-33.

⁸⁴ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, p. 23.

⁸⁵ Craig Calhoun, quoted in Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 3.

⁸⁶ Calhoun, quoted in Butler et. al., *Religion in the Public Sphere*, p. 3. See for example Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularisation: On Reason and Religion*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007). For recent debates about the role of religion in the public sphere see Butler, et. al., *Religion in the Public Sphere*, pp. 15-33, 1; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 1-3, 16, 18-20.

this thesis I will be using the term ‘public’ in a wider sense than the Habermasian version of the term, which conceptualises a bourgeois public sphere independent of religion and the state, to incorporate all forms of public activity that existed beyond the immediate circles of the home and the Quaker community. It is this broader version of ‘public’ that would have been familiar to the women in this thesis. Joyce Goodman and Camilla Leach have noted that nineteenth-century Quakers ‘did not acknowledge a rigid distinction between religious, social and political spheres’, and the same holds true of turn-of-the-century Friends.⁸⁷ In 1918 the former Mount scholar Lucy Fryer Morland (1864-1945) argued that Quakers’ public participation had ‘made obsolete the old lines of separation between philanthropy and politics, between religious and secular’.⁸⁸ For York’s Quaker women, reading together in the more private circles of their religious community enabled these women to cultivate and reinforce the beliefs and identities that helped to inspire their participation in public life. As this thesis shows, the literary education offered at the Mount encouraged pupils to develop an awareness of themselves as female Quaker citizens with a role to play in guiding the local community; Lucy Harrison’s publications emerged from her privately-nurtured responses to literature; while for YFSM, reading bolstered the group’s philanthropic and political campaigning.

Quakers, reading and gender

Women remain an under-researched category of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reader history. The most comprehensive work remains Kate Flint’s monumental *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (1993), though recent scholarship has provided welcome investigations of the reading practices of American and European female readers, such as the 2011 special issue of the journal *Women’s Writing* on ‘Women Readers in Europe: Readers, Writers, Salonnières, 1750-1900’ and Barbara Sicherman’s discussion of a generation of readers born during America’s Gilded Age (c. 1877-1929) in *Well Read Lives: How Books inspired a Generation of American Women* (2010). In her study

⁸⁷ Joyce Goodman and Camilla Leach, ‘At the centre if a circle whose circumference spans all nations’: Quaker women and the Ladies Committee of the British and Foreign School Society 1813-37’, Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 53-69 (p. 53).

⁸⁸ Lucy Fryer Morland, *The New Social Outlook*, (London: Headley Bros. Publishers Ltd., 1918), p. 45.

Flint highlighted how reader-response theorists had overlooked the woman reader altogether, while feminist critics had tended to present her as an essentialised type, ignoring the differences between ‘the fifteen-year-old or the grandmother, the woman on a Yorkshire farm or the society hostess’.⁸⁹ With this in mind I seek to contribute an account of female reading practices that is generationally, historically, and regionally specific. More importantly, however, my discussions acknowledge the influence of religious affiliation, a factor that has been largely ignored in accounts of Victorian and Edwardian female readers.⁹⁰

The Quaker women who appear in the following pages were largely upper-middle class. As Sheila Wright has shown, from the 1820s onwards York Monthly Meeting ‘had become prominently middle-class, with an increasingly large upper-class element’, almost seventy per cent of members falling into either the Class I or II demographic (the families of doctors, managers, surveyors, and so on).⁹¹ This is not to say, of course, that no lower-middle and working-class female Friends attended YFBS or YFSM. During this period Quaker women of different backgrounds were coming together to exchange ideas, particularly through educational initiatives such as the Adult Schools Movement and the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.⁹² But in the documents I have used in this thesis it is primarily upper-middle-class, prominent Quaker family names that appear. While these provide only a partial view of York’s Quaker readers, they are nevertheless the ones who emerged from the material. Although the female Friends I discuss in this thesis were no doubt influential, it remains for the social

⁸⁹ Flint, *Woman Reader*, p. 42.

⁹⁰ Religion was a significant omission from Flint’s study, mentioned only in passing. Flint, *Woman Reader*, pp. 37, 51, 66, 72, 80-81, 216, 220-222.

⁹¹ Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 109. This pattern was typical of nineteenth-century Quakers, who predominantly fell into the Class I socio-economic category. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 171, 173.

⁹² At the beginning of the century Ruth Slate and Eva Slawson, two working-class friends from London who shared an interest in Quakerism, recoded favourable impressions of meeting prominent female Friends such as Joan Fry and living-in as students at Woodbrooke Quaker study centre. See Tierl Thompson (ed.), *Dear Girl: the diaries and letters of two working women 1897-1917*, (London: The Women’s Press, 1987), pp. 89-90, 116-117, 125, 198-224. However, Ruth’s descriptions of working as a welfare worker in Rowntree’s Cocoa Factory during the First World War suggest she seldom mixed with the women of York Quaker Meeting, attending Leeman Road Meeting house instead (pp. 297-300). For more on the Adult Schools Movement and Woodbrooke Centre see Robert Davis (ed.), *Woodbrooke: 1903-1953, A Brief History of a Quaker Experiment in Religious Education*, (London: The Bannisdale Press, 1953); Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 44-45, 171-196; Freeman, ‘No finer school’, pp. 245-62; Freeman, *Charitable Trust*.

historian to determine the extent to which these women set the tone for their community more generally.

As residents of York these Quaker women belonged to a regional community that could boast a lively literary scene. While nineteenth-century York was a popular tourist destination perceived to be ‘off the map of modernization’, as Charles Dellheim has suggested, this is not to say that the city was a provincial backwater.⁹³ Nineteenth-century York was networked into the exciting cultural developments being forged in London and other large cities across the nation. In addition to its lively Philosophical and Archaeology Societies, which brought touring lecturers into the city to discuss the latest cultural, scientific and philosophical ideas, York also played host to public readings by celebrated novelists such as Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863).⁹⁴ Residents were kept up-to-date with literature through York’s subscription library, which had been founded 1794 and was offering over two hundred thousand titles by mid-century, with a public library opening in 1893.⁹⁵

While it is safe to assume that York Friends participated in many of the city’s cultural activities, the Quaker community also had an active literary life of its own. At the turn of the century YFBS continued to host annual conversaziones alongside monthly meetings in which members swapped books and heard lectures on writers such as Barrett Browning, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), and Tagore.⁹⁶ York Friends’ literary activities enjoyed metropolitan connections. Lucy Harrison, a regular speaker at YFBS, brought her Bloomsbury education and avant-garde connections with her to York in the 1890s, while members of YFSM were associated with pioneering suffragists such as Josephine Butler (1828-1906) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902). These women’s kinship networks also meant that they and their families travelled regularly

⁹³ Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: the Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 112-13.

⁹⁴ P.M. Tillott (ed.), *A History of the County of York: the City of York*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 289.

⁹⁵ York’s public library merged with the Mechanics Institute in 1917. Tillott (ed.), *County of York*, p. 536.

⁹⁶ *Record of York Friends’ Book Society*, J 2.3. YFBS had a counterpart on the other side of Yorkshire, where the Bradford Friends Literary Association also met monthly to discuss the work of contemporary writers such as Edmund Gosse (1849–1928), J. M. Barrie (1860–1937), and Elizabeth Von Arnim (1866–1941). Bradford Friends’ Literary Association, *Minute Book of the Bradford Friends Literary Association*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University: Manuscripts MS Dept. 1979/1 (Carlton Hill Archive), 3 vols. N131-N133, c. 1840-1905.

between York and major cities such as London, as well as to America.⁹⁷ As a consequence these Quakers' regional reading practices were not divorced from metropolitan debates, fashions and tastes; as we shall see, York Friends often sought to inscribe York and Yorkshire into the national literary narratives that were being developed during this period.

In an era before female enfranchisement, reading was an important means by which these Quaker women developed a sense of citizenship and public participation. Gender was notoriously absent from Habermas's initial construction of the bourgeois public sphere. The significance of *Structural Transformation* to gender studies is too lengthy to describe in detail here; suffice it to say that where Habermas failed to explicitly 'theorise gender' and conceptualised the 'privatised individual' as 'consistently, if unconsciously, masculine', much excellent feminist criticism has subsequently revised and expanded Habermas's argument to account for female public participation.⁹⁸ However, the scope of the 'public' in which women could participate remains open to debate. Recently Kathryn Gleadle has defined mid-Victorian women as 'borderline citizens' who, while unable to wield significant power in the 'public realm', often occupied strong positions of authority in what Gleadle terms the 'parochial realm' ('the world of the neighbourhood, workplace, or acquaintance networks').⁹⁹ In this 'community sphere', Gleadle continues,

⁹⁷ As M.P. for York Arnold Rowntree travelled regularly between York and the capital. Packer, *Letters*, p. 17. Members of the Rowntree family such as John Wilhelm had strong transatlantic ties with influential Quaker thinkers such as Rufus M. Jones. See Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', pp. 16-18. Rowntree died while on a trip to New York, and his death was a significant blow to Friends nationally. In the poem 'JWR' (1905), the Scarborough-born Isabella Ann Rowntree suggested that following Rowntree's death it fell to Quakers to continue his pioneering work, concluding 'He guides, - we follow - shall *we* faint or fear?'. Isabella Ann Rowntree, *Poems*, (London: The Friends Book Centre, 1930), pp. 35-36.

⁹⁸ Johanna Meehan (ed.), *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 1; Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1995), p. 239. In addition to *Feminists Read Habermas*, see essays by Seyla Benhabib, Wendy Brown, Joan B. Landes, Anne Philips and Iris Marion Young in Joan B. Landes (ed.), *Feminism, the Public and the Private*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), and essays by Nancy Fraser and Mary P. Ryan in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992).

⁹⁹ Joan B. Landes, 'The Public and the Private: A Feminist Reconsideration', in Landes, *Feminism, the Public and the Private* p. 97.

⁹⁹ Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 17-18. Gleadle draws upon Lyn H. Lofland's concept of 'Public' and 'parochial' realms here. See Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory*, (New York, 1998), pp. 11-14.

women could accrue considerable authority as individual agents through philanthropy, economic status, local print culture, family connections, and their own political efforts. Social status and educational privilege were, in these contexts, often more important than gender in structuring the contours of female opportunity.¹⁰⁰

The Quaker women of this study occupied prominent positions in this parochial sphere. As well as her talks to Quaker audiences and publications in the Quaker press, Lucy Harrison lectured to local communities such as York's Anti-Vivisection Society. Harrison's social background and educational history lent weight to her public pronouncements, and hers was an influential voice. Members of YFSM were also figureheads in the local community, spearheading philanthropic activities and taking leadership roles in suffrage and peace campaigns. However, these women's horizons were not hemmed in by local preoccupations. Harrison's literary and educational work engaged with the latest debates and scholarship, while members of YFSM responded to national developments in peace and suffrage campaigns, missionary concerns, and crises in international relations.

As this thesis will show, these women's public participation was promoted by their reading. Women's literary interventions into the public sphere have proved a hot topic amongst feminist historians. Joan B. Landes was the first to draw attention to Habermas's distinction (often overlooked by early scholarship) between a political public sphere, from which women were debarred, and a literary public sphere (the world of salon discussion and essay publications) in which women could participate.¹⁰¹ Recent research has uncovered ways in which women participated in literary public discourses during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁰² Yet 'literary

¹⁰⁰ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, pp. 17-18. See also pp. 47, 71-71, 126-146.

¹⁰¹ Landes, 'Public and Private', p. 97. See Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 23, 162-163. Research into eighteenth-century women's involvement in this literary public has flourished over the past decade or so. See for example: Markman Ellis, 'Coffee-Women, the spectator and the public sphere in the early eighteenth century', in Eger (ed.), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere*; Tedra Suzanne Osell, 'Tattling Women in the Public Sphere: Rhetorical Femininity and the English Essay Periodical', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38: 2, 2005, pp. 283-300; Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Carolyn Steedman, 'Poetical Maids and Cooks Who Wrote', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39:1, 2005, pp. 1-27.

¹⁰² Maria DiCenzo, Lucy Delap and Leila Ryan, *Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals and the Public Sphere*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 25-26; Ruth Hoberman, 'Women in the British Museum Reading Room During the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century: From Quasi- to Counterpublic', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 28 No. 3, (Autumn 2002), pp. 490-491.

public' remains a deceptively broad category. While publication is easier to categorise as a form of public intervention, what of the more private activity of reading? J. A. Downie has taken exception to the fact that 'Apparently undismayed, Habermas represents women as participants in the public sphere as readers' because the notion of a publicly-involved reader is an oxymoron.¹⁰³ For Downie, reading is only ever a private act and so remains divorced from public participation.¹⁰⁴

I would challenge this view. As I hope to show, as both a private and a collective activity reading can foster a sense of citizenship and provide a spur to public activity. This was especially true for female readers at the turn of the twentieth century. Before the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, 1882 and 1893 gave women independent legal status, and the Representation of the People Act of 1928 ensured votes for all women over the age of twenty one, 'a woman could not', in Linda Colley's words, 'by definition be a citizen'.¹⁰⁵ But as Colley reminds us, the absence of recognised legal and political status did not prevent women from becoming politically involved in a variety of ways, and 'The true position of women was more diverse than the statute books suggested'.¹⁰⁶ In associating reading with political consciousness I realise I risk committing what Jonathan Rose calls one of the 'common fallacies' of reader-response theorists: assuming that 'all literature is political, in the sense that it always influences the political consciousness of the reader'.¹⁰⁷ To be sure, not all acts of reading are occasions of consciousness-raising; but it seems to me that 'political consciousness' glosses over the more subtle ways in which reading can influence an individual's sense of citizenship. Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose have proposed 'an understanding of citizenship as subjectivity' that 'captures the complexities of citizenship as both highly individualised and, at the same time, a collectively invoked

¹⁰³ J. A. Downie, 'Public and Private: The Myth of the Bourgeois Public Sphere', in Cynthia Wall (ed.), *A Precise Companion to the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 70.

¹⁰⁴ Downie, 'Public and Private', p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p. 239.

¹⁰⁷ Jonathan Rose, 'Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1992), pp. 47-70 (p. 48).

social identity and subject position'.¹⁰⁸ Reading, I want to suggest, enabled York's female Friends to bring into being a subjective sense of their individual and collective social roles, for, as Simon Dentith reminds us, '[c]ultural forms and genres [...] are ways of negotiating social relations, historically created resources which people use to make sense of their lives and to manage their place in the world in relation to others'.¹⁰⁹ York's Quaker women used literature to renegotiate the contours of their social identities: from Mount School pupils working through Ruskin together in the 1880s; to Lucy Harrison expounding the important role women have to play in shaping educational and literary discourse; to YFSM reading novels whose strident heroines networked them into an 'imagined community', to borrow Benedict Anderson's term, of pioneering women who inspired members' public campaign work.¹¹⁰

Despite their public activities, however, the ideology of separate gendered spheres nevertheless remained a presence in these Quaker women's lives. The notion that middle-class men and women inhabited separate, gendered spheres – women confined to the private and domestic sphere of the home, while men sallied forth into the public world of work and politics – proved influential to early social histories of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British society.¹¹¹ Subsequent historiography has sought to problematize the separate spheres model by exploring the ways in which men and women moved between the two.¹¹² Yet as Kathryn Gleadle points out, 'a

¹⁰⁸ Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose, 'Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations', in Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose (eds.), *Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivities*, (Padstow: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002), pp. 1-2, 5-6.

¹⁰⁹ Dentith, *Cultural Forms*, p. 182. See also Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day: Women Who Invented the Twentieth Century*, (London: Verso, 2010), p. 1.

¹¹⁰ In his discussion of the formation of national identities, Benedict Anderson defines an imagined community as a group of people who are unlikely to meet but nevertheless share a sense of common heritage and experience. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, [1983] 1991), p. 36.

¹¹¹ See for example Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Catherine Hall's essays 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology' and 'Gender Divisions and Class Formation in the Birmingham Middle Class, 1780-1850', in *White, Male, and Middle Class*, (New York: Routledge, 1992); Martha Vicinus, *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. ix-x.

¹¹² Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers (eds.), *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, pp. 226-276; Simon Morgan, *Victorian Women's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, (Yale: New Haven, 1999); Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), pp. 383-414; Amanda Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power: Women in Politics: 1850 to the Present*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

recognition of the porosity between 'public' and 'private' should not blind us to the fact that contemporaries often did make a qualitative distinction between the two'.¹¹³

This was certainly true of the Quaker women in this study. Early work on Quaker women suggested female Friends had been the exception to the rule of separate spheres. As early as 1933 A. Ruth Fry asserted that 'the home, and the home only, has never been considered to be the whole sphere of Quaker women's lives', and an image of Quaker women at the 'vanguard' of women's public participation was promoted by early feminist Quaker historians.¹¹⁴ More recent scholarship, however, has taken a tentative view of Quaker women's public involvement, highlighting how during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries the Religious Society of Friends held ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards female participation in wider society as well as in the corporate life of the Meeting.¹¹⁵ The idea, if not the ideal, of separate spheres remained a subtle yet tenacious presence within turn-of-the-century Quakerism. Amongst Edwardian Quakers, some female Friends campaigned for women's freedom to step out of the home just as others recommended she remain within it.¹¹⁶ Despite the fact that, as Holton suggests, female Friends experienced the public and private spheres as 'two mutually defining worlds; permeable and shape-shifting spheres in which both men and women participated', broadly speaking the two remained distinct to York's Quaker women.¹¹⁷ These middle-class Friends often upheld a notion of separate spheres, even as they traversed the borders between the two. While Mount pupils' education prepared them for public roles it also ensured they were equipped to run efficient middle-class homes. Though Lucy Harrison remained single and childless, lived with a female partner, and advocated female involvement in public life she nevertheless tended to present women's ideal civic contributions as stemming from marriage and motherhood. And for all their public campaigning, members of

¹¹³ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 60.

¹¹⁴ A. Ruth Fry, *Quaker Ways: An attempt to explain Quaker beliefs and practices and to illustrate them by the lives and activities of Friends of former days*, (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1933), p. 42; Dunn, 'Latest Light', p. 77.

¹¹⁵ Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 107-08; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 210-236; Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent', p. 240; Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 49. See also Mack, 'Religion, Feminism, Agency', pp. 145-177.

¹¹⁶ Julia Bush, 'Caroline Stephen and the Opposition to British Women's Suffrage', *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 15 Iss. 1, (2010), Birmingham: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, pp. 32-52; Holton, *Quaker Women*, pp. 200-221.

¹¹⁷ Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 226.

YFSM read novels that present women's ideal location as the domestic sphere. Reading, I will argue, provided these Quaker women with opportunities to work through these contradictory attitudes towards their public and private roles.

Structuring the material

The structure and organisation of this thesis has been led by the surviving data, exploring the various contexts in which my evidence suggests that female Friends in York engaged with literature. Chapter one centres around the school diaries of Hannah Hodgkinson (1869-1958) and Gertrude Nicholson (1869-1955), students at the Mount School between 1884 and 1888. I argue that literature was a central component of Quaker education, used to cultivate pupils' sense of female Quaker identity in both public and private life, but that students resisted these teachings as much as they welcomed them. In chapter two I examine the papers and biography of Lucy Harrison, Mount School headmistress from 1890 to 1901. I reveal how Harrison re-inscribed Quakerism into a canonical genealogy of English literature as a means to bring this nonconformist community from the margins to the centre of the nation's heritage. I also suggest that Harrison was influential in promoting literature as a source of spiritual teaching. Chapter three unpicks the third volume of minute books of YFSM, which cover the years 1906-1927, exploring the ways in which reading promoted a shared sense of fellowship and conviction between these Quaker women and inspired their politicised activities. All three chapters uncover the ways in which Quaker readers used literature to conceptualise an 'imagined community' of writers and readers belonging to a Protestant national community that transcended the denominational boundaries enforced in social practice.

This material covers a time-span between roughly 1885 and 1925, and therefore my thesis necessarily, but also deliberately, cuts across conventional categories of historical periodization: in literature (Victorian and Modernist); Quaker historiography (pre- and post-1860 [the date when Friends were no longer disowned for marrying outside of the Society] or pre- and post- the Manchester Conference of 1895); and British history (Victorian and Edwardian, nineteenth and twentieth century, pre- and post-First World War). My decision to defy historical categorization stems from my ambivalence about retrospectively organising periods of time around large-scale socio-

political events and epochs. In part I am in agreement with Joan Kelly-Gadol, who in her famous essay ‘Did Women Have a Renaissance?’ sought ‘to call into question accepted schemes of periodization’ by foregrounding that ‘events that further the historical development of men, [...] have quite different, even opposite, effects upon women’.¹¹⁸ To be sure, in an era before female enfranchisement and wide-scale employment opportunities for middle-class women, the experience of these female Friends differed from those of their male counterparts. Yet putting gender to one side, historic periodization also remains risky for the way it imposes retrospective narratives based on a sequential sense of history that would not have been apparent to those living through it. Instead, I intend to place the onus on a more immediate and personal sense of time passing. The generational overlaps between the women featured in my study, and their experiences of belonging to different communities within the wider Quaker Meeting, delineated continuities and changes other than the histories of wider society. For example, H. Winifred Sturge and Theodora Clark’s *The Mount School York: 1785 to 1814, 1831 to 1931* (1931), a book written by the two Old Scholars to celebrate the School’s centenary, is divided into chapters with headings such as ‘New Buildings at the Mount: Limitations in the Sixties’, ‘Susan Scott and her Times’, or, simply, ‘Lucy Harrison’.¹¹⁹ It was partly through these generational exchanges that York’s female Friends cultivated their literary taste, to paraphrase Lucy Harrison’s term, continuing, developing, and in some cases rejecting the traditions and values that had been passed on to them. By the turn of the twentieth century the practice of reading – both individually and in community – had become established as an ‘absolute and legitimate necessit[y]’ to the belief and identity of this community of female Friends.

¹¹⁸ Joan Kelly-Gadol, ‘Did Women Have a Renaissance?’, in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz and Susan Stuard (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, second edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, [1977] 1987), pp. 174-201 (p. 176). See also Joan Kelly-Gadol, ‘The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women’s History’, *Signs*, Vol. 1, no. 4, (Summer 1976), pp. 809-823 (pp. 810-812).

¹¹⁹ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School York*.

CHAPTER ONE

Reading, education and citizenship at the Mount School

One evening in May 1885, fifteen-year-old Hannah Hodgkinson recorded in her school diary how she and her school friends had spent the afternoon playing charades:¹

After tea charades – 1st Welcome.

Well Scene fr. Uncle Tom's Cabin. Rachel = E.E.Bayes; Eliza = Alice Curtis; Harry = one of kids (Waller), Simeon = Josie Whitten; Maid = Dora Sturge; Ruth = Ruth Allan.

Come An editor = Helen; Landlady = Ruth; Fish Wife = May Pike; singing & shouting behind screen (2nd April 1885; p. 5).²

By incorporating Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into their game Hannah and her friends were working through their relationship to the Quaker reading community. As I discussed in my introduction, Stowe's crusading anti-slavery novel famously represented Quakers as agents of political and social justice and was one of the first novels widely read by Friends. In part these pupils' appropriation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* illustrates that literary works were becoming common currency within the York Quaker community of the 1880s. But Hannah's diary entry also reveals how Mount pupils interacted dynamically with the reading practices of their religious community, using a novel associated with moral conviction to facilitate their playful activities.

¹ Pupils at the Mount School appear to have been encouraged to keep records of their time at the institution, and the archives contain several collective and individual school scrapbooks made by pupils and staff during the 1890s and 1900s. It is unclear, however, whether Gertrude and Hannah's school diaries, which detail the daily activities of their life at the school, were produced for private, personal reflection or were intended to be shared publicly. While Gertrude notes at one point that during a visit to a members of the local Meeting, 'I found aunt Rachel was reading my diary wh. Aunt Maria had told me to bring with me', the first page of Hannah's diary states 'Strictly Private'. 'Aunt Maria' possibly refers to Maria Heath Richardson, a prominent female member of the local Quaker Meeting; no relation of Gertrude's, 'Aunt' in this context would signify familiarity and respect. Hannah K. Hodgkinson, *School Diary, 1885*, The University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 6/6/1/4. Gertrude's diary is incorrectly catalogued in the Mount archives as being the school diary of 'G. Wilson'. The archives contain only the second volume of her diary, which perhaps explains the muddles over the dates in the catalogue. G. Nicholson, *Diary: Second Volume, November 16th 1884 – November 25th 1885*, University of York: The Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 6/6/1/3.

² While 'Well' is an easier scene to decipher, I have not managed to glean what 'an editor' has to do with 'Come'.

In this chapter I argue that literature was presented both by York's Quaker community and the Religious Society of Friends in Britain as an important educational tool for shaping liberal, cultured, and informed Quaker citizens. The female citizenship promoted at the Mount was one in which Quakers actively participated in what they conceived as an ecumenical Protestant nation, but in which, as I will show, women's social roles were gendered and unequal. Quaker education established reading as a common and quotidian part of a Quaker's life from an early stage, presenting it as central to the personal development of the Quaker young woman. Practices of communal reading – from class lessons to conversaciones, teatime discussions to recitations during sewing meetings – invited Mount School pupils to enter into York's adult Quaker community, highlighting the ways in which reading bound this religious group together. My reading of the Mount School diaries of Hannah Hodgkinson and Gertrude Nicholson, which run from 1885 to 1886, suggests that Quaker young women by turns welcomed, resisted, and renegotiated the Quaker community's complicated uses of literature.

Both Gertrude and Hannah came from Quaker families. Hannah, who hailed from Stockport, entered the Mount school in August 1884 while Gertrude arrived a year later.³ Though Gertrude's family were living in Sunderland while she was at the Mount, they had been based in Canada up until at least 1881.⁴ Hannah's school diary is far longer than Gertrude's, running between January 1885 and July 1886, while Gertrude's is just a few pages long and lasts from late November to early December 1885. The two girls' diaries are very different in tone: Hannah tends to list events and offer brief wry comments, while Gertrude is far more descriptive and conveys a strong sense of interiority. Despite these stylistic differences the two diaries convey similarly ambivalent responses to the local Quaker community. This tension is particularly apparent in the girls' records of reading, reflecting the fact that they had to negotiate uneven and contradictory messages about the roles they could occupy as Quaker young women.

³ The Mount School, *Register of Pupils*, University of York: The Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 6/1/1/4/1.

⁴ *Census of Canada, 1871 and 1881* [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009; accessed 16.2.2012. Precisely why Gertrude's family returned to the UK is unclear, though the fact that her father originally came from England may have had something to do with it. Gertrude's birth certificate lists her father's profession as farmer. *Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869-1913* [database online]. (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009); accessed 16.2.2012. I am grateful to Hilary Evans and Hazel Shaw for helping me to find information about Gertrude and Hannah's family histories.

Women's education in the nineteenth century

Arriving at the Mount in the mid-1880s, Gertrude and Hannah entered the school during an exciting time for female education. Prior to the 1870s the education of young women had been, in the words of Joan F. Burstyn's early study, 'unsystematic'.⁵ For many middle-class girls learning took place at home, under the supervision of parents or governesses, or in small, private schools that provided upper- and upper-middle-class young ladies with schooling (or 'finishing') in such genteel arts as needlework, deportment, and handwriting. Such training was ostensibly designed to equip young women with the skills to run efficient and suitably leisured middle-class homes, and so sought to reinforce separate spheres ideologies.⁶ Within this context Quaker schools stood out as offering an education that prepared young women for participation in certain spheres of public, as well as private, life.

In the first half of the nineteenth century York was something of a hub of private schools for genteel young ladies. Maria Paschalidi estimates that between 1800 and 1850 there were over one hundred such establishments in the city, providing girls with a limited education in domestic accomplishments.⁷ According to Paschalidi the one exception was the Quaker girls' school, which provided a broader education than was available elsewhere.⁸ The school began life in 1785 as Trinity Lane School for Girls, and was run by William and Esther Tuke (1727-1794) with the intention that, as the editors of *The Mount School York* (1931) put it, 'the youth of the Society should be trained in a spiritual atmosphere to become the leaders of the future'.⁹ While the notion that Trinity Lane sought to create female 'leaders' perhaps belongs as much to 1930s retrospect

⁵ Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984), p. 22. For a fascinating discussion of cultural-representations of the nineteenth-century schoolroom, see Elizabeth Gargano, *Reading Victorian Schoolrooms: Childhood and Education in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (London: Routledge, Taylor, & Francis Group, 2008).

⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp. 289-290; Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1981), pp. 41-48; June Purvis, *A History of Women's Education in England*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), pp. 65, 70-72.

⁷ Maria Paschalidi, *'Useful and Elegant Accomplishments': The Education of Middle-Class Girls in York, 1800-1850*, unpublished MA Dissertation, the University of York, 1997, pp. 14-17, 19, 28, 73-75.

⁸ Paschalidi, *Useful and Elegant Accomplishments*, pp. 73-75.

⁹ H. Winifred Sturge and Theodora Clark, *The Mount School York: 1785 to 1814, 1831 to 1931*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1931), pp. 4, 109.

than it does to the aims of eighteenth-century Friends, it nevertheless contains a kernel of truth. Although they may not have been 'leaders' in society, during the eighteenth century it was possible for Quaker women to occupy prominent and significant roles within the Religious Society of Friends.¹⁰ Trinity Lane offered an education that equipped Quaker young women to assume leadership roles within the local Quaker community as well as the home.¹¹ The School prospectus of 1785 advertised instruction in 'the English Language, Writing, and Arithmetic', skills which would prepare Quaker young women to minister and carry out administrative tasks within the Society as much as it trained them for domestic management.¹² Financial problems caused Trinity Lane School to close in 1814, and seventeen years passed before Castlegate School opened amidst concerns about educational provisions for young female Friends in the city.¹³ As the prospectus of 1835 stated, 'The object of the Quarterly Meeting in establishing this School, is to supply religious and good literary education to the daughters of Friends, and those who profess with them, residing within the limits of the Quarterly Meeting of York'.¹⁴ Already the religious was combining with the literary as a means to prepare Quaker young women for informed roles within the home and the religious community, although it should be noted that at this stage 'literary' could refer to literacy as much as to the study of works of literature.¹⁵ Castlegate provided a similarly comprehensive baseline education to some of the most celebrated women's schools in the country. While Cheltenham Ladies College taught 'holy scripture and liturgy, history, geography,

¹⁰ For example, Quakers supported many female travelling ministers, some of whom worked internationally. See Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775*, (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999). For the majority of women, however, such preaching was conducted locally in order to maintain familial commitments: women's public activities were never wholly at the expense of domestic duties. Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 178, 180. For more on Quakerism's uneven commitment to female equality, particularly in the eighteenth century, see above pp. 42-43.

¹¹ Sheila Wright argues that during this period Quaker women played a vital role in the organisation and ministry in the Society in York, and young female Friends were encouraged to assist with these activities. Sheila Wright, *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780-1860*, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), pp. 31-33.

¹² Reproduced in Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 5.

¹³ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, pp. 35, 37.

¹⁵ In addition to its current meaning, 'Of or relating to the writing, study, or content of literature', *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites a second, now rare, definition: 'Of or relating to the letters of the alphabet, or (occas.) another set of letters or symbols used as an alphabet'.

grammar, arithmetic, French, music, drawing and needlework, with German, Italian and dancing as ‘extras’, Castlegate offered ‘the usual branches of good English education, Needlework &c.’, with extra charges for ‘teaching the French, Latin and Greek languages’.¹⁶ York Quaker girls’ school remained at Castlegate until 1857, when the unsuitability of the school buildings led to its relocation to the Mount.¹⁷

That Paschalidi should find York’s Quaker school providing superior instruction to young women is hardly surprising given Friends’ reputation for progressive attitudes towards female education.¹⁸ The idea that Quakers were pioneers in this regard has been around since at least the 1920s. In *The Cause* (1928), for example, Ray Strachey maintained that during the early years of Queen Victoria’s reign the ‘bulk’ of people who ‘were familiar with the idea that there was something wrong with the position of women [...] came from among the new Radicals, and particularly from the Unitarian and Quaker families’:

If you were a Buxton, a Gurney, a Fry, a Wedgewood, a Bright, a Fox, a Barclay, or a Darwin it was not such a very great misfortune to be born a woman; though, of course, even in these families you would not share in the main work of your husbands or brothers. Still you would be allowed and expected to be educated and intelligent, and you would be considered an equal in family life, and might, if you chose, take up occupations and interests of your own.¹⁹

Strachey highlights the obvious but nevertheless important point that Quaker women’s opportunities had not been the same as those of their male counterparts. As I noted in my introduction, throughout the centuries the Religious Society of Friends occupied a far more equivocal and less progressive attitude towards women and female public activity than much of the historiography would like to suggest.²⁰ As well as the problem

¹⁶ Purvis, *Women’s Education*, p. 81; Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 37.

¹⁷ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 76.

¹⁸ Victoria Glendinning, *A Suppressed Cry: Life and Death of a Quaker Daughter*, (London: Virago Press Ltd., [1969] 1995), pp. 9-11; Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 217; Purvis, *Women’s Education*, p. 68; W. A. Campbell Stewart, *Quakers and Education: As seen in their Schools in England*, (London: The Epworth Press, 1953), p. 31.

¹⁹ Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women’s Movement in Great Britain*, London: Virago Press Ltd., [1928] 1978, p. 44.

²⁰ See above, pp. 42-43.

of what and how young women were to be taught, there was also the question of what they were to do with their education afterwards. A woman might be considered 'an equal in family life', but what of her partaking in more public roles? As I will show, prior to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, which gave women an explicit statutory right to become Members of Parliament, hold public office, and retain employment after marriage, the opportunities for female professional activity remained limited, and this influenced the ends to which female education was directed.

While the direction in which female education might be channelled remained less clear, Strachey recognised the significance of Quaker women's informal educational development through 'family life' and the pursuit of self-directed 'occupations and interests'. Subsequent scholarship has confirmed the view that middle-class Quaker women in the first half of the nineteenth century enjoyed an informal education that exposed them to scientific, artistic, and philosophical writings and debates amongst family and friends.²¹ The journal of the Cornish Quaker Caroline Fox (1819-1871), for example, records her lively discussions with family friends such as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).²² June Hannam has shown how Emily and Isabella Ford (1855-1924) enjoyed a 'broad education' growing up in their liberal Quaker home in Leeds.²³ During a similar period Anna Mary Howitt was receiving art training in Munich, and, through her parents' literary connections, was moving in circles that included the educationalist and feminist Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891) and writers such as Gaskell, Dickens and Tennyson.²⁴ Her cousin Lucy Harrison, who is the subject of chapter two, grew up amongst thinkers such as the designer William de Morgan (1839-1917), the historian Samuel Rawsdon Gardiner (1829-1902), and the social reformer Octavia Hill, as well as attending boarding school in Heidelberg in the late 1850s.²⁵ These informal instances of learning, in which cultural engagement and intellectual development took place outside

²¹ Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 99.

²² Wendy Monk (ed.), *The Journals of Caroline Fox, 1835-1871*, (London: Elek Books Ltd., 1972).

²³ June Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 9, 14-15, 20-21; Purvis, *Women's Education*, p. 68;

²⁴ Anna Mary Howitt, *An Art-Student in Munich*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1853); Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography*, (London: W. M. Isbister Ltd., 1889).

²⁵ Amy Greener, *A Lover of Books: The Life and Literary Papers of Lucy Harrison*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd, 1916), pp. 7-8, 14.

of the classroom as much as in it, were also an important feature of life at the Mount School.

By the middle of the nineteenth century debates had begun to gather pace about the inadequacy of female education.²⁶ A report published by the Schools Inquiry Commission in 1867 described girls' education as having:

Want of thoroughness and foundation; want of system; slovenliness and showy superficiality; inattention to rudiments; undue time given to accomplishments, and those not taught intelligently or in any scientific manner; want of organisation.²⁷

Addressing anxieties such as these, during the 1860s and 1870s many reforms were put in place that improved the provision and quality of girls' education. The Endowed Schools Act of 1869, for example, led to a proliferation of both secular and denominational high-schools for girls.²⁸ Many of the reforms in both secondary and higher education were brought about through the efforts of pioneering women such as Frances Mary Buss (1827-1894), Dorothea Beale (1831-1906), Anne Clough (1820-1892), and Emily Davies (1830-1921).²⁹ The move to improve educational provisions for women was fuelled primarily by the middle-classes, and was often aligned with a sense of religious duty.³⁰ Isabel M. Todd (1836-1896) typified this combination when

²⁶ This is not to say, of course, that women's education was heartily supported by everyone. Burstyn's work details the ways in which conservative commentators voiced concerns about the economic, social, biological and moral threat to the nation. Burstyn, *Victorian Education*, pp. 30-51, 58, 70, 84, 99, 101, 107. See also Jane Robinson, *Bluestockings: The Remarkable Story of the First Women to Fight for an Education*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2009), pp. 71-72.

²⁷ Quoted in Purvis, *Women's Education*, p. 74.

²⁸ Purvis, *Women's Education*, pp. 77-80, 84.

²⁹ For more on the efforts of these extraordinary women see Rosemary O'Day, 'Women and Education in Nineteenth-Century England', in Joan Bellamy, Anne Laurence and Gill Perry, *Women, Scholarship and Criticism, Gender and Knowledge c. 1790-1900*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 103; Robinson, *Bluestockings*, p. 47; Dale Spender (ed.), *The Education Papers: Women's Quest for Equality in Britain, 1850-1912*, (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); Gillian Sutherland, 'Anne Jemima Clough and Blanche Athena Clough: Creating Educational Institutions for Women', Mary Hilton and Pam Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress, 1790-1930*, (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 101-114.

³⁰ Laura Morgan Green, *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Women*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), p. 4; Purvis, *Women's Education*, 1991, pp. 74-75. Several feminist historians have shown how the women's educational movement was propelled by pioneers from a variety of religious denominations. See essays by Mary Hilton, Pam Hirsch, Hilary Minns, and Ruth Watts, in Hilton and Hirsch, *Practical Visionaries*. Many of the Mount superintendents were forerunners in this mould, and did much to raise the

she proposed that middle-class young women were best placed to benefit from an education:

Placed above the atmosphere of mingled suffering and recklessness which poverty creates, and below that of luxurious idleness and self-worship which surrounds great wealth, their very condition compels the exercise of many of the higher faculties of heart and mind, while it also gives them hopes and motives for that exercise.³¹

While Todd's emphasis on the 'exercise' of 'higher faculties' is typical of the language used to articulate aspirational thinking, it also carries overtones of generalised religious self-discipline and moral striving. As I explore below, the perceived potential of the dutiful, hard-working and motivated middle-class Protestant student was not lost on the Religious Society of Friends.³²

Feminist historians have pointed out that the establishment of women's colleges at Cambridge (Girton College, 1869; Newnham College, 1871) and Oxford (Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville, 1879; St. Hugh's, 1886; and St. Hilda's College, 1893), as well as the provisions at London University (where women were awarded degrees from 1878), inspired schoolgirls to achieve the intellectual excellence that could lead to a higher education.³³ This sense of possibility would have been particularly palpable to Quaker young women in the 1870s and 1880s, after the Universities Test Act of 1871 made it possible for nonconformists to enter Cambridge, Durham and Oxford (although it was not until well into the twentieth century that they were awarded degrees from these institutions).³⁴ Female Friends such as Winifred Seebom and Margaret Tuke seized these new opportunities, heading to Newnham College around the same time that Gertrude and Hannah were at the Mount. Before entering Newnham Winifred

quality of the education offered at the school in the latter half of the nineteenth century. See Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, pp. 95-106, 165-209.

³¹ Isabella M. S. Todd, 'On the Education of Girls of the Middle Classes', in Spender, *Education Papers*, p. 230.

³² Victorian Quakers belonged largely, Elizabeth Isichei reports, to the upper-middle and middle-classes. Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 172-173.

³³ Burstyn, *Victorian Education*, p. 3; Purvis, *Women's Education*, p. 78.

³⁴ Prior to the Act, which declared that Cambridge, Durham and Oxford 'as places of religion and learning, should be rendered freely accessible to the nation', anyone entering those Universities had first to profess allegiance to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/34-35/26>; accessed 15.10.2012.

wrote excitedly to her cousin of her hopes for the ‘first-rate teaching’ she would receive at Cambridge, as ‘I shall, I hope, be more fit for teaching (or any other work) after a year or two of study there’.³⁵ Seebohm’s ambiguous parenthetical reference to the ‘other work’ she may perform highlights the fact that at this period female education was in a sense self-supporting: in the absence of formal public roles for women, teaching, as Seebohm realised, was perhaps the only professional role available to women.

If women’s opportunities had yet to become equal, there must nevertheless have remained a sense of potential to women’s higher education. The superintendent of the Mount during the 1860s and 1870s, Lydia Rous, was quick to capitalise upon this sense of possibility. Looking back in 1931, one pupil recollected a Saturday evening in the 1870s during which Rous had ‘read us an account of Girton College. It seemed so grand for women to be able to go in for the same studies as men, and to gain the same degrees’.³⁶ Though she had not received a university education herself, Rous had studied at several Quaker schools and her own career served as a model to pupils that female education could enable women to occupy important public roles. A photograph of Rous, taken around this time (*Figure 2*), portrays an assured and confident figure proudly engaging the gaze of her viewer. A similar portrait of Lucy Harrison, taken in 1890 (*Figure 4*), presents the superintendent, in plain but scrupulously smart dress, fixing the onlooker with an intelligent, determined look. Both portraits depict these women in their professional employed capacity, an inspiring celebration of what female education could achieve.

³⁵ Glendinning, *A Suppressed Cry*, p. 56. Sadly Winnie’s hopes were never realised: she left Newnham after less than a term due to poor health, and died a few weeks later. Tuke would go on to graduate from Newnham with the equivalent of first-class honours in modern and medieval languages, and became the Principle of Bedford College from 1906 to 1929. In her 1939 history of the school she speaks passionately about the ambition and determination of young women in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s to make the most of the educational opportunities on offer to them. See Margaret Tuke, *A History of Bedford College for Women, 1849-1937*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 129.

³⁶ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 109.



Figure 2: Lydia Rous (source: The Mount School, York)

By the 1880s a precedent had been established for Mount students to go on to take degrees at London University, which had a strong nonconformist tradition. When the former Mount pupil Lucy Fryer Morland graduated from London in 1885, students were granted a half-holiday, and Gertrude's diary entry describes how,

After silence after dinner today Miss Scott at once burst forth with –
“In the newspaper today were the names of Susan O'Brien & Lucy Morland who passed the BA exam with honours & at the request of two of you I think you may have this afternoon for a holiday”
(November 19th 1885, p. 1).³⁷

Though these two women's individual achievements are claimed by the whole school community, Gertrude turns this back into a personal opportunity, going on to note that, 'All this afternoon I painted' (p. 2).

³⁷ Morland would go on to be a prominent Quaker campaigner for social justice, giving the 1918 Swarthmore Lecture. See Lucy Fryer Morland, *The New Social Outlook*, (London: Headley Bros. Publishers Ltd., 1918).



Figure 3: Susan Scott, in a later portrait (source: The Mount School York)

According to the historiography, the Mount superintendent throughout the 1880s, Susan Scott, was far less ambitious for her pupils and maintained a less intellectually rigorous environment than that upheld by either Rous or Harrison.³⁸ Nevertheless, many of Scott's former pupils went on to higher education. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Hannah and Gertrude received a university education, several of their peers did: Evelyn Bayes and Hannah Sparkes achieved BAs from the University of London, while Mary O'Brien secured a D.Sc, and Caroline Marriage studied at both the Stuttgart Conservatorium and the Royal College of Music.³⁹ It certainly seems that, Scott's alleged lack of ambition notwithstanding, pupils at the Mount received a high level of intellectual training. The report to the London University Board following an inspection of the School in June 1888 noted that, 'With the most advanced pupils the higher studies are carried on at quite a University standard of scholarship, exactness, scientific method, and logical demonstration; thought is generated, and the reasoning faculties are developed'.⁴⁰ Students seem to have appreciated the significance of intellectual currency, and Hannah scrupulously records

³⁸ Anon, *The Mount School, York, 1857-1957*, (York: William Sessions Ltd., 1957), p. 12; Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, pp. 129-130.

³⁹ Sturge (ed.) *Register of Mount Old Scholars*, pp. 24, 25, 29.

⁴⁰ Thomas Randell, *York Friends' Boys' and Girls' Schools: Report of Examination*, (York: Coultas and Voltans, 1888), Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 4/3/2, p. 13.

all of her classmates' examination results and class rankings in her diary (December 1885; p. 97).

During the 1880s York remained a robust site for female education. For working-class girls there were a number of charity schools such as the Anglican Bedern National School and Bishophill British Girls School, which had opened in 1813 and was funded by York Meeting.⁴¹ There do not appear to have been any cross currents between pupils at Bishophill British School and the Mount despite the schools' shared origins in Quakerism. While some of these schools, such as York High School for Girls, were overseen by secular organisations many were run by religious groups.⁴² The Bar Convent School, which had started life in the 1680s, was providing a Catholic education to around fifty girls in the 1870s, while York and Ripon Training College for Schoolmistresses, which had opened in 1846 under the auspices of the two Church of England Diocesan Boards of Education, catered for 'mostly middle-class' pupils.⁴³ There also remained several of the kind of privately-run, genteel-young-lady schools that Paschalidi has found prevailing in the city in the first half of the century. An 1884 advert for Limetree House School for Girls in Monkgate, for example, described the school as offering 'a comfortable home and educational advantages to both boarders and day scholars'.⁴⁴ Amidst these various educational institutions, the Mount was considered exemplary. The report of the 1888 inspection stated that,

The happy result of this investigation, so searching and comprehensive and elaborate, is that I am enabled with confidence to report on the Mount School, York, in the highest terms of commendation. It has been my lot to visit many Higher-Grade Girls' Schools [...] and I do not hesitate to pronounce the Mount School at York the best school for the higher education of girls that I am privileged to know.⁴⁵

⁴¹ The school had a peak in attendance in 1887 after which numbers declined, and it eventually closed in 1896. P. M. Tillott (ed.), *A History of the County of York: the City of York*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 442,444-445, 447.

⁴² Tillott, *County of York*, p. 459. York High School for Girls opened in 1880 under the auspices of the Girls Public Day School Company.

⁴³ Tillott, *County of York*, pp. 442, 446, 448, 449.

⁴⁴ *The York Herald*, Saturday August 2nd 1884, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Randell, *York Friends' Boys' and Girls' Schools*, p. 15.

In large part this high standard was due to the quality of the school's provisions for staff training. Although at this stage the Mount teaching staff was not made up of university graduates – it wasn't until the arrival of Harrison in the 1890s that all appointments to teaching posts were required to hold a degree – the majority of the teachers at the Mount in the 1880s had come through the School's in-house teacher-training department.⁴⁶



Figure 4: Lucy Harrison in 1890 (source: *A Lover of Books*)

The department had been established by Rous in the 1860s, and had, according to W. A. Campbell Stewart, significantly raised the standards of teaching in the School.⁴⁷ In this respect the Mount was in advance of teacher-training programmes available elsewhere. A report on York and Ripon Training College had lamented that poor standards of general education amongst students meant 'a great portion of time is consumed in instructing them in those elementary branches of learning which belong

⁴⁶ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 176. The inspector's report of 1897 recorded that 'The Assistant Mistresses include two BAs, one Bsc of London, one MA of Victoria, and a Lady, who has taken the Cambridge Modern Language Tripos'. F. E. Kitchener, *York Friends' Schools*, 1897; Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 4/3/3, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, p. 89.

more properly to a National School than a training institution'.⁴⁸ Under Rous's superintendence in the 1860s and 1870s, trainee teachers studied educational theory, history, and methodology, rather than simply how to drill pupils in fact-based learning.⁴⁹ After inspecting the school in 1864 on behalf of the Royal Commission, Sir Joshua Fitch reported that: 'I noticed on the part of all the teachers a professional aptitude, and a skill in oral explanation and in collective teaching, which are very unusual in higher schools. I attribute this to the fact that the Friends are the only religious body in which there is a distinct recognition of the need for training, and a definite provision to meet that need'.⁵⁰ Fitch's statement was not quite accurate, as there had been several teacher-training colleges established in the first half of the nineteenth century by the Anglican-run National Society, York and Ripon Training College among them, which catered for female trainees.⁵¹ With a few notable exceptions, however, these were London-based institutions and therefore in terms of York, Quakers were exceptional in their provision of teacher-training.⁵² In taking on many former pupils as trainees the Mount teacher-training department provided Quaker young women with at least one tangible example and opportunity to assume a professional leadership role.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Tillott, *County of York*, p. 458-459. According to O'Day, 'For much of the nineteenth century there was no academic discipline of education'. O'Day, 'Women and Education', p. 91.

⁴⁹ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, pp. 107-109.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, p. 98.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Edwards reports that the first teacher training college for women opened in London in 1841 under the auspices of the National Society, and was soon followed by another ten of such colleges for women. The only non-Anglican institution at this stage was Homerton College in London, formerly a Congregationalist institution for the training of male ministers, which became co-educational and nondenominational in 1852. Upon its move to Cambridge in 1894 the college became a female-only institution. Elizabeth Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges, 1900-1960: A Culture of Femininity*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 6.

⁵² Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges*, p. 6.



Figure 5: *The Mount School in 1884* (source: *The Mount School, York*)

Literary education and citizenship

As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, and explore in detail below, by the 1880s reading and literature had become important components in the education offered at the Mount, used to develop pupils' understanding and experience of female Quaker citizenship. The relationship between literary education and citizenship has long been a source of contention. Early Marxist historiographies of the rise of literary studies tended to posit that nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literary education had functioned as a tool for oppressing rather than increasing active citizenship by perpetuating dominant social hierarchies and ideologies.⁵³ Grounded in theoretical enquiry, these studies arrived at their conclusions without consulting the evidence of actual readers. Jonathan Rose's timely corrective showed how the life-writings of working-class readers during the nineteenth century revealed that they were 'radicalize[d]' rather than 'mollif[ied]' by reading canonical works of literature: for such readers, 'acculturation was

⁵³ Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 60-62; Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell [1983] 2000), pp. 20-23. See also Burstyn, *Victorian Education*, p. 11; Bryan Doyle, *English and Englishness*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 14, 17. Recently Carol Atherton has provided an alternative to these overtly-politicised and reductive narratives, presenting the rise of English studies as due more to 'the process of professionalization and specialisation' than to any 'mission of national cultivation'. Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority, and Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 17, 20.

essential to political liberation'.⁵⁴ The liberating potential of reading was not lost on York Friends: Harrison encouraged Quakers to reclaim canonical literature from the establishment as a means of bringing the religious community from the margins to the centre of wider society, while York Friends' Sewing Meeting (YFSM) read imaginative literature together to inspire and validate their philanthropic and political campaigning.

The relationship between literary education, citizenship, and Quakerism has yet to be explored in any depth. Given the position of Quakerism within the history of girls' education it is surprising how little sustained attention the subject has received; indeed, Quakers' education of children has been curiously disregarded as an area of enquiry, and the only full-length study remains W. A. Campbell Stewart's *Quakers and Education: As Seen in Their Schools in England* (1953).⁵⁵ While Stewart's work provides a wealth of material, and makes many insightful and suggestive comments, there nevertheless remains much more to be said on the subject – particularly the relationship between Quaker education and citizenship. Stewart argues that while Quaker education promoted extra-curricular activities designed to raise students' civic and political participation, the fact that these were privately-run boarding schools meant they were ideologically and physically removed from full participation in the state and politics.⁵⁶ Yet Quaker commentators at the time were keen to present Quaker schools as focussing on long-term public participation by preparing students to become civic

⁵⁴ Jonathan Rose, 'Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1992), pp. 63-64. In this Rose's argument was not too far away from that of Richard Altick, whose ground-breaking *The English Common Reader* (1957) opened with the assertion that 'a history of the mass reading audience is, in fact, the history of English democracy seen from a new angle'. Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*, (London: The University of Chicago Press, [1957] 1963), p. 3. Rose's most recent work amply demonstrates the liberating potential of reading for the working-classes. See Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁵⁵ There have been several histories of individual Quaker schools, such as Sarah Sheil's *Among Friends: The Story of The Mount School, York* (2007) and Michael Finch's *A View from the Hills: A History of Sibford School 1842-2010* (2010), but these offer collective memoir as opposed to academic critique. Scholarship on Quakers and education has tended to focus on adult education, such as the Adult Schools Movement and the Summer Schools Movement. For more on these see Mark Freeman, 'The Magic Lantern and the Cinema: Adult Schools, Educational Settlements and Secularisation in Britain c. 1900-1950', *Quaker Studies*, vol. 11, 2007, pp. 192-203; Mark Freeman, "'No finer school than a settlement": the development of the educational settlement movement', *History of Education* xxxi, 2002, pp. 245-62; Mark Freeman *The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust: a study in Quaker philanthropy and adult education 1904-1954*, (York: William Sessions, 2004); Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 258-279; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp.44-45, 120-121, 171-177, 177-196, 189-190.

⁵⁶ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, pp. 27, 161-164, 165.

leaders.⁵⁷ They were less clear, however, on the roles that women could play as emerging Quaker citizens. In 1894 John Wilhelm Rowntree (1868-1905) argued that Quaker education sought to prepare a future generation of Friends to shoulder the responsibility for the nation. In ‘Our Educational Policy’ Rowntree wrote that Quakers ‘have promoted schools famed for an admirable blending of sound mental and moral training’ and ‘have contributed powerfully to the formation of virile Christian character, and many of the scholars who have passed out through their gates have become leaders in progressive social and religious work’.⁵⁸ Though Rowntree didn’t explicitly debar women from his vision of Quaker citizenship, he expressed his argument in terms associated with masculinity: the Quakers of tomorrow were the ‘virile [...] scholars’ of today.

This gender ambiguity continued well into the twentieth century. In her 1918 Swarthmore Lecture ‘The New Social Outlook’ Lucy Fryer Morland articulated a common view when she argued that ‘Quakerism is not a privilege of a small select group, but a Truth to be promulgated everywhere’, and that Quaker ‘service should be in the direction of doing good *with* rather than in doing good *to* any set of people’, but remained unclear as to whether Quaker men and women were to perform equal or different roles in this ‘new social outlook’.⁵⁹ Rather than focus on philanthropic and charitable work, Morland suggested, Friends should take their place alongside those who had the power to change society. When one considers that charitable and philanthropic work had largely been the preserve of women during the nineteenth century, and continued to provide female Friends with a sense of vocation up until at least the late 1920s, the potential for gender equality in Morland’s vision begins to seem rather unlikely.⁶⁰ C. E. Stansfield captured something of these ambiguities in his report on ‘Twenty Five Years of Quaker Education’ (1928), noting that Friends had increasingly ‘look[ed] to education to qualify men and women for the varied and

⁵⁷ Friends’ Education Council, *Quakers and Their Schools*, (London: Friends House, 1978), p. 6; Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, p. 165

⁵⁸ John Wilhelm Rowntree, ‘Our Educational Policy’, in *Essays and Addresses*, (London: Headley Brothers, 1906), p. 181.

⁵⁹ Morland, *New Social Outlook*, pp. 34, 41-42.

⁶⁰ In chapter three I provide an in-depth discussion of the relationship between women, philanthropy, citizenship and reading.

extending work of the Society’ but neglecting to mention how this ‘varied’ work had been divided between male and female Friends.⁶¹

For pupils at the Mount in the 1880s formal involvement in civic life remained an impossibility, and thus pupils’ engagement with public life was directed towards associational activities. The reading selections presented to pupils at the Mount reinforced rather than challenged these notions of female roles, drawing upon drama, essays, poetry, and in particular novels as a means to foster pupils’ self-perception as morally-upright, proficient, and self-assured Protestant young women capable of leading the local community.⁶² Thus a Mount literary education of the 1880s upheld a more conservative view, presenting women as the moral heart of the nation and locating their civic importance in their role as wives and mothers.⁶³ Given that this was a period of fervent proto-feminist activity, it seems surprising that these Quaker educators were not using literature to uncover alternative visions of womanhood, an obvious place to look to challenge gender inequalities and construct a new ‘imagined community’ of female identity and activity.⁶⁴ Although transgressive New Women had yet to burst on to the pages of fin de siècle literature, during the 1880s unorthodox forms of femininity were available to those who went looking for them: in chapter three I show how Harrison

⁶¹ C. E. Stansfield, ‘Twenty Five Years of Quaker Education’, *The Friends’ Quarterly Examiner*, 1928, p. 253. The following year the author of *Ackworth School, 1779-1929* (1929) perhaps expressed an ideal rather than a reality in arguing, in equalised terms, that the aim of Quaker schools should be ‘providing a sound education for our boys and girls – the citizens of tomorrow’:

To produce good men and women is to produce good citizens: those who do their own work well, aiming in perfection in what they undertake, and those, consequently, who, when called to help in the administration of their city or of their country, are capable of giving wise decisions and initiating progressive policies.

Anon, *Ackworth School, 1779-1929*, (York: William Sessions Ltd., 1929), p. 5. Although by this stage the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 ensured women’s right to hold public offices, it seems unlikely that middle-class women across the board were taking up these positions. Indeed, as I explore in chapter three many of York’s Quaker women continued to focus on associational work rather than formal, professional involvement in civic life well into the late 1920s.

⁶² For more on the relationship between reading, citizenship and subjectivity see above, pp. 40-41.

⁶³ Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 15-16; Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 4, 248-249; Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Sanders, *Eve’s Renegades*, pp. 15-16. Both Caine and Levine argue that although the term ‘feminism’ did not emerge until the late nineteenth century, it is not an anachronistic term to apply to those Victorian women who self-consciously drew attention to what would now be considered identifiably feminist issues (Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, p. 6; Levine, *Victorian Feminism*, p. 14).

⁶⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, [1983] 1991), p. 36.

identified progressive models in the works of Shakespeare, Dickens, and others. That Mount educators of the 1880s favoured normative literary exemplars suggests that the earlier attitudes of York's Quaker community towards its female members, which had been uneven and often conservative, continued until late in the century.⁶⁵

Although Mount pupils of the 1870s and 1880s weren't necessarily being trained to be equal citizens, they were provided with an education that would enable them to make an informed and intelligent participation in the public life of the local community. The education offered to pupils presented Quakers as belonging to an ecumenical Protestant nation. In part this was achieved by providing students with a literary education that would enable them to secure the cultural capital necessary to move with confidence in broader middle-class circles. As John Guillory has observed, the literary canon functions as a means to transmit cultural capital by delineating a form of literature that is implicated in the display of middle-class identity.⁶⁶ Mount pupils were exposed to this canon in a number of ways. For example, the works of literature available to pupils in the school library represent what was emerging as the literary canon during the period, and so would have helped to familiarise pupils with an important middle-class cultural construction.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the annual York Friends' Book Society conversazioni, which I discuss below, provided an occasion in which Mount pupils witnessed York Friends aligning cultural capital with the display of genteel middle-class sociability. While no codified curriculum for the period exists, there nevertheless seems to have been a comprehensive educational programme in place.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities 1770-1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', (unpublished PhD thesis, The University of York, 2000), p. 240; Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 49.

⁶⁶ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. vii-viii. Guillory builds upon Pierre Bourdieu's argument that our tastes and aesthetic judgements are propelled by what he terms 'cultural capital'. Unlike economic capital, in which one's material possessions and status determine one's power and influence, 'cultural capital' involves the assertion of one's social status by displaying tastes and aesthetic judgements that are aligned with class identity. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (Harvard: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd., 1984), in particular pp. 1-2, 9-13.

⁶⁷ For a list of some of the books contained in the Mount School Library catalogue for 1885, see Appendix I. I discuss the relationship between the Mount School and canon formation in greater detail in chapter two, pp. 118-119.

⁶⁸ The Mount Archives contain no annual school reports to York Quarterly Meeting until 1891, after Susan Scott had retired and Lucy Harrison, who was to implement many reforms at the school, had succeeded as superintendent. Likewise a detailed breakdown of curriculum, such as the meticulously detailed syllabus for 1901-1903, either did not exist or has been lost. The Mount School, York, *Syllabus Register*, 1901-1903; Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 4/1/1/1/1.

Taken together, the 1884 school prospectus and an inspector's report of 1888 reveal that pupils were being taught English literature and language, the sciences, mathematics, geography, history, religion, Latin, French, Greek, German, music, gymnastics and needlework.⁶⁹ As we have seen, the report went on to recommend the school as achieving 'quite a University standard of scholarship, [...] and [pupils'] reasoning faculties are developed'.⁷⁰ As well as providing girls with a set of academic skills that would equip them with sound critical faculties and prepare them for higher study (and all the subsequent possibilities that might entail), a Mount education offered a subtler, more informal promotion of social awareness and participation.⁷¹

During their time at the Mount Gertrude and Hannah were invited into a counter-public of middle-class Quakers who, while maintaining a nonconformist identity, co-operated with prominent and influential members of the establishment.⁷² Hannah records attending a Band of Hope meeting, an occasion when Quaker young women joined with children from other denominations in a shared Protestant interest in temperance:

Last night Monday the 4th we went to the Band of Hope meeting in the concert room. I liked it very much indeed singing & all, tho' the children voices were very loud & shrill; W. White was the chairman, but we didn't like him for he talked so much about himself, especially being "Mayor of Birmingham", Canon Henning made a splendid speech, I don't wonder at people admiring him awfully. Mr Morrel was also on the platform & "Fishy" & "Collars" was among the audience. I walked with Porpoise (5th October 1885; p. 53).

⁶⁹ The Mount School, York, *Mount School Prospectus*, c. 1884; Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 1/3/2/1; Randell, *York Friends' Boys' and Girls' Schools*, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Randell, *York Friends' Boys' and Girls' Schools*, p. 13.

⁷¹ This tradition became stronger over the subsequent three decades. In *The Mount School, York* (1931), several former pupils who had been at the school during the First World War recollected how on Armistice Day the pupils had 'a model League of Nations' which was actively encouraged by members of the Preparative Meeting. Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 249.

⁷² Counter-publics are a host of competing publics that work against the dominant or bourgeois 'public' at any given time, and include a variety of different working-class, religious, ethnic or sexual groups. For perceptive discussions of counter-publics and their relation to the bourgeois public sphere see Natalie Fenton and John Downie, 'Counterpublic Spheres and Global Modernity', *Javnost – The Public*, Vol. 10, 2003, pp. 15-31; Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing in Democracy', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109-142 (p. 116, 122); Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Public Sphere', *Gender and History*, Vol. 11 No. 3, (1999), pp. 475-488 (p. 482-483).

William White (1820-1900) had converted to Quakerism through his involvement in the abstinence movement during the 1840s, and was elected Mayor of Birmingham in 1882: according to his biographer during his tenure ‘the Mayoral hospitality was entirely of a Tee-total description’.⁷³ Though Hannah seems to have been none too impressed by White, his prominent position alongside other men on the platform, including the Anglican Canon Henning, would have conveyed to these Quaker young women that members of their denomination could gain equal prominence to establishment figures. Moreover, attending the Band of Hope rally would have underlined the extent to which late-nineteenth-century Quakers had become integrated rather than marginal members of the community, participating in a broader, and emphatically middle-class, Protestant culture. Thus these rallies would have provided another instance in which pupils could acquire cultural capital, gaining familiarity with middle-class ideologies and social practices. As we shall see, inter-denominational exposure to events such as the Band of Hope rally was mirrored and reinforced by the books the girls read at the Mount, where pupils were encouraged to take moral messages from the works of non-Quaker writers.

In my introduction I detailed how recent scholarship has uncovered the ways in which religion has played an important and influential role in the public sphere, and pointed out that nineteenth-century Quakers were active in shaping public life.⁷⁴ The relationship between religious affiliation and public influence does not seem to have been lost on Gertrude and Hannah, and I explore below the ways in which this association was promoted through reading occasions at the school. Both girls’ diaries record witnessing the campaign in York for the 1885 general election, in which prominent Quaker politicians such as John Bright (1811-1889) were candidates, and reveal the girls’ awareness of how closely aligned the Liberal Party were to Quaker identity and interests. Both Hannah (November 24th 1885; pp. 92-93) and Gertrude record witnessing the Liberal Party rally. Gertrude describes how

This morning we all went a walk on the walls & there was a liberal meeting being held on Queen Street & a little further up a Tory one. The liberal meeting looked more than twice the size of the other. We could not hear what was said but we heard after that Lockwood (the chief liberal candidate) when he was referring to the Tory meeting a

⁷³ Oliver Morland, *William White: A Brother of Men*, (London: Headley Brothers, 1903), p. 7-9, 15, 23, 25, 129.

⁷⁴ See above, pp. 33-35.

little further up the hill called it the family party up on the hill & indeed it looked almost like one by the Liberal meeting. When we were standing on the walls a lady came along & asked one of the girls what school it was that had such a nice show of yellow & when she told her she said “Oh that’s right” (November 24th 1885; pp. 5-6).

Gertrude and her school fellows are spectators here, observing the way in which Quakers belong to a political majority within the city. Gertrude is a participant by virtue of the fact that she observes the rally, for, as Kathryn Gleadle has argued, to be a spectator of a political event was often a means by which women could tacitly declare their political allegiance.⁷⁵ Though too young and of the wrong sex to vote, the girls are able to express their political allegiance by wearing the signature colour of the Liberal Party. That Gertrude’s entry leads up to a concluding reference to a local woman recognising the girls’ educational, religious and political affiliation through their ‘nice show of yellow’ suggests that this entwined identity is a source of pride to the schoolgirl. It also reveals the extent to which her political involvement was gendered, as her affiliations are displayed on her body; such embodiment was, several feminist historians argue, a typical means by which women expressed and experienced their political identity.⁷⁶ Developing the theme of embodied political participation, the following day Gertrude describes how,

We had on a good deal of yellow this morning going to meeting & created a great sensation. We met Mrs Thorp on the way with a large yellow handkerchief stuck out in front. [...] Miss Scott & Amy Jane Thorp & Madge Scott & Dora Sturge went out in the afternoon in a wagonette to shew their colours & seem to have had quite an exciting time from Madge’s account (November 25th 1885; pp. 6-9).

Wearing yellow is a way of ‘creat[ing] a sensation’, and there is something both delightfully adolescent and Quakerly about drawing attention to oneself without verbal communication. In the absence of the vote, these women declare their political

⁷⁵ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 78.

⁷⁶ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 67; Canning and Rose, ‘Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity’, in Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose (eds.), *Gender, Citizenships and Subjectivities*, (Padstow: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002), p. 6.

affiliation by wearing it on their bodies and wafting it around with their accessories.⁷⁷ Gleadle suggests that waving handkerchiefs was a particularly charged act that ‘was not viewed as a superficial or passively ‘feminine’ action but rather could ‘immediately mobilise an election crowd’.⁷⁸ That Quaker women should be articulating their political sympathy in this way is particularly canny, for surely part of their ‘sensation’ derives from the fact that they are subverting expectations about Quaker adornment and ‘plain dress’. Witnessing members of the Meeting such as Amy Jane Thorp (1860-1910) and their own headmistress parading around in this way would have left pupils such as Gertrude in little doubt that Quaker women could wield an assured, daring, and effective public presence. Moreover, as Gleadle points out, often women could transcend their status as ‘borderline citizens’ through sheer force of personality, particularly nonconformist women who could claim a tradition of public dissent.⁷⁹ In witnessing Scott and Thorp’s activities Gertrude is made aware of the potential clout wielded by women from her religious community. As we shall see, such behaviour contradicts many of the models of femininity endorsed in the books read to pupils at the Mount.

Hannah seems less impressed by the festivities than Gertrude:

Yesterday going to meeting, everybody seemed awfully excited [...]. Mrs Thorp, Miss Scott, Dora & Madge, went driving round the town waving their colours. Painted up in the school room in the afternoon & listened to St George & St Michael (girls made me read). After tea went into Miss Scott’s parlour & listened to her read politics & yawning’ (November 25th 1885; pp. 92-93).

For Hannah it is ‘everybody’ else who ‘seemed awfully excited’ by the election, and it is ‘the girls’ rather than ‘us’ who are wearing yellow. She is quick to identify herself as superior to the proceedings, choosing to paint and read aloud to others instead. Her parenthetical aside that ‘(girls made me read)’ is a textual gesture towards this group’s self-enclosure, and also perhaps towards her own superior position within the school

⁷⁷ A couple of decades later the suffrage movement would use suffrage-branded items of clothing, accessories, and even Christmas crackers as a way of promoting the cause. See National Women’s Social and Political Union, *Votes For Women: The Organ of the National Women’s Social and Political Union*, (London: British Museum, 1907-1918) for examples of advertisements.

⁷⁸ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 79.

⁷⁹ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, pp. 62-63, 26-27.

hierarchy. Though their choice may be coincidental, George Macdonald's *St. George and St. Michael* (1876) offers an uncanny parallel to the girls' response to the day's events.⁸⁰ Set during English Civil War, *St. George and St. Michael* opens with a scene in which the seventeen-year-old heroine Dorothy skips out of a discussion between her mother and the local clergyman about the dissenting attacks on the Church (p. 8). Though she enters into an impassioned but confused argument with her friend Richard about whether Saint George or Saint Michael is the true hero of 'Merry England!', Dorothy is described by the narrator as possessing an 'indifference to the politics of the time' (pp. 15-16, 18). In Dorothy Hannah and her friends have a heroine who legitimises their lack of interest in the day's political events. While some Quaker pupils were political enthusiasts, others apparently were not.

By the 1880s the Mount offered a comprehensive education that encouraged pupils to develop enquiring minds, and to engage in various forms of public participation. Students were often invited to view themselves as Quaker young women who had the potential to become active, prominent members of the local community. I now want to turn my attention to the way in which these notions of female citizenship were transmitted, and often problematised, through the school's uses of literature and reading, and consider how pupils' private reading practices both embraced and subverted these messages.

Adolescent readers: self, community, citizenship

Pupils at the Mount in the 1880s could be left in no doubt as to the centrality of literature within the local Quaker community. Pupils regularly attended YFSM, where a shared appreciation of literature drew together several generations of Quaker women.⁸¹ In October 1885, Hannah recorded how during one meeting 'some of the girls read King Lear, I had to take Kate Wilmot's part – burgundy [sic], but only had about a dozen lines to read. On the whole I think it was a success' (21st October 1885; p. 59). This is reading as performance and entertainment rather than devotion and instruction,

⁸⁰ George Macdonald, *St. George and St. Michael*, (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1876). All subsequent references are in-text citations. Macdonald was a close friend of Lucy Harrison, the subject of chapter two.

⁸¹ Unfortunately no YFSM records exist for this period.

conveying to pupils that literature could foster community fellowship through enjoyment in one another's company.⁸² The relationship between literature and community sociability was also foregrounded at the *conversazioni*, an annual event of the YFBS that was held alternately at Bootham and the Mount School.⁸³ During *conversazioni* several of the York Quaker reading communities would intersect, as Mount and Bootham scholars rubbed shoulders with members of both YFSM and YFBS. Hannah's description of the 1885 *conversazione* is fairly brief:

Last Tuesday we had our *Conversazione*; the playroom decorated for the occasion; <illegible> white & thick curtains, pictures, chairs, sofas etc. Tea at usual time in the school room – chairs. Got ready came down. Dialogue with my old Gentleman behind the door; concert – Mariette, Porpoise & Br. Miss Tangye & Miss Hammond, Herr Padel played, but the fearful <'babble'?>!! Singing class sung – 4 things. Then in came Chavis & lectures began, given by Dr Watson on R. Browning, sat between Br. & Sallie, very sleepy, splendid lecture, Mr Andrews in the chair; supper – bed (1st December 1885; pp. 92-93).

Hannah's entry presents a succession of nouns and verbs with little in the way of a first-person subject. Partly this conveys the excitement of the occasion, one thing following the other with little time for self-consciousness or reflection. Although at this stage in her studies Hannah's diary entries are often quite brief, this passage stands out as a particularly brisk record of a sequence of events.⁸⁴ It may have been that the evening didn't leave much of an impression beyond the 'impressions' themselves: though the lecture was 'splendid', she was 'very sleepy' during it and afterwards it was 'supper – bed', the abrupt hyphen a synecdoche for her general lack of comment. Gertrude's diary is more evocative, and recounts her rather bemused experience of the event:

E Dixon & I watched the visitors coming upstairs they looked so ridiculous with their huge bustles when we were looking straight down at them. [...] Then the music & singing began. We could hear the singing pretty well but when Herr Padel (the singing master) began to play there was such a row in the room that we could hardly

⁸² Chapter three explores in detail how YFSM used reading and sociability to bolster their public philanthropic and political activities.

⁸³ York Friends' Book Society, *Record of York Friends' Book Society, 1852-1911*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University, Manuscripts MS Dept. 1981/2 (Clifford Street Archive), 3 vols., J. 2.1-2.3.

⁸⁴ In Hannah's diary more descriptive and reflective passages emerge the following summer, towards the end of her time at the Mount.

hear anything. I spoke to Mr & Mrs Andrews & Miss Addie. <erased> Miss Addie looked rather stiff & cold when she spoke to us. Miss Tangye & Miss Hammond played after that a duet but some of the people were so interesting <sic> in talking politics that they did not know how much noise they were making & it was almost as bad as when Herr Padel was playing. After that the lecture began. Kittie & I sat on the lockers in the window & there was no room for our legs so we had to sit on them & it was slightly uncomfortable. Mr Andrews was chairman & the lecture was given by Robert Spence Watson on “Robt Browning” he read most of it off & I did not listen very much (1st December 1885; pp. 14-16).

The local Quaker community appears by turns hostile and irrelevant, characterised by stern looks, ostentatious clothing and inconsiderate talk. Gertrude is a marginal observer rather than an active participant, skirting the event and viewing it from a variety of angles: through staircase banisters, from the tops of lockers. Gertrude’s physical discomfort – ‘there was no room for our legs so we had to sit on them & it was slightly uncomfortable’ – stands in for her general sense of inconvenience and dissatisfaction, and this embodied experience of the lecture suggests her attention was directed within: ‘I did not listen very much’. Though events such as the *conversazione* sought to incorporate students into the overarching community of Quaker readers, Hannah and Gertrude seem to have figuratively and literally kept their distance.

This wariness is typical of Gertrude’s general attitude towards the school reading community; Hannah, however, seems caught between embracing it at times and disdaining it at others. While Hannah records numerous instances of reading – privately, with friends, with teachers, with Friends from the local and area meeting – Gertrude only mentions grand communal reading events such as the *conversazione*. The practice of day-to-day reading – an activity which, as I outlined in my introduction, was encouraged by the Religious Society of Friends – is not something Gertrude records in her diary. Of course, this silence may be due to the fact that her journal spans only a little over a month; but Gertrude’s references to playing the piano and painting during this period suggests that private reading held little interest to her. Gertrude, it seems, resisted York Friends’ promotion of personal and collective reading. Meanwhile Hannah adapted it to suit herself, taking the community emphasis on reading and using it to aid personal development and foster close, and at times subversive, friendships with her peers.

Given that the term teenager doesn’t appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary* until 1941 I shall be referring to Mount pupils here as ‘adolescent readers’, as this accounts

for the fact that the girls, as fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds, were no longer quite children ('adolescent' has a much lengthier lifespan than 'teenager', making its first appearance, according to the *OED*, c. 1440). Moreover, the term is a pertinent one to use in relation to schoolgirls of the 1880s. As Carol Dyhouse has shown, it was precisely towards the end of the nineteenth century that adolescence came to be seen as a differentiated developmental stage that carried with it 'questions of autonomy and dependence'.⁸⁵ While the Mount pupils may have been adolescent readers, they nevertheless read a lot of children's literature, and for this reason I will be drawing upon scholarship pertaining to both children's and adolescent literature.

Several critics have highlighted that literature for children and adolescents, perhaps more than most, is concerned with shaping the ideologies and world views of its readers.⁸⁶ This is not to say, of course, that young readers passively receive these messages. As Peter Hunt points out, child and adolescent readers are engaged in a 'power struggle' with adult writers in which there is often 'a tension between the reader *implied* by the writer, and the real readers'.⁸⁷ This tension is central to my reconstruction of the ways Mount pupils read. In what follows I identify what I believe to be the overriding message of the text: the one that seems to me to be most in line with what a writer, and a Quaker educationalist selecting that writer, might desire young readers to identify. I shall then explore how Quaker schoolgirls filtered these messages. Texts are seldom ideologically or structurally water-tight, containing ideas and images that destabilise their central messages. As I show, Mount pupils identified subversive strands to books as often as they engaged with their dominant ideologies. Given that Hannah seldom provides any lengthy comment as to what she and her friends made of the books that they read, my reconstruction of their reading will necessarily involve a degree of imaginative, informed and intuitive interpretation.

In her sociological study of middle-class adolescent readers in 1990s Canada, Meredith Rogers Cherland argues that pupils used fiction to 'explore the various

⁸⁵ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp. 116, 119.

⁸⁶ Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 40; Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls*, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1995), p. 9; Kimberly Reynolds, *Children's Literature of the 1890s and the 1990s*, (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. ix.

⁸⁷ Peter Hunt, 'Instruction and Delight', in Janet Maybin and Nicola J. Watson (eds.), *Children's Literature: Approaches and Territories*, (Milton Keynes: Palgrave Macmillan in Association with the Open University, 2009), pp. 12-26.

possibilities that existed in connection with their own places as agents in the world, and they often as part of this process of exploration imagined themselves *in conflict* with the roles [...] suggested for them'.⁸⁸ Such conflicts would have proved particularly charged within the context of a boarding school environment, which is, Rebecca Rogers reminds us, 'fertile ground for the development of both individual aspirations and communal values'.⁸⁹ Gertrude and Hannah were boarding at a Quaker school which emphasised the importance of community, but this was undercut by the accent on individuality and interiority that was becoming increasingly prevalent within society towards the end of the nineteenth century. Carolyn Steedman has argued persuasively that over the course of the nineteenth century new concepts of subjectivity came into being which acknowledged the significance of a unified, 'interiorised self' with a personal history.⁹⁰ This interiorised individual found its way into the schoolgirl diaries and memoirs of the time, where, Regenia Gagnier and Philippe Lejeune report, girls' diaries and memoirs in both England and France display more of a tendency to assert individuality than to conform to the moral and social order than had been the case previously.⁹¹ Both Gertrude and Hannah's diaries demonstrate this, recording their personal impressions of life at the school and creating a sense of individual history within the wider institution. Hannah's diary, for example, ends with a resounding note that conveys a sense of life as a linear narrative with clearly delineated chapters: 'LEFT SCHOOL THE END' is written so large that it takes up the whole of the final page (22nd June 1886; p. 133). Gagnier has suggested that people represent their lives in terms of master narratives, and here Hannah draws upon the novel or autobiographical tradition, suggesting she has been sufficiently exposed to these forms to assimilate them into her self-representation.⁹² While this may seem like an obvious point, it indicates the extent to which the practice of novel-reading had begun to influence the self-perception of

⁸⁸ Meredith Rogers Cherland, *Private Practices: Girls Reading Fiction and Constructing Identity*, (London: Taylor and Francis Ltd., 1994), p. 166.

⁸⁹ Rebecca Rogers, 'Schools, discipline and community: diary-writing and schoolgirl culture in late nineteenth-century France', *Women's History Review*, Routledge, Volume 4 Issue 4, (1995), pp. 527-528.

⁹⁰ Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority 1780-1930*, (London: Virago Press Ltd., 1995), pp. 3-5.

⁹¹ Philippe Lejeune, 'The "Journal de Jeune Fille" in Nineteenth-Century France', in Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia Huff (eds.), *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 114, 117, 119; Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 196-197.

⁹² Gagnier, *Subjectivities*, p. 6.

young Quaker readers. However, as several life-writing theorists have pointed out, unlike novels and autobiographies, which are finite wholes, diaries are on-going processes in which there is no definite sense of an ending.⁹³ In making such a decisive stop Hannah exerts authorial control over her personal narrative, foreclosing any sense of continuation between her time at school and her life after she leaves and marking off the Mount as one chapter in the whole of her life story.⁹⁴ The tension between asserting the self and resisting the school community are also a feature of Hannah's reading practices. Hannah can often be found reading personal copies of books away from the eyes of the teaching staff, particularly novels featuring mischievous and boisterous heroines. Yet over the course of her time at the Mount she comes to favour the conservative ideals of Protestant femininity found between the pages of books shared by her Quaker community.

Reading and the school

As I noted in my introduction, at the end of the nineteenth century the Mount provided what the editors of *The Mount School York* (1931) would later term 'a circumscribed library', with Rous asserting control over the reading selections of staff as well as pupils.⁹⁵ Over at Bootham School in the mid-1870s the headmaster Fielden Thorp was also exercising control over his pupils' reading, writing to parents that:

⁹³ Margo Culley (ed.), *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women From 1764 to the Present*, (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1985), pp. 19-20; Philippe Lejeune, 'How do diaries end?', in Trev Lynn Broughton (ed.), *Autobiography: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), pp. 88-89, 92. See also Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), p. xi. Lejeune lists 'a voluntary or explicit stop', destruction, revision, and publication typical forms of diary ending. 'How do diaries end?', p. 89. For an intriguing discussion of the ways in which the nineteenth-century novel drew upon the diary form, see Catherine Delafield, *Women's Diaries as Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), particularly pp. 9, 28, 32, 39, 43, 81, 105-108, 118.

⁹⁴ As Stephen E. Kagle and Lorenza Gramega suggest, 'the techniques of fiction might offer [the diarist] a sense of empowerment by controlling reality as it becomes fixed by pen and ink'. Stephen E. Kagle and Lorenza Gramega, 'Writing Her Life: Fictionalization and Fictional Models in Early American Women's Diaries', in Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia Huff (eds.), *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996, pp. 38-55 (p. 55).

⁹⁵ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 135. See above, p. 25.

Our difficulty arises, not from books from a distinctly corrupting or immoral tendency, [...] but rather from the abundance of fascinating and unsubstantial literature which is constantly in circulation, and which tends to destroy the appetite for more improving reading. [...] To require the books brought to school to be given up to us is a measure we have only had recourse to in respect to such as might be fairly considered unsuitable for general schoolboy reading. A less restrictive plan has been occasionally adopted, viz. that of desiring a boy not to lend certain books without permission. To this there is the objection that it sometimes places a boy in a position of difficulty and temptation, between the desire to obey the injunction, and the wish to oblige a schoolfellow. We venture, therefore, to ask the assistance of parents in the matter.⁹⁶

Thorp's letter conveys a hesitancy to circumscribe pupils' reading, acknowledging that books play an important role in exchanges between pupils. If there was any attempt on the part of the Mount School to regulate Hannah and her friends' reading then she does not mention it. Hannah appears to be left free to share books with her friends, and these interactions form a significant part of the girls' friendships.

Given that adolescence is a time of transition and uncertainty, a period to try on new identities and formulate new subjectivities, it is unsurprising that adolescent reading, perhaps more so than that of adults, takes place in close relation to both personal relationships and social ideologies.⁹⁷ The reading occasions provided by the Mount carried the sense that pupils' personal experiences of literature should tally with those of the school community. Hannah describes several instances in which teachers read aloud to pupils, such as when 'After tea we went to Miss Scott's parlour & she read "Daddy Darwin's Dovecot" aloud to us' (3rd April 1885; pp. 6-7), or when 'After tea Miss Wells read to us, out of Wordsworth – Hart-leap Well, & another one' (9th September 1885; p. 55). In part reading aloud provides a means of drawing the school community together in a time of quiet, shared appreciation of literature. This set-up is not too dissimilar to Quaker worship, where the Meeting gather together in silence and

⁹⁶ In Francis E. Pollard (ed.), *Bootham School 1823-1923*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1926), pp. 107-109.

⁹⁷ Cherland argues that reading is first and foremost an 'external, social' activity that both draws adolescents into a wider network – of peers, say, or the family or the school – and causes the reader, consciously or otherwise, to absorb community and societal ideologies and practices. Cherland, *Private Practices*, pp. 5-6, 195, 198. Robyn McCallum suggests that adolescent fiction itself is especially pre-occupied with the themes of 'personal growth or maturation', revealing to the reader that the development of self occurs dialogically, through the individual's relationship to the outside world, and is 'always shaped by social ideologies'. Robyn McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*, (London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), p. 3.

occasionally hear people minister. In reading aloud literature takes the place of ministry, providing a means of drawing pupils and teachers together in spiritual fellowship and instruction. But whereas in a Quaker Meeting there exists the possibility that anybody may feel called upon to speak, in reading aloud it is the teacher alone who possesses the authority to talk.⁹⁸

While little has been written on the phenomenon of reading aloud (a discussion to which I return in chapter three), several historians have touched upon the ways in which the activity was an important component of children's education.⁹⁹ Reading aloud enabled teachers to guide the ways in which pupils experienced literature, skipping over more unsavoury passages of a book and placing emphasis on particularly edifying words and phrases. Kate Flint and Patricia Michealson have argued that reading aloud ensured young women were placed at a safe remove from the text, in the process reinforcing school and family hierarchies by demonstrating to girls who ultimately held the power.¹⁰⁰ Reading aloud at the Mount may well have served to reinforce school structures as it would have established teachers as the keepers of literature, shaping pupils' knowledge of and familiarity with literature. Yet teachers could not control pupils' personal responses as they sat listening in silence, and thus reading aloud left the door open for private questioning and critique. As a pedagogical technique reading aloud implicitly conveyed the sense that students should cultivate personal

⁹⁸ In *Villette* (1853) Lucy Snowe recalls in passionate horror her experiences of "la lecture pieuse" at the Madame Beck's boarding school for girls, a nightly event in which the girls are read aloud to from a 'book contain[ing] legends of the saints': 'This said "lecture pieuse" was, I soon found, mainly designed as a wholesome mortification of the Intellect, a useful humiliation of the Reason; and such a dose for Common Sense as she might digest at her leisure, and thrive on as best she could. [...] I would have given two francs for the chance of getting that book once into my own hands, turning over the sacred yellow leaves, ascertaining the title, and perusing with my own eyes the enormous figments which, as an unworthy heretic, it was only permitted me to drink in with my bewildered ears'. Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, Vol. I, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1853), pp. 226-227.

⁹⁹ Monica C. Lewis, 'Anthony Trollope and the Voicing of Victorian Fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 65, No. 2, (September 2010), p. 144. See also David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 60; Alison Byerly, 'From Schoolroom to Stage: Reading Aloud and the Domestication of Victorian Theatre', in Pauline Fletcher and Patrick Scott (eds.), *Culture and Education in Victorian Literature*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990), pp. 125-141. For an example of an early twentieth-century pedagogue advocating the importance of reading aloud in the classroom, see Horace A. Eaton, 'Reading Poetry Aloud', *The English Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (March 1913), pp. 151-157. Eaton appeared far from convinced that the practice had taken hold during the nineteenth-century, asserting that 'The ability to read aloud [...] should be far more than it is at present a pre-requisite for the teaching of English' (p. 151).

¹⁰⁰ Patricia Howell Michealson, *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading, and Speech in the Age of Austen*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 156-157, 173; Flint, *Woman Reader*, p. 100. See also William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 131.

interpretations to a text, reinforcing the Mount school emphasis on developing individual critical faculties.

In the books selected for reading aloud Mount educators sought to guide pupils towards self-recognition as broadly Protestant, as opposed to distinctly Quaker, young women. In reading *Daddy Darwin's Dovecot* (1881), for example, Miss Scott demonstrates to pupils the possibility of identifying moral messages in the recent writings of non-Quaker authors – once again foregrounding the shared heritage between Quakerism and other protestant denominations.¹⁰¹ *Daddy Darwin* is a novella by the Anglican writer Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841-1885), who was one of ‘the most popular children’s authors of [her] day’.¹⁰² Set in Ewing’s native Yorkshire, the novella recounts the tale of Jack Marsh, a workhouse boy whose kind-hearted and faithful character is rewarded when he grows up to marry the affluent Phoebe Shaw and become the owner of the Dovecot.¹⁰³ In selecting this novel Miss Scott offers pupils a story set in the region of their own school, emphasising the significance of Yorkshire heritage. This regionalism was important to York Friends: as I show in chapter two, ten years later Lucy Harrison’s essays and lectures would advance Yorkshire as a significant site in the nation’s political, religious, and social history. *Daddy Darwin* also depicts an Anglican young woman, just a few years older than Hannah and her peers, whose character displays many of the qualities favoured by Quaker education. In the opening scene the twenty-year-old parson’s daughter is depicted efficiently organising the parish accounts, the narrator wryly observing that, ‘The country parson (no less than statesmen and princes, than men of science and letters) is responsible for a great deal of his work that is really done by the help-mate – woman’ (p. 11). Here the Parson’s daughter stands in for women of all ranks of society, and presents these Quaker young women with a model of capable religious femininity in which private efficiency and public benefit are aligned. In reading aloud this novel Miss Scott subtly encourages pupils to realise that the skills they are acquiring at school, such as mathematic aptitude, could enable them to help in the running of the local religious community. Hannah doesn’t comment upon the content of Ewing’s novel, but it is possible to reconstruct a sense of what she made

¹⁰¹ Juliana Horatia Ewing, *Jackanapes, Daddy Darwin's Dovecot, The Story of a Short Life*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

¹⁰² Mary Sebag-Montefiore, *Women Writers of Children's Classics*, (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd., 2008), p. 1.

¹⁰³ Sebag-Montefiore, *Women Writers*, p. 34.

of its message. As I discuss below in relation to Ewing's *Loetus Sorte Mea* and John Ruskin's *Ethics of the Dust*, Hannah and her friends embrace a similar model of femininity in which private capability is shown to intimate the possibility of public influence.

Though neither Hannah nor Gertrude refer to venturing into the School library at any point, and while Hannah's reading selections seldom tally with items contained in the library catalogue, this is not to say that they are closed to the reading occasions offered by the school. Hannah's diary reveals how books are part of the fabric of Quaker conversation, woven into discussions about Quaker activities such as Quarterly Meetings. On one occasion she mentions how she, 'Sat by Miss Wells at dinner, she talked about "Cranford" (the old ladies) & the Quarterly' (21st October 1885; p. 59).¹⁰⁴ Hannah appears to welcome such recommendations. After hearing Miss Scott read *Daddy Darwin*, for example, Hannah goes on to read another book by Ewing, the recently-published *Loetus Sorte Mea; or, The Story of a Short Life* (1885). The novella tells the tale of a small boy, Leonard, who is wilful and spoiled until disabled in an accident. Leonard wishes to join the army but is unable to do so due to his disability. He insists on being taken to spend time in the local army barracks, where he becomes a pet favourite before eventually dying there. *Loetus* pursues a more obviously Anglican theme than *Daddy Darwin*, uniting nation, military and church. The army barracks are presented as being run like the best households, 'tin pails are kept as bright as average teaspoons (to the envy of housewives and the shame of housemaids!)' (p. 11), and when Leonard dies there at the end of the novel he does so to the strains of hymn being sung in the church on the site (pp. 117-125).

That Mount pupils should be presented with a novel favourably depicting the military may come as a surprise, given that Quakers are famed for their peace campaigning and activism. Yet Quakers' commitment to the Society's Peace Testimony had never been uniform or unequivocal.¹⁰⁵ As early as 1921 Rufus Jones was pointing

¹⁰⁴ In chapter three I explore more fully the special relationship York's female Quaker community have with Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853).

¹⁰⁵ Heloise Brown, *The Truest Form of Patriotism: Pacifist Feminism in Britain, 1870-1902*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 45-46; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 313, 323; Brian Phillips, 'Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation, 1890-1910', (unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Cambridge University, 1989), pp. 67-68, 76, 333; David Rubinstein, *York Friends and the Great War*, Borthwick Paper 96, (York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, 1999), p. 3. The Quaker Peace Testimony was an important collective declaration made by Friends in 1660. For a detailed examination of the 'Origins and Legacies' of the Peace Testimony, see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 237-269. I return to Quaker responses to the First World War in more detail in chapter three.

out that prior to the First World War the Peace Testimony had been an ‘unexamined inheritance’ for many young Friends, ‘the rank and file of the membership’ possessing ‘hardly more than a traditional adherence to the peace position’.¹⁰⁶ At the Mount in the 1880s it would seem that military activities were if not actively endorsed then certainly condoned, emphasising commitment to a vision of nation whose patriotism was neither wholly dissenting nor pacifist. Reading books such as *Loetus*, therefore, encouraged pupils to feel invested in a mainstream form of patriotism and to view their emerging Quaker citizenship as implicated in a broader Protestant culture.

Reading *Loetus* encourages Hannah and her friends to cultivate a sense of patriotic femininity. *Loetus* concludes with the possibility of collective redemption through the arrival of a new son for Leonard’s mother, Lady Jane:

Lady Jane may yet have to buckle on a hero’s sword. Brought up by such a mother in the fear of GOD, he ought to be good, he may live to be great [...] But never, not in the “one crowded hour of glorious” victory, not in the years of the softest comforts of a peaceful home, by no virtues and in no success shall he bear more fitly than his crippled brother bore the ancient motto of their house: “Laetus Sorte Mea” [Happy in my lot] (pp. 129-130).

Margaret Hillel has shown how the ‘child as redeemer’ had a strong presence in Victorian literature, as evangelicalism taught children that they should take care to redeem both their own souls and those of others.¹⁰⁷ That this should be articulated in *Loetus* through the re-emergence of the repentant first son in the promise of a soldier-like second reinforces a popular mid-Victorian ideal of masculinity: Susan Walton has shown how mid-Victorian notions of manliness, and their corresponding notions of femininity, were articulated through images of soldiers.¹⁰⁸ The reader of *Loetus* is encouraged to feel pity for both Leonard and his mother that he failed to fulfil such a patriotically masculine role. This message was not lost on Hannah, whose response suggests that she has been haunted by the character: ‘Next half I must remember to ask if I can bring back our photo of Leonard for Carrie to see, as it [erased] he is so like the

¹⁰⁶ Rufus M. Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, Vol. II, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), p. 728.

¹⁰⁷ Margaret Hillel, ‘A Little Child Shall Lead Them: The Child as Redeemer’, in Roderick McGills (ed.), *Children’s Literature and the Fin de Siècle*, (London: Praeger Publishers, 2003), pp. 57-58. See also Maurice Saxby, *Offered to Children*, (Sydney: Scholastic, 1998), pp. 199-200.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Walton, *Imagining Soldiers and Fathers in the Mid-Victorian Era: Charlotte Yonge’s Models of Manliness*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 1-7.

little boy in “Loetus Sorte Mea” (14th June 1885; p. 40). Hannah’s reference to Leonard as a ‘little boy’ implies Ewing’s text has inspired in her a pity and tenderness that becomes a currency amongst her and her friends: one can almost see them fawning together over the photograph she mentions. Thus Hannah acts out the maternal, feeling, patriotic form of femininity endorsed by the text; one whose rhetoric promotes women’s role in the life of the nation as equally important to that of men’s, but whose ideology advances a sentimentally hetero-normative model. As I explore below, this ideal of femininity becomes appealing to Hannah and her friends towards the end of their time at the Mount.

Reading and Protestant national identity

Margaret Meek has described how literature plays an important role in how children come to understand their nationality, fostering a sense of a national language and tradition.¹⁰⁹ Partly this was achieved at the Mount through an emphasis on English Literature and Language, which were, according to Stewart, ‘the first considerations in the curricula of [all the main Quaker schools]’ during the nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ Stewart suggests that Quakers emphasised vernacular English over the classics from the earliest days of the Society not only because English was free from ‘suspicious pagan, university, and ecclesiastical associations’, but more specifically because a sound grasp of written and spoken English would ensure Quaker students became successful in both Quaker ministry, and professions favoured by Quakers such as trade.¹¹¹ Undoubtedly this English education was viewed as significant at the Quaker school in York. The teachers at Trinity Lane School called upon Lindley Murray (1745-1826), an American Quaker who had moved to York in the 1780s, to write a book on grammar to assist them in their teaching, as at that time there were ‘no satisfactory books to guide their work’.¹¹² Murray’s *English Grammar* was published in 1795, and the proceeds of the first

¹⁰⁹ Margaret Meek (ed.), *Children’s Literature and National Identity*, (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2001), pp. ix-x.

¹¹⁰ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, p. 111.

¹¹¹ Stewart, *Quakers and Education*, pp. 25-28, 114-115.

¹¹² Sturge and Clark, *Mount School* p. 14; For more on Murray see Stephen Allott, *Lindley Murray, 1745-1826: Quaker Grammarian*, (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1991).

edition were donated to the school.¹¹³ It was a significant landmark in the development of literary education, as Lydia Rous later noted: ‘for a half-century [*English Grammar*] was decidedly the most useful and popular class-book in England; we think deservedly so, when compared with his contemporaries’.¹¹⁴ As well as emphasising the vernacular English tradition, the Mount School went a long way towards providing pupils with a familiarity with famous works of English Literature. By 1885, for example, the school library was well-stocked with an array of English writers who were becoming established as canonical.¹¹⁵ This, like the *conversazione* lectures and reading aloud, ensured pupils were exposed to a decidedly English literary tradition. As I reveal in chapter two, Lucy Harrison delineated a similar genealogy of English literature in her essays and lectures, where she identifies Quaker sentiments embedded in canonical works as a means to re-inscribe Quakerism into a Protestant national history extending back to the time of King Alfred (848/9–899).

The English tradition presented to Mount pupils was a decidedly Protestant one. Quaker educators were not unusual in this regard: Emma Major has shown how writers like Anna Barbauld (1743-1825) placed emphasis in her writings for children ‘on the national culture shared by Dissenters and those in the Established Church’.¹¹⁶ A sense of belonging to this shared Protestant heritage was part of the fabric of education at the Mount, far wider in scope than simply the girls’ reading material. Pupils were often encouraged, for example, to take imaginative possession of significant sites of religious and political power in Yorkshire.¹¹⁷ Hannah records two trips to York Minster in her diary, the first of which demonstrates Quaker young women participating in an Anglican religious service: ‘Por & I went to the Minster in the afternoon, we had the 65th Ps. & John XIV 16.17 for the anthem’ (July 12th 1886; p. 124). Her second entry presents the Minster as a tourist attraction to be enjoyed: ‘After Meeting Miss Wallis took some of us to the Minster & we went all round except up into the Tower’ (16th July

¹¹³ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 16.

¹¹⁴ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 16. For more on Murray’s importance to the development of English literary studies see St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, pp. 137, 383.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix I.

¹¹⁶ Emma Major, *Madam Britannia, Women, Church, and Nation, 1712-1812*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 216-217.

¹¹⁷ See for example, Lucy Harrison, ‘Leisure Hour Pursuits’ (1913), in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 297-298.

1886; p. 129). Hannah also records visiting Rievaulx Abbey.¹¹⁸ A tourist guide of the 1870s was quick to highlight the importance of Rievaulx Abbey in the region's religious history, citing it as 'the first Cistercian monastery in Yorkshire'.¹¹⁹ In being taken on an excursion to see the ruins of what had been a symbol of Catholic power, Mount pupils were tacitly reminded of the triumph of Protestantism over Catholicism in England. A trip to Castle Howard offered pupils an opportunity to enact their dissenting community's cultural preferences in a setting associated with aristocratic power. The *Illustrated Handbook* (1857) had lauded Castle Howard, another Catholic site, as 'the seat of the Right honourable the Earl of Carlisle', 'a magnificent pile of architecture, replete with the choicest works of art', which 'has long maintained its reputation of being one of the most splendid objects of attraction in the North of England'.¹²⁰ Hannah, meanwhile, seems more preoccupied with the dynamics of schoolgirl relationships, and describes excitedly how

We DID go the excursion such a jolly one & to Castle Howard. I walked with Porpoise & then Sallie & Alice Curtis & Katie Baker came with us too. We went into an awfully jolly wood & got lots & lots of flowers – primroses, violets, wood-anemones, cowslips, wild hyacinths, champions etc. (7th May 1885; pp. 26-27).

The Primrose Excursion was a celebrated annual event in the Mount school calendar, and primroses crop up in a number of the writings by York Quaker women.¹²¹ As a community of wildflowers originating from a single stem, primroses are a symbol that can be readily appropriated by Quakers.¹²² Wildflowers, in this context, arguably carry

¹¹⁸ Rievaulx Abbey makes an appearance in Winifred Sturge's *Archaeology Diary* in 1901. Sturge's diary contains architectural sketches of many religious heritage sites in Yorkshire, such as Fountain's Abbey, as well as prominent religious, political and educational institutions from further afield, notably several Cambridge Colleges. Winifred Sturge's *Archaeology Diary, 1900-1910*, MOU 5/1/5/7.

¹¹⁹ George Frank, *Guide to Ryedale, Including Rievaulx Abbey, and the Towns of Helmsley, Kirbymoorside, and Pickering, With the Places of Interest and Beauty in the Neighbourhood*, (Birmingham: Martin Billing, Son, and Co., 1873), p. 18.

¹²⁰ Anon, *The Illustrated Hand-Book to Castle Howard, The Yorkshire Seat of The Right Hon. The Earl of Carlisle*, Malton: Henry Smithson, 1857, p. 1. See also Fred Bohn, *The Handbook for the City of York: with Knaresborough, Harrogate, Boston Spa, Ripon, Fountain's Abbey; Castle Howard, Scarborough, and Whitby*, (York: John Sampson, 1857).

¹²¹ In chapter two I discuss how Lucy Harrison draws upon Ruskinian primroses to expound a mystical Quakerism.

¹²² Indeed, the *Primula Vulgaris* is also known as the Quaker's Bonnet Primrose.

dissenting connotations. That Hannah should take more of an interest in picking primroses and other wild flowers than she does in appreciating Castle Howard itself suggests that this famous aristocratic seat is demoted in the eyes of Quaker schoolgirls to little more than a backdrop for their annual community outing. Though the Anglo-Catholic heritage of the Howard family problematize their standing as a symbol of establishment culture and history, their associations with aristocratic privilege and power make them a significant target for this dissenting community. The implicit message conveyed by the school in taking the girls on the primrose excursion to Castle Howard seems to be that Quaker traditions and responses to nature are more significant and worthy of attention than the histories of prominent elites.



Figure 6: pupils on a primrose excursion in 1897 (source: *The Mount School, York*)

The Protestant identity explored by Mount pupils is not exclusively English. Hannah mentions reading two works that, while written by English novelists, place a pan-European Protestant history centre stage. The first, Annie Lucas's *Wenzel's Inheritance; or Faithful Unto Death, A Story of Bohemia in the Fifteenth Century* (1880), Hannah records reading both with friends and alone (21st and 26th November 1885; p. 90, 93).¹²³ *Wenzel's Inheritance* is set in 1430s Bohemia, opening with an allusion to the burning at the stake of Jan Hus in 1415. Hus was executed for what were perceived to be his

¹²³ Annie Lucas, *Wenzel's Inheritance; or Faithful Unto Death, A Story of Bohemia in the Fifteenth Century*, (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1880). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

heretical religious ideas, and immediately became a martyr.¹²⁴ Lucas's account foregrounds the familiarity of Hus's story, implying that this is an era of Protestant history with which the English adolescent reader should be well acquainted:

The career of John Huse – beginning, like those of his predecessors, with bold denunciations of the vices and corruptions of the Church, gradually developing, through the study of the Scriptures and the works of Wickliffe, into a fearless championship of Gospel truth, and ending, in spite of imperial safe-conduct and Papal pledge, in defiance of all principles of justice and right, at the stake [...] is too well-known to need even a passing record here (p. 12).

Lucas's Anglicisation of Jan Hus as 'John Huse' makes this Czech priest seem at home in the drawing rooms of late-Victorian England, a Protestant martyr in Englishman's clothing whose times speak to the modern reader. Lucas presents these forerunners of the Protestant Reformation as exciting and noble. 'At its very birth the Bohemian church was baptised with blood' (p. 8), Lucas writes,

Host upon host of her noblest chivalry, of her bravest warriors, headed by prince and prelate, nerved by Papal behest and blessing, and burning with zeal and hatred, had pressed through the natural fortresses with which it is begirt (p. 7).

Lucas challenges the reader to consider 'what save faith in the God for the right to worship whom according to their conscience they fought, could have saved the heroic sons of that small and feeble nation in their long and single-handed struggles against the combined forces of Europe?' (p. 15). To reinforce this idea, the narrative of the novel follows the fate of two young people, Wenzel and Gertrude, as they remain committed to their cause in the face of persecution and the death of Gertrude's brother, Sigisimund. For their noble commitment to Protestantism they are rewarded with a happy home life together: 'blessed and blessing, loving and beloved, [...] Wenzel and Gertrude lived and laboured. Children were given to them; the power and the peace of God were upon their hearts and their lives' (p. 399). By the novel's conclusion, the reader is left in little doubt as to the central message that adherence to Protestantism is honourable, exciting, and will bring the rewards of both earthly and heavenly 'blessing'.

¹²⁴ See Thomas A. Fudge, *The Crusade Against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418-1437*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 2-3.

Yet while young female readers are invited to feel a sense of belonging to a lengthy Protestant heritage, theirs is not to be an equal contribution. Gertrude is celebrated not as the eponymous hero of *Wenzel* but as a future wife and mother, the lifeblood of the ideal Protestant nation.

Quite what Hannah and her friends made of all this is difficult to tell, because Hannah only refers to having read *Wenzel's Inheritance* and doesn't supply any comment. Indeed, it's possible that she didn't even finish the novel. Several months earlier Hannah refers to how, 'In the afternoon I went & laid down upstairs with Margy & ate plums & dates also read Schonberg Cotta Family, when ever shall I get it finished?' (p. 33). The *Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family* (1862) by the Anglican author Elizabeth Rundle Charles (1828-1896) tells a similar tale to *Wenzel's Inheritance*, this time of the Protestant Reformation in Germany under Martin Luther (1483-1546).¹²⁵ That Hannah should be reading this novel reclining on a bed, languidly eating fruit, is probably not the ideal reading experience envisioned by the author of *Chronicles*. But this is perhaps because, like *Wenzel*, *Chronicles* is as exciting as it is educational and instructive, a novel to read as much for fun as for edification.¹²⁶ *Chronicles* is first told from the perspective of Else, a narrator of a similar age to Hannah. It opens:

Friedrich wishes me to write a chronicle of my life. Friedrich is my eldest brother. I am sixteen, and he is seventeen, and I have always been in the habit of doing what he wishes; and therefore, although it seems to me a very strange idea, I do so now (p. 9).

Like Else, Hannah had an older brother, James, and this identification may have been part of the novel's initial appeal to her. *Chronicles* doesn't appear to have held her attention for long, however, for after speculating exasperatedly, 'when ever shall I get it finished?', Hannah doesn't mention Charles's novel again. It would appear that on occasion Hannah valued the pleasures of the act of reading above dutifully soldiering on

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Rundle Charles, *Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family*, (London: T. Nelson and Sons, [1862] 1885). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

¹²⁶ *Clayhanger* (1910), Arnold Bennett's novel set in the midlands of the 1870s, presents *Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family* as a novel that stirs the imagination of even the most bemused adolescent reader: 'On the table, open, was a bound volume of "The Family Treasury of Sunday Reading", in which Clara had been perusing "The Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family" with feverish interest. Edwin had laughed at her ingenious absorption in the adventures of the Schönberg Cotta family, but the fact was that he had found them rather interesting, in spite of himself, while pretending the contrary'. Arnold Bennett, *Clayhanger*, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. [1910] 1920), p. 134.

to the final page to become well-versed in Protestant history. Hannah reveals how the context in which one reads a text enables one to modify the way in which one can negotiate its message. What should be educational and instructive here is pursued for its entertainment value, and when it fails in this regard the book – and perhaps its message – are set aside and forgotten.

Hannah's reference to reading in the company of her friend Margy is typical, as she often refers to reading alongside friends. Reading seems to have been in vogue amongst these Mount pupils. Looking back in the 1930s, the editors of *The Mount School York* (1931) described how during the 1880s:

[I]t was the thing to read! [...] bunches of girls thrown back on their own resources read steadily: Carlyle, Ruskin, Prescott. An inner circle read because they wanted to read, others – not without backward glances at the story drawer – in hopes of being numbered amongst the intelligentsia. The first Class prided themselves on a taste for books called dry by the Third!¹²⁷

Reading here seems self-directed, a result of being permitted to follow one's 'own resources', but it nevertheless involves a subtle yet specific declaration of allegiance to a particular group. Reading provides a means of asserting one's position in the pecking order and mediating friendships. Cherland has demonstrated how reading is one of the ways in which schoolgirls can 'do friendship', as 'one became a member of a community by having read the same books, by recommending books to each other, by looking for books for each other, and by talking about books together'.¹²⁸ Hannah's diary records how books reinforce friendships by serving as forms of exchange. Books are gifts, mentioned in the same breath as pretty hand-made objects. Hannah records how for her birthday:

The girls here gave me – [...] a pocket book, the "Gry" gave me two little terra cotta vases which she had painted on herself. The Porpoise gave me a cap, the outside she had crocheted herself & then it has a plush crown. [...] Agnes – Wordsworth's poems. The Arnold sent me a brooch; Bessie – Coleridge in a red morocco binding (September 20th 1885; pp. 44-45).

¹²⁷ Sturge and Clark, *The Mount School, York*, p. 135.

¹²⁸ Cherland, *Private Practices*, pp. 99-100.

In favouring the physical appearance of these books – Hannah’s new Coleridge comes in ‘red morocco binding’ – these adolescent readers defy the Victorian notion that valuing the outsides of books was morally suspect.¹²⁹ Here, the book beautiful provides a means to signify friendship and to convey value in the act of exchange, echoing Harrison’s belief that the importance of reading and literature lies in the way they ‘make you ready to share them and pass them on’.¹³⁰ Books are often lent and borrowed amongst these friends. Hannah notes early on in her diary how ‘In the afternoon I read Carrie’s “Gypsy Breynton”’ (2nd April 1885; p. 5), a book which, as I explore below, was popular amongst Hannah and her friends for the way it validated their more mischievous behaviour. Rogers has shown how shared experiences amongst schoolgirls provided a means for girls to undermine school regulation and control without explicitly breaking the rules, and reading was a particular way in which girls could cultivate intimate friendships within an environment of surveillance and public activity.¹³¹ Reading the same books as one another, then, provides Mount pupils as a way of forging counter-communities within a school that regulated pupils’ friendships by assigning walking partners and set places for mealtimes and lessons.¹³²

Reading and femininity

Side-stepping the literature made available to them by the school, Hannah and her friends work out their own version of Quaker femininity by reading imaginative fiction and secular essays. The Mount School Library Catalogue for 1885 lists numerous works of Quaker hagiography, including more than one work on Elizabeth Fry, a woman who was, as Alison Booth has shown, a popular figure in nineteenth-century prosopography.¹³³ That these Mount pupils do not record reading such works suggests

¹²⁹ Leah Price, *How to Do Things With Books in Victorian Britain*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 2-3.

¹³⁰ See above, p. 10.

¹³¹ Rogers, ‘Schools, discipline and community’, p. 538.

¹³² See for example Hannah’s diary entries for 14th December 1885, p. 98 and February 3rd 1886, pp. 103-104.

¹³³ Alison Booth, *How to Make it as a Woman: Collective Biographical History From Victoria to the Present*, (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 138.

either that these pioneering Quaker women held little relevance to them, or that they seemed too familiar to bother reading about. The girls don't select non-Quaker *Lives* either, despite the fact that the Library contained works such as Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) and Mathilde Blind's *George Eliot* (1883).¹³⁴ It is a curious fact that while the Library appears to have been well-stocked with biographies of famous female writers, there is not a single work of fiction by a man or a woman listed in the Catalogue. While the Library had yet to catch up with the reading practices of teachers and pupils at the School, it is possible that the *Lives* of female novelists had been the thin end of the wedge in incorporating fiction into Quaker girls' education.

The Victorian and Edwardian adolescent girl, Claudia Nelson and Lynne Valone have argued, was very much a gendered entity.¹³⁵ This gendered focus was particularly apparent in the books that adolescent girls were encouraged to read, and throughout the century there existed a clearly-delineated gendered category of literature for girls.¹³⁶ Flint notes that this girls' literature was often designed to prepare the young woman for her 'future matrimonial role, by encouraging her sympathetic nature'.¹³⁷ We have seen how Mount pupils were exposed to many such texts, which appear to have inflected the tone of female friendships at the school. If the recollections of the editors of *The Mount School York* are anything to go by, during the 1880s 'within the school, as within the covers of current novels, there was over-preoccupation with emotion, and too many violent, rather flabby friendships'.¹³⁸ Certainly Hannah's school diary records instances of intense friendship, particularly with 'Bristles' (probably Ethel Oliver, but possibly Ethel Clark), with whom she spends a lot of time: the girls are eventually separated in classes and at mealtimes, Hannah wryly commenting in her diary 'such is life!' (16th October 1885; p. 57). Yet the girls seem to have appropriated works associated with masculine zeal in order to articulate their affection for one another. Hannah expresses her feelings

¹³⁴ See Appendix I.

¹³⁵ Claudia Nelson and Lynne Valone (eds.), *Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, (London: University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp. 2-3.

¹³⁶ Gillian Avery, *Nineteenth Century Children*, Hodder and Staughton, 1965; Julia Briggs, 'Women Writers and Writing for Children: From Sarah Fielding to E. Nesbit', in Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, *Children and Their Books*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 238; Foster and Simons, *What Katy Read*, pp. 2, 3; Nelson and Valone (eds.), *Anglo-American Girl*, pp. 1-10; Reynolds, *Children's Literature*, pp. 30-32. Cherland points out that 'because gender is a cultural construction and reading is a social practice, gender is also unavoidably present in reading'. Cherland, *Private Practices*, p. 13.

¹³⁷ Flint, *Woman Reader*, pp. 10-11. See also Cherland, *Private Practices*, p. 133.

¹³⁸ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 159.

towards her friend with an allusion to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1841 poem 'Excelsior', 'I exercised with "Bristles" after tea, my feelings towards her are "Excelsior!"' (27th September 1885; p. 48), providing another instance in which Hannah draws upon literature to make sense of her personal experiences. In Barbara Pym's novel *Excellent Women* (1952), 'Excelsior!' is mentioned in the obituary of an Old Girl in an Anglican school magazine, and is shown to have served as a model for validating intense female friendships amongst schoolgirls at the turn of the century.¹³⁹ 'Excelsior!' is just one of the literary templates with which Hannah expresses her boisterous affection for Bristles, and their rowdy femininity is depicted in several of the novels the girls read.

In picking up novels with tomboyish heroines, such as Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did at School* (1873) and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *Gypsy Breynton* (1866), Hannah and her friends display preferences that were typical of female adolescent readers more generally. In *Juvenile Literature As It Is* (1888) Edward Salmon argued that,

A great many girls never read so-called "girls' books" at all; they prefer those presumably written for boys. Girls as a rule don't care for Sunday-school twaddle; they like a good stirring story, with a plot and some incident and adventures.¹⁴⁰

Many novels for girls, however, were not straightforwardly the pious 'Sunday-school twaddle' that Salmon held them to be, instead offering rather unexpected models of femininity. As Judy Simons suggests, though children's literature ostensibly sought to uphold traditional gender binaries, in actuality the male and female characters in these books often exposed the 'flimsiness and artificiality' of such gender divisions and portrayed characters who transgressed gender norms.¹⁴¹ However, Flint's argument that Victorian girls were unconscious of gender in their reading choices seems unlikely.¹⁴² Hannah and her friends display a keen awareness of the implications of gender in their

¹³⁹ Barbara Pym, *Excellent Women*, (London: Virago Press, [1952] 2008), pp. 125-126. All subsequent references are in-text citations.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, (London: Henry J. Drane, 1888), pp. 27-28.

¹⁴¹ Judy Simons, 'Gender Roles in Children's Fiction', in M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 143, 146.

¹⁴² Kate Flint, 'Woman Readers Revisited', in Janet Badia and Jennifer Phegley (eds.), *Reading Women: Literary Figures and Cultural Icons from the Victorian Age to the Present*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 288-291.

reading, by turns welcoming and subverting normative codes rather than ignoring them altogether.

In the first section of her diary, particularly during the summer of 1885, Hannah records a predilection amongst herself and her friends for novels depicting rowdy models of femininity. Two of their favourites, *Gypsy Breynton* and *What Katy Did at School*, were popular American novels of the day. Foster and Simons have shown how during the 1850s and 1860s there was a surge of American children's literature in the UK, as novels such as the *Katy* books sold in vast numbers on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁴³ Part of the appeal of these novels, Foster and Simons contend, is that they 'offered the young English readers a more liberated model of girlhood, in contrast to that experienced in duty-ridden, restrictive British society', one which was 'joyfully anarchic', tomboyish, and celebrated 'a secret world of autonomy and freedom from adult control'.¹⁴⁴ That these themes chimed with contemporary audiences seems convincing: in 1888 Salmon suggested that 'American stories for girls are always more true to nature than English stories'.¹⁴⁵ As I reveal in chapter three, American fiction in general enjoyed popularity with Quaker readers in York at the turn of the century.

Early on in her diary Hannah refers to reading *Gypsy Breynton* over two days (2nd and 3rd April 1885; pp. 5-6).¹⁴⁶ Phelps's novel is set in the Vermont countryside, and follows the adventures of Gypsy, a twelve-year-old tomboy who continually gets into scrapes. Her brother Tom says that the 'best' thing about Gypsy is 'there's none of your girl's nonsense about her' (p. 29). The narrator informs the reader that 'Gypsy could be, and half the time she was, as orderly and lady-like as anybody. [But the trouble was] She did everything in fits and starts' (p. 38). Gypsy knows her mother is 'right' in wanting her to acquire 'the habits of a lady', and recognises that she has, in her mother, a good example to follow, but believes that the pursuit of a lady-like state would prove fruitless because of 'a natural kink within herself' that 'depended entirely upon the child's own will for its eradication' (pp. 37-38). The subsequent chapters follow a typical pattern in which Gypsy has a lot of fun pursuing high-spirited adventures, before getting into

¹⁴³ Foster and Simons, *What Katy Read*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ Foster and Simons, *What Katy Read*, pp. 15-16, 18-19.

¹⁴⁵ Salmon, *Juvenile Literature*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁶ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, *Gypsy Breynton*, (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, [1866] 1876). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

trouble and consequently learning that she should think before acting in order to stem her mischievous behaviour. Yet this message is undercut by the fact that the scenes of daring are so much more exciting and memorable than the ones in which Gypsy is chastised. Indeed, the narrative is unable to sustain the sense that Gypsy is wrong for making mischief as she always tells the truth and admits her mistakes afterwards. This is, the narrator informs the reader, ‘one of the reasons why people had such a habit of loving Gypsy’ (p. 135). An honest heroine whose zest for life is such that while she can’t seem to help getting into trouble, she never does any real harm: there is much here to vindicate the lively Quaker schoolgirl.

Although she doesn’t comment on the book, Hannah seems to go a fair way towards recreating some of Gypsy’s escapades. At the beginning of the novel Gypsy is described as ‘coming up the stairs with a great banging and singing and laughing, as nobody but Gypsy could come upstairs’ (p. 18), and at one point Hannah details in her diary how ‘I taught Bristles my patent way of coming downstairs, at 4pm she managed very well; only I hope she will never break her neck by so doing, for she approves of the system, it is slightly rapid’ (22nd September 1885; p. 47). The contradictory adverb and adjective ‘slightly rapid’ is at once hesitant and mischievous, Hannah both acknowledging and abdicating her responsibility for any future attempt Bristles may make to slide down the stairs. As a rhetorical gesture ‘slightly rapid’ is not too far removed from the way Gypsy’s desire to do good clashes with her natural inclination for naughtiness and adventure.

Another American novel that Hannah seems to favour for its mischievous female characters is *What Katy Did at School*, the second novel in the ‘What Katy Did’ series.¹⁴⁷ While *What Katy Did* (1872) follows the adventures of the exuberant Katy, whose fall from a swing knocks the tomboyishness out of her by turning her into an invalid, *Katy At School* follows a reformed Katy as she recovers and sets off to boarding school. The novel opens with Katy fulfilling the role of housewife in the family (her mother is dead), and shows her ‘work[ing] with a will’ to ensure that everything in the house is in order when her mother’s cousin comes to stay: ‘Everything was as nice as could be, when Katy stood in the dining-room to take a last look at her arrangements; and she hoped Papa would be pleased, and that mamma’s cousin would think her a good housekeeper’ (p. 29). But when her mother’s relative expresses concern that Katy

¹⁴⁷ Susan Coolidge, *What Katy Did at School*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, [1873] 1880). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

is becoming old before her time, Katy's father resolves to send her away to boarding school (p. 37). This rather mixed message – that young women should be dutiful and domesticated but not *too* dutiful and domesticated – recurs throughout the novel, as the narrative remains ambiguous as to whether or not Katy is right to chastise the moral conduct of her mischievous friends. While Katy's friend Ellen may tell her towards the conclusion that 'you [...] have done more to keep us steady than any girls in school' (p. 139), much of the novel reinforces the sense that the community of adolescent female friends is more important than that of the family. Foster and Simons have noted that 'the originality and appeal of Coolidge's work lies in its exploration of juvenile behaviour isolated from direct contact with adults', and *Katy at School* gives a lot of time over to the dynamics of friendships within the context of school life.¹⁴⁸ Just like pupils at the Mount, the girls in *Katy at School* have to negotiate the jealousy, broken promises, and anxiety of securing walking partners (p. 85). Katy's dorm room is on a corridor nicknamed 'Quaker Row', and her stoic attitude towards its plainness may well have resonated with Mount readers. For Katy, the narrator informs us, 'Its bareness and simplicity had the charm of novelty' (p. 70). Katy and her friends set up a secret society, the 'S.U.C.C', whose constitution states that 'The object of this Society is twofold: it combines having a good time with the pursuit of VIRTUE' (p. 110). Hannah and her friends have a similar society, 'the league of the jolly-cum-profs', though their group seems less concerned with 'VIRTUE' than Katy's. On one occasion the girls draw their society symbol on their foreheads, 'wh. caused Miss Schohaus to send us out fr. Tea to wash' (4th April 1885; pp. 8-9). Reading this novel appears to have promoted lively behaviour amongst Hannah and her peers. After beginning *Katy at School*, Hannah describes how,

After tea went the walk to Hob Moor. [...] I walked with Plunkett & after much hunting about for a leaf, we at length lodged in a tree overshadowing a brook; & took it in turns to read the aforesaid book [*Katy*] aloud; [...] Plunkett's foot went to sleep & she nearly rolled off into the water (12th June 1885; pp. 39-40).

Hannah and Plunkett mirror *Katy at School's* transgressive message – that lively girls can establish alternative positions for their peer group – ensconcing themselves in an

¹⁴⁸ Foster and Simons, *What Katy Read*, p. 107.

elevated, secluded private space. This embodied experience adds frisson to the reading, particularly as it carries the possibility of accidentally (on purpose?) falling into the water below. Thus the act of reading, as much as the act of interpretation, facilitates the subversion of traditional gender expectations.

These exuberant reading experiences occur early on in Hannah's diary. As her time at the Mount progresses, she and her friends begin to embrace the more traditional models of femininity endorsed by the school in the works of novelists such as Ewing. During her final year at school Hannah and Bristles pore over John Ruskin's *The Ethics of the Dust* (1865) together: 'had a splendid time in the afternoon, read Ethics of the Dust with Bristles. [...] We read the chapter Chrystal Virtues wh. I think is splendid' (26th October, 1885; pp. 61-62); 'Very fine rather snowy day, in the afternoon read the "Ethics of Dust". Talk with Bristles before & after Meeting about "Home virtues" p. 143' (15th November 1885; p. 79). Ruskin's book is listed in the 1885 Mount School Library Catalogue, but presumably Hannah and Bristles read the copy Hannah's brother James sent as a birthday present (20th September 1885; p. 45). Dedicated 'with love' to 'THE REAL LITTLE HOUSEWIVES whose gentle listening and thoughtful questioning enabled the writer to write this book', *Ethics* is a series of dramatized lectures given by an Old Lecturer to a group of young women aged between nine and twenty.¹⁴⁹ On the surface *Ethics* appears the epitome of the Victorian idealisation of domesticated femininity – oppressive, limiting, playing to gender stereotypes – and yet Hannah and Bristles respond thoughtfully and warmly to Ruskin's book. Although, as Sharon Aronofsky Weltman points out, Ruskin's work displays 'a surprising tendency to unsettle the gender distinctions that he would prefer to uphold', Hannah and Bristles respond favourably to the virtuous femininity celebrated in *Ethics*.¹⁵⁰ *Ethics* must have come as a subversive relief to young women in a Quaker boarding school who delight in pretty things. Quakerism had long advocated 'plain dress', a mode that emphasised muted colours and simplicity of design as a means to focus attention away from worldly concerns: in 1798 Elizabeth Fry described plain dress as 'a sort of protector to the

¹⁴⁹ John Ruskin, *The Ethics of the Dust*, (London: J.M. Dent and Co., [1865] 1907). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

¹⁵⁰ Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, *Ruskin's Mythic Queen: Gender Subversion in Victorian Culture*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), pp. 8, 124.

principles of Christianity in the present state of the world'.¹⁵¹ Mary Ann Caton reports that although the practice of plain dress had begun to die out by the late nineteenth century, nevertheless there remained a preference for 'simple dress' that 'was functional and lacked fashionable trim, details, and extravagant fabric patterns'.¹⁵² Indeed, the section on 'Christian Simplicity' in *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends* (1911) reproduced an extract from an epistle of 1691 that urged Friends 'to avoid pride and immodesty in apparel, and all vain and superfluous fashions of the world'.¹⁵³



Figure 7: Mount pupil of the 1930s modelling 'Plain Dress' of the 1830s and 1840s

(source: *The Mount School, York*)

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Mary Ann Caton, 'The Aesthetics of Absence: Quaker Women's Plain Dress in the Delaware Valley, 1790-1900', in Emma Jones Lapansky and Anne A. Verplanck (eds.), *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflection on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003, pp. 246-271 (p. 255).

¹⁵² Caton, 'Aesthetics of Absence', pp. 267, 270, 271. Marguerite Di Angeli's *Thee Hannah* (1940), set in pre-Civil War Philadelphia, follows the adventures of a nine-year-old Quaker girl who longs to be able to possess pretty things. At one point Hannah's friend Cecily, who is not a Quaker, lends her a pink sash, leading to consternation on Hannah's part lest she be caught with it. Hannah ultimately learns to appreciate her Quaker heritage, however, when her family come to the aid of an escaped slave. Marguerite Di Angeli, *Thee Hannah*, Harrisonburg: Herald Press, [1940] 2000.

¹⁵³ The Religious Society of Friends, *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends: Doctrine and Practice*, (London: H. D. & B. Headley), [1883, 1900] (1911), p. 91.

In contrast to this rejection of fashionable and attention-seeking modes, the Old Lecturer of *Ethics* presents taking care of her appearance as a girl's moral duty, or, as he puts it, 'virtue':

always to dress yourselves beautifully – not finely, unless on occasion; but then very finely and beautifully too. Also, you are to dress as many other people as you can; and to teach them how to dress, if they don't know; and to consider every ill-dressed woman or child who you see anywhere, as a personal disgrace (p. 107).

This is the pursuit of beauty as evangelism. The Old Lecturer could almost be talking of Quaker attitudes to dress when he holds forth on modesty of appearance:

I don't know any more tiresome flower in the borders than your especially "modest" snowdrop; [...] Girls should be like daisies; [...] making the ground bright where ever they are; knowing simply and quietly that they do it, and that it would be very wrong if they didn't do it. Not want to be seen, indeed! (p. 105).

How fortuitous for Hannah and Bristles that Ruskin should use wild flowers as his simile for advocating female beauty! Indeed, the shift in Ruskin's passage from appearance to knowledge – the daisies' 'seen' qualities of simplicity and quietness turn into their 'knowing [...] that they do it' – imbue this passage with Quaker undertones that validate the pupils' appreciation of feminine beauty even as they contradict the Society's teaching.

Unsurprisingly, the girls take the lessons of *Ethics* on board. At one point the Old Lecturer tells his audience that taking care of one's appearance is 'what you were meant to do, always; and to dress your houses, and your gardens' (p. 107), and when they are invited to Joseph Rowntree's house for afternoon tea towards the end of their time at the Mount, Hannah notes walking 'round & round the garden with Ethel, she admired one corner of it very much where there was grass & all sorts of forget-me-nots, wood stuff & buttercups growing up together, told me if I ever had charge of a garden to have it like that, which I dutifully promised her' (16th June 1886; p. 130). As I note in chapter three, the gardens at Rowntree's home were also to prove enticing to the women of the Edwardian YFSM.¹⁵⁴ It is as though the moral tone of Ruskin's book

¹⁵⁴ See chapter three below, pp. 149-150.

validates and gives permission for Hannah and Bristles's love of beautiful things, enabling them to recognise that women within their Quaker community are running homes in which beauty is cultivated and enjoyed. In their reading of *Ethics* Hannah and Bristles take what might otherwise seem an oppressive message, and turn it into something liberating. In so doing they perform the kind of reading that Cherland identifies in her study, in which adolescent readers 'renegotiate the cultural messages' of texts so that what might appear like a reproduction of oppressive social values to an adult functions for adolescent readers a form of agency.¹⁵⁵

In appreciating a work such as *Ethics* Hannah and her friends come to embrace the normative model of femininity forwarded by their school: one in which women's roles within society are based upon their contributions to the immediate circles of domestic and religious communities and associational life. *Ethics* reveals how reading provided Mount pupils with a means to identify parallels between this vision of femininity and national culture, an icon such as Ruskin is read as expressing dominant ideologies in terms that resonate with Quakerism. Ruskin's ideal women are like the primroses and wildflowers gathered by pupils on Mount School excursions, a union through simile of mainstream belief with dissenting symbolism. That Hannah and her friends, through their reading, ultimately favour this model suggests a Mount education succeeded in using literature to guide its pupils towards self-recognition as gendered citizens of a Protestant nation.

Coda: Gertrude and Hannah after the Mount

I am quite happy when I think about myself, perhaps I'll never be as happy as this again – as I've been for the last three weeks – till I die.
Hannah's *Diary*, 24th May 1886; p. 119.

The fates of Gertrude and Hannah after leaving the Mount are rather shadowy. Both women lived long lives: Gertrude died in 1955 and Hannah in 1958. After leaving the school in 1886 Hannah returned home. According to the register of *Mount Old Scholars 1931-1932*, by the early 1930s she was living in Southport and described herself as being

¹⁵⁵ Cherland, *Private Practices*, p. 167.

a 'Member of Friends' C[ommi]ttees.¹⁵⁶ Gertrude left the Mount in 1888, and remained living with her father and sister up until at least 1911, where the census lists them in Ruswarp, Yorkshire.¹⁵⁷ *Mount Old Scholars* described Gertrude as living in Letchworth, where she was a 'Home Housekeeper' with a 'handicraft interest'.¹⁵⁸ Due to the lack of evidence it would be all too easy to fall into the trap of emphasising the things that the two women did not do. But to conclude by telling you that neither Gertrude nor Hannah married nor went on to higher education, while Gertrude's older brother William Fletcher Nicholson (1867-1955) had a successful career within the Society of Friends, would be to offer a rather lopsided story.¹⁵⁹ The thoughts, activities and relationships that peopled these women's lengthy lives may have left few traces to the researcher, but this neither erases their existence nor diminishes their significance. Set in the early 1950s, Pym's *Excellent Women* depicts the old scholars' list in the school magazine as an inadequate summary of a woman's life. The entry for the novel's heroine, Mildred, states that 'M. Lathbury is working part-time at the Society for the care of aged gentlewomen' (pp. 121-122). 'Yes of course, that is what I do,' Mildred reflects, 'but somehow it seemed so inadequate; it described such a very little part of my life' (pp. 121-122).

Whatever they may have gone on to do and whoever they may have gone on to know, Gertrude and Hannah clearly looked back with fondness on their time at the Mount. Both women's school diaries made their way back into the school archives, and were silently extracted and referred to in *The Mount School York* (1931).¹⁶⁰ Thus in the end, for all their schoolgirl resistance, the individual records of Gertrude and Hannah's time at the Mount became important pieces in the school's collective community history.

¹⁵⁶ Sturge, *Mount Old Scholars*, pp. 28, 26.

¹⁵⁷ *1911 England Census* [database online]. (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2011); accessed 16.2.2012.

¹⁵⁸ Sturge, *Mount Old Scholars*, pp. 28, 26.

¹⁵⁹ According to Bootham School register of 1935, William had been an apprentice at Ackworth from 1885-1888 and taught at a number of schools. He took a BA from London University in 1894, and was Clerk of Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting before becoming recording Clerk of London Yearly Meeting in 1917. Anon, *Bootham School Register*, revised edition, (London: E. T. W. Dennis & Sons Ltd., 1935), p. 287.

¹⁶⁰ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, pp. 127-140.

CHAPTER TWO

Lucy Harrison, Literary Pilgrim

Tucked away in the Mount School Archives is a small black pocket-book that belonged to Lucy Harrison. Harrison used the pocket-book around 1901-1902 as part of 'Morning Texts', a daily activity at the Mount School in which pupils recited quotations they had been encouraged to memorise. The pocket-book's inside pages are covered with quotations copied out in Harrison's angular handwriting; a variety of Biblical verses are scattered amongst lines from imaginative works such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1857) and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1599-1601). Hilda Strange, the Old Scholar who donated the pocket-book to the Mount Archives in 1960, wrote in an accompanying letter that,

I have had it by my bed-side for years, until the pages came adrift and the covers parted company, and I thought that I should mend it and pass it on. It is so typical, and very wonderful, I always thought, and I hope that you will enjoy it as much as I have.¹

The pocket-book is 'typical' in that it exemplifies in miniature many of the recurring themes in Harrison's literary and pedagogical writings. In aligning quotations from *Aurora Leigh* and the Bible Harrison sacralises literature, reading an imaginative and a religious text as speaking to – and perhaps reinforcing – one another. By including writers who carry cultural prestige, Harrison's pocket-book gestures towards the ways in which her work seeks to unite dissenting and establishment culture: an iconic writer such as Shakespeare is made to facilitate the learning of the Quaker schoolgirl. Moreover, as an educational tool in which the teacher's selections seek to guide pupils' personal development, Harrison's pocket-book also demonstrates her presentation of literature as the cornerstone of an ideal community. A treasured and well-thumbed

¹ Hilda Barrow Strange, 3rd August 1960. Pocket-sized notebook belonging to Lucy Harrison, with Biblical quotations and references, 1901-1902, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/5. The pocket-book measures 9.5cm by 6cm. Pocket-books had been precious objects to Harrison since childhood. In 1856 she wrote from Heidelberg to her sister, 'Please [...] could you send my pocket book, which I think is in the side board drawer nearest the door. It is purple with my name on it'. Emma Lucy Harrison to her sister, Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham: Ht/25/4, 3.11.1856.

object, the pocket-book passed through several female hands before reaching Hilda, and thus it is also ‘typical’ in the way it reveals a network of women reading Harrison as ‘a lover of books’.²

Harrison’s pocket-book is less typical in that it catches her in the act of reading, selecting and editing passages of literature and using these in an educational activity. The majority of the traces of reading Harrison has left behind take the form of published articles and lectures, which offer a polished model of reading and a carefully-considered critical stance. As this chapter explores, Harrison’s way of reading is in many senses typical of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century literary criticism. Yet, I will argue, while this criticism has been associated with establishment commentators and oppressive ideologies, Harrison’s work demonstrates the ways in which it could be deployed in the service of more marginal, dissenting and what we might now call left-leaning communities. In her essays and lectures Harrison develops connections between literary histories and cultural spaces, wresting the formation of ‘English Literature’ away from metropolitan circles and presenting it as something to be experienced – and produced – in localised, regional sites. Harrison flattens the distinction between dissenting and establishment culture, presenting Quakerism as a central rather than a marginal religious community. Though Harrison’s ideal female Quaker citizens are, like the young women in the previous chapter, equal but different, nevertheless she forwards a vision in which women’s moral contributions lie at the heart of the ideal Protestant nation.

In this chapter I will situate Harrison’s work within her historic moment, attending to the ways in which she appropriates emerging forms of literary critical discourse as a female dissenter. This will lead to more focussed case studies of Harrison’s corpus, exploring her presentation of Englishness, women, and ecumenical mysticism, to reveal how Harrison constructs a vision of national community and culture in which York’s female Quaker readers are also invested.

² Hilda was given the pocket-book by a Miss Eddington, who in turn had received it from Harrison’s close friend and biographer Amy Greener. Hilda’s letter is addressed to ‘Cousin Emmeline’, presumably the Mount Old Scholar (1901-1902) Emmeline Cadbury (née Wilson).

A dissenting voice within mainstream literary criticism

As a critic and educator from the 1860s through to the 1910s, the period in which English Literature was taking off as a discipline in schools and universities, Harrison was participating in early debates about what literature is and how it should be used.³ During this period there was little differentiation between the academic specialist and the generalising journalist, and this heterogeneous scene allowed Harrison to make assured interventions into literary discussions.⁴ Harrison's essays and lectures appropriate the liberal humanist forms of literary-critical discourse that were widely-used at this stage, exemplified in the work of diverse thinkers such as Matthew Arnold and Leslie Stephen.⁵ Liberal humanist critique was by no means a systematic theoretical position at the turn of the century, however, and would perhaps best be described as what Nicholas Dames has termed a 'protocol': a set of attitudes and practices used by literary commentators in an era before clearly-defined schools of criticism.⁶ The protocols of liberal humanist criticism centred on broader concerns with rational and moral thought, with the capacity for human inspiration, and with the role of the arts in general, and literature in particular, in cultivating these qualities in individual readers and more widely.⁷ Such thinking was viewed as a means of cultivating more enlightened

³ For cultural histories and social theories that trace the rise of literary studies as a discipline, see: Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority, and Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Alan Bacon, 'English Literature Becomes a University Subject: Kings College, London as Pioneer', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 4, (Summer 1986), pp. 591-612; Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983); Bryan Doyle, *English and Englishness*, (London: Routledge, 1989); Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, (London: Verso, [1984] 2005); Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell [1983] 2000); A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand and Lawrence Rainey (eds.), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume Seven: Modernism and the New Criticism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [2000] 2008); D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). As I observe below, the rise of literary studies is a contentious subject and these histories take very varied approaches.

⁴ This distinction was to come with the emergence of New Criticism in the 1920s. See Litz, Menand and Rainey (eds.), *History of Literary Criticism*, p. 12. See also Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994), p. 2.

⁵ Stephan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.

⁶ Nicholas Dames, 'On Not Close Reading: The Prolonged Excerpt as Victorian Critical Protocol', in Rachel Ablow (ed.), *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience and Victorian Literature*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 11-26 (p. 14).

⁷ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 61-67, 75-78. In my introduction I noted that 'liberalism' is a tricky term to pin down, and possesses a variety of applications. The same can be said of 'humanism': the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists six separate uses of the term. Most relevant for my purposes are: 'stresses the inherent value and potential of human life', belief in 'human rationality and capacity for free thought and moral

citizens, eager to participate in reforming and humanising society. As Arnold put it in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), by collectively pursuing ‘total perfection’ through culture, which Arnold defined as ‘the best which has been thought and said in the world’, mankind might be able to turn ‘a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits’.⁸ Writers who worked in this liberal humanist mode, Stefan Collini suggests, looked upon their role as that of ‘public moralist’ whose job it was to guide their audiences towards interpreting artistic culture in terms of its moral teaching.⁹ As a literary critic Harrison undoubtedly worked within this mode. Yet as a York-based female Dissenter she was an unlikely candidate for a position that was, Collini reminds us, predominantly male, establishment, conservative, and London-centric.¹⁰ As I reveal, Harrison appropriates liberal humanist strategies in her essays and lectures as a means to make different forms of citizenship available to York’s Quaker women.

At first glance Harrison’s work promotes the sense that the literary critic has an important role to play as a social educator. In ‘A Teacher’s Ideal’ (1896) she states of the teacher that, ‘He is a member of a great, an ancient and illustrious guild; he may number among his fellow-craftsmen such names as St. Hilda of Whitby, Ascham, Colet, Milton, Locke, Arnold’ (p. 233).¹¹ Yet while Harrison’s genealogy claims for teachers a lengthy history of male public philosophising, nevertheless hers is a genealogy that decentralises the establishment by aligning it with dissenting and regional figures. The presence of John Milton (1608-1674) associates her lineage with Protestant dissent, while St. Hilda (c. 614-680) and Roger Ascham (c. 1515-1568) associate it with Yorkshire. Moreover, St. Hilda illustrates women’s success as ‘public moralists’ and so provides Harrison with a visible foremother. Harrison’s literary critics may be social leaders, but they guide from the margins.

The genealogy of English literature that Harrison outlines in her work is aligned with a continuous Christian national identity that Harrison associates with timeless teaching. As such, it appears at first glance to fulfil one of the main charges levied

action’, a ‘sympathetic concern with human needs, interests, and welfare’, and ‘devotion to or expertise in the humanities’.

⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1869] 1960), p. 6.

⁹ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 2-3, 14-15, 17, 19, 23, 36-39.

¹¹ Lucy Harrison, ‘A Teacher’s Ideal’, *The Friends’ Quarterly Examiner*, Vol. XXX, (London: West, Newman and Co., 1896), pp. 207-223.

against liberal humanism: that it seeks to ascribe transcendent qualities to human experience and thinking.¹² Admittedly, one of the striking aspects of Harrison's literary criticism is its consistency and lack of internal contradictions in highlighting key themes in literature. Over the thirty year period in which Harrison wrote she returns to ideas such as reserve, mysticism, community, and the inspiration to be drawn from nature. Harrison finds examples of these themes across the pages of English literature. Beginning with King Alfred, whom she describes as 'the pious Christian king and Englishman', Harrison's corpus traces a clear line of Anglo-Saxon literary descent through late-Medieval writings of Chaucer, the reformation drama of Spenser and Shakespeare, the Romantic poets, and popular nineteenth-century novelists, before arriving at the modern poetry of Alice Meynell.¹³ Yet the apparent timelessness of Harrison's literary genealogy is undercut by the ways in which she uses these writers to grapple with questions that are contingent upon her specific historic moment. Hers is a literary critical apprehension that is alive to the dynamics of the present day.

Furthermore, Harrison's literary genealogy enables her to claim cultural capital for herself and her students as someone who, as a female dissenter, did not possess social equality.¹⁴ After Greener went to see her nephew perform in a Greek play at Bradfield College in 1904, Harrison wrote to her friend, 'What a sinful, unjust thing it is that for so many generations girls should have been (and still are to some extent) cut off from all the culture and learned associations as this at Bradfield foster'.¹⁵ Drawing upon a commanding literary heritage enabled Harrison to provide Mount pupils with a comprehensive knowledge of literature from Chaucer through Tennyson, which would, as I discussed in chapter one, equip Quaker young women to move comfortably in mainstream, middle-class circles.¹⁶

¹² For studies that point out the pervasiveness of this claim, and some of its fallacies, see Stefan Collini, "'Every Fruit-juice Drinker, Nudist, Sandal-wearer ...': Intellectuals as Other People', in Helen Small (ed.), *The Public Intellectual*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002), pp. 203-223 (p. 207); David Wayne Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 15.

¹³ For a complete list of Harrison's books, essays and lectures, see Appendix II.

¹⁴ For more on female Quaker education, the canon, and cultural capital, see pp. 63-64.

¹⁵ Lucy Harrison to Amy Greener, 25th June 1904; in *A Lover of Books*, p. 55.

¹⁶ The Mount School, York, *Syllabus Register*, 1901-1903; Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 4/1/1/1/1.

Perhaps most contentiously, liberal humanism has been accused of forwarding a vision that oppresses anyone who falls outside of mainstream culture. For Marxist critics in particular, a literary education founded upon liberal humanist principles squeezes out marginal voices by presenting the dominant white, middle-class, heteronormative position as the only available and valid form of experience.¹⁷ It is fair to say that Harrison's literary criticism presents a single rather than a polyphonic perspective, her rhetorical use of the third-person 'us' and 'we' absorbing her audiences into her critical position. Yet this strategy serves as a means to model the ways in which her dissenting female audiences could stake a claim in the works of establishment writers and so destabilise their cultural position. For example, in her Mount School lecture 'Three of Shakespeare's Women' (undated) Harrison uses the third-person perspective to invite her audience of schoolgirls to identify exemplary Quaker conduct in the work of the celebrated poet and playwright, suggesting at the outset: 'Let us think for a moment of some of the women – figures we meet from time to time in our great national literature'.¹⁸ I explore the way in which Harrison makes a female Protestant identity available to Quaker pupils through 'Shakespeare's Women' in greater detail below. What I want to highlight here is that by appropriating liberal humanist rhetoric for the purposes of educating York's Quaker girls, Harrison's criticism reveals the ways in which Victorian liberal discourse was, as Lauren Goodlad puts it, 'decentralised' and 'idiosyncratic' rather than unified and dominating.¹⁹ Harrison's work supports David Wayne Thomas's contention that liberal ideologies were not passively received by the majority of Victorians, who possessed far more agency in renegotiating cultural messages than is often assumed.²⁰ Seen in this light, Harrison's apparently safe rhetoric

¹⁷ Baldick, *Social Mission*, pp. 59-67; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, pp. 20-23, 174, 191; John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 53; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1977] 1978), pp. 45-46.

¹⁸ 'Three of Shakespeare's Women' is reprinted in *A Lover of Books* without any bibliographical information. It is not recorded in the Minute Books of the York Friends Book Society; nor does it appear in either *The Friend* or *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*. Therefore I have assumed that the essay formed a lecture delivered to the Mount School. 'Three of Shakespeare's Women' (undated); in *A Lover of Books*, pp.142-160 (p. 143).

¹⁹ Lauren Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 8. These days liberal humanism is something of a dirty word in academia. Yet liberal humanist approaches don't seem to have gone away; they've simply gone into hiding. I've had several conversations with academics who, while scrupulously holding 'the text' at arm's length in their work, admit to being 'inspired' and 'moved' by the 'books' that they read on their own time. Academia, one begins to suspect, is full of closeted liberal humanists.

²⁰ Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians*, pp. 5-6.

becomes a tool by which to provide her dissenting, York-based, often female audiences with access to prestigious cultural forms.

At first glance the corpus of work to which Harrison devotes her – and her readers’ attention – may seem predictable, unchallenging, exclusive and hence canonical. Yet such a view is problematized when one remembers that the canon was not a fixed entity during the period in which she was writing. As William St. Clair has shown, prior to the 1870s there existed what he identifies as a relatively fixed ‘old canon’ of literature, largely a product of the ‘vagaries’ of copyright laws rather than any ideological agenda.²¹ This ‘old canon’ had been perpetuated by numerous anthologies from the 1780s onwards, which reproduced standard passages from writers such as Cowper, Milton, Pope, Shakespeare, and Spenser.²² By the 1870s, however, a range of works that had been difficult to acquire during the Victorian era, notably the Romantic poets, fell out of copyright and so became more readily available, opening up the potential for a revised catalogue of national literature.²³ The canon that was gradually brought into being towards the end of the nineteenth and the early-twentieth century was by no means a fixed and uncontested entity, and within this context Harrison’s interventions were often daring.

The making of a liberal humanist

The life and work of Lucy Harrison provides an important case study with which to reveal how liberal humanist discourses could be harnessed by dissenting readers. Harrison’s family background and education networked her into some of the progressive metropolitan circles of Victorian Britain, exposing her to radical thinking

²¹ William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 128.

²² St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, p. 128.

²³ St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, pp. 120-128. St. Clair details how in 1774 new copyright laws were enforced that allowed all but the most recent authors, whose intellectual property was protected by an act of 1710 (ensuring statutory copyright for 14 years), could be republished. It was during this ‘brief copyright window’, as St. Clair terms it, that many of the ‘old canon’ anthologies were published. The copyright window was closed in 1814, when copyright was changed to the life of author (in 1842 copyright was extended to the author’s lifetime plus seven years, or forty-two years from publication, which ever was longest).

and unprecedented opportunities for women that coloured her later work as a female Quaker educator and literary critic.

Emma Lucy Harrison was born on the 17th January 1844 in the rural countryside near Birkenhead, the youngest of eight children. In the same month that she was born, Harrison's father Daniel founded Harrisons & Crossfield, a tea merchant's company whose continued success led to the business – and the Harrison family – relocating to London in the 1850s.²⁴ Daniel was a life-long Quaker whose family's membership to the Society of Friends can be traced back to 1760; Lucy's mother Anna Harrison (née Botham) had also been raised in the Society, although in adulthood she converted to the Church of England.²⁵ Far from creating tension within the family, this difference of religious conviction meant that, as Harrison's sister Agnes Macdonell later recalled, theirs was 'a family in which a variety of opinion was permitted, and in which two forms of religious belief – Anglicanism and Quakerism – moved harmoniously together'.²⁶ Harrison remained a Quaker throughout her life, but often looked to Anglican liturgy and places of worship in her personal life as well as in her teaching. On the inside cover of her copy of the *Book of Common Prayer* she listed the names and dates of Anglican churches she had visited between 1886 and 1914, including Westminster Abbey, King's College Chapel, and Canterbury Cathedral.²⁷ The fact that Harrison recorded these visits in her *Book of Common Prayer* is itself an indication that they were more than the jaunts of a tourist; her final entry, '(Declaration of Wartime) York Minster September 4th 1914', suggests she found comfort in the Established Church. This entry is a poignant example of Harrison recording a sense of local and national unity that transcends sectarian difference, and gestures towards the way her 'imagined community' of readers draws together dissenters and Anglicans, regional and national communities.²⁸

²⁴ John W. Graham, 'Books and their Writers', *The Friend*, 5th January 1917, p. 9. The Harrisons and Crossfield archives are housed in the London Metropolitan Archives.

²⁵ Amy Greener, *A Lover of Books: The Life and Literary Papers of Lucy Harrison*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd, 1916), p. 2.

²⁶ A. M., 'Lucy Harrison: Biographical Notes', *The Friend*, 14th May 1915, p. 366.

²⁷ Book of Common Prayer, belonging to Lucy Harrison, c. 1900, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/4.

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, [1983] 1991), p. 36.

Like many mid-Victorian Quaker young women, the Harrison children received an informal education.²⁹ Agnes later described how, ‘There was little schoolroom teaching, but these early years left memories of many things learned. Much was discussed during mealtimes’.³⁰ Harrison grew up amidst an atmosphere in which artistic discussion and debate were familiar and unremarkable features of everyday life. Her family were associated with some of the socially and artistically progressive circles of mid-Victorian Britain. Her aunt and uncle were the writers William (1792–1879) and Mary Howitt, who contributed to an array of English and Scottish journals and co-authored volumes of poetry; according to his biographer, William wrote the bulk of Cassell's *Illustrated History of England* (1856–64).³¹ The Howitts’ daughter Anna Mary was a pre-Raphaelite artist whose recollections of her art training in Germany, *An Art-Student in Munich* (1853), were published at the encouragement of Elizabeth Gaskell.³² As I noted in my introduction, the Howitts could claim acquaintance with celebrated writers including Barrett Browning, Dickens, and Tennyson. Through the Howitts the Harrisons began moving in similar circles themselves, regularly entertaining artists and writers such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) and Arthur Hughes (1832-1915) at their family homes during the 1850s and 1860s. Though Harrison’s biographer would later foreground these associations, Harrison herself was characteristically reticent: in her essays and lectures she discusses figures such as Dickens, the Howitts, and Octavia Hill without mentioning the family connection.³³

As well as being artistically liberal, the Harrison family were also involved in progressive politics. In the mid-1850s Mary Howitt was active in gathering names for an

²⁹ See above, pp. 50-51.

³⁰ A. M., ‘Lucy Harrison’, p. 367.

³¹ See Peter Mandler, ‘Howitt, William (1792–1879)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13998>, accessed 7 Nov 2011].

³² In 1850, Mary Howitt wrote to Anna Mary that ‘Mrs. Gaskell is much pleased with your writings. [...] She hopes, on your return, you will collect and publish your letters in a volume – a sort of ‘Art Life in Munich’. Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography*, (London: W. M. Isbister Ltd., 1889), Vol. II, p. 66. Certain passages of Anna Mary’s extraordinary autobiography, such as her description of High Mass at the Hof-Kapelle, demonstrate a compelling blend of Quakerism, Catholicism, and artistic sensibility. See Anna Mary Howitt, *An Art-Student in Munich*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1853), in particular pp. 6-8.

³³ See for example ‘Octavia Hill’, *The Friend*, 20th June 1913, pp. 409-410.

unsuccessful petition in favour of the Married Women's Property Act.³⁴ A decade later Anna Harrison joined the National Society for Women's Suffrage (which later became the NUWSS), going on to found the Bromley, Beckenham and Shortland's Suffrage Society in 1882.³⁵ Harrison and her sisters were also involved in this organisation: in March 1883 Harrison gave a paper to the Society that had been written by her sister Agnes.³⁶ Two of Harrison's sisters married into politically active households, Anna Jemima marrying the idealistic journalist James MacDonell (1841–1879), Agnes marrying his brother Sir John MacDonell (1845-1921), a barrister.³⁷ The Harrisons closely supported the housing and social reformer Octavia Hill, who later recollected time spent with the family in the 1850s as one of 'intellectual companionship, of high ideal, of generous sympathy'.³⁸ During the 1860s, while a student and teacher in London, Harrison regularly assisted Hill with her work in the East London Settlements.³⁹ Harrison also met William Morris, later recalling 'his emphatic declaration that the taste of the time was all *wrong*, and the emphasis he put on the word "wrong". He worked a marvellous change'.⁴⁰ Harrison's early exposure to socialist thinking informed her later writings on art and literature, which display the influence of Arts and Crafts and socialist ideologies.

³⁴ Howitt, *An Autobiography*, Vol. II, pp. 114-116.

³⁵ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928*, (London: Routledge, [1999] 2001), p. 85.

³⁶ Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, p. 85.

³⁷ For an account of James MacDonell's political activities and encounters with important nineteenth-century thinkers such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, see W. Robertson Nicoll, *James MacDonell, Journalist*, (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1890), in particular 150, 167-169, 184, 187, 195, 197, 310-313.

³⁸ Hill, in a letter of 1899; quoted in *A Lover of Books*, p. 7. In July 1855, after Hill and her Toy Factory children had been invited to have afternoon tea with the Harrisons, Hill wrote to Mary Harrison [Harrison's eldest sister], 'I must thank you all very very much for your kindness, which I am sure we shall never any of us forget. [...] I am sure that to many of us it was a revelation not only of beauty and comfort, but of gentleness and generosity'. Hill to Miss Harrison, July 24th 1855, in C. Edmund Maurice (ed.), *Life of Octavia Hill, as Told in Her Letters*, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1913), p. 51. Like Harrison, Hill was another woman who channelled Ruskian ideals to socialist ends. See Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day: Women Who Invented the Twentieth Century*, (London: Verso, 2010), pp. 28-29.

³⁹ *A Lover of Books*, p 23.

⁴⁰ Harrison describes going to visit Morris at Queen Square, which would date her encounter with him anywhere between 1865-1881, the period during which Morris held premises at Queen Square and Harrison was living and working in London. Lucy Harrison, 'On The Cultivation of Artistic Taste', *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, Vol. XXXIV, (London: West, Newman and Co., 1900), pp. 84-85.

From an early age Harrison was surrounded by close communities of women. According to her biographer, Harrison's elder brothers had left home by the time she was five and consequently she grew up amidst female family members.⁴¹ Literature was an important component of these women's relationships. When Harrison travelled with two of her sisters to Germany at the age of twelve, she wrote of how, 'We are reading "Domby and Son" [sic] aloud on the evenings, and like it very much indeed'.⁴² Reading aloud re-emerges as a central strand of Harrison's educational and literary writing. In 'On the Cultivation of Literary Taste', which appeared in the journal *Modern Language Teaching* in 1906, Harrison offers an idealised image of reading aloud. 'I can see in my mind's eye a group of children round their mother's knee in the glittering firelight', Harrison writes, reading together 'from the well-known and seemingly exhaustless store' of literature, the words settling upon the air and 'leaving on the child's mind as it goes to bed a clear image and lovely melody to mingle with its dreams, and insensibly to mould its estimate of what is beautiful or heroic, spiritual or humorous, and all hallowed by the sacred love of the mother'.⁴³ Throughout her essays and lectures Harrison conveys the sense that reading aloud, and sharing literature more broadly, draws communities together in an experience akin to worship. In this she shared a similar attitude to the readers of the Mount School and York Friends' Sewing Meeting (YFSM), for whom reading aloud served to incorporate individuals into the immediate Quaker community.⁴⁴

Between the ages of thirteen and fifteen Harrison spent two years in Heidelberg, studying at a Roman Catholic School whose Headmistress reminded the Harrisons of Madame Beck from *Villette*.⁴⁵ Here, Agnes later recalled, Harrison 'breathed an atmosphere of intellectual fullness, and there was intercourse with the families of many

⁴¹ *A Lover of Books*, pp. 6, 14.

⁴² Harrison to her sister, Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham: Ht/25/4.

⁴³ Lucy Harrison, 'On the Cultivation of Literary Taste', in Walter Rippman (ed.) *Modern Language Teaching: The Official Organ of the Modern Language Association*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906), pp. 172-173.

⁴⁴ For more on Quakerism and reading aloud see chapter one above, pp. 74-76, and chapter three below, in particular pp. 172-174.

⁴⁵ See *A Lover of Books*, p. 8. It is easy to see how Harrison might have identified with *Villette*'s heroine Lucy Snowe, a passionate female governess – and of course another Lucy – who often feels out of step with her surroundings. See also Lucy Harrison, 'Charlotte Brontë and the Brussels Episode', 27th March 1914, in *The Friend*, 1914, pp. 214-215.

of the professors of the University'.⁴⁶ This levelling of the university professor and the young female student influenced Harrison's later attitudes to education. In her address on the opening of the Mount School Library in 1903, Harrison associated this Yorkshire Quaker girls' school with a monument to establishment, male learning, arguing that 'Just as in Oxford one feels that the Bodleian embodies in beautiful form the ideal of the scholarship and culture of the whole University, so one hopes that the kindling spirit of learning and the love of student life may be fostered in this library of ours'.⁴⁷ Associating York's Quaker educational communities with celebrated national institutions is a recurring feature of Harrison's essays and lectures.

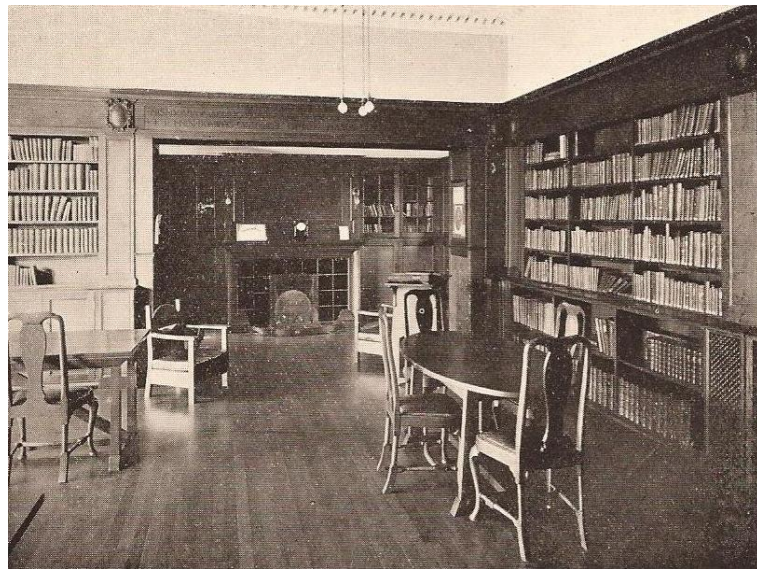


Figure 8: *The Mount School Library, 1903* (source: *The Mount School, York*)

Between 1861 and 1863 Harrison and her sister Annie studied at Bedford College in Bloomsbury, living in a student boarding house.⁴⁸ Rosemary Ashton has painted a vivid portrait of Victorian Bloomsbury as the bustling, intellectual and artistic

⁴⁶ A. M., 'Lucy Harrison', p. 367.

⁴⁷ Lucy Harrison, 'Address on the opening of the Mount School Library' (Whit-Monday 1903); in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 301-303.

⁴⁸ *A Lover of Books*, pp. 8-9. This may well have been one of those run by the Ladies' Residential Chambers Ltd. Society, which provided accommodation for single women living in London and were overseen by Millicent and Agnes Garrett (sisters of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson). Rosemary Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, (London: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 240-243.

heart of the capital and a hotbed of educational, feminist, and non-conformist activity.⁴⁹ Bedford College had been founded by the wealthy Unitarian Elisabeth Jesser Reid (1789-1866) in 1849 with the aim of providing women with the same standard of University education as that of men.⁵⁰ According to Ashton, this was ‘the first establishment for the higher education of women’ and preceded Emily Davis’s Girton College by 20 years.⁵¹ Reid called upon her connections at nearby University College London to secure male teachers, who came over from Gower Street to Bedford Square to teach classes.⁵² From the outset Bedford College was non-sectarian: one of its declared aims was that ‘no question whatsoever be asked as to the religious opinions of the pupil, nor is any pupil to be required to attend any theological lectures which may be given’.⁵³ Agnes Harrison later praised the College for its ‘liberal and unsectarian’ ‘bias’.⁵⁴

According to her biographer, Harrison maintained that her time at Bedford College ‘was really the conscious starting-point of all her intellectual activities’.⁵⁵ There she was taught by famous scholars such as the historian Samuel Rawson Gardiner and the poet and novelist George MacDonald (1824-1905): the latter was particularly encouraging and became a close friend.⁵⁶ Harrison continued to dip into classes long after her two-year stint as a student, running her studies alongside her own teaching. Harrison’s success in her exams was a source of pride to her family. In March 1864 Agnes wrote to Harrison of ‘how delighted & overjoyed we were to hear of your having passed victoriously [...] it has given us such pleasure’.⁵⁷ Her lecturers, too, appear to have been struck by her work. When Harrison was placed first class with distinction in an exam on Anglo-Saxon in 1880, her tutor, the English Literature scholar John Wesley

⁴⁹ Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, pp. ix-x, 4, 11, 14-15, 20, 183-214, 240-243.

⁵⁰ Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, pp. 215, 225.

⁵¹ Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, p. 219.

⁵² Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, pp. 215, 225.

⁵³ Bedford College was eventually incorporated into University of London in 1900. Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, pp. 220, 224, 234.

⁵⁴ *A Lover of Books*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ *A Lover of Books*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ *A Lover of Books*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Letter from Agnes Harrison to Lucy Harrison, March 10th 1864; Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham: Ht/15/6/6/1.

Hales (1836-1914) wrote, ‘I must say with what pleasure I read your Literature paper – several really excellent papers have been sent in; of them all yours was the best. Thank you for it’.⁵⁸ When Harrison came to publish *Spenser for Home and School* (1883) three years later, she acknowledged in her preface ‘how much’ her own scholarship owed to her former teacher.⁵⁹

In 1866 Harrison filled in as English and Latin teacher at Bedford School at the request of the Anglican educationalist Frances Martin (1829-1922). Four years later, when Harrison was twenty six years old, the two women co-founded Gower Street School for Girls. Harrison went on to teach at the school for fifteen years. Her most famous pupil at Gower Street was the poet Charlotte Mew (1869-1928), who studied under Harrison in the early 1880s. Several feminist critics have discussed the ways in which Harrison’s teaching had a profound effect upon Mew and her later work. Penelope Fitzgerald and Angela Leighton have suggested that Harrison’s emotionally-charged readings of Alice Meynell’s ‘To a Daisy’ contributed to Mew’s depressive tendencies and her obsession with what Leighton terms a ‘half-metaphorical, half-literal female grave lore’ (Mew committed suicide at the age of fifty eight).⁶⁰ More recently Nelljean McConeghey Rice has taken a more generous view, arguing that rather than fuel Mew’s morbidity Harrison demonstrated strategies for coping with intense emotion. ‘Lucy Harrison’s impact on Charlotte Mew should not be understated’, Rice writes, for ‘Harrison’s attitude that poetry is the way we can express the inexpressible passed to Lotti. Miss Harrison inculcated in Charlotte Mew a passion for poetry as a

⁵⁸ *A Lover of Books*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Lucy Harrison, *Spenser for Home and School: Poems of Spenser, selected and arranged, with notes, by Lucy Harrison*, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883), p. v. Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599) was an important figure within literary education in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with scores of scholarly publications such as Charles Kingsley’s *Spenser* (1879) and G. W. Kitchin’s textbook edition of *The Faerie Queene* (1867). *Spenser for Home and School*, as the title suggests, was designed to bring Spenser down from the shelves of academic libraries and make his work available to ordinary pupils and teachers. It was described by a reviewer in *The Academy* as ‘the first attempt to introduce the whole field of Spenser’s poetry to the general public’. *The Academy*, 1883, Issue 24, J. Murray. For more on the uses of Spenser in the Victorian classroom, see David Hill Radcliffe, *Edmund Spenser: A Reception History*, (Columbia: Camden House, Inc., 1996), pp. 104-105, 114, 121. Radcliffe’s study of Spenser’s reception history cites many examples of textbooks that were designed to make Spenser accessible to young readers during the nineteenth century, but doesn’t mention *Spenser for Home and School*. While this is not in itself proof that Harrison’s book failed to reach a wider audience, it certainly seems to suggest it didn’t make a sizeable impact.

⁶⁰ Angela Leighton, *Victorian Women Poets: Women Writing Against the Heart*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 270. Fitzgerald identifies a ‘morbidity’ to Harrison’s work that calls into question her suitability as a teacher. Penelope Fitzgerald, *Charlotte Mew and Her Friends*, (London: Harvill, 1984), pp. 28, 30.

way to express her unruly emotions'.⁶¹ I share Rice's view, and in my discussion of 'To a Daisy' below I reveal the ways in which Harrison used Meynell's poem at the Mount to expound a mystical form of Quaker spiritual experience.

At Gower Street Harrison encouraged pupils to develop independent thought and self-discipline, and develop personal interests and talents.⁶² Harrison's teaching also had a strong political bent. She supported opportunities for working-class as well as middle-class women, teaching woodwork at the Working Women's College.⁶³ Such work left her open to patronising criticism. On one occasion Arthur Munby (1828-1910), who taught Latin at the College, described Harrison as looking 'like a more intelligent dairy-maid'.⁶⁴ Perhaps Harrison had attitudes such as Munby's in mind when, in a lecture at the Mount almost fifty years later, she presented woodwork as a feminist accomplishment:

it is particularly good that these handicrafts should be offered in a girls' school, for I sometimes think that women do not sufficiently understand the pleasure of using tools. [...] This is a pity, because it is a good thing to be able to do little jobs in the house; and if one lives in the country, where, if a handle comes off the door, it takes the carpenter three weeks to make up his mind to come and mend it, one is thankful to be independent of him.⁶⁵

In 1885 Harrison retired from Gower Street School due to ill-health, moving near to where her father had been raised in rural Wensleydale. Harrison's biographer states that 'Her ambition from girlhood had been to own a piece of land and build herself a little house and live in the country', and the result was Cupples Field.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Nelljean McConeghey Rice, *A New Matrix for Modernism: a Study of the Lives and Poetry of Charlotte Mew and Anna Wickham*, (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 34-37.

⁶² Fitzgerald, *Charlotte Mew*, pp. 29-31.

⁶³ *A Lover of Books*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Munby's diary entry for October 25th 1865; quoted in Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury*, p 236.

⁶⁵ Lucy Harrison, 'Leisure Hour Pursuits', December 15th 1913; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 293-300 (pp. 298-299).

⁶⁶ *A Lover of Books*, p. 24.



Figure 9: *Cupples Field* (source: *A Lover of Books*)

During the five years Harrison spent living alone at Cupples Field her imaginative life seems to have taken over. Her library there, Agnes wrote, was

a mirror of her life and work. On the orderly shelves are no editions de luxe and few first editions. But in the carefully chosen volumes are seen the tools she used, the food she fed on, the shelf of Shakespeare and his commentators, Chaucer in various forms; later English poets. Books of what may be termed liberal theology, beginning with George Fox's *Journal* and Barclay's *Apology to Inge and Gore*; the beloved mystics – her latest companions, from Traherne and the Cambridge Platonists to Underhill and Tagore.⁶⁷

Harrison's library reveals many of the recurring themes in her work. Like her pocket-book, Harrison's bookshelves feature religious writings jostling alongside drama and poetry. Also like her pocket-book, Harrison's library marks the intersection between her private and public appreciation of literature: it was the place in which her personal response was cultivated before being channelled into her essays and lectures. Agnes goes on to describe how Harrison made marginal notes in these books, drawing 'parallels or comparisons' between texts, 'illustrating unity of thought in writers of various schools, coincident thought in men of different countries'.⁶⁸ Studiously uncovering transcendent themes in literature is central to Harrison's teaching, a means

⁶⁷ A. M., 'Lucy Harrison', p. 367.

⁶⁸ A. M., 'Lucy Harrison', p. 367.

of using literature to expound moral messages. That Harrison should be found occupying a domestic space associated with masculine work points towards the ways in which, as a literary critic, Harrison was a woman occupying what was still ostensibly a male role.⁶⁹

Towards the end of 1889 Harrison had recovered enough to return to work, and applied for the position of Mount School superintendent (she would replace Susan Scott). Her application for the post boasted testimonies from Hales, Hill, MacDonald, and Martin, and these illustrious names clearly made an impression on the appointing committee.⁷⁰ After Harrison died in 1915 Joseph Rowntree, who had been on the committee, still recollected these ‘remarkable testimonies’.⁷¹ Harrison’s obituary in *The Friend* suggested she brought an air of cosmopolitan glamour along with her to the Mount, describing how ‘To the staff and girls at York when she arrived, she seemed to bring a graciousness of personality, as well as a largeness of view which they felt at once to be distinctive and unlike what they had come in contact with before’.⁷² Harrison’s background undoubtedly played a part in this. As Kathryn Gleadle argues, ‘Social status and educational privilege’ were important playing cards for many Victorian women who sought to enter public roles as these trumped any disadvantages they may have faced due to their gender.⁷³ But it is also fair to say that Harrison’s impact owed much to her strong personality. One teacher recalled how ‘She had a fascinating influence over us all’, while a former pupil seems to have summed up the general consensus when she described Harrison ‘bringing with her a serene sense of freshness and space and of august things’.⁷⁴ Inspiring reverence and expanding the horizons of pupils and adults alike, Harrison became an influential figure within York’s Quaker community.

⁶⁹ Victoria Rosner has revealed how, in late-Victorian and Edwardian England, domestic libraries and studies were considered to be male territory. Victoria Rosner, *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 64, 93, 124.

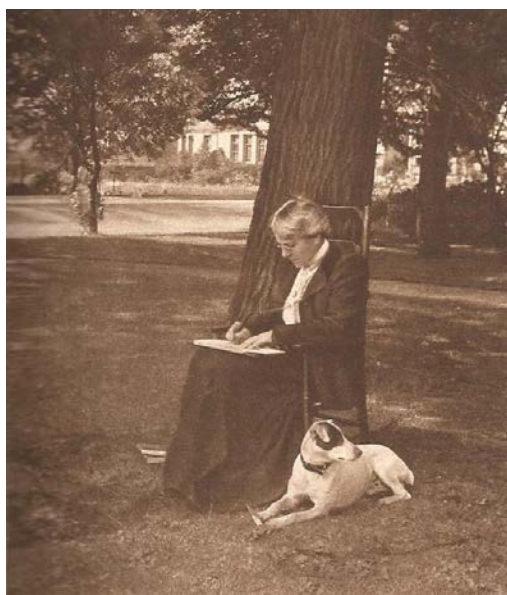
⁷⁰ *A Lover of Books*, p. 14.

⁷¹ Quoted in *A Lover of Books*, p. 41.

⁷² Anon, ‘Lucy Harrison’, *The Friend*, 14th May 1915, p. 364.

⁷³ Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 17-18.

⁷⁴ Quoted in *A Lover of Books*, p. 43; Anon, *Lucy Harrison, 1844-1915* (n.d.), Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 5/1/4/8, p. 5.



*Figure 10: Harrison reading in the grounds of the Mount School (source: *A Lover of Books*)*

During her time as Mount superintendent (1890-1902) Harrison instituted many reforms, such as appointing only graduates to the teaching staff, and allowing teachers occasional periods of furlough for, in Harrison's words, 'the purposes of travel or further study by which they, and indirectly their pupils, may so greatly benefit'.⁷⁵ While Susan Scott had introduced students to literature through intimate, domesticized activities such as reading aloud, Harrison made the rigorous study of literature central to her teaching. An external report of 1897 noted that, 'The lessons in English, from those in Chaucer by the Headmistress, downwards, were interesting and careful'.⁷⁶ These literature lessons made a lasting impression on many of Harrison's pupils. 'Some of our most grateful memories centre on her literature lessons', one wrote afterwards. 'I remember the zest of anticipation with which we waited for those lessons, which were to many of us the best hours of the week'.⁷⁷ Another held that her lessons were 'far too

⁷⁵ The Mount School, York, *Annual School Report*, 1891-1898, Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 1/4/1/1. See also H. Winifred Sturge and Theodora Clark, *The Mount School York: 1785 to 1814, 1831 to 1931*, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1931), p. 176.

⁷⁶ F. E. Kitchener, *York Friends' Schools*, 1897, Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 4/3/3, p. 5.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Anon, 'Lucy Harrison', p. 364. See also Old Scholars' Papers, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 7/4/1/1.

good for school-girls; when students at college we were lucky if we had anything so good'.⁷⁸

Harrison retired as superintendent of the Mount in 1902, though she continued to live in York and teach literature classes at the School up until 1907. At this point she retired fully to Bainbridge with her companion Amy Greener (1860-1944), with whom she had been close since their days teaching together at Gower Street School.⁷⁹ While one must be cautious in retrospect to attribute the term 'lesbian' to their relationship, nevertheless these women engaged in what Martha Vicinus has termed 'romantic friendship' which mirrored companionate marriage in its life-long commitment and domestic intimacy.⁸⁰ The pair lived together until Harrison's death on the 2nd of May 1915. She was buried in the grounds of the Friends Meeting House in Bainbridge.⁸¹ The following year Greener published her biography *A Lover of Books: The Life and Literary Papers of Lucy Harrison* (1916), which eulogised Harrison as 'a lover of books' by reprinting her private correspondence on literary subjects and apportioning two thirds of the volume to reproductions of Harrison's essays and lectures.

Establishing a women-of-letters tradition

As a female Quaker literary critic at the turn of the century Harrison was something of a pioneer. She was amongst some of the first women to become recognised critics of art and literature.⁸² These female literary critics had few visible precedents, as the majority

⁷⁸ Quoted in Anon, 'Lucy Harrison', p. 364.

⁷⁹ *A Lover of Books*, p. 56.

⁸⁰ Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women who Loved Women, 1778-1928*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. xxi, 11, 13, 231.

⁸¹ *A Lover of Books*, p. 94.

⁸² Baldick, *Social Mission*, p. 61; Meaghan Clarke, *Critical Voices: Women and Art Criticism in Britain 1880-1905*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), in particular pp. 27, 158-159; Doyle, *English and Englishness*, p. 3; Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston (eds.), *Gender and the Victorian Periodical*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jane Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), pp. 71, 75-90; Laura Morgan Green, *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Women*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), pp. 3-4; Rosemary O'Day, 'Women and Education in Nineteenth-Century England', in Joan Bellamy, Anne Laurence and Gill Perry (eds.), *Women, Scholarship and Criticism, Gender and Knowledge c. 1790-1900*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 102. See also the 'Introduction' to the same volume, pp. 7, 8, 14;

of their forerunners had published anonymously.⁸³ Moreover, there had been no female writers in the ‘old canon’.⁸⁴ Unsurprisingly, therefore, Harrison seeks to recuperate female novelists in her work as a means to legitimise her own project as a woman-of-letters. As Deirdre David reminds us, the profession of novelist was one of the few ways in which a woman could be a working intellectual in nineteenth-century Britain.⁸⁵ In recovering female novelists Harrison takes her place alongside the many female commentators who, as Joanne Wilkes has shown, were developing a version of the canon in which writers such as Austen, the Brontës and Eliot were ‘central’.⁸⁶ Harrison appears to have been aware of the work of these fellow critics. Her lecture ‘Jane Austen’ (1896), for example, bears striking resemblance to Margaret Oliphant’s *Literary History of England* (1883). While Oliphant dedicated a chapter to Jane Austen (1775-1817), Susan Ferrier (1782-1854) and Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849), ‘three sister novelists’ who ‘opened up for women after them a new and characteristic path in literature’, Harrison compares Austen’s characters to those of her ‘sister novelist’ Susan Ferrier, and sets Austen’s literary craftsmanship alongside ‘the apostle of prudence’ Maria Edgeworth.⁸⁷ In producing the essays ‘Jane Austen’ (1896), ‘The Poems of Emily Brontë’ (1911), ‘Ann Radcliffe, Novelist’ (1911), ‘The Inner Life of George Eliot’ (1912), and ‘Charlotte Brontë and the Brussels Episode’ (1914), Harrison makes bold interventions into the development of the canon, using these writers to construct an important heritage for herself.⁸⁸

Joanne Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain: the Critical Reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

⁸³ Clarke, *Critical Voices*, pp. 53-58; Fraser, Green and Johnston, *Victorian Periodical*, pp. 27-28; Solveig C. Robinson (ed.), *A Serious Occupation: Literary Criticism by Victorian Women Writers*, (Lancashire: Broadview Press, 2003), p. xiii; Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women*, p. 8.

⁸⁴ St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, p. 128.

⁸⁵ Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. ix.

⁸⁶ Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women*, pp. 2-3. See also Talia Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), pp. 48, 25.

⁸⁷ Mrs. Oliphant, *The Literary History of England, in the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century*, Volume III, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), p. 207. Lucy Harrison, ‘Jane Austen’ (1896); reproduced in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 97-117 (p. 99).

⁸⁸ Claire Harman reports how after falling out of print in the 1820s Austen became ‘a half-forgotten niche writer’ whose reputation only began to pick up following the publication of James Edward Austen Leigh’s *Memoir* in 1870. Harman, *Jane’s Fame*, p. 120; see also Brian Southam, *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, Volume I, 1811-1870*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), pp. 2, 1. Harrison opens ‘Jane Austen’ with the declaration that ‘The readers of Fiction, and these, I take it, may be considered nowadays as the

Female novelists provide Harrison with a means to secure her moral status as a woman in print. In 'Jane Austen' Harrison praises Austen as an exemplary figure whose work is an expression of her morality.⁸⁹ Harrison draws close parallels between Austen the woman and Austen the writer, describing her 'matchless work' as being the product of 'a life of spotless purity and goodness' (p. 114). Thus, Harrison maintains, 'There is an integrity and an uprightness in her art which act like a moral tonic' (p. 104). For Harrison, female novelists also validate her work as a woman-of-letters by demonstrating how women's contributions have shaped the course of English literature. In 'Ann Radcliffe, Novelist', a lecture delivered to York Friends' Book Society in 1911, Harrison highlights the influences of this neglected female author.⁹⁰ According to Harrison Radcliffe is, more than any of her more famous male counterparts such as Horace Walpole (1717-1797), a pioneer of the gothic genre, and 'When we are told that women never initiate anything, do not let us forget Mrs. Radcliffe' (pp. 184, 204). Harrison sets up a sequence in which the work of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century female novelists sparks a chain of influence that continues throughout the

reading world, are divided into two great and distinctive classes – the one that admires Jane Austen and worships at her shrine; the other who finds it impossible to read her, sees nothing in her and regards her devotees with pity if not contempt'. Harrison, 'Jane Austen'; *A Lover of Books*, p. 97. In Miriam Allott's words, Brontë criticism was 'thriving' at the turn of the century. Miriam Allott, *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, (London and New York: Routledge, [1974] 2003). The Brontë craze was fuelled by the opening of the Brontë Museum in Haworth in 1895. Harrison summarised the situation in 1914 by describing the 'the admirers of the author of "Villette"' as synonymous with 'the literary world'. Harrison, 'Charlotte Brontë', p. 214. According to Gordon S. Haight, Eliot was an immensely popular author up until publication of *Daniel Deronda* in 1876, at which point 'the tide of acclaim began to turn', although after her novels fell out of fashion 'they were never entirely neglected'. Gordon S. Haight, *A Century of George Eliot Criticism*, (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. xi-xii. Harrison noted at the outset of her review of Charles Gardner's *The Inner Life of George Eliot* (1912) that while '[f]ew it would seem nowadays are willing to give much study to her works', nevertheless 'a renewed study of George Eliot's work, which, whatever its flaws may be, does offer us matter for thought, a commodity not over-abundantly supplied by the usual modern novel'. Lucy Harrison, 'The Inner Life of George Eliot', 6th December 1912, in *The Friend*, 1912, pp. 799-800. Unlike Austen, the Brontës, and Eliot, by the Edwardian era Ann Radcliffe had become a decidedly marginal figure. In 1903 George Routledge and Sons were advertising cheap editions of Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Romance of the Forest* in *The Athenaeum* under the heading 'Half-Forgotten Books'. 'Advertisement', *The Athenaeum*, July 25th 1903, p. 111. Robert Miles suggests that from the outset Radcliffe's critical reception was 'ambivalent', and that only since the 1970s has her work been considered in depth. Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 2-5.

⁸⁹ Both Southam and Valerie Sanders note Austen's popularity amongst more conservative mid-Victorian feminists, who favoured her moral tone. See Southam, *Jane Austen*, p. 11; Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), p. 27. For an overview of the ways in which Austen has been claimed variously as radical subversive and conservative conformer by feminist literary critics, see Vivien Jones, 'Feminisms,' in Claudia L. Johnson and Clara Tuite (eds.), *A Companion to Jane Austen*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 282-291.

⁹⁰ Lucy Harrison, 'Ann Radcliffe, Novelist' (1911); in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 183-204. 'Ann Radcliffe, Novelist' was delivered to the York Friends Book Society on November 7th 1911. York Friends' Book Society, *Record J*. 2.3.

nineteenth-century to Harrison's own times: Radcliffe's work inspired the realist developments pioneered by Frances Burney (1752-1840) and Austen, and their work 'founded a new dynasty under which we now, in the twentieth century, live' (p. 203).

Uncovering this buried genealogy of female influence enables Harrison to challenge the pronouncement of her male contemporaries. Radcliffe, Harrison notes,

does not belong to that group of the elect, who, if we accept Clement Shorter's estimate, can be numbered on the fingers of one hand, novelists whose achievements in English fiction may be called supreme – Fielding, Scott, Austen, Bronte, Dickens; though she cannot approach these, she has a distinction of her own (p. 203).

Referring to the appraisals made by the influential journalist and literary critic Clement King Shorter (1857-1926), Harrison assumes a quietly combative stance by demonstrating that readers can challenge the opinion of established literary commentators.⁹¹ Just as her female novelists wield subtle yet powerful influence over men who go on to enjoy public acclaim, Harrison the female critic identifies and recuperates important writers passed over by more famous contemporary scholars.

Although she may have had few identifiable female precursors to call upon, Harrison had a dissenting forerunner much closer to home in the form of the American Quaker grammarian Lindley Murray. Murray had settled in York in the 1780s, and as I mentioned in chapter one, his *English Grammar* (1795) had been an important educational tool both at York's Quaker girls' school and nationally.⁹² Murray had been a significant architect of the old canon: his *English Reader* (1799), which anthologised passages from the works of writers such as Addison and Cowper, is estimated by Charles Monaghan to have sold over three million copies in Britain during the first half of nineteenth century.⁹³ Yet while Murray's books were influential at the Mount up until the 1860s, by the mid-1880s his works were no longer catalogued in the School Library, replaced by more recent guides such as Joseph Angus's *Handbook of English Literature* (1865), Henry Morley's *A First Sketch of English Literature* (1873) and John Morley's on-

⁹¹ See for example, Clement Shorter, *Victorian Literature: Sixty Years of Books and Bookmen*, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1897), p. 41.

⁹² See above, pp. 79-80.

⁹³ Charles Monaghan, 'Lindley Murray, American', in Ingrid Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, *Two Hundred Years of Lindley Murray*, Münster: Nodus, 1996, pp. 27-43. See also St. Clair, *Romantic Nation*, p. 137.

going *English Men of Letters Series* (1878-1919).⁹⁴ It was Murray's summerhouse, moved from his home in Holgate to the school grounds in 1901, that made his name familiar to Mount pupils at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹⁵ As the editors of *The Mount School York* (1931) put it, 'Though the name is unknown to [pupils] in connection with lessons, they still talk of "the Lindley Murray," meaning a summer-house and not a book'.⁹⁶ The fading of the 'old canon' and the decreased influence of Murray's *Grammar* and *Reader* left room for a proponent of a new revised canon, such as Harrison, to become an influential literary figure amongst York Quakers.

In many ways Harrison's work picked up where Murray's left off. Though their terminology may have been different – Murray advocated literature on the basis that it inculcated 'the most important principles of piety and virtue' – the two educators shared the belief that the study of literature was an important component of personal development.⁹⁷ Both educationalists also held a common interest in reading aloud. Murray was an influential exponent of reading aloud, devoting a considerable section of the *English Reader* to what he termed this 'useful and necessary art', providing a comprehensive how-to guide that included discussions of 'distinctness', 'slowness', and 'proper loudness of voice'.⁹⁸ Further, as Quaker writers publishing their educational theories from a base in York both Murray and Harrison demonstrate how the production of literary criticism was often as decentralised as much as a cosmopolitan venture. Harrison's, however, was a bolder performance than Murray's. Where Murray had reproduced a fixed canon and separated his linguistic and literary work from his Quaker faith, Harrison engaged with a dynamic canon and sought to elide the differences between dissenting and mainstream culture.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ See Appendix I.

⁹⁵ Stephen Allott, *Lindley Murray, 1745-1826: Quaker Grammarian*, (York: Sessions book Trust, 1991), pp. 44, 63.

⁹⁶ Sturge and Clark, *Mount School*, p. 16.

⁹⁷ Lindley Murray, *The English Reader, or, Pieces in Prose and Poetry, [...]*, (Bellows Falls, Vermont: James Cutler and Co., [1799] 1835), p. 3.

⁹⁸ Murray, *English Reader*, pp. 5-16.

⁹⁹ As Allot points out, Murray also avoided terms like 'Quaker' and 'Friend' in his writing; Allot suggests this was due to 'sense of privacy many Friends felt about the affairs of the Society' during the Quietist period, as well as the fact that Murray's works were 'intended for the general public on topics of general interest'. Allott, *Lindley Murray*, p. 55-56.

Though Harrison assumed the role of female public moralist, she was not concerned with self-publicity. In keeping with her Quaker background, Harrison privileged the more imperceptible influence of teaching over the visibility of extensive publication. Her ideal educator is one who seeks to pass on their appreciation to others and, in her words, ‘let them catch something of the contagion of happiness that he himself feels in his presentation of the subject’.¹⁰⁰ Thus Harrison shied away from presenting to the lively literary public sphere that existed at the turn of the century.¹⁰¹ With a few notable exceptions all her work was addressed to Quaker audiences such as readers of *The Friend*, Mount School pupils, or members of York Friends’ Book Society (YFBS). Responding to a Friend who encouraged her to publish her essays more widely, Harrison asserted that ‘there is, at the present day, such an amazing quantity of quite exceptionally good work’ already in circulation ‘that I could not with quiet conscience launch my very feeble little bark on the ocean of publication’.¹⁰² Referring to her work as a ‘feeble little bark’ is rather modest, given the praise Harrison received from scholars and friends alike. However, Harrison’s gesture towards a ‘quiet conscience’ suggests she saw her work as a form of Quaker ministry in which her personal insights were shared with members of her religious community rather than broadcast further afield. Nevertheless, her literary criticism enabled her to claim a position of authority within a

¹⁰⁰ Harrison, ‘Cultivation of Literary Taste’, p. 174.

¹⁰¹ In *Structural Transformation* Habermas maintained that by the turn of the twentieth century the bourgeois public sphere had been ‘pseudo-privatised’ by advertising and contaminated by state influence. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by MIT, (Cambridge: Polity Press, [1962, trans. 1989] 1992), pp. 141-142, 171-172. For correctives to Habermas’s view, which have uncovered a lively culture of public debate in the periodical press, see Laurel Brake and Julie F. Codell (eds.), *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Editors, Authors, and Readers*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 2; Stefan Collini, *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 221-222, 227; James Curran, ‘Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere’, in Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks (eds.), *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 46; Maria DiCenzo, Lucy Delap, and Leila Ryan, *Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals and the Public Sphere*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 25-26; Ruth Hoberman, ‘Women in the British Museum Reading Room During the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century: From Quasi- to Counterpublic’, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 28 No. 3, Autumn 2002, pp. 490-91. See also Ruth Hoberman, ‘A Thought in the Huge Bald Forehead’: Depictions of Women in the British Museum Reading Room, 1857-1929’, in Janet Badia and Jennifer Phegley (eds.), *Reading Women: Literary Figures and Cultural Icons from the Victorian Age to the Present*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 168-191; Mary P. Ryan, ‘Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America’, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 263.

¹⁰² Undated quotation; in *A Lover of Books*, p. 65.

religious community that, as I noted in my introduction, took an ambivalent attitude towards women's ministry.¹⁰³

Harrison's teaching and literary criticism seems to have achieved her aims, as many Quaker readers were inspired by her work.¹⁰⁴ After she died one Mount Old Scholar was quoted in *The Friend* as stating that

The real secret of her success was gauged when pupils spent a long Sunday afternoon wandering through the adventures of the Faëry Queen [sic], when they composed essays 'Of the Regiment of Sports Training' after Bacon, wrote letters in the manner of Elia, and chose to go on pilgrimage dressed up as the Canterbury Pilgrims.¹⁰⁵

Harrison's project of claiming a lengthy literary tradition for Quaker women is picked up by her students, who modify the works of such free-thinking writers as the poet Edmund Spenser, the politician and philosopher Francis Bacon (1561–1626), and the essayist Charles Lamb (1775–1834) to serve their own purposes. This commanding genealogy is manifested in localised activities, Lamb's model essays relating to a school sports activity while York is associated with the ecclesiastical power of Canterbury and the literary giant Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400). This practice of inscribing York's dissenting communities into a national narrative was typical of Harrison's work. Her essays and lectures make national literature available to her dissenting community of readers by guiding them on imaginative literary pilgrimages through the pages of English literature. That her pupils were keen to dress up and follow in her footsteps suggests she was an assured and inspiring guide.

¹⁰³ See above, pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁴ Harrison's influence appears to have been far-reaching. In the late 1930s a Quaker book group in Reading drew upon Harrison's 'Jane Austen' in their discussions of the novelist's work. The group's minutes for 21st April 1937 record that, 'F. E. Pollard quoted from Lucy Harrison's Literary Papers some telling and illuminating remarks, particularly about Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*'. See the UK RED database record number 30060; http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/record_details.php?id=30060 [accessed 26.5.2013].

¹⁰⁵ Anon, 'Lucy Harrison', p. 364.

Dissenting pilgrimages to a national literature

In December 1869, when she was twenty-five years old, Harrison travelled with several friends by foot from Maidstone to attend the New Year's service at Canterbury Cathedral. The journey quickly became the stuff of legend amongst the group. James MacDonell wrote to Anna Jemima afterwards of 'our pilgrimage':

We read, we chatted, we declaimed, we told stories, [...] we sang hymns, [...] we debated the profoundest questions in ethics and theology, [...] we went to church, and [...] enjoyed ourselves [...] like a pack of young, cultivated, pious Christian savages let loose!¹⁰⁶

Looking back in 1913, Harrison wrote to a friend of how she had been 'one of the Pilgrims in that far away time [...] and a glorious time it was'.¹⁰⁷ Embarking on their Chaucerian pilgrimage in the 1860s, Harrison and her friends were participating in an exciting process of redefining the English cultural landscape that took place during the nineteenth century. As a continuing body of research has shown, many late Victorians and Edwardians used the art, literature and figures from the nation's past as a means to establish a sense of a continuous national identity from Anglo-Saxon England to the present day.¹⁰⁸ Often this nationalising story was located in idealised regional, particularly rural, communities.¹⁰⁹ We have seen how two of Harrison's ideal educationalists, St. Hilda and Roger Ascham, hailed from Yorkshire; her essays and lectures more broadly situate York and Yorkshire as important sites in the educational,

¹⁰⁶ James MacDonell to Annie Harrison, 5th March 1870; in Nicoll, *James MacDonell*, p. 173.

¹⁰⁷ Lucy Harrison to Robert H. Marsh, 2nd August 1913; in *A Lover of Books*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁸ See for example Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: the Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 16-18; Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, (London: Yale University Press, 1981); Joanne Parker, 'England's Darling': *The Victorian Cult of Alfred the Great*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. x; Clare A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*, (London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ Roger Ebbatson, *An Imaginary England: Nation, Landscape and Literature, 1840-1920*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 5, 8; Tim Barringer, "That's the Life for a Man Like Me": Rural Life and Labor in Edwardian Art and Music', in Angus Trumble and Andrea Wolk Rager (eds.), *Edwardian Opulence: British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 133-157; Dellheim, *Face of the Past*, pp. 58-59, 63, 67; Sandra Kemp, Charlotte Mitchell and David Trotter (eds.), *Edwardian Fiction: An Oxford Companion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xiii, 336-337; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1998), p. 125; K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [2006] 2009), p. 4, 14, 21.

literary, political and religious history of the nation.¹¹⁰ In ‘Some Lovers of Books’ (undated) Harrison describes York as

especially noteworthy as one of the earliest seats of learning in England; we find that in York when other parts of our island, and indeed Europe generally, were enveloped in the thick clouds of paganism and ignorance, our city was celebrated for its schools, (as at the present day!) and for its learned men; that it was the centre of great intellectual activity; and that students from the Continent sought and participated in its learning and its educational advantage.¹¹¹

Harrison places York at the vanguard of culture and learning both nationally and internationally, her parenthetical reference to the excellence of present-day educators gesturing towards the prominent role played by York’s Quaker educationalists. In this construction York Quakers are embedded in a secure local community that upholds national institutions, placing the Religious Society of Friends at the heart of the nation’s cultural life.

Harrison’s Chaucerian pilgrimage is suggestive of the way in which, for her, accessing literature involves cultivating imaginative, localised affiliations with the nation’s history and literature rather than belonging to an intellectual metropolitan elite. Harrison’s uncle William Howitt had contributed to the development of this kind of literary tourism through *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets* (1847), in which sites such as Southwark, Bristol and Grasmere provided the imaginative backdrop for his discussions of British writers.¹¹² Like Howitt, Harrison’s literary criticism leads her audiences on imaginative literary pilgrimages, pointing out along the way the moral and spiritual signposts that writers have staked into the pages of literature. In her lecture ‘Some Old Essayists’ (1903) Harrison conflates literature and nation by portraying the English literary landscape as a romantic terrain to be traversed by writers and their readers. ‘English literature is full of pleasant places; we can hardly go astray in the wide country of mountain, stream, and valley’, Harrison writes, and those writers whom she visualises traversing this landscape are like pilgrims from a

¹¹⁰ See for example Harrison, ‘Leisure Hour Pursuits’, pp. 297-298; Lucy Harrison, ‘The First Religious Conference Held in Yorkshire’, *The Friend*, 4th December 1903, pp.800-802.

¹¹¹ ‘Some Lovers of Books’; papers of Lucy Harrison, MOU 5/1/4/3.

¹¹² William Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*, (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, [1847] 1863).

bygone age, carrying ‘precious things in their packs; beautiful images of life and character; kind records of human strength and human weakness’.¹¹³ This rural topography is indicative of the way in which Harrison wrests literature away from metropolitan circles and places it in the hands of ordinary, and often dissenting, folk.¹¹⁴

Harrison’s rural literary topography points towards the fact that hers was not a nationalistic vision of English literature.¹¹⁵ The construction of the English literary canon has been charged as belonging to an imperialist project to transmit cultural notions of Englishness across the empire.¹¹⁶ As I noted above, the idea that the canon was a monolithic entity at this stage is misleading; Harrison’s corpus also demonstrates that a literary canon could seek to identify a more inward-looking, localised, and dissenting tradition. Harrison herself emphasised that her attitude towards literature was not jingoistic, writing to a friend three months after outbreak of First World War that she believed, ‘There is nothing insular in Wordsworth’s patriotism – nothing Jingo. [...] [H]e believes that at [England’s] best she does stand for Freedom and the real things that make a nation (and I do too!)’.¹¹⁷ The notion that English literature expresses the values of the marginal – dissenters, the working-classes, women, people living in the regions – was central to Harrison’s vision. In her paper to the newly-opened Woodbrooke Quaker Settlement in 1907, Harrison stressed that Wordsworth’s poetry embodies principles shared by Quakerism and other communities outside of the mainstream. Howitt had attempted something similar in *Homes and Haunts* (1847), where his lengthy digression about the ‘fundamental philosophy’ of Wordsworth’s life and work forwarded the view that ‘[t]he Quaker’s religious faith is his immediate inspiration’ and that Wordsworth achieved ‘a poetic Quakerism’.¹¹⁸ In ‘Some Aspects of

¹¹³ Lucy Harrison, ‘Some Old Essayists’ (1903), pp. 23-24; Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3.

¹¹⁴ Harrison was a member of the Folk-Lore Society. The Folk-Lore Society ‘Officers and Members’, *The Folk-Lore Journal*, Vol. II, 1884, p. 394.

¹¹⁵ As Tim Barringer reminds us, during the Edwardian period the vision of an ideal rural nation was claimed by socialist and Tory alike. Barringer, ‘Rural Life’, pp. 134, 138. See also Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The ‘Queen Anne’ Movement 1860-1900*, (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 7-8; S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism 1900-1920: Early Modernism and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Edwardian England*, (London: Routledge, 1988), p. xviii.

¹¹⁶ Doyle, *English and Englishness*, pp. 14, 17; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁷ Lucy Harrison to H. C. E., February 9th 1915; in *A Lover of Books*, p. 89.

¹¹⁸ Howitt, *Homes and Haunts*, pp. 542-543.

Wordsworth's 'Teaching' (1907) Harrison likewise uncovers a Quaker Wordsworth, using Quaker terminology to imply a special relationship between Quakerism, the rural nation, and literature, noting that Wordsworth's poetry teaches us that "plain living" makes "high thinking" possible' (p. 166). But Harrison goes further in identifying a more ecumenical dissenting Wordsworth. Wordsworth, Harrison suggests, shows 'the eternal truth that man's life consisteth not in what he *has*, but in what he *is*', and that

these eternal glories of outlook are not only for the privileged few, but for all; the peasant, the poor gleaner in the field, the packman wandering from village to village, as well as for the lord in his castle. [...] In his philosophy the meek do indeed here and now inherit the earth.¹¹⁹

Harrison's allusion to Matthew 5: 5, 'Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth', sacralises Wordsworth's poetry and presents his equalising spirit as grounded in broad Christian principles.¹²⁰ This is not literary analysis as an oppressive, dominating tool but rather as a means to reveal how literature belongs to marginalised, regional communities as much as it does to the wealthy and powerful. Nor is it an attempt to present Quaker belief as superior, seeking instead to incorporate it into a broader, non-sectarian national community.

Making the former poet laureate available to her dissenting audience is a typical manoeuvre on Harrison's part.¹²¹ As I will show, her literary genealogy claims a variety of writers as Quaker figures. Emma Major's work demonstrates that there was a precedent for this sort of manoeuvring, as the work of the eighteenth-century essayist and educationalist Anna Barbauld (1743-1825) had emphasised 'the national culture

¹¹⁹ Lucy Harrison, 'Some Aspects of Wordsworth's Teaching' (1907); in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 161-182 (pp. 166-167). For more on the development of the Woodbrooke settlement, see Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 177-196.

¹²⁰ Matthew 5: 5 states, 'Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (eds.) *The Bible, Authorised King James Version with Apocrypha*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); New Testament, p. 7.

¹²¹ Wordsworth was claimed by a variety of denominations during the nineteenth century. In 1844 Wordsworth wrote to his publisher, 'Within the last week I have had three letters, one from an eminent High Churchman and most popular poet [probably Keble], another from a Quaker, and the third from a Scottish Free churchman, which together prove how widely the poems interest different classes of men'. Quoted in Robert Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious politics in English literature, 1789-1824*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 118.

shared by Dissenters and those in the Established church'.¹²² By reading Quakerism into a version of literature that pre-dates the emergence of the Religious Society of Friends in the mid-seventeenth century, Harrison stabilises her Quaker faith and presents Quakerism as entwined with the nation's cultural life from the earliest days of an English language culture.

Harrison's literary history secures Quakerism's presence in a national English language heritage by beginning with King Alfred (848/9–899), the first Christian King of England, a figure associated with the origins of the Anglo-Saxon race and the emergence of a written English language culture. Alfred was a significant icon for a dissenter such as Harrison to claim at the turn of the century, as he was considered by many Victorians to be 'the originator' of celebrated British institutions.¹²³ Harrison's essay 'King Alfred as a Man of Letters', an allusion to Morley's *English Men of Letters Series*, was presented to the York Friends' Book Society at Bootham School on November 5th 1901.¹²⁴ As well as marking the opening of the new school library, Harrison's paper was also part of the national celebrations to commemorate the Millenary of Alfred's death.¹²⁵ One of the driving forces behind the celebrations was a desire to establish a close connection between Victorian England and the golden age of King Alfred, with many commentators foregrounding the lineage between Alfred and Victoria.¹²⁶ In 'King Alfred as a Man of Letters' Harrison reinforces this narrative, although her version writes Quakerism into the story.

Drawing upon illustrative material from Edward Conybeare's *Alfred in the Chroniclers* (1900), a readily-accessible text which set out, in Conybeare's words, 'to present to English readers in a popular and readable form the early authorities for the life of King Alfred', Harrison argues that from its earliest days English literature has

¹²² Emma Major, *Madam Britannia, Women, Church, and Nation, 1712-1812*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 215-231.

¹²³ Parker, *England's Darling*, p. 11.

¹²⁴ York Friends' Book Society, *Record of York Friends' Book Society, 1852-1911*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University, Manuscripts MS Dept. 1981/2 (Clifford Street Archive), 3 vols., J. 2.1-2.3. All references are to Harrison, 'King Alfred as a Man of Letters'; *A Lover of Books*, pp. 205-220. 'King Alfred' was described in the Society Minute Book as 'very valuable in showing a side of Alfred's work to which probably less importance has been given that it deserves; it was also felt to be particularly suitable to the place and occasion'. York Friends' Book Society, *Record*.

¹²⁵ Parker, *England's Darling*, pp. 1-4, 16, 17.

¹²⁶ See Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*, pp. 175-202; Parker, *England's Darling*, p. 42.

expressed the experiences and values of the people.¹²⁷ Harrison identifies Alfred's primary achievement as the 'invaluable Chronicle, the compiling and preservation of which is one of Alfred's greatest gifts to the English nation' (p. 207). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* matters to Harrison because it is 'one of the noblest monuments of the English people' (p. 217) and so establishes imaginative links between ordinary citizens. Harrison applauds the 'many excellent editions' of the *Chronicle* that had been published throughout the nineteenth century because unlike the 'compilations of historians' they are made up of the 'words of eyewitnesses' and so 'seem to live and breathe' (p. 217).¹²⁸ This is literature as social history, an equalising and unifying force that records the stories of ordinary folk.

Harrison suggests York Quakers are better-placed to access the spirit of this former nation than most. Speaking at a time when York stood as a powerful emblem of the nation's medieval heritage, Harrison presents the streets of York as the imaginative route into the nation's past.¹²⁹ Harrison opens 'King Alfred' with the assertion that 'we who are citizens of the historic town of York, rich in association and teeming with archaeological interest' should be 'thankful that some historic imagination may have been cultivated in us' due to the fact that

we are dwellers in a city where the casual sight of almost every street-name brings to our mind and remembrance some far-off time and condition, and helps us to people these very streets with strange and shadowy figures of bygone times (pp. 205-206).

Harrison's 'we' and 'our' function as more than rhetoric, seeking to foster a sense of collective identity and experience amongst her audience. All a York Quaker need do in order to brush shoulders with the English men and women of former times, Harrison suggests, is step out of his or her front door and traverse local sites. Thus Harrison decentralises the nationalising narrative about Alfred by making York the location in which contemporary readers can access the spirit of his times.

¹²⁷ Edward Conybeare, *Alfred in the Chronicles*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1900), p. v.

¹²⁸ Editions of the *Chronicle* were published in 1823, 1842, 1854, 1861, and the text also appeared in popular histories and anthologies such as G. A. Giles's *The Whole Works of King Alfred the Great* (1852). See Parker, *England's Darling*, pp. 47, 53.

¹²⁹ Dellheim, *Face of the Past*, pp. 112-13.

As the originator of an English language culture, Alfred is a vital figure for Harrison to appropriate in order to claim that Quaker sentiments exist throughout English literature. Harrison argues that Alfred transmits the ‘spirit of his thought’ through the Anglo-Saxon language, which she presents as a language of authenticity, describing Alfred as a “‘Truth-teller’” whose ‘right to this beautiful name comes out in nothing more strikingly than in his writings’ (p. 209). Truth-telling was, Claire Simmons suggests, an important component of the Victorian Alfred mythos.¹³⁰ Harrison traces a lineage from Alfred’s truth-telling to ‘our good Queen Victoria’, whose ‘proudest title, one thinks, must have been her claim to lineal descent from Alfred’: like Alfred, Victoria ‘was also remarkable for her truthfulness’ (p. 209). Given that the association between Victoria and truthfulness was, Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich report, firmly established by the end of her reign it is unsurprising to find Harrison memorialising this quality soon after the Queen’s death.¹³¹ By associating truth-telling with the first and the most recent Anglo-Saxon monarch, Harrison establishes a continuing English practice with which to align Quakerism. Truth-telling is redolent of Quaker plain-speech, a simple form of language adopted by earliest Quakers, Martin L. Warren explains, in order to ‘identify themselves as the remnant of Israel foretold by the prophet Zephaniah’.¹³² Harrison associates Quaker plain-speech and English truth-telling by providing an anecdote about the Quaker Liberal politician John Bright (1811–1889). Harrison notes that Bright’s own ‘standard of truth was, we know, a high one’, and relays how he ‘said after seeing something of the Queen, that she was the most truthful person I have ever met’ (p. 209).¹³³ In aligning plain-speech with Alfred and the Anglo-Saxon language, Harrison entwines Quakerism in the roots of the English nation and literature. Uniting these with Queen Victoria demonstrates how this Quakerised genealogy has survived to the present, and insinuates modern Quaker readers into the heart of the nation’s cultural life.

¹³⁰ See Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest*, p. 186.

¹³¹ Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich (eds.), *Remaking Queen Victoria*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 8.

¹³² Martin L. Warren, ‘The Quakers as Parrhesiasts: Frank Speech and Plain Speaking as the Fruits of Silence’, *Quaker History*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Fall 2009, pp. 1-25 (p. 1). Zephaniah 3: 9 states that ‘For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent. Carroll and Prickett (eds), *King James Version*; New Testament, p. 1023.

¹³³ This anecdote had appeared in Millicent Garrett’s *Life of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (1895), where it was reinforced by a similar recollection from Bishop Wilberforce. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Life of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1895), p. 29-30.

Identifying a close relationship between regional place, dissenting belief, and literary culture lays the foundations for Harrison to conclude that Quaker citizenship is built upon a national culture. Addressing her York Quaker audience at Bootham School, Harrison argues that, 'It has seemed natural to dwell tonight chiefly upon Alfred's literary work' because,

The very meaning and function of such a school as this in which we meet tonight – as the noble library now rising at the instance of the Old Scholars will soon attest – is, broadly speaking, the cultivation of the love of reading, the appreciation of poetry, the study of our own beautiful mother-tongue, as used by its greatest masters. These are the stepping stones by which we rise to the pleasant paths of the higher culture; and these indeed if properly fostered may bring us to the Delectable Mountains from whence we may catch glimpses of the Gate of the Celestial City itself (pp. 218-19).

Here, 'literature and learning' are the lifeblood of personal experience and development, just as they have been, throughout Harrison's essay, flowing through the national community of readers. But 'literature and learning' also unite this Quaker community in shared literary understanding. Harrison reinforces her argument by alluding to a sequence of sources, stringing together Tennyson's lines from 'In Memoriam' (1850), that 'men may rise on stepping stones/Of their dead selves to higher things' (I, ll. 1-4), with Proverbs 3:17, '[h]er ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace', and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), where from the 'most pleasant mountainous country' of Immanuel's Land the pilgrims 'see to the Gate of the Celestial City'.¹³⁴ This rhetoric draws Harrison's audience together as a community sharing a common familiarity with literature, taking pleasure spotting allusions to various sources from English literature and the Bible. In 'King Alfred', Harrison suggests, 'learning and literature' bind together the individual, the religious community, and a national community of readers.

¹³⁴ Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 440; Carroll and Prickett (eds.), *King James Version*, New Testament, p. 725; John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress From This World to That Which is to Come*, (London: Seely, Jackson, and Halliday, [1678] 1860), p. 57.

Women and the Protestant nation

King Alfred, then, provides Harrison with a means to claim a localised, Quakerised national narrative for York Friends. Yet her reference to Queen Victoria notwithstanding, this vision of nation does not emphatically require the presence of women. Indeed, Victoria could just have easily been a male monarch for Harrison's Quakerised tale of the English language to hold true. We have seen how Harrison recovers the work of female novelists to validate her position as a woman in print, but what of women's role within the cultural life of the nation? To ensure that women are integral to this, Harrison's literary corpus aligns the literature of the age of Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) with the emergence of an identifiably Protestant English literary tradition. Elizabeth was an important icon for the Victorians, frequently evoked as 'a national symbol in the mode of the current Queen'.¹³⁵ In 'The Renaissance and Reformation in English Literature', which was published in *The Friend* in 1909, Harrison presents the Elizabethan era as the age in which the seeds sown during the Protestant Reformation came to fruition. Surveying the literature discussed in *Renaissance and Reformation* (1909), a collection of scholarly essays comprising the third volume of *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (1907-1921), Harrison presents Elizabeth's times as 'bursting' with 'the buds which are the heralds of the coming summer, the summer of a vivid patriotism', signalling 'the discovery of England by the English'.¹³⁶ Harrison lists developments that associate literature with the development of Protestantism, amongst them 'the readjustment of education', 'the publication of the first English anthology, Tottle's Miscellany', 'the compilation of the Book of Common Prayer', 'and along with, and behind all this, the burning interest in the religious settlement' (p. 163). In Harrison's construction, the reforms brought about by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement of 1559, which established a unified Anglican church, initiate the emergence of a Protestant literature. The course of English literature, Harrison seems to imply, was directed by the leadership of a woman.

¹³⁵ Nicola J. Watson, 'Gloriana Victoriana': Victoria and the Cultural Memory of Elizabeth I, Homans and Munich (eds.), *Remaking Queen Victoria*, p. 100. See also Julia M. Walker, *The Elizabeth Icon, 1603-2003*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 123-151. Many biographies of Queen Elizabeth were published around the turn of the century, coinciding with Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. See Edward Spencer Beesly's *Queen Elizabeth* (1895), M. Creighton's *Queen Elizabeth* (1896), Agnes Strickland's *The Life of Queen Elizabeth* (1904).

¹³⁶ Lucy Harrison, 'The Renaissance and Reformation in English Literature', 12th March 1909, *The Friend*, pp. 162-164 (p. 163).

Elizabeth provides Harrison with a means to claim arguably the most famous English writer, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), as a product of female influence.¹³⁷ In her Mount School lecture ‘Three of Shakespeare’s Women’ Harrison aligns Shakespeare’s female characters with the monarch of the age, arguing that ‘in the great Elizabethan time the estimate of women seems to have been influenced by the extraordinary figure of Queen Elizabeth [...] Elizabeth’s personality colours almost all the poetry of the men of her time’ (p. 146).¹³⁸ For this reason, Harrison suggests, Shakespeare’s characters are particularly worthy of study: ‘When we open our Shakespeare, we leave behind us allegory, abstraction and unreality and find ourselves with men and women’ (p. 147). By the end of the nineteenth century Shakespeare had become an important figure in female education, as the study of his characters was perceived to be morally beneficial for girls.¹³⁹ In *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) John Ruskin asserted of Shakespeare that ‘there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it, steadfast in grave hope and errorless purpose’.¹⁴⁰ Harrison elevates Shakespeare’s women to the highest plane of exemplary femininity by placing them on a par with Biblical characters, likening the Countess and Helena in *All’s Well That Ends Well* to ‘Ruth and Naomi in Elizabethan dress’ (p. 147). But as we shall see, Harrison’s ideal Shakespearean women display specifically Quaker qualities that her audience, Harrison implies, would do well to emulate.

At the turn of the century, Talia Schaffer has suggested, ‘what we might call the first feminist literary criticism’ emerged, ‘inasmuch as it was a literary criticism that focussed on women’s literary styles, histories, and capabilities’.¹⁴¹ To this we might add

¹³⁷ For more on Shakespeare’s position in nineteenth-century cultural constructions of Englishness, see Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, (London: Arden, 2004), pp. 193, 205. See also Richard Foulkes, *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Linda Rozmovits, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Culture in Late Victorian England*, (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998); Richard W. Schoch, *Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹³⁸ In *Spenser for Home and School* Harrison describes Spenser as ‘an Elizabethan of Elizabethans; his country, his queen, and his own times, their virtues and their prejudices, live for us in his verses. It is this, perhaps, that makes Spenser more interesting to us even than some of his greater contemporaries’. Harrison, *Spenser*, p. iv.

¹³⁹ Gail Marshall, *Shakespeare and Victorian Women*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-12. See also Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts, ‘Mary Cowden Clarke: Marriage, Gender and the Victorian Woman Critic of Shakespeare’, in Marshall and Poole (eds.), *Victorian Shakespeare Volume II: Literature and Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

¹⁴⁰ John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, (London: George Allen and Sons Ltd., [1865] 1908), p. 117.

¹⁴¹ Schaffer, *Forgotten Female Aesthetes*, pp. 48, 25.

a focus on literary representations of female characters, which form a consistent aspect of Harrison's approach.¹⁴² Harrison places literary representations of women at the centre of her critical appraisals in similar way to later feminist critics of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.¹⁴³ Her interests, however, lie in depictions of character rather than characterisation. When Harrison states that Shakespeare's women stand out amidst the 'storehouse of character in English Literature' (p. 143), she's referring as much to their personal attributes as she is to their literary representation. Notions of character, particularly an emphasis on morality and self-restraint, dominated liberal humanist discourse at the turn of the century.¹⁴⁴ Harrison's criticism follows the method of the influential scholar A. C. Bradley (1851–1935), who pioneered a 'character-based' criticism that dealt with characters as though they had interior lives.¹⁴⁵ Harrison professed admiration for Bradley in her review of his *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), describing his work as 'a model of what exposition and criticism should be' (p. 282).¹⁴⁶ Harrison appropriates Bradley's model to appraise Shakespeare's female characters on the basis of their potential to inspire Quaker young women.

Harrison singles out *King Lear's* Cordelia as a paragon of Quakerly reserve. A term that recurs throughout her work, Harrison borrows 'reserve' from Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1860): 'the power which a great painter exercises over himself in fixing certain limits'.¹⁴⁷ Echoing the liberal humanist preoccupation with self-restraint, Harrison emphasises that the 'distinguishing traits of Cordelia's character' are 'truthfulness and

¹⁴² For further examples, see: 'Ann Radcliffe'; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 195-202; 'George Eliot', pp. 799-800; 'An Hour With Dickens'; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 132-139; 'Jane Austen'; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 100-104; 'Meredith Made Easy', 24th December 1909, *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 1909, pp. 865-866; 'Tagore's "Chitra"', *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 3rd July 1914, pp. 489-490; 'Three of Shakespeare's Women'; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 143-147.

¹⁴³ For famous examples of this form of criticism see: Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, [1979] 2000); Kimberly Reynolds and Nicola Humble, *Victorian Heroines: Readings of Femininity and its Representation in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Art*, (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, (London: Virago Press [1977] 2003).

¹⁴⁴ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 96-97. See also Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Taylor, *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 41, 48.

¹⁴⁶ In *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner* (1905); Reprinted as 'Shakespearean Tragedy' in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 281-289; my references are to this reprinted edition.

¹⁴⁷ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. V, p. 174.

reserve', 'mastery of impulse', 'reticence in the expression of emotion', and 'noble self-control' (pp. 156-157). Harrison aligns these qualities with Quakerism, associating Cordelia's reserve with the power of silence. Harrison quotes Cordelia's 'first words' in the play "What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent" (p. 156). For Harrison this sentence proves 'the index of her character':

These few words speak volumes. Cordelia, we notice, says "What shall Cordelia *do*?" not what shall she *say*? and her answer to herself is, "*Love and be silent.*" To Cordelia to love and to do are one and the same; to *say* is nothing' (p. 156).

A belief that silence is a more effective communicative tool than words, paradoxically carrying the power to garner more attention than speech, has been a feature of Quakerism from its earliest days.¹⁴⁸ In identifying this quality in a Shakespearean heroine Harrison demonstrates to Mount pupils that Quaker identity and practice have been endorsed by a national icon. In Harrison's construction, Cordelia's reserve places her at the heart of her community by enabling her to be 'a tower of strength' (p. 156) to others, demonstrating how reserved Quaker young women can play a significant role in supporting those around them. Harrison goes one further in presenting Cordelia's fortitude through reticence as a form of female ministry that provides 'a redeeming gleam of Heaven's own light' (p. 148), suggesting Quaker women can wield public influence and religious authority through the power of their individual conduct.

The notion that Quaker young women may participate in public life by upholding the moral tone of the community is one that we encountered in the education of pupils at the Mount in the 1880s. That Harrison should be maintaining this view into the Edwardian era seems consistent with her mid-Victorian upbringing, as her generation of feminists tended to hold the view that women had an important civic role to play as compassionate and moral figures.¹⁴⁹ Yet Harrison's are not subservient,

¹⁴⁸ Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 85).

¹⁴⁹ Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 4, 248-249; Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Sanders, *Eve's Renegades*, pp. 15-16. Both Caine and Levine argue that although the term 'feminism' did not emerge until the late nineteenth century, it is not an anachronistic term to apply to those Victorian women who self-consciously drew attention to what would now be considered identifiably feminist issues (Caine, p. 6; Levine, p. 14). The Cambridge Quaker Caroline Stephen (1834-1909) (Virginia Woolf's aunt) published several works in which she maintained that women's energies would be better expended in the domestic as opposed to the

domesticated Angels in the House. Harrison's presentation of Cordelia's 'lofty ideal of honour' (p. 148) points towards the way in which her work often draws upon the late-Victorian and Edwardian vogue for chivalry, which portrayed this quality as a distinctly male attribute, to assert the potency of women's contributions within the public sphere.¹⁵⁰ In 'Octavia Hill' (1912) Harrison depicts this social reformer as a female 'Saint George' grappling 'hand to hand with the monster of poverty and wretchedness' (p. 562), presenting women's steely bravery and fortitude as a patriotic form of conduct, while in 'Florence Nightingale' (1913) this imagery re-emerges in Nightingale 'quell[ing] the Dragon of Conventionality, that dragon which has paralysed the lives of so many women' (p. 272).¹⁵¹ Almost twenty years before Virginia Woolf, Harrison has a stab at killing off the Angel in the House.¹⁵²

Eschewing the heroines to be found between the pages of contemporary fiction, Harrison suggests that exemplars of female chivalry such as Cordelia could only be found in the work of an established writer such as Shakespeare.¹⁵³ 'There are many voices in this twentieth century, some helpful enough', Harrison concludes her lecture,

political spheres. See Julia Bush, 'Caroline Stephen and the Opposition to British Women's Suffrage', *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 15 Iss. 1, 2010, Birmingham: Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, pp. 43, 51. E. O'Driscoll has gone so far as to argue that actively-suffragist Quaker women such as the famous Priestman-Bright-Clark circle were 'the exception rather than the rule within the Society'. O'Driscoll, 'Women's Rights and Women's Duties: Quaker Women in the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Women Friends', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Sunderland, 1999), p. 282., quoted in Bush, 'Caroline Stephen', pp. 43, 51.

¹⁵⁰ Girouard, *Return to Camelot*, pp. 63-64, 131-135. Recently Carolyn Collette has shown how many suffragettes reclaimed Medieval legends and images in order to validate and authorise their struggle for enfranchisement. Carolyn Collette, 'Militants, Visionaries and Martyrs: the middle Ages and the British Women's Suffrage Movement', Annual Riddy Lecture, The University of York, November 8th 2011.

¹⁵¹ Lucy Harrison, 'Octavia Hill', 30th August 1912, *The Friend*, pp. 562-563. Hill is the notable female entry in Girouard's study of nineteenth-century male chivalry. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, 1981, p. 253.

¹⁵² Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women' (1931) in Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 140-145.

¹⁵³ Harrison had little time for the heroines found between the pages of contemporary fiction. In 'Jane Austen' Harrison maintains that 'Austen's women are not *modern* women, much less "new women" (whatever they may be)' (p. 101), her parenthetical aside calling into the question the solidity of this cultural icon. Likewise in 'Ann Radcliffe' she suggests Radcliffe's heroines possess a 'certain moral strenuousness [...] which is truly admirable' (p. 195) and that they offer 'very praiseworthy' displays of 'fortitude' (p. 200). These qualities 'place them on an altogether higher level than that occupied by some of their physically robust sisters of modern fiction' (p. 195). See also 'Lucy Harrison, 'On The Cultivation of Artistic Taste', *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, Vol. XXXIV, (London: West, Newman and Co., 1900), pp. 81-96 (pp. 85-86). For cultural histories of the nineteenth-century fin de siècle, which conjure up a world of late-Victorian anxieties around the perceived gender transgressions of robust and assertive New Women and dangerously decadent men, see: Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin de Siècle Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Richard A. Kaye,

But it cannot be amiss to turn now and again to the very greatest, to those who have stood the test of many generations, to those who are indeed the classics; to turn to the great writers, and to join hands with the men and women of the imaginary world, [...] to sit at their feet and from their lessons in character and action try to mould our lives and conduct by their ideals (p. 160).

A lengthy heritage serves as proof of time-honoured teaching: in looking to Shakespeare the young Quaker reader can be sure she is amongst respectable company. Harrison's model reading suggests that Quaker pupils may approach an iconic writer such as Shakespeare on their own terms, drawing upon his work to define the contours of their private character and public influence. Harrison's feminist literary criticism tacitly presents Quaker femininity as mainstream rather than marginal, displayed in the work of a writer belonging to a decidedly Protestant and matriarchal age. With the right approach, Harrison suggests, Quaker schoolgirls may read themselves into the Protestant nation.

Mysticism: securing an ecumenical Quakerism

Thus far I have explored the ways in which Harrison appropriates literature to inscribe regional and female Quaker identities into a national narrative. In order to imbue her Quaker audiences yet further with a sense of belonging to the nation, and to make them more invested in its literature, Harrison encourages Quaker readers to treat literature as a religious guide. Like her shared Protestant national identity, the religious teachings that Harrison finds in literature are ecumenical. Harrison's presentation of literature as the repository of ecumenical teaching helps to explain the absence of Quaker writers from her genealogy. Aside from a reference to George Fox in 'The Practice of the Presence of God' (1904), and an essay on the eighteenth-century American Quaker

'Sexual Identity at the Fin de Siècle', in Gail Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, (London: Virago Press, 1994); Elaine Showalter, *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin de Siècle*, (London: Virago Press Ltd., 1993); Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, London: Virago Press, [1990] 1992. Alexis Easley suggests that these modern authors were frequently associated with the 'ephemerality' of the fin de siècle press and so were seen to lack the 'timeless appeal' necessary to qualify as 'great literature'. Alexis Easley, *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), p. 12.

John Woolman, Harrison makes no mention of Quaker figures or writings and remains silent about female Friends. This was unusual during the period in which she was writing. Quaker hagiography, which had begun in the Society's earliest days, continued into the twentieth century with publications such as Irene M. Ashby's *Elizabeth Fry: The Angel of the Prisons* (1892), Georgina Lewis's *Elizabeth Fry* (1909), Helen G. Crossfield's *Margaret Fox of Swarthmore Hall* (1913), Mabel Richmond Brailsford's *Quaker Women 1650-1690* (1915) and L. V. Hodgkin's *A Book of Quaker Saints* (1917).¹⁵⁴ Quaker historiography was also becoming established around this time, with several York Friends playing central roles in initiating what became known as the Rowntree History Series.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps Harrison, writing mainly for Quaker audiences, felt that Quaker readers didn't need to hear about members of their own community. Accordingly her essay 'John Woolman' (1912) was presented to Arts and Crafts readers of *The Vineyard*, the journal of the Peasant Arts Guild.¹⁵⁶ Seeking to resurrect a Woolman whose writings might appeal to contemporary Arts and Crafts readers, Harrison foregrounds Woolman's 'longing for something like equality of happiness and opportunity for all' and 'sorrow over the decay of handicrafts' (p. 230). Yet she also engages in a subtle form of evangelism, presenting this Quaker figure as a 'minister of Christ', 'saintly soul' and 'mystic' whose religious insights were channelled into Arts-and-Crafts-friendly social reforms: Woolman possessed 'the devouring zeal of the practical reformer, and he never hesitated to bring his spiritual intuitions to the test of practical issues' (p. 221). In drawing parallels between Quakerism and Arts and Crafts ideals Harrison implicitly establishes a non-sectarian, left-leaning vision of national belief.

¹⁵⁴ Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Quaker Identities, 1650-1700*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), in particular pp. 3-8; Alice Southern, 'The Rowntree History Series and the Growth of Liberal Quakerism', *Quaker Studies*, Volume 16 Issue 1, September 2011, pp. 7, 12, 61.

¹⁵⁵ Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', pp. 7, 12, 61.

¹⁵⁶ Lucy Harrison, 'John Woolman', *The Vineyard*, May 1912; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 221-232. Woolman was something of a marginal writer during the period Harrison was writing. There had been a few reprints of Woolman's *Journal* and a short book by the poet and Harrison family friend Dora Greenwell (1821-1882), but the sentiments expressed by the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) in the 1870s remained true of the Edwardian era: 'the great world has, for the most part [...] passed John Woolman by'. John G. Whittier (ed.), *The Journal of John Woolman*, (London: Andrew Melrose, 1871), pp. xv. See also Dora Greenwell, *John Woolman*, London: F. B. Kitto, 1871. Greenwell's brief biography is constructed largely from quotations lifted from Whittier's edition. Harrison's essay combines Whittier's edition with the Everyman Library's *The Journal with other Writings of John Woolman* (1910). The Everyman Library had been founded in 1906 and became, according to Stefan Collini, an important factor in the development of the autodidact tradition. Collini, *Common Reading*, p. 251.

In her essays and lectures Harrison looks to literature specifically for mystical insights. The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a surge of interest in the history and psychology of mysticism, with comprehensive publications such as William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), Rufus M. Jones's *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909), and the prolific Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* (1911) and *The Mystic Way* (1913). Commentators sought to uncover a mystical tradition within English literature, with studies and anthologies such as Adeline Cashmore's *The Mount of Vision: A Book of English Mystic Verse* (1910), Caroline Spurgeon's *Mysticism in English Literature* (1913), and *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (1917). Studies of mysticism identified it as multi-denominational, multi-faith and multi-national. In *The Mystic Way*, for example, Underhill gave equal attention to the histories and characteristics of English, French, German, and Spanish mysticism.¹⁵⁷ Harrison's work increasingly drew upon mystical writings to transcend the boundaries of denomination, faith, and nation, encouraging Quaker readers to identify shared human traits and experiences that united them with people outside of their own religious community.

Harrison was not the only Quaker with an interest in mysticism. Many late-Victorian and Edwardian Friends demonstrated awareness of the ways in which the ideas of non-Quaker theologians coalesced with the new liberal Quakerism.¹⁵⁸ In an oblique nod to James's *Varieties* (1902) Joan Fry noted in 1904 that 'we need not be afraid of the variety of religious experience', calling upon Quakers 'to see the absolute necessity for diversity in any corporate life that is worth the name, and thus to enter sympathetically into relation with those very far removed from our own narrow rut of thought'.¹⁵⁹ The Quaker theologian Rufus M. Jones saw mysticism as an important means by which Quakers could take an active role in wider society. In *Quakerism: A Religion of Life* (1908) Jones argued that modern Quakers were being 'called [...] to be the bearers to-day of a type of Christianity which is essentially inward, spiritual, and mystical'.¹⁶⁰ For Jones, this Quaker Christianity was patriotic:

¹⁵⁷ Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way: A Psychological Study in Christian Origins*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1913).

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 39; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 161, 165. See also Southern, 'Rowntree History Series', pp. 10-11.

¹⁵⁹ Joan Mary Fry, *The Way of Peace and Other Papers*, (London: Headley Brothers, 1904), p. 25.

¹⁶⁰ Rufus M. Jones, *Quakerism: A Religion of Life*, Swarthmore Lecture, (London: Headley Brothers, 1908), p. 19.

Friends have sometimes been dull of vision for national ideals and they have, at some periods, been too absorbed in “individual states of mind” to take the prophetic mission to the nation, but the *pillar* Quakers have been prophets of the ideal nation, devotedly loyal to the country that ought to be.¹⁶¹

Jones’s reference to ‘*pillar* Quakers’ suggests those who have upheld this religious community have also supported the nation, presenting Quakerism as a pivotal rather than marginal form of belief. ‘Pillar Quakers’ also implies a hierarchical construction of Quakerism, contradicting a Society epistle of 1875 that had called upon ‘Friends everywhere [to] continue to bear a faithful and open testimony against hierarchical systems in every form’.¹⁶² Though Harrison shared Jones’s belief that mysticism could enable Quakers contribute to society, hers was a more equalising stance.

Rather than present Quakers as individuals calling upon the mysticism of their own sect to lead the nation, Harrison’s ideal Quaker readers respond to the mystical insights of others to develop a sense of affinity with a range of denominations and faiths. In ‘The Practice of the Presence of God’, a paper given to York Friends in 1904, Harrison encourages her audience to identify parallels between the mystical writings of disparate seventeenth-century religious figures such as the French Carmelite monk Brother Lawrence (c. 1614-1691), John Bunyan (1628-1688) and George Fox. According to Harrison, Bunyan’s ‘burning and vivid experiences’, Fox’s experience of ‘working out his salvation’, and Lawrence’s ‘heavenly vision’ happened ‘at the same time’ and so drew these figures together into a ‘great Brotherhood of the Lovers of Christ’.¹⁶³ Harrison’s reference to ‘Brotherhood’ gestures towards the socialist sympathies that underpin her work, implicitly presenting mysticism as an equalising form of spiritual experience.

As well as drawing denominations together, Harrison suggests, mysticism provides women with a role to play as spiritual leaders. In 1908 Harrison wrote to a friend about the mystic Julian of Norwich (1342–c.1416), stating that ‘some of her thoughts and words, though of so long ago, are marvellously appropriate to our 20th

¹⁶¹ Jones, *Quakerism*, p. 42.

¹⁶² Religious Society of Friends, *Christian Discipline*, p. 134.

¹⁶³ Lucy Harrison, ‘The Practice of the Presence of God’, 9th October 1904; consulted in Papers of Lucy Harrison, MOU 5/1/4/3, p. 3.

Century needs'.¹⁶⁴ In 'Florence Nightingale', a review of Edward Cook's *The Life of Florence Nightingale* (1913), Harrison maintains Nightingale was 'a mystic of the loftiest type' whose life reminds the reader that 'it is the mystics who are the practical reformers of the world'.¹⁶⁵ Through mysticism, Harrison suggests, women have an important role to play in building the ideal ecumenical nation. This was an important point for Harrison to assert given that, as we have seen, at the turn of the century Quaker women did not occupy a position of equality within the Religious Society of Friends. In this context Harrison's essays and lectures on mystical writings functioned as a form of ministry, a means for her to claim a leadership role in guiding the religious understanding of her community.

To catch the attention of her Quaker audiences Harrison often discusses mysticism in Quaker terms, foregrounding the ways in which this ecumenical form of religious belief and experience speaks to the Quaker reader.¹⁶⁶ In 'Leisure Hour Pursuits' (1913), a lecture delivered at the Mount School, Harrison suggests that poets express their mystical insights in terms familiar to Friends. Harrison calls upon Ruskin's famous discussion of the 'pathetic fallacy', where Ruskin ranks the various 'orders' of poets on the basis of how they might perceive a primrose.¹⁶⁷ Harrison assumes a collective familiarity amongst her audience with Ruskin's ranking, stating that 'we all know there are three kinds of primroses: There is the primrose of the botanist; There is the primrose of Peter Bell; There is the primrose of the Poet or the Seer' (p. 294). This configuration collapses Ruskin's 'first order' poet ('the men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly') with his non-poet of 'prophetic inspiration' to create a mystic poet to whom 'we ordinary mortals must go' in order to discover what '*more* [the

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in *A Lover of Books*, p. 60.

¹⁶⁵ Lucy Harrison, 'Florence Nightingale', *The Friend* (1913); in *A Lover of Books*, p. 280. Five years later Lytton Strachey's infamous *Eminent Victorians* (1918) would cut Nightingale down to size, dismissing her spiritual writings and noting archly of her correspondent, the theologian Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), that 'he criticised her writings on those subjects with the tactful sympathy of a cleric who was also a man of the world'. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1918), p. 174. For more on Nightingale's reception history, see Mark Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale: The Woman and Her Legend*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., [2008] 2009).

¹⁶⁶ For examples that I don't have space to discuss here, see 'Review of the Works of Francis Thompson' (*The Friend*, 1913); in *A Lover of Books*, p. 277; 'An Apostle of Joy: Thomas Traherne' (1910, in *The Vineyard*); in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 233-234, 237; 'Treasure Trove', *The Friend*, 2nd December 1910, pp. 802-803.

¹⁶⁷ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, pp. 151-152.

primrose] ought to be to us' (p. 294).¹⁶⁸ Harrison models to an audience of Quaker schoolgirls the ways in which, through careful reading, they can find mystical insights in poetry. 'Take down your Wordsworth', Harrison proposes,

and read the poem called *The Primrose on the Rock*, [...] and you will see what the *something more* is. [...] or if you are tired of Wordsworth (and one has heard of people getting tired of Wordsworth), turn to the slender volume of priceless poems by Alice Meynell and read her sonnet *To a Daisy*. There I think you will find something about the daisy that you have never thought before. [...] She will tell you something not only about the daisy but about your own mind and the universe (p. 295).

Borrowing Ruskin's primroses is more than literary coincidence. In chapter one I noted that primroses and wildflowers were claimed as Quaker emblems by Mount pupils and educators.¹⁶⁹ In drawing upon wildflowers to expound mystical insights Harrison forwards the same message as she had six years earlier in 'Some Aspects of Wordsworth's Teaching', presenting a special relationship between literature, nature, and Quaker belief. This reading enables Harrison to interpret the work of the Catholic poet Alice Meynell on Quaker terms, selecting from Meynell's oeuvre the poem in which her mystical insights are channelled into a meditation upon a wildflower. Meynell's appearance alongside Wordsworth emphasises that women have an equally important role to play in expounding mystical teachings. A popular and avant-garde writer, 'one of the best known literary celebrities of the 1890s', Meynell's presence in 'Leisure Hour Pursuits' gestures towards the important role that contemporary female writers play in guiding readers' spiritual understanding, and makes Harrison's discussion relevant to a new generation of Quaker readers.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, p. 152.

¹⁶⁹ See above, pp. 81-82.

¹⁷⁰ Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds (eds.), *Victorian Poetry: An Anthology*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995), p. 510. Harrison greatly admired Meynell's work. Towards the end of her lecture Harrison calls upon her audience to 'read two Essays by Alice Meynell, the one called *Cloud*, the other *The Winds of the World*. There you may see, especially in *Cloud*, how the watching of the clouds and the mists may teach you not only of coming shower and storm but of the secrets of light and colour, of the mysteries of space and of the landscape of the skies'; in *A Lover of Books*, p. 299. Harrison appears to have been connected to the Meynell family. In 1914 she wrote to a friend of how 'C.M. told me much that interested me about Mrs. Alice Meynell, who is her Aunt, and whose things I have been reading with immense delight. Do you know her Essays? They seem to me perfect; and I love her poems too'; in *A Lover of Books*, p. 60. Harrison's view of mysticism was shared by Meynell, who wrote in 1910 that unlike

'Leisure Hour Pursuits', like the majority of Harrison's criticism, seeks to uncover the parallels between Quaker belief and those of other denominations in order to present Quakerism as part of a national religious tradition. Towards the end of her life, however, Harrison sought to break down the barriers between nation as well as faith, seeking to identify universal human truths within literature. Her final paper 'Rabindranath Tagore', which was delivered to YFBS in November 1914, suggests that mysticism is vital in binding mankind together during a time of international conflict.¹⁷¹ In *Practical Mysticism* (1914) Underhill had presented mysticism as patriotic, arguing that in times of war 'it becomes a part of true patriotism to keep the spiritual life, both of the individual citizen and of the social group active and vigorous', before going on to suggest that 'the two women who have left the deepest mark upon the military history of France and England – Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale – both acted under mystical compulsion'.¹⁷² While Harrison may have expressed favour for these mystics during the Edwardian period, in 'Tagore' she sidesteps Anglo-Franco support in favour of advancing an international vision. In 'Tagore's work, Harrison suggests, 'the limitations of nationality, of space, of time pass away and we are amongst essential and universal things' (p. 243). These qualities mean that Tagore's work has much to teach a Quaker reader in 1914, for 'like all great mystics, he shows us how to face Reality' (p. 242).

Rabindranath Tagore had only recently become available to British readers by 1914. Publications of English translations of his work appeared from 1912 onwards, and Tagore won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. In Britain, Malcolm Sen suggests, Tagore was received as a 'poet and saint'.¹⁷³ Tagore's poetry was held by many to speak to British readers: the Irish poet W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) wrote in his

'their brothers, the Saints', poets achieve mystical status not through the laborious 'spadework' of 'long and rigorous experience', but rather through the power of their mind, 'becom[ing] mystics by their genius and the divinity of their imagination'. Alice Meynell, 'The Mystical Lyric', in Adeline Cashmore (ed.) *The Mount of Vision: A Book of English Mystic Verse*, (London: Chapman and Hall, Limited, 1910), pp. x-xi.

¹⁷¹ Lucy Harrison, 'Rabindranath Tagore' (1914); reproduced in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 241-262.

¹⁷² Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism: A Little Book for Normal People*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, [1914] 1948), pp. ix-x.

¹⁷³ Malcom Sen, 'MYTHOLOGISING A 'MYSTIC': W.B. Yeats on the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore', *History Ireland*, Vol. 18, No. 4, The Elephant and Partition: Ireland and India (July/August 2010), pp. 20-23. After falling out of favour at mid-century, Tagore is beginning to receive renewed attention in academia. See for example Ian Copland and Kama Maclean (eds.), 'Special Issue, Rabindranath Tagore: Introducing a Surplus', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, Iss. 1, March 2012; Kenneth R. Stunkel, 'Rabindranath Tagore and the Aesthetics of Postmodernism', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Winter, 2003), pp. 237-259.

Introduction to *Gitanjali* (1910; trans. 1912) of how ‘A whole people, a whole civilisation, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image’.¹⁷⁴ Harrison draws upon Tagore in similar terms to Yeats, suggesting that though in Tagore’s poetry ‘we have the delicious freshness of a very national personality’ nevertheless ‘Tagore puts familiar truths before us, he deals with the great human realities, and he reveals to us fundamental and everlasting principles’ (p. 243). In identifying timeless truths in the ‘delicious[ly] fresh’ work of a Bengali Hindu Harrison could be charged with appropriating Tagore and approaching his work on Westernising terms. Yet such a reading would lack sensitivity to the ways in which, as recent post-colonial theorists point out, the relationship between Britons and those under imperial rule could be one of inter-cultural exchange and mutual affinity, particularly for those Britons who belonged to more marginalised communities.¹⁷⁵ Rather than flattening Tagore into a novel and exotic ‘other’, Harrison takes care to uncover the ways in which his writings are in sympathy with the beliefs and practices of Quakerism.

In ‘Tagore’ Harrison suggests that the careful reader of his work will find much to inspire contemporary Quakerism. Harrison recounts passages of *Sādbanā* (1913) whose sentiments and imagery resonate with the Quaker belief in the Inner Light: ‘Thou who art the spirit of manifestation, manifest thyself in me. [...] This prayer is not merely one born individually of him; it is in the depths of all things, [...] It is in the soul of man’ (p. 261). As I noted in my introduction, a renewed emphasis on the Inner Light was one of the central tenets of liberal Quakerism.¹⁷⁶ In foregrounding this passage Harrison implies that liberal Quakers may find confirmation of their beliefs in the work of this new poetic discovery. *Sādbanā*, Harrison suggests, has ‘the ring of spiritual cosmopolitanism’ (p. 261) and so can enable York’s Quaker readers to access a more expansive and modern form of religious understanding. Harrison reiterates the sense that Tagore can rejuvenate contemporary thinking, presenting Tagore as a latter-day

¹⁷⁴ W. B. Yeats, ‘Introduction’, in Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali and Fruit Gathering*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, [1910] 1918), pp. xvi-xvii.

¹⁷⁵ See for example Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially pp. 1-33; Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin de Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁷⁶ See above, p. 26.

Christian figure: 'It is noticeable that just at a time when a considerable number of Western intellectuals are ready to repudiate much of the Christian teaching, here in Tagore we meet with its spirit embodied, as it were, in new and striking garb. Much of *Sādbanā*, very many of the lyrics are instinct with the mind of Christ' (pp. 252-53). Harrison's use of 'instinct' presents Tagore's lyrics as appealing to fundamental humanising qualities that have their basis in Christian teaching. Thus, Harrison suggests, the apparent newness of Tagore's literary expression serves the important function of arresting the Quaker reader's attentions and vividly representing long-accustomed teachings. Picking up the work of a poet such as Tagore will enable the Quaker reader to enter into a deeper understanding of their own faith at the same time as they come to recognise the common ground between Christianity and Hinduism, West and East, ancient thought and modern. In so doing they may develop a less jingoistic and more humane response to the outbreak of international conflict. Identifying an ecumenical mysticism in 'Tagore' enables Harrison to expand the scope of her imagined community so that it incorporates all of mankind and establishes Quakers as world citizens.¹⁷⁷

'Tagore' exemplifies the way in which Harrison's literary criticism seeks to claim humanising, universal principles for Quaker readers. Throughout her essays and lectures Harrison uses liberal humanist protocols to make reading and literature the means by which Quakers can access a sense of belonging to broader traditions and identities than those of their own religious community. Harrison decentralises 'English Literature' by presenting it as localised and closely associated with dissenters. Women, Harrison suggests, are vital to the existence and continuance of English literature, directing its paths and upholding its moral tone. Through her recurring trope of the literary pilgrim Harrison presents the ideal Quaker reader as one who is capable imaginatively to interact with the voices and stories of the past, entering into a communion with literature in a more immersive sense than would be possible through scholarly practices alone.

As I noted in my introduction, in *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold had maintained that nonconformists had missed out on the inspiring potential of culture due to their tendency to 'Hebraise' (to 'sacrifice all other sides of [their] being to the religious side'), and so had 'developed one side of their humanity at the expense of all others, and have

¹⁷⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 36.

become incomplete and mutilated men in consequence'.¹⁷⁸ To 'develop their full humanity more perfectly', Arnold had suggested, nonconformists should add culture's 'sweetness and light' to their religious 'zeal'.¹⁷⁹ In a sense Harrison's literary criticism works as a corrective to Arnold's claim. In inviting her Quaker audiences to identify universal, humanising tendencies within literature, and to see themselves as participants in a mainstream cultural tradition, Harrison offers a vision of Quakerism in which Friends can claim to belong to a broader culture of 'sweetness and light'.

¹⁷⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 11, 14.

¹⁷⁹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 11. Mark Girouard has detailed how Arnold's sentiments captured the imagination of many middle-class reformers at the turn of the century, who wished to create a society founded upon beauty, enlightenment and harmony. Girouard, *Sweetness and Light*, pp. 1-4.

CHAPTER THREE

Reading and public activity at York Friends' Sewing Meeting

January 19th 1911. Sewing meeting held at Swarthmore by kind invitation of Mrs. Philip Burt. 44 Friends present. Mrs. Waller read to us some most amusing stories entitled "Aunt Jane of Kentucky" and "Aunt Jane's Album". Miss Walton also recited "Two Strings to Her Bow" and Miss Edith Rowntree delighted us with her charming singing. The meeting closed with Mrs. Burt reading a portion of scripture.¹

Extending invitations for members to attend, referring to women by their marital status, listening to musical recitals and extracts from a novel described by contemporary commentators as 'quaint' and 'wholesome': there is much here to suggest York Friends' Sewing Meeting (YFSM) was a cosy, non-threatening community of Quaker readers.² The scrupulously polite tone of the minutes, referencing 'charming singing' and a 'kind invitation', reinforce this decorous and well-mannered appearance. Images of sewing meetings as occasions for middle-class women to enjoy a spot of genteel sociability emerge in several Edwardian novels. Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902) depicts a Methodist sewing circle in which local gossip captures members' interests far more than their philanthropic work. Though sewing is carried out dutifully it is 'not to the detriment of conversation', the 'general subjects' of which are 'the school-treat shortly to occur, the summer holidays, the fashions, and the change of ministers which would take place in August'.³ In John Meade Falkner's *The Nebuly Coat* (1903), the work conducted by the 'band of devoted females' who 'gathered week by week to make garments for the poor' at the Anglican sewing circle is presented as unnecessary and self-indulgent.⁴ As 'little actual poverty' (p. 93) exists within the local community, the

¹ The York Friends' Sewing Meeting, *Record of York Friends Sewing Meeting*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University: Manuscripts MS Dept. 1981/2 (Clifford Street Archive), vol. 3, 1906-1927, p. 34. All subsequent references are in-text citations. For a full list of the texts read by the Edwardian YFSM, see Appendix III.

² For more on the reception of *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, see Lynn E. Neidermeier, *Eliza Calvert Hall: Kentucky Author and Suffragist*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p. 124.

³ Arnold Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., [1902] 1967), p. 92. All subsequent references are in-text citations.

⁴ John Meade Falkner, *The Nebuly Coat and The Lost Stradivarius*, (London: Oxford University Press, [1903, 1895] 1954), p. 93. All subsequent references are in-text citations.

sewing meeting instead provides an opportunity for women to dress up in their 'best things' and perform to the assembled company (pp. 94):

Mrs. Bulteel – the brewer's lady – who wore fashionable London dresses, and was much the most fashionable person in Cullerne, proposed that some edifying book should be read aloud on Dorcas afternoons to the assembled workers. It was true that Mrs. Flint said she only did so because she thought she had a fine voice; but however that might be, she proposed it, and no one cared to run counter to her. So Mrs. Bulteel read properly religious stories, of so touching a nature that an afternoon seldom passed without her being herself dissolved in tears, and evoking sympathetic sniffs and sobs from such as wished to stand in her good books (p. 95).

In this sewing meeting philanthropic duty and religious devotion provide the flimsiest of veneers for affectation, bitchiness, and a great deal of showing off. The gossipy tone reveals that members are valued for their social status, ability to keep pace with metropolitan fashions, and display of excessive femininity, rather than for their philanthropic productivity. At first glance Falkner's passage shares much in common with the YFSM minute: both involve performance, shifting dynamics between women, and little mention of work being carried out.

Yet there was much more to YFSM than this initial reading would suggest. Depictions of sewing circles as cosy or self-indulgent gatherings disguise the ways in which these were politically charged, sometimes even radical, organisations. As this chapter shows, Victorian and Edwardian sewing circles provided instrumental support to controversial causes of the day – from abolitionism to pacifism, suffragism to social reform – in the process redrawing the boundaries of women's public contributions. Private sociability fed into public campaigning in subtle yet potent ways. In passing what seem like leisurely evenings together, YFSM developed a sense of community solidarity that strengthened their collective participation in philanthropic and political activities.

Reading aloud and being read to, I will argue, was not simply an activity aimed at entertainment, passing the time, focusing minds, or garnering attention. Reading aloud served the important function of mediating the relationship between YFSM's private and public activities. It was a means by which the group collectively reaffirmed their commitment to particular causes, emphasised productivity as an effective form of female ministry, and imaginatively brought into being alternative forms of Quaker femininity. As I will show, seemingly tame works of literature, such as Eliza Calvert

Hall's *Aunt Jane of Kentucky* (1907), provided YFSM with a means to imagine assertive, challenging identities and roles for middle-class Quaker women. Unlike Lucy Harrison's lectures, Mount School lessons, or York Friends' Book Society (YFBS) conversazioni, for YFSM the act of reading aloud took place within a gathering that, importantly, combined sociable activities with philanthropic and political work. Previous studies of both individual and collective reading practices have tended to focus on contexts in which reading is the primary focus, and thus the minutes of YFSM provide a welcome glimpse into occasions in which reading takes place alongside other activities.⁵ Multitasking rather than single-mindedly focussing on literature, I would argue, may have played a significant role in shaping the way in which members engaged with and interpreted the texts that were read aloud.

In my introduction I detailed the shifting reading preferences of YFSM between 1834 and 1880. Unfortunately the volume that covers the 1880s and 1890s has been lost, and therefore in this chapter I concentrate primarily on the third volume of YFSM minutes, which run from 1906 to 1927 and correspond with the period in which Harrison was publishing and lecturing in York.⁶ In contrast to the piles of articles, lectures, notebooks and correspondence Harrison left behind, the documented reading experiences of YFSM are far more enigmatic. While the minute books refer to the various novels, poems, plays, pamphlets, letters and periodicals that the group selected, they seldom provide information as to which passages or how much of a text was read. Further, they record little or no response to what the group made of particular texts beyond an 'amusing' here or an 'interesting' there. This silence is a result of the fact that

⁵ For examples of studies that explore reading as a focussed activity, see: Laurel Brake and Julie F. Codell (eds.), *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Editors, Authors, and Readers*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Will Brooker and Deborah Jermyn (eds.), *The Audience Studies Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2003); Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994); Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing, and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Elizabeth Long, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Patricia Howell Michealson, *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading, and Speech in the Age of Austen*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Culture*, (London: Verso, 1984); Janice A. Radway, *A Feeling For Books: The Book-of-The-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Leah Price has recently noted that book historians tend to privilege the act of reading books over the other ways in which they're used, for as her study reveals, 'reading is not the only thing that can be done to books'. Leah Price, *How to Do Things With Books in Victorian Britain*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 19-41.

⁶ The final volume, which runs from 1927 to 1973, is beyond the scope of this study.

as a literary form minutes are designed to encode consensus: something almost impossible to achieve within a gathering that often contained upwards of forty people possessing a variety of opinions, preferences and responses. Indeed, one of the trickier aspects of dealing with a text such as the YFSM minutes is that they present the organisation as a homogenous entity rather than as a collection of individuals or subgroups, the anonymous hand that records each meeting speaking as a 'we' that simultaneously manages to be everyone and no one. In my examination of YFSM readers I remain alert to the difference – possibly even tension – between the unified voice represented by the minutes and the heterogeneous collection of individuals that it signifies, seeking to tease out the instances in which the minutes leave room for the possibility of competing voices.

Given the scant commentary supplied by the minutes, I will necessarily be making something of an informed imaginative leap in reconstructing what members of YFSM made of particular literary works. In part I shall be attending to the context in which the event of reading took place: where a text was read, how many members were present, what other activities were taking place alongside the reading, and so on.⁷ I will also consider how members' wider political activities, particularly their involvement in suffrage campaigning, might have shaped the ways in which they interpreted certain texts. I attempt to identify passages that would have been likely to speak to a community of middle-class female Friends, and uncover the dynamic relationship that existed between particular authors and Quaker readers. Most importantly, I will be identifying the broader continuities that recur across the range of books read by YFSM and considering what these trends suggest about the relationship, for this group of Quaker women, between reading and the creation of collective identities.

Domestic settings: politicising the private

As we have seen, both *Anna of the Five Towns* and *The Nebuly Coat* portray sewing circles as little more than occasions for female domestic sociability. The eponymous heroine of *Anna* is informed upon her arrival at the sewing meeting that 'Everyone's here, except the men, of course' (p. 95), and when 'the men' do join the gathering at tea-time they

⁷ As Janice Radway famously put it, there exists an inextricable relationship 'between the *event* of reading and the meaning of the *text* constructed as its consequence'. Radway, *Reading the Romance*, p. 7.

are served, an ‘elaborate meal, complex with fifty dainties each of which had to be savoured’ (p. 107). The minutes of the Edwardian YFSM could be interpreted in a similar way, providing yet another instance of sewing meeting as refined gathering. One could point out the strikingly genteel tone of the minutes, which refer to members as ‘Mrs’ and ‘Miss’ rather than by their first names, as had been the case previously, note that meetings were held at tea-times, and that an ‘invitation’ had been extended for members to attend. One would emphasise that while the group met occasionally at the Clifford Street Quaker Meeting House, more often they gathered at the large homes of wealthy members such as the White House Fulford, home of Mrs Adams, or Clifton Lodge, the Arts-and-Crafts-style home of Emma (1846-1924) and Joseph Rowntree (1836-1925).



Figure 11: Clifton Lodge (source: www.rowntreesociety.org.uk)

There would of course be a need to acknowledge that in part these venues were chosen as a means to accommodate significant numbers of people: both the White House and Clifton Lodge featured drawing rooms big enough to contain – though at a push – upwards of forty or fifty people.⁸ Nevertheless, one could suggest that holding meetings in these members’ homes meant that the gatherings, by sheer virtue of their location, became more sociable occasions. Indeed, the association held annual garden parties at Clifton Lodge, during which the group often set aside their work in favour of enjoying the environment. A typical entry records that ‘It was such a delightful day that it was decided not to do any sewing but spend the time looking around the gardens which are

⁸ I am grateful to Denise and Richard Edmondson for showing me around the White House, and discussing the slightly bewildering logistics of how fifty people could have been hosted in their dining room.

both extensive and beautiful' (May 28th 1909; p. 20).⁹ It would be possible to cite other instances in which nearby Quaker sewing circles conducted sociable gatherings. The minutes of the Scarborough branch of the Missionary Helpers' Union (MHU), for example, also record holding garden parties (August 2nd 1893).¹⁰ This group held annual meetings at a local café at the beginning of each winter as well, doubtless in an attempt to ensure some fun at the start of the cold, gloomy season (November 8th 1893; November 30th 1894; December 17th 1894; November 25th 1895). That these sewing meetings were more sociable than philanthropic occasions, one could conclude, is revealed in a minute for March 24th 1898, which notes that 'Contrary to the custom <'custom' replaces 'the usual way', which has been crossed out> the work was nearly all finished'.

Yet such representations overlook the ways in which domestic sewing circles blended private sociability with public activity and debate in subtle yet powerful ways. The domestic space itself became a temporary site for philanthropic and politicised work, enabling women to elide the distinctions between their private and public lives.¹¹ Writing of mid-nineteenth-century Quaker women, Kathryn Gleadle has argued that just as family networks helped women such as Priscilla Bright Maclaren (1815-1906) to enter into public political discourse, so too political belief and debate became a central part of internal family dynamics and identity.¹² In other words, public life played a defining role in the home as much as domestic relations were carried into the public. This overlap would have been a familiar feature of the lives of many members of YFSM. Among the few members regularly identified in the minutes during this period a significant proportion were married to men who had important roles within York's civic

⁹ It is a sad irony that the final Sewing Meeting before the outbreak of the First World War should be held at one of these garden parties at Clifton Lodge (June 25th 1914, p. 61). A tenacious cliché of the Edwardian era is of an endless summer of genteel garden parties; one which, Morna O'Neill suggests, 'was, in part, crafted by the Edwardians themselves. They were nostalgic for their own moment, often projecting a sense of what might be lost to themselves and to future generations'. See Morna O'Neill and Michael Hatt (eds.), *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design and Performance in Britain, 1901-1910*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ The Scarborough group was active between 1891 and 1970. Scarborough Missionary Helpers' Union Branch, *Minutes*, Hull History Centre Archives and Rare Books: UDQR (2) 17/1, 5 vols., 1891-1970.

¹¹ As early as the 1980s Jane Rendall pointed out that throughout the nineteenth century women who worked in the home blended public and private worlds. Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 3.

¹² Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 18-19, 26-27, 98-108, 111-112.

life: Mrs Burt's husband Phillip (1862-1931) was Deputy General Manager of North Eastern Railways between 1904 and 1914; Bertha Bowes Morrell's husband (1877–1954) John (1873-1963) was director of the Rowntree's Cocoa Works and later Lord Mayor of York (Bertha's father Robert Spence Watson (1837-1911) was a Quaker solicitor from Newcastle who held the Presidency of the National Liberal Federation between 1890 and 1902); Mary Rowntree was married to Arnold (1872-1951), M. P. for York between 1910 and 1918; Jane Thompson's husband Silvanus (1851-1916) was a physicist and electrical engineer who was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1891; Amy Jane Thorp was married to the formidable Bootham School headmaster Fielden Thorp (1832-1921); and Mrs Waller's husband was the Secretary of Rowntree Cocoa Works, William James Waller (1877-1929). In these households the public standing of male members would have been an inescapable component of family identity: to be a female 'Rowntree' was to be associated with civic as well as national political influence.

As well as their public activities, which I explore below, through their reading selections YFSM often incorporated public debate into their more private gatherings. An entry for 1911 records that during a meeting at Mrs. Ernest Seebohm's 'Miss Seebohm played for us, Mr. Seebohm also joined us, and an impromptu discussion respecting the use of wealth and socialism and kindred subjects took place which excited considerable interest. The Meeting closed with Mr. Seebohm reading a portion of scripture' (February 16th 1911, p. 35). This meeting reveals YFSM making little distinction between domestic hospitality, political discussion and religious practice, and exemplifies the way in which meetings blurred the boundaries between the three.

As several historians have remarked, philanthropic organisations such as sewing circles provided middle-class women with opportunities to cultivate a sense of public purpose and vocation by extending their knowledge and skills beyond the domestic sphere.¹³ Also known as 'Dorcas Meetings' after the female Biblical figure associated with Christian charity, during the nineteenth century sewing circles gained popularity with Anglicans and Nonconformists alike, providing women with a shared sense of

¹³ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, pp. 17-18, 47, 71-71, 126-146; Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Anti-Slavery Movement*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 67-69, 115; Carolyn C. Lawes, *Women and Reform in a New England Community, 1815-1860*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), p. 47; F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 3, 5, 7. Sue Morgan suggests that the evangelical movement did more to 'enlarge women's sphere of action' than did the feminist movement. Sue Morgan, 'Introduction: Women, Religion and Feminism: Past, Present and Future Perspectives', in Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 1-19 (p. 2).

Christian purpose and identity.¹⁴ Julie Roy Jeffrey and Carolyn C. Lawes have revealed the ways in which nineteenth-century sewing circles could be meticulously-administrated, efficient organisations that often generated considerable profits.¹⁵ Sewing meetings provided women with the opportunity to perform more powerful female roles than were available to them elsewhere. However dubious the narrator of the *Nebuly Coat* may have been about their philanthropic efficacy, the novel nevertheless presents sewing circles as important sources of vocation to women otherwise lacking a clear social role. As a spinster domestic servant, Miss Euphemia Joliffe recognises that a ‘Scripture-reader or at least a district visitor’ would be an ‘impossible’ position for her to occupy, ‘and so the Dorcas meeting was the only systematic philanthropy in which she could venture to indulge’ (p. 93). While Joliffe finds her work at the meeting ‘a duty’, it is at the same time ‘also a pleasure – one of her few pleasures, and perhaps her greatest’ (p. 94). As upper-middle class women, members of YFSM would have had greater opportunities than Joliffe to assume leadership roles within associational life. Nevertheless, their social position, particularly amongst married members, would have rendered formal employment an unlikely possibility.¹⁶ Accordingly, the YFSM minutes convey a sense that members found purpose and vocation in belonging to the group, recording the proceedings of annual ‘committee meetings’ held in the ‘small committee room Clifford St’, including meticulous account sheets, and referring to each twelve month cycle as a ‘session’ (August 9th 1910, p. 29).

Far from being the ‘clearing houses for gossip’ depicted in Flora Thompson’s retrospective portrayal, nineteenth and early-twentieth-century sewing meetings were

¹⁴ The Book of Acts, 9: 36, states that ‘Now there was at Joppa a certain discipline names Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did’. *The Bible, Authorised King James Version with Apocrypha*, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), New Testament, p. 160. Several feminist and religious historians have detailed the ways in which sewing circles gained popularity with a variety of different Christian denominations. See D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 118; Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*; Lawes, *Women and Reform*; Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 10. Social historians have highlighted how philanthropy opened the door for women from different denominations, including Quakers, to work alongside one another for common causes, in the process broadening their awareness of the ground that existed between them. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 87; Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 11-13; Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp. 23-25; Sheila Wright, *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780-1860*, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), p. 23.

¹⁵ Jeffrey, *Silent Army*, pp. 67-69, 115; Lawes, *Women and Reform*, p. 47.

¹⁶ As I noted in chapter one, prior to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 women did not possess the statutory right to become Members of Parliament, hold public office, and retain employment after marriage.

hotbeds of politicised action.¹⁷ As several feminist historians have shown, in antebellum America these meetings became an important means by which women participated in pressing global concerns.¹⁸ Many sewing circles became passionate advocates of abolitionism: producing garments that generated a lucrative income for the cause, hosting travelling speakers, and debating contemporary developments.¹⁹ As I outlined in my introduction, YFSM remained committed to the anti-slavery cause well after the emancipation of American slaves in 1863, and often read anti-slavery essays, letters, pamphlets, and tracts as a means of affirming their shared commitment to the cause.²⁰ The turn-of-the-century YFSM continued this tradition of political activity. In chapter one I recounted that many members had been active in campaigning for the Liberal Party in the 1885 general election; during the Edwardian period, as I explore below, they became prominent advocates of women's suffrage through the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF).

Members incorporated politicised readings and debate into YFSM gatherings, such as the 'impromptu discussion' about socialism at Mr. and Mrs. Seebohm's mentioned above. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, as Thomas Kennedy has shown, socialism emerged as a prominent strand within British Quakerism, existing alongside and sometimes in tension with the Society's more established liberal tendency.²¹ While YFSM remained a predominantly liberal collective throughout the Edwardian era, the group's interest in socialism reveals that they were open to alternative perspectives and the ways in which these could shed new light onto contemporary issues. For example, in 1908 the group read about the exploitation of working-class women, the minutes recording that 'Miss Kitching read some extracts from a book on (women) "Sweated Labour" which was most interesting' (January 4th

¹⁷ Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin [1945] 1973), p. 434.

¹⁸ Lawes, *Women and Reform*, pp. 6-7, 45, 47.

¹⁹ Jeffrey, *Silent Army*, pp. 6, 246. See also Carol Lasser, *Antebellum Women: Private, Public, Partisan*, (Lanham and Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2010), p. 43.

²⁰ See above, pp. 23-25.

²¹ Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 278, 280, 283. Kennedy discusses how two organisations, the Socialist Quaker Society (SQS) and the Friends' Socialist Union (FSU), were established during this period. The SQS in particular made a mark on Edwardian Quakerism, though the FSU also had some influence. The FSU was founded and run by the York Quaker Seebohm Rowntree.

1908; p. 9).²² Such injustices, as Sheila C. Blackburn's work reveals, were tackled predominantly by feminist trade unionists such as Clementia Black (1854-1922).²³ Bringing a range of political concerns into their meetings suggests that engaging with contemporary political issues, particularly those of feminist interest, was an important component of the group's shared identity as Quaker women.

The currents between the group's private activities and their public campaign work are particularly apparent in the group's response to the First World War. During the War YFSM worked in support of the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) and the War Victims' Relief Committee (WVRC), and publicly defended the aims and ideals that lay behind these organisations. The FAU was a voluntary nursing corps founded by the Cambridge scholar Philip Noel-Baker (1889-1982) which had the backing of wartime M. P. for York Arnold Rowntree.²⁴ The WVRC had been set up by British Friends in 1870 to assist victims of the Franco-Prussian War and was re-established at the outbreak of the First World War.²⁵ Supporting these causes left members of YFSM open to charges of anti-patriotism by pro-War Friends and the local press on the one side, and military collusion by staunchly pacifist Friends on the other.²⁶ As a number of historians have

²² Unfortunately I haven't been able to identify the work 'Sweated Labour' read by YFSM.

²³ Sheila C. Blackburn, 'No Necessary Connection with Homework': Gender and Sweated Labour, 1840-1909', *Social History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Oct., 1997), pp. 269-285; Sheila C. Blackburn, 'Princesses and Sweated-Wage Slaves Go Well Together': Images of British Sweated Workers, 1843-1914', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 61, Sweated Labor: The Politics of Representation and Reform (Spring, 2002), pp. 24-44.

²⁴ Although in August of 1914 Rowntree had declared that, 'I for one will have nothing to do with this war', he nevertheless went on to advocate that everyone should undertake some form of 'service and self-sacrifice' in the face of War and it was this attitude that led to his involvement in the FAU. Ian Packer, *The Letters of Arnold Stephenson Rowntree to Mary Katherine Rowntree, 1910-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18. YFSM worked swiftly and efficiently for these causes throughout the War. The minute for August 21st 1914 notes that 'It was decided that we should start our Sewing Meetings at once, & have them every week, as owing to the War. The distress might be upon us before we were ready with charitable clothing' (p. 63). Thereafter the minutes record sending bi-monthly bundles of parcels to the FAU and the WVRC. Despite the demands of War the Meeting remained committed to projects they had supported previously, such as the Poor Children's Holiday Fund, continuing to produce garments to sell in aid of the Fund (see for example June 3rd 1915, p. 67). They also produce pillowcases for Haxby Road Hospital (December 16th 1916, p. 74).

²⁵ For more on the WVRC see the online catalogue entry for the organisation's records: <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt038nd79q/> [accessed 1.5.2013].

²⁶ Both were rather simplistic accusations given that the FAU and the WVRC worked alongside the military to provide aid to those affected by battle rather than operating in active support of the fighting. It seems probable that members of YFSM saw their work for the FAU and the WVRC as a continuation – rather than a disavowal – of the group's earlier pacifist commitments. During the nineteenth century the group had read regularly from nascent pacifist publications such as *The Olive Leaf* (Vol. 2, 1846, 1847, 1852, 1853, 1870, 1876), a journal founded by the Irish Quaker Maria Fisher (1829-1922) sometime in the

detailed, despite the lengthy Quaker commitment to pacifism Quakers were divided in their attitudes towards the War, and the Religious Society of Friends took no official stance on the issue.²⁷ During the War members of YFSM visibly defended their contentious position. In a lecture at York Settlement in January 1915, for example, Mary Rowntree provided a forthright introduction to the evening's main speaker, J. E. Crossfield, who was to talk on 'The Story Behind the War'. *The Yorkshire Herald* reported that Rowntree had seized the platform made available to her and asserted that,

There was an appalling ignorance on the part of people of this country of other nations beyond our own. English people as a nation knew nothing about the aims, difficulties, and other aspirations of other nations, and they were just as ignorant about their own ideals. We had to recognise that this war was the result of wrong thinking on the part of all nations involved, and we were in it just as much as any other.²⁸

The following day it was Rowntree's rather than Crossfield's speech that was picked up by the local press, which attacked her arguments in an editorial entitled 'Mrs. Rowntree's sweeping assertions'.²⁹ Rowntree was not alone amongst YFSM members

1840s. Fisher was an active suffragist who had been educated at Castlegate School in York. According to Helen Rappaport, Fisher founded the Olive Leaf in 1849, though the fact that YFSM were reading from it in 1846 suggests it began a little earlier. Helen Rappaport, *Encyclopaedia of Women Social Reformers: Volume One*, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2001), p. 291. Reading from the *Olive Leaf* in the 1840s, YFSM were in the early days of supporting the cause: Heloise Brown has shown how the influence of Olive Leaf circles took off in 1850s. Heloise Brown, *The Truest Form of Patriotism: Pacifist Feminism in Britain, 1870-1902*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 53.

²⁷ While the Quaker Peace Testimony had been reproduced in the *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends* (1911), where it stated that 'We utterly deny all outward wars, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever', throughout the War the Religious Society of Friends assumed no official stance. 'A Declaration [to Charles II] from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers', 1660, in The Religious Society of Friends, *Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends: Doctrine and Practice*, (London: H. D. & B. Headley, [1883, 1900] 1911), p. 139. For a detailed examination of the 'Origins and Legacies' of the Peace Testimony, with particular reference to the First World War, see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 237-269. As early as 1921 Rufus Jones was pointing out that prior to the War the Peace Testimony had been an 'unexamined inheritance' for many young Friends, 'the rank and file of the membership' possessing 'hardly more than a traditional adherence to the peace position'. Rufus M. Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, Vol. II, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1920), p. 728. It was this tenuous commitment to the Testimony, Jones suggested, that caused Quakers to occupy equivocal positions on the War. This 'new test – the severest that has ever come' was such that 'some Friends have chosen one line of loyalty and some another'. Jones, *Later Periods*, p. 757. More recent scholarship has confirmed that Friends held equivocal positions towards the War. Brown, *Pacifist Feminism*, pp. 45-46; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 323; David Rubinstein, *York Friends and the Great War*, Borthwick Paper 96, (York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, 1999), pp. 2-3. However, York Quakers were more strongly opposed to the First World War than Friends nationally. Rubinstein, *York Friends*, p. 3.

²⁸ *The Yorkshire Herald*, Thursday 14th January 1915, p. 6.

²⁹ *The Yorkshire Herald*, Thursday 14th January 1915, p. 6.

for acting publicly in support of her political beliefs.³⁰ As I discuss below, prior to the War many of these women assumed prominent roles within local suffrage campaigning.

Interestingly, throughout the War the YFSM minutes do not mention a single instance of reading. This may have been because the minutes were used scrupulously to document the quantities of particular items produced, and where they were sent. But it seems likely that reading aloud did not take place during wartime sessions, as the urgency of the crisis demanded that all hands be devoted to needlework. Besides, in such a pressing context novel-reading and poetry recitals may have seemed jarring, while the case for supporting pacifist causes was perhaps compelling enough to these Quaker women that it needed little reiteration through reading.

As well as overlooking the fact that sewing meetings were politicised occasions, dismissals of these associations as domesticized and sociable fail to account for the ways in which their proceedings overlapped with members' wider activities and interests. As YFSM demonstrate, the same women who sat sewing in a drawing room could be found, on other occasions, publicly agitating for politicised causes. This is particularly so in the case of the group's suffrage campaigning.

It has become something of a truism that turn-of-the-century Quakers held ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards the women's suffrage movement.³¹ While prominent Friends such as those in the Priestman-Bright-Clark circle actively supported women's campaign for suffrage, others, such as Caroline Stephen (1834–1909), maintained a conservative, anti-suffrage stance.³² Even pro-suffrage Quakers

³⁰ Several members of YFSM were married to men whose stance on the War brought them public attention. As M.P. for York during the War Arnold Rowntree endured criticisms in the national political arena, where his pacifist stance was deemed by many to be unpatriotic; 'his attitude to the War was [also] deeply unpopular in York'; and he also came under attack from those Friends who believed that his involvement in the Friends' Ambulance Unit put him in collaboration with the military. Packer, *Letters*, p. 19-20; see also Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 315. As a civil engineer in munitions work Samuel Henry Adams (1856-1951) tendered his resignation from the Society on the grounds that, as he put it, he was 'almost wholly engaged upon the production of machinery required by the War Office' and therefore felt he had 'no right to remain in membership'. However, his resignation was rejected by the Society on the grounds that he was operating not from financial motives but rather from a desire to help those who were risking their lives at the Front. See Rubinstein, *York Friends*, pp. 8-9.

³¹ See for example Sandra Stanley Holton and Margaret Allen, 'Offices and Services: Women's Pursuit of Sexual Equality Within the Society of Friends, 1873-1907', *Quaker Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 1997, pp.1-29; Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 227-235; Sheila Wright, 'Who Was Maria Heath Richardson? Quakerism, Feminism and Radicalism in York 1850-1914', paper given at Women's History Network Conference (Midlands Region), 5th November 2011, p. 4.

³² Julia Bush, 'Caroline Stephen and the Opposition to British Women's Suffrage', *Quaker Studies*, Vol. 15 Iss. 1, 2010, pp. 32-52; Sandra Stanley Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780-1930*, (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 198-221.

could hold opposing views about how best to tackle the issue. Sandra Stanley Holton has shown how the older generation of Priestman-Bright-Clark women remained committed to the WLF following the re-election of the Liberal Party in 1906, whereas Alice Clark (1874-1934) believed the more militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) were better equipped to advance the cause.³³ The Religious Society of Friends never took an official stance on the question of women's suffrage.³⁴ This was much to the exasperation of suffragist Quakers such as Emily Manners, who highlighted in the *British Friend* in 1906 that despite their progressive stance on almost every other issue, 'our journals have never in any way advocated the granting of Parliamentary Franchise to women'.³⁵

Within this context York Friends assumed a more cutting-edge approach to the issue. The women of the Edwardian YFSM belonged to a Quaker community that had long supported women's suffrage and women's contributions to public life.³⁶ In November 1913, Arnold Rowntree addressed a meeting of the local branch of the WLF in which he argued that,

The greatest wrong done by the repression of women was not the loss to the women themselves, but the impoverishment of the community as a whole, which needed the women's point of view and the women's mind.³⁷

Members of YFSM were amongst the leading lights of York WLF. Mrs Proctor was the Federation's President until 1912, and the address at annual meetings was often delivered by a YFSM member.³⁸ These women's suffrage activities connected them to

³³ Holton points out that both the WLF and the WSPU could be absorbed into Quaker traditions: the WLF readily aligned with modern liberal Quakerism, while the WSPU was in keeping with Quakerism's long-standing tradition of radicalism and dissent. Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories From the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 161-164.

³⁴ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 228-229.

³⁵ In Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 228-229.

³⁶ Sheila Wright's recent work has uncovered the ways in which both male and female Friends played an instrumental role in York Women's Suffrage Association in the 1870s and 1880s. Wright reports that as early as 1874 Maria Heath Richardson, Amy Thorp and Joseph Rowntree were appearing on the list of subscribers to the *Women's Suffrage Journal*. Wright, 'Who Was Maria Heath Richardson?', p. 7, 12.

³⁷ *The Yorkshire Gazette*, Saturday 29th November 1913.

³⁸ At the WLF meeting of November 1912 Mary Rowntree addressed the assembled audience on the subject of 'the Enfranchisement of Women'. Mrs. Morrell, Mrs. Proctor, Mrs. Theodore Rowntree, and

wider circles of the campaign.³⁹ Sheila Wright has described how Elizabeth Cady Stanton attended a Suffrage Association meeting at the festival rooms in York while on her travels across UK in April 1883, at which several York Friends were in attendance.⁴⁰ During the Edwardian era Amy Thorp was in regular correspondence with the Christian suffragist Josephine Butler.⁴¹ Suffrage campaigning brought members of YFSM into partnership with women from outside of their immediate community. As Secretary of the York Branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), for example, Mrs Meyer worked alongside the branch President the Hon. Mrs Caroline Wilkinson (d. 1929), who was married to Lt. Col. George Wilkinson, to further their shared interests.⁴² In May 1911 Meyer and Wilkinson successfully challenged Arnold

Mrs. Thompson were also listed among the attendees. See *The Yorkshire Gazette*, Saturday 23rd November 1912. Nationally many Quakers were active in the WLF, and Kennedy has shown how Friends were instrumental in establishing branches in major cities such as Bristol, Darlington and London, as well as York. Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 228. York Friends were keen to distance themselves from the WSPU, which had been founded in 1906. Krista Cowman has uncovered a York branch of the WSPU that was active from 1910 until the outbreak of the War. Krista Cowman, *The Militant Suffragette Movement in York*, Borthwick Paper 110, (York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, 2007). At a WLF meeting of November 1913 Arnold Rowntree asserted to the assembled audience that: 'I most warmly approve of the cause, but I most strongly disapprove of some of the methods that are used to advance the cause. (Applause). I cannot help feeling that there [sic] methods have made our position much more difficult and have caused a great deal of prejudice'. *The Yorkshire Gazette*, Saturday 29th November 1913. For more on regional suffrage campaigning see June Hannam, 'I had not been to London': women's suffrage – a view from the regions', in June Purvis and Sandra Stanley Holton (eds.), *Votes For Women*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 226-245.

³⁹ Quaker women nationally had embraced these exchanges early on. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century the Leeds Quaker Isabella Ford had links with American Quakers such as Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906). June Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 30. Likewise the Priestman-Bright-Clark women campaigned alongside and developed friendships with Anthony, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy (1833-1913) and Stanton. Holton, *Quaker Women*, pp. 178, 205

⁴⁰ Wright, 'Who Was Maria Heath Richardson?', pp. 10-11..

⁴¹ The Women's Library Archives contain letters in which Butler thanks Thorp for recommending servants. Josephine Butler to Mrs. Thorp, 10th September 1903. Josephine Butler Letters Collection, The Women's Library: London Metropolitan University, 3JBL, c.1816-1907, 3JBL/47/26. See also 3JBL/47/24, 3JBL/47/25, 3JBL/47/30, 3JBL/47/36, 3JBL/47/37, 3JBL/47/38, 3JBL/47/39. York Friends' associations with metropolitan suffrage circles are typical of Quaker women nationally. For example, the involvement of Isabella Ford in the WLF in the late 1880s, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) at the turn of the century, and then the NUWSS, meant she travelled back and forth between regional and metropolitan campaigning. Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 36, 83, 124. Likewise, Alice Clark's commitment to the WSPU led her to travel up to London to participate in marches on parliament, while Helen Clark and Margaret Clark Gillett's affiliations with the WLF and NUWSS brought them into the orbit of Alys Russell, Ray Strachey, and Lady Mary Murray, as well as the Garrisons, American suffragists campaigning in London. Holton, *Quaker Women*, pp. 212-217.

⁴² It is not clear whether Mrs Meyer was unusual amongst York Friends in her support of the NUWSS. Searching through issues of *Votes for Women: The Organ of the National Women's Social and Political Union* during this period I found no reference to familiar York Quaker names in the list of subscribers, or mentioned in the weekly reports from regional meetings. National Women's Social and Political Union, *Votes For Women: The Organ of the National Women's Social and Political Union*, London: British Museum, 1907-1918.

Rowntree to vote in favour of Sir George Kemp's Women's Franchise Bill, for which Rowntree was intending to pair rather than vote. Rowntree wrote to Mary on 4th May 1911 that Meyer and Wilkinson 'seemed so greatly upset and disappointed by my pairing instead of voting and said the women of York would be, that I promised seriously to consider whether I could alter my arrangements'.⁴³ Mary was clearly in agreement with Meyer and Wilkinson, and her added pressure caused Rowntree to change his mind; though not without him lodging a certain amount of protest that his vote was 'somewhat grudgingly performed when one holds that a 'pair' would have been as effective'.⁴⁴ For all their apparent equality, it would seem, York's female Friends still had to press their supposedly supportive male counterparts on particular issues. As I explore in detail below, these women's canny forms of persuasion and displays of determination are a feature of the heroines depicted in the novels read by YFSM during this period. Reading about the triumphs of assertive, autonomous and strong-minded fictional exemplars, I will suggest, may well have inspired and validated the political manoeuvrings of YFSM members such as Meyer and Rowntree.

The reading activities of YFSM were closely aligned with their campaign work during the Edwardian period and the First World War, and went through different phases. At times reading braced the community for their philanthropic work, reminding members of how their contributions provided vital assistance to particular causes. At others, reading operated as a means to raise awareness of issues faced by contemporary women. Reading enabled the group to explore ideas that were beginning to capture the attention of members of the Religious Society of Friends. At certain periods, such as during the War, reading aloud seemed unnecessary and so was set aside. That the community resumed their collective readings in 1919, however, suggests that the practice of listening to someone reading aloud – whatever the content may have been – remained an important component of the group's activities.

An international outlook

We have seen how YFSM gatherings were events for politicised activity, debate, and reading, taking the group beyond the domestic settings in which their meetings

⁴³ Packer, *Letters*, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁴ Packer, *Letters*, p. 54.

occurred. Yet just as sewing circles have been characterised as homely affairs, so too they have been presented as focussing their attentions upon localised, and therefore perhaps limited, concerns. As I noted above, the sewing circle in *Anna of the Five Towns* is preoccupied by parish gossip and regional affairs. Recent historians such as Gleadle have suggested that philanthropic work allowed women to accrue power in what she identifies as the ‘parochial realm’ (‘the world of the neighbourhood, workplace, or acquaintance networks’) as opposed to the ‘public realm’ (‘those spaces in a city which tend to be inhabited by persons who are strangers to one another or who “know” one another only in terms of occupational or other non-personal identity categories’).⁴⁵ To be sure, members of YFSM were active in this ‘parochial realm’ through their involvement in supporting the Haxby Road hospital and the Retreat psychiatric unit, or working to provide a Holiday Fund for poor children in the city. But it would be wrong to present theirs as an outlook confined to local community life. Through their philanthropic, pacifist and suffragist activities members of YFSM entered into politicised spheres that transcended the boundaries of region and nation.

Most obviously the group’s international focus was developed through their missionary work. During the early twentieth century YFSM supported missionary causes in China, India, Madagascar, and Syria, linking YFSM to other Quaker sewing circles that existed in Yorkshire at the turn of the century. Both Ilkley and Scarborough Quaker Meetings ran branches of the MHU, and while YFSM remained a separate organisation it nevertheless appears to have been networked loosely with these sewing circles, working in support of identical missionary causes and hosting visits from the same missionaries.⁴⁶ At a meeting in the White House Fulford in 1908, for example, where thirty five members were present, the YFSM minutes record how,

⁴⁵ Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, pp. 17-18. See also pp. 47, 71-71, 126-146 of the same book. Gleadle draws upon Lyn H. Lofland’s concept of ‘Public’ and ‘parochial’ realms here. See Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm: Exploring the City’s Quintessential Social Territory*, (New York, 1998), pp. 11-14, 17-28.

⁴⁶ The Ilkley branch ran from 1899 to 1953. Missionary Helpers’ Union, Ilkley Branch, *Record Book*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University: Manuscripts MS Dept. 1979/1 (Carlton Hill Archive), 3 vols., K20-22, 1899-1953. The Ilkley branch had much smaller attendance numbers than York Friends – the average being around eleven, with numbers often as low as five – and was a multi-generational community. While the Ilkley minute books are similar in style and format to YFSM, they take a more formal approach to the work with terms like ‘full members’, ‘associates’, ‘accounts’, ‘subscriptions’, and ‘Annual Report’ peppering the opening pages (pp. 2-3). The more formal aspect of the Ilkley branch is underscored by the fact that the minutes provide detailed accounts of the annual report submitted to their umbrella organisation outlining their yearly proceedings (pp. 2-3).

We were very pleased to welcome Miss Dixon who is over from India. She told us about the orphanage she is connected with & also showed us some costumes & various ornaments with which the natives adorn themselves. It was most interesting to hear her account of the happy life of the orphans (December 17th 1908, p. 16).

The Scarborough branch of the MHU had hosted a talk by Miss Dixon in August 1900, also noting that she had brought along ‘a number of very interesting curiosities’. Ilkley branch members were effusive in their praise when Miss Dixon visited them during the 1916-1917 session, the minutes asserting that ‘Never was any missionary so brimful of information & so clever in imparting it’ (p. 87). The shared speaker programme between this confederation of Quaker sewing circles served to affirm their joint convictions, and demonstrates that these were tightly organised institutions networked into international projects.

While occasional visits from speakers helped to develop members’ awareness, most often YFSM cultivated their missionary interests through reading. YFSM read many letters recounting missionary work abroad. On October 19th 1907 the minutes record that ‘An interesting letter was read from Mrs. Robson acknowledging a parcel of work which had been sent out to her several months ago. She gave some account of her life in India and her regret at the closing of the hospital for which she had worked’ (p. 7). Reading such letters served to remind members of the realities behind the causes for which they were working, and how their contributions were assisting organisations whose continuance was by no means assured.

Such missionary interests could of course be interpreted as a sign that these Quaker sewing circles participated in the broader imperialist zeal that existed during the Edwardian period. Several historians of turn-of-the-century British society have highlighted the ways in which women’s contributions were viewed as vital to upholding the British Empire, most particularly, Julia Bush suggests, by ‘supporting church-building and missionary work abroad, and providing juvenile imperialist education and hospitality for colonial visitors at home’.⁴⁷ Undoubtedly the missionary support of these

⁴⁷ Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power*, (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 2-3, 12. See also Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian women and Imperial Culture 1865-1915*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Barbara Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 123; A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979); Clare Midgely (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Linda Walker, ‘Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890-1914’, in Rendall, *Equal or Different*, p. 170.

Quaker women was inescapably implicated in an imperialist agenda; yet it does not follow that their work straightforwardly contributed to the transmission of British cultural practices and values abroad. As I noted in the previous chapter, recent post-colonial work has demonstrated the ways in which the relationship between British nationals and people from countries under imperial rule could be one of inter-cultural exchange and mutual identification.⁴⁸ Seen in this light, YFSM's interest in missionary causes enabled them to identify shared ground and sympathies between different cultures. It also served to facilitate more personal engagements with alternative female identities and lifestyles. Hearing a woman such as Miss Dixon speak of her life as a female missionary in India presented members of these sewing circles with an example of a different way of being a Quaker woman, broadening the scope of their horizons beyond the more immediate York-based circles in which they were involved on a day-to-day basis. Combining politicised activities and agendas with personal reflection and private sociability is a key feature of YFSM.

Using literature to imaginatively travel to other countries and communities is a recurring aspect of YFSM sessions. Often the minutes record contemporary American novels with a rural setting. America had long been a site of interest to the association. As early as 1835 members had been reading tracts from America, and, as I mentioned above, the group had been involved in abolitionist campaigning between the 1840s to the 1880s. In a sense, therefore, by looking to America the YFSM of the early twentieth century were building upon the interests of many of their mothers and grandmothers.⁴⁹ They were also in step with the Religious Society of Friends more broadly. As Kennedy puts it, during the Quaker Renaissance at the end of the nineteenth century a 'dynamic interaction' between American and British Friends became increasingly important as British Quakers looked to America for guidance as to how best to take the Society of Friends forward.⁵⁰ Indeed, in British society more generally, and particularly within suffrage campaigning, America came to be seen as leading the way into the new

⁴⁸ See for example Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially pp. 1-33; Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin de Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ As we saw in chapter one, American fiction had begun to capture the imagination of York's Quaker readers from the 1880s onwards. See above, pp. 89-92.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 157.

century.⁵¹ As I have shown, York's female Friends were networked into transatlantic suffrage circles, and in their reading YFSM primarily look to contemporary American fiction for guidance as to how to be a modern Quaker woman.

In reading from novels that depict American regional communities, YFSM imaginatively enter into a location that is at once provincial and international, familiar and new. These novels present rural America as the cradle of a simpler way of life, validating for the Quaker reader some of the ideals of her own religious community. Whereas Harrison draws upon English ruralism in her literary criticism as a means to foreground a special relationship between dissenting belief, nation, and a lengthy tradition of English literature, YFSM appear to use American ruralism as a means to authorise traditional Quaker values within a transatlantic framework. *Aunt Huldah: Proprietor of the Wagon-Tire House and Genial Philosopher of the Cattle Country* (1904) by Grace MacGowan Cooke (1863-1944), a 'most interesting' novel which Mrs Waller 'kindly read' on two occasions (May 21st, 1908, p. 11; March 13th 1913, p. 51), makes an explicit 'plea for better understanding of a little understood, and now vanishing, class', foregrounding the lessons to be learned from pioneering communities built upon 'the simple domestic life common to all mankind'.⁵² The suggestion that 'simple' concerns are 'common to all mankind' leaves the door open for a Yorkshire Quaker reader to identify with the fictional experiences of Southern American women, using their example to justify preserving values of simplicity in an era of modernity. The classic children's novel *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903) by Kate Douglas Wiggin (1856-1923), which YFSM read on May 18th 1906 (p. 4), portrays the experiences of the young Rebecca as she visits her two fifty-something spinster aunts, Miranda and Jane Sawyer, in a rural community in Maine.⁵³ Rebecca's aunts are presented as more moral and virtuous than Rebecca's wayward mother Aurelia, the implication being that their simple country life has fostered honest, old-fashioned moral values: the two women live a

⁵¹ Kathleen Burk, 'Foreword', in Jonathan Hollowell (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 2001, p. ix; Chapman and Mills, *Treacherous Texts*, pp. 3, 115-116. Patricia Greenwood Harrison, *Connecting Links: The British and American Suffrage Movements, 1900-1914*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. xv, 91-92

⁵² Grace MacGowan Cooke, *Aunt Huldah, Proprietor of the Wagon-Tire House and Genial Philosopher of the Cattle Country*, (Indianapolis: the Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1904), Preface. All references are in-text citations. Cooke was a prolific and well-connected writer who moved amongst radical thinkers and socialists at Upton Sinclair's experimental colony Helicon Home in New Jersey. See Kay Baker Gaston, 'The MacGowan Girls', *California History*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Summer, 1980), pp. 116-125.

⁵³ Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, [1903] 1925). All subsequent references are in-text citations.

'quiet' life together, and Miranda is described as 'just, conscientious, economical, and industrious' (pp. 30, 33). Rebecca's aunts are yet another example of the active, productive and morally-sound single women that, as we shall see, are favoured by YFSM. The opening pages of *Aunt Jane of Kentucky* by the Presbyterian suffragist Eliza Calvert Hall (1856-1935) unite the rural American context with implicitly Quaker values: the narrator notes that 'Aunt Jane and her room together always carried me back to a dead and gone generation', a room with 'ancient Shaker rockers' and a 'high bed and bureau and a shining mahogany table [that] suggested an era of "Plain Living"'.⁵⁴ Here we find an echo of the Quakerised sentiments that Harrison finds in Wordsworth, whose poetry teaches, Harrison argues, that "'plain living" makes "high thinking" possible'.⁵⁵ Yet unlike Harrison YFSM identify these ideas in a transatlantic rather than an English context. Beverley Gordon has described how Hall's novel was implicated in the American colonial revival (1876-1914), a movement which worked against the grain of modernisation by maintaining an idealised American past that was white, middle-class, and Protestant, and had its counterpart in the British Arts and Crafts Movement.⁵⁶ As I noted in my introduction, the Arts and Crafts Movement captured the attention of many British Friends at the turn of the century, and we have seen how YFSM met regularly in the Arts-and-Crafts style home of Emma and Joseph Rowntree. In reading novels in which Arts and Crafts and Quakerised ideals and images are shown to have their counterparts in an American context, YFSM reveal themselves to be eager to broaden their horizons and make international connections between their values and interests and those of an apparently more modernising nation.

Entertaining forms of political engagement

By now it should have become clear that YFSM were a politically-active community. Nevertheless, entertainment was also an important component of YFSM's gatherings. The minutes catalogue numerous instances in which sewing and reading aloud take

⁵⁴ Eliza Calvert Hall, *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, (London: Cassel and Company Limited, 1909), p. 4. All references are in-text citations.

⁵⁵ Lucy Harrison, 'Some Aspects of Wordsworth's Teaching' (1907); in Amy Greener, *A Lover of Books: The Life and Literary Papers of Lucy Harrison*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd, 1916), pp. 161-182 (p. 166).

⁵⁶ Beverly Gordon, 'Spinning Wheels, Samplers, and the Modern Priscilla: The Images and Paradoxes of Colonial Revival Needlework', *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 33, No. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 1998), pp. 164, 167, 174.

place alongside leisure activities such as tea-drinking, singing, and piano performances and the occasional ‘splendid selection on the gramophone’ (December 17th 1908, p. 16; November 18th 1909, p. 24; November 16th 1911, p. 41; March 19th 1914, p. 60). During this period reading itself appears to have become an entertaining as much as an ‘instructive or interesting’ (Vol. 1) activity, as it had been for the Victorian YFSM, and gestures towards the extent to which Quaker reading choices had changed by the turn of the century. This development was typical of readers more generally: as several cultural historians have shown, over the course of the nineteenth century reading increasingly became a form of entertainment and leisure rather than primarily an act of devotion, duty or instruction, as had previously been the case for middle-class readers of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁷ The Edwardian YFSM appears to have found much to enjoy in the texts that they read and listened to. Members appear to have played up to the fact that several of the novels were written in dialect – often the minutes record that Mrs Waller read these works aloud, which suggests she was particularly adept at doing the voices. One is reminded of Mrs. Bulteel’s stagey recitations at the sewing meeting in *The Nebuly Coat*, which undermine any claim Bulteel may make to being a proper charitable woman. The extent to which YFSM provided members with the opportunity to show off rather than devote themselves to philanthropic work remains unclear, but the references to piano recitals, singing and ‘amusing’ readings suggest it may have been a feature.

Some Quaker historians have taken issue with the apparently bland, upper-middle-class lifestyle enjoyed by many Edwardian Friends, who became, in the words of Brian Phillips, ‘an essentially conservative, respectability-conscious community with no real appetite for risky political struggle’.⁵⁸ Yet the more entertaining and self-consciously sociable arrangement of YFSM, I want to suggest, may have been an extension rather than a disavowal of the communities’ politicised activities. Whereas for the Victorian YFSM reading aloud combined with philanthropic work to foster a sense of common

⁵⁷ Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions: Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain*, (London: HarperPress, 2006), pp. 164-205; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 11. Between 1895 and the outbreak of the First World War, the editors of *Edwardian Fiction* (1997) suggest, ‘lay twenty years in which fiction was the most important section of the leisure industry’. Sandra Kemp, Charlotte Mitchell and David Trotter (eds.), *Edwardian Fiction: An Oxford Companion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xv.

⁵⁸ Brian Phillips, ‘Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation, 1890-1910’, (unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Cambridge University, 1989), pp. 76, 333, quoted in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 262-262. Taking a slightly more tentative view, Kennedy identifies a ‘self-satisfied ambiance’ to the ‘pronouncements’ of Edwardian Quakers. Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 262-261

identity and purpose, the leisured reading practices of the Edwardian YFSM enabled a more personalised interaction between members. Less driven by the pursuit of a common agenda, members were able to voice individual viewpoints and interests and personalities were able to emerge. For example, at a gathering held at her home on Blossom Street in 1908 Amy Thorp (née Clark) is recorded as having read aloud ‘some very interesting stories from *Bridgestow* by Mark Guy Pearce’ (February 25th 1908, p. 10). In so doing Thorp invited her guests not only into her home but also into a part of her heritage: *Bridgestow* (1907) is an episodic novel set in a fictionalised Cornish town, the region from which Thorp originally came.⁵⁹ Thus personal heritage and tastes came to colour the tone of a meeting, fostering a sense of connection between individuals which, I will argue, facilitated members’ collective public campaigning. Thus the practices of YFSM reveal there to be no dissonance between reading as entertainment and reading as political engagement.

The sense that reading for entertainment can serve a more politicised agenda comes across strongly in the group’s readings of humorous literature. The association read a variety of light-hearted poems and short stories that are described in the minute books as ‘amusing’, the adjective that appears most often in reference to the books read during meetings at this time. In 1909 the group read John Brown’s biographical sketch of the Scottish child prodigy Marjorie Fleming (1803-1811), describing it as ‘a very amusing story’ (January 21st 1909, p. 17). Fleming was, Kathryn Sutherland reports, a subject of ‘general turn-of-the-century fascination’ following the publication of her diaries and letters and her appearance in the first edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1889).⁶⁰ While in part a sentimental eulogy to ‘Pet Marjorie’, Brown’s biography also revels in Fleming’s precocious and mischievous statements, quoting extensively from what Brown describes as Fleming’s ‘peppery little pen’.⁶¹ The fact that

⁵⁹ Mark Guy Pearce, *Bridgestow: Some Chronicles of a Cornish Parish*, (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907). Clark belonged to the Clark family of Street, Somerset, and so was networked into the Priestman-Bright-Clark circle. See Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 149.

⁶⁰ In his DNB entry for Fleming Leslie Stephen described her as a writer of ‘singular quickness, vivacity, and humour’ and ‘one of the most charming characters’ to appear in the series (despite this effusiveness he got her name wrong, and she appeared as Margaret). Leslie Stephen, ‘Fleming, Margaret’, *Dictionary of National Biography* (1889), in *Dictionary of National Biography Archive* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/olddnb/9707>, accessed 24 July 2012]. For more on Fleming and her nineteenth-century reception history, see Kathryn Sutherland, ‘Fleming, Marjory (1803–1811)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9707>, accessed 24 July 2012].

⁶¹ John Brown, *Marjorie Fleming: A Sketch*, Boston: Tickner and Fields, 1864, pp. 14, 18.

Fleming died aged eight does not appear to have influenced the meeting's reading of her biography. That the minutes refer to Brown's biography as an 'amusing' 'story', suggesting YFSM responded to the work primarily as humorous entertainment rather than as a record of a life cut short. As a female child prodigy Fleming is of a piece with the heroic children and single women celebrated in the novels read by YFSM during this period, providing yet another model of bold and accomplished femininity. 'Amusing' crops up again in 1909, where the minutes record that 'Mrs. Thompson read some amusing extracts from W. Jacobs "Five Freights"' (March 18th 1909, p. 10), a slightly inaccurate reference to *Light Freights* (1901) by William Wyndmark Jacobs (1863-1943).⁶² *Light Freights* is a collection of irreverent vignettes in which gruff men get their comeuppance through the cunning of children and women: one tale includes a young boy dressing up as a girl in order to trick sailors into giving him free passage to Australia.⁶³ Such works reveal the ways in which humorous literature enabled YFSM subtly to challenge the status quo. Writing of the so-called 'feminine middlebrow novel' (a classification to which I return in the next section), Erica Brown has recently suggested that while 'Comedy makes these texts delightfully entertaining', nevertheless it 'also offers a mechanism to communicate to the attentive reader a more subversive commentary'.⁶⁴ Because 'jokes require very specific knowledge and shared attitudes [...] in order to be shared', Brown suggests, humour can serve to bind readers together through common identification of the shortcomings of particular ideologies and social practices.⁶⁵ As I will show, collectively defying social norms, particularly the position of women, in a gentle and indirect way is a significant feature of YFSM's readings. Reading aloud mischievous tales suggests that YFSM gatherings were often high-spirited occasions, contributing to the group's collective identity as energetic and exuberant Quaker women.

Contrary to the stereotype of Quakers as earnest and po-faced, by the turn of the twentieth century there appears to have been a burgeoning audience of Friends who

⁶² The minutes misquote titles on several occasions – 'Martha Of The Day' being another such example – suggesting that the large numbers in attendance at each meeting perhaps made it difficult for the minute-keeper to catch what was being spoken aloud.

⁶³ W. W. Jacobs, *Light Freights*, (London: Methuen and Co., 1901).

⁶⁴ Erica Brown, *Comedy and the Feminine Middlebrow Novel: Elizabeth Von Arnim and Elizabeth Taylor*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), p. 2.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Comedy*, p. 3.

sought out the light-hearted in literature. While Ruth Fry (1879-1962) may have complained in 1933 that the ‘lack of gaiety’ and ‘absence of the lighter side of life’ amongst Friends had ‘undoubtedly repelled people from Quakerism’, several Friends at the beginning of the twentieth century had expressed appreciation for humorous literature.⁶⁶ In her essays and lectures Harrison repeatedly advocated in both literature and human character what she called on one occasion ‘the blessed presence of humour’.⁶⁷ There existed an audience of Quaker readers who were hospitable to playful works. In March 1914 YFSM read Mary E. Manners’ (1858-1941) *The Bishop and the Caterpillar* (1892), a poem described in the minutes as ‘very amusing’ (p. 60). Another instance in which YFSM read a text depicting male patriarchs getting their comeuppance at the hands of ingenious children, *Bishop* is a tale in rhyming verse about a collection of lively schoolchildren who outwit a ‘condescending’ bishop by asking him how many legs a caterpillar possesses (pp. 1-10). In the Preface to *Bishop* Manners noted that several of the poems in the collection had ‘made their debut at a social gathering of an Essay Meeting composed of members of the “Society of Friends”, whose kindly appreciation first encouraged me to hope that the pieces might be found suitable for reading and recitation by a wider circle of friends (with or without the capital “F”)’.⁶⁸ Manners appears to have been a popular writer amongst Quakers in Yorkshire, lecturing at Ackworth School in November 1911 to an audience that included Mount scholars.⁶⁹

YFSM belonged to a broader trend amongst early twentieth-century Quakers, therefore, in responding to the gentle and light-hearted in literature. But this should not be seen as an outright rejection of the Victorian group’s earnest engagement with social and moral ‘issues’. Because the Edwardian YFSM read humorous literature within the context of a gathering that blended sociability with philanthropic and political work, even entertaining texts carried the potential to feed into members’ more politicised activities.

⁶⁶ A. Ruth Fry, *Quaker Ways: An attempt to explain Quaker beliefs and practices and to illustrate them by the lives and activities of Friends of former days*, (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1933), p. 231.

⁶⁷ Lucy Harrison, ‘An Hour With Dickens’; in *A Lover of Books*, pp. 133-34. See also ‘Jane Austen’, pp. 111, 109; ‘Florence Nightingale’, p. 274; ‘Ann Radcliffe – Novelist’, p. 192; ‘Some Aspects of Wordsworth’s Teaching’, p. 164; and private correspondence on page p. 52 in the same volume.

⁶⁸ Mary E. Manners, *The Bishop and the Caterpillar, and Other Pieces*, (London: James Clarke and Co., 1892), p. vii.

⁶⁹ Winifred Ardley’s school scrapbook contains the programme for this event. W. Ardley, Mount School Diary, 1906-1911, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 6/6/2/1.

Collusive uses of light-hearted fiction

As I noted in my introduction, over the course of the Victorian era YFSM gradually included biographies of evangelical Christian women alongside their readings of Quaker *Lives* as models of exemplary female conduct.⁷⁰ By the early twentieth century YFSM had thrown the net even wider, incorporating characters from imaginative fiction into their roster of spiritual exemplars. While on the surface the heroines of the contemporary popular novels such as *Aunt Huldab*, *Aunt Jane*, and Julie M. Lippmann's *Martha By-The-Day* (1913) may seem harmless enough, these fictional role models provide the YFSM with pioneering examples of assertive, and at times challenging, models of female conduct and identity.⁷¹

I shy away from referring to the novels read by YFSM as 'middlebrow', as the definition doesn't strike me as particularly helpful. Most obviously 'middlebrow' carries derogatory connotations about both genre and reader, but it is also, as Isobel Maddison has recently demonstrated, an unstable and elusive term.⁷² In recent years scholarship has sought to expand the category ever wider until it has become something of a catch-all term for texts that have fallen outside the boundaries of the canonical, and several historians have overlooked the historic specificity of the term ('middlebrow' first appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1924) in order to uncover a genealogy of proto-middlebrow fiction beginning, in some cases, as early as the 1850s.⁷³ As a subject of debate the 'middlebrow' belongs to the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, associated with mass-marketing, the expansion of the middle-classes, and the increase in a university-

⁷⁰ See above, pp. 20-23.

⁷¹ For more on the popular appeal of these authors, see Gaston, 'The MacGowan Girls', pp. 116-125; Neidermeier, *Eliza Calvert Hall*, pp. 121-122; Mary R. Reichardt (ed.), *A Mary Wilkins Freeman Reader*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. vii-viii. Julie M. Lippman has been a difficult figure to track down, though she appears to have been a successful and well-connected author. Her catalogue entry for the New York Library Public records lists several novelists with whom she was friends, including Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) and Mark Twain (1835-1910), and mentions her suffrage campaigning and support of Theodore Roosevelt. See <http://www.nypl.org/archives/4299> [accessed 2.5.2013].

⁷² Isobel Maddison, *Elizabeth Von Arnim: Beyond the German Garden*, (Fanhham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 6-12.

⁷³ See for example Jaime Harker, *America the Middlebrow: Women's Novels, Progressivism, and Middlebrow Authorship Between the Wars*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 1-7. Similarly, 'The Popular and the Middlebrow: Women's Writing 1880-1940', a conference at Newcastle University on 12th April 2012, identified a culture of the feminine middlebrow novel emerging in the 1880s.

educated readership.⁷⁴ It is, therefore, an anachronistic label to assign to fiction published during the Edwardian era.

Nevertheless, debates about forms and styles of reading have a bearing upon early-twentieth-century readers. During this period the literary canon was being formed, and terms like ‘lowbrow’ (first *Oxford English Dictionary* appearance: 1906) and ‘highbrow’ (1908) were making their first appearance.⁷⁵ Many York Friends engaged – with varying degrees of directness – in the process of conferring cultural prestige upon what was emerging as the canonical form of literature. In chapter two I noted that Harrison sought to distinguish ‘English Literature’ from other literary forms and expounded what she termed the ‘cultivation of literary taste’, while the YFBS appear to have approached literature with a similar emphasis on intellectual stimulation and acquisition of cultural capital.⁷⁶ At the YFBS’s monthly gatherings members heard talks focussing mainly on celebrated writers and literary traditions, such as Harrison on Charles Dickens (March 27th 1906), Philipp Burt on Percy Bysshe Shelley (October 11th 1906), Mrs Herbert Crossland on the rise and progress of English ballad music (November 6th 1906), and Mr Wilkinson on Henry James (February 1st 1910).⁷⁷ It seems safe to assume that members of YFSM attended YFBS, particularly as two of the YFBS speakers mentioned above, Burt and Wilkinson, were married to members of YFSM. The fact that there were few overlaps between the two groups in terms of choices and styles of reading, however, highlights that reading served a very different function within YFSM sessions. Rather than display cultural capital or facilitate intellectual development, YFSM used reading to emotionally engage with texts in ways that inspired their public activity.

⁷⁴ Radway, *Feeling For Books*, pp. 167, 244-245, 248. See also Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, (London: Chatto and Windus, [1932] 1965), pp. 19-22.

⁷⁵ As Mary Hammond points out, the period 1880 to 1914 represents ‘a kind of zenith of the impact of [...] debates’ about categories of literature, and the relationship between literary preferences and social class. Hammond, *Reading, Publishing, Literary Taste*, pp. 8, 11-13.

⁷⁶ Lucy Harrison, ‘On The Cultivation of Literary Taste’, in Walter Rippman (ed), *Modern Language Teaching: The Official Organ of the modern Language Association*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906), pp. 170-76.

⁷⁷ York Friends’ Book Society, *Record of York Friends’ Book Society*, 1852-1911, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University, Manuscripts MS Dept. 1981/2 (Clifford Street Archive), vol 3, J. 2.3. Over on the other side of Yorkshire, the Bradford Friends Literary Association (BFLA) were engaging with works of literary criticism such as Stopford Brooke’s *The Poetry of Robert Browning* in 1904 and Edward Dowden’s *New Studies in Literature* in 1905. Bradford Friends’ Literary Association, *Minute Book of the Bradford Friends Literary Association*, Brotherton Special Collections, Leeds University: Manuscripts MS Dept. 1979/1 (Carlton Hill Archive), 3 vols. N131-N133, c. 1840-1905.

Reading as a form of emotional engagement, as a means to be moved and inspired by a book, served an important purpose for a community of Quaker readers who championed suffrage causes. As this thesis has shown, the position of Quaker women was far from equal during the period in which YFSM were reading, and thus the group constructed an ‘imagined community’ in literature through which to renegotiate the contours of their collective identity.⁷⁸ Mary Chapman and Angela Mills have recently demonstrated how popular fiction became a significant means of disseminating pro-suffrage messages on both sides of the Atlantic.⁷⁹ As we shall see, novels such as *Aunt Huldah*, *Aunt Jane* and *Martha-By-The-Day* were written by suffragist authors and carried strong feminist messages, their female characters providing readers with impressive examples of female achievement. In focussing on characterisation, emotion, and personal experience, such novels, as Janice Radway puts it, invite the reader ‘to inhabit the parallel self provided by a book’.⁸⁰ In so doing they encourage what Radway terms a ‘personalism’ that emphasises how the reader shares with others a deep-seated ‘idiosyncratic’ self.⁸¹ Yet reading novels that promote a common sense of personal identity and human experience may not be simply an act of apolitical personal growth. As Jaime Harker has recently pointed out, Radway’s ‘personalism’ ‘misses the political connections many writers built on such individual appeals’ as these writers ‘used feeling to develop their reader’s political consciousness’, particularly, for example, in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s potent use of sentiment to inspire anti-slavery convictions amongst readers of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.⁸² In reading novels that invite readers to identify imaginatively with pioneering heroines who wield considerable authority and power in the local community, the novels chosen by YFSM validate and encourage their philanthropic activities and suffrage campaigning.

⁷⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, [1983] 1991), p. 36.

⁷⁹ Mary Chapman and Angela Mills, *Treacherous Texts: US Suffrage Literature, 1846-1946*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp. 3, 115-116. Patricia Greenwood Harrison has detailed the extent to which the women’s suffrage campaign was a decidedly transatlantic affair. Harrison, *Connecting Links*, pp. xv, 91-92.

⁸⁰ Radway, *Feeling For Books*, pp. 283-284. See also Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity and Bohemianism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 47.

⁸¹ Radway, *Feeling For Books*, pp. 283-284.

⁸² Harker, *America the Middlebrow*, p. 18.

The feminist messages of the novels chosen by YFSM were heightened by the fact that members read them aloud to one another. The act of reading aloud provided this Quaker community with a sense of fellowship and solidarity as they formulated a shared understanding of identity.⁸³ Reading groups, Elizabeth Long suggests, give rise to an emotional fellowship amongst members that enables a collective exploration of alternative subjectivities:

as they read and talk [members] are supporting each other in a collective working-out of their relationship to the contemporary historical moment and the particular social conditions that characterise it. This activity is quite literally productive in that it enables women not merely to reflect on identities they already have but to bring new aspects of subjectivity into being. [...] In other words, they are in the process of remaking themselves in dialogue with others and with literary texts.⁸⁴

YFSM provided members with precisely this occasion for ‘remaking themselves in dialogue with others and literary texts’, the monthly gatherings becoming an opportunity to formulate a common female Quaker identity and belief. Much like Harrison’s lectures, where a shared appreciation of literature amongst speaker and audience functioned as a form of worship, for YFSM reading aloud encouraged members collectively to identify and interpret uplifting moral guidance contained within literary works.

For this community, therefore, reading aloud was an empowering activity rather than the tool for domestic and educational control that historians have tended to present.⁸⁵ As listeners members of YFSM would have possessed autonomy over their

⁸³ Writing of eighteenth-century domestic reading practices Naomi Tadmor has ‘reading aloud turned what was ordinarily a private activity into ‘a sociable rather than solitary experience’. Naomi Tadmor, ‘In the even my wife read to me’: women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century’, in James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 162-174 (p. 165).

⁸⁴ Long, *Book Clubs*, p. 22. See also Jenny Hartley, *Reading Groups: A Survey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 2, 15-16, 45-47, 58-59.

⁸⁵ Studies on more quotidian, domestic instances of reading aloud associate it with instruction and the consolidation of traditional gender roles. Patricia Howell Michealson argues that reading aloud in the eighteenth-century home enabled families to come together in intellectual intimacy and shared interests on the one hand, and to maintain patriarchal structures of authority on the other. Michealson, *Speaking Volumes*, p. 141. For a similar analysis of this process in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, see Flint, *The Woman Reader*, p. 100. Naomi Tadmor seeks to provide a corrective to the view that the eighteenth-century woman was ‘listless and idle’, offering instead a vision of domestic reading aloud that involved ‘devout’ practices aligned with ‘discipline and [domestic] work’. Tadmor, ‘women, reading and household life’, pp. 162-174. Much of the work that has been done on communal reading in the nineteenth century

impressions and responses, particularly in the context of a sewing circle where, as Lawes points out, women could engage in quiet contemplation of the text being read aloud as they worked their needles.⁸⁶ These personal responses could be accommodated into a group experience in much the same way as a Quaker Meeting, the individual perspective being incorporated into the community rather than eradicated by it. Reading aloud echoes Quaker worship in that individual members collectively attend to a spoken message as a means to promote community belief and identity. Thus while members of YFSM possessed personal responses, nevertheless within a community of like-minded female Friends reading aloud could strengthen members' sense that their impressions chimed with those around them. As early as 1920 Muriel Harris was drawing attention to the importance of this process.⁸⁷ Being with 'other listeners' introduces an important 'Crowd psychology', Harris argued, as

There is a difference between listening to a book alone, and listening to it mirrored equally in the appreciations of other people. Here again this raises all the values, doubles the reflections, makes the book as intensely uplifting as it is possible for it to be.⁸⁸

Of course, Harris's description leaves little room for divergent forms of interpretation between members: for critical intervention, questioning, the changing of minds. Reading aloud would have precipitated conversation and debate between Friends, challenging the possibility of community consensus and destabilising any authoritative interpretation. Nevertheless, in creating a reading occasion in which members might sense their responses 'mirrored' in the hearts and minds of other women present, YFSM established an environment that heightened members' responsiveness to the characters, scenes, and ideas offered by the works that they read.

This frisson was particularly important when it came to instances in which YFSM read contemporary novels depicting communities of pioneering women. Jane

has tended to focus on public readings by professional authors, which provided writers such as Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope with lucrative business opportunities. See Philip Collins, *Reading Aloud: A Victorian Metier*, (Lincoln: The Tennyson Society Tennyson Research Centre, 1972); Monica C. Lewis, 'Anthony Trollope and the Voicing of Victorian Fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 65, No. 2, September 2010, pp. 141-165. See also William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 119, 131, 187, 235, 242, 317, 344, 395, 419.

⁸⁶ Lawes, *Women and Reform*, p. 51.

⁸⁷ Muriel Harris, 'On Reading Aloud', *The North American Review*, Vol. 214, No. 790 (Sep., 1921), p. 345.

⁸⁸ Harris, 'On Reading Aloud', p. 350.

Eldridge Miller has pointed out that the ‘rebellious woman’ who was a recurring figure in Edwardian fiction adopted a variety of guises, offering female readers an array of different possibilities as to what female subversion might look like.⁸⁹ The ‘rebellious woman’ who crops up time and again in the novels selected by YFSM is capable, determined, eccentric, and middle-aged, and is the linchpin of her local community. One of the potential appeals of novels like *Aunt Jane*, *Aunt Huldah*, *Martha*, and *Rebecca* is that they offer the reader visions of emancipated womanhood that run along the lines of plain-living matriarchs rather than the anarchic and subversive young women depicted in English suffrage fiction during the same period.⁹⁰ These fictional heroines provide YFSM with a subtle means to challenge the position of female Friends within the Quaker community, as their fortitude and assertiveness stretch the limitations of heteronormativity without breaking them altogether.

In this regard a favourite subject of YFSM is the eponymous heroine of *Martha* by the celebrated novelist and political activist Julie M. Lipmann (1864-1952).⁹¹ In October 1913 the minutes record how ‘Mrs Waller read a very interesting book entitled “Martha of the Day”, which was too long to finish. We are looking forward to the rest at our next meeting’ (October 16th 1913, p. 55). Mrs Waller continued her reading at a gathering on December 18th, but the novel was still ‘too long to finish and so we are looking forward to hearing the rest at our next meeting’ (p. 57). At the following meeting in January 1914 Mrs Waller ‘was not able to be present to continue her reading’, and so the group delayed concluding the book until their next gathering (p. 58). But when Mrs Waller was absent from the February 19th meeting as well, excitement appears to have got the better of the group and ‘Mrs Thompson kindly finished reading from the book entitled “Martha By the Day” which has been most interesting’ (p. 59). This sequence gives an indication of how much of a text YFSM read at each meeting. *Martha* is two hundred pages long: read across three meetings, this suggests the group averaged around sixty five pages per session and thus that the majority of each two-hour gathering was taken up by reading aloud. The lengthy amount of time spent reading suggests that these heroines became a powerful presence

⁸⁹ Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, (London: Virago Press, 1994), p. 4.

⁹⁰ See Miller, *Rebel Women*.

⁹¹ Julie M. Lippmann, *Martha By-The-Day*, (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1913). All subsequent references are in-text citations. A popular novel, *Martha-By-The-Day* was adapted into a stage play in 1919.

within YFSM sessions. In *Martha*, the middle-aged Martha Slawson is presented as an ideal woman precisely because she does not conform to conventional standards of delicate femininity. Described as a supporter of ‘Woman Sufferich’ [sic], Martha is introduced as ‘a woman of masculine proportions, towering, deep-chested, large-limbed’, whose robust version of womanhood – her ‘great embodiment of human sympathy and strength’ – makes her the axis around which the plot turns (pp. 44, 8-9, 25). Encountering the wide-eyed Wellesley graduate Claire Lang alone in New York City, Martha takes the ‘stray lamb’ into her home and nurses her back to health (p. 25). While the youthful Claire’s feminine delicacy is associated with sickness and dependency, it is Martha’s refusal to conform to heterosexual gender norms that makes her a source of strength to others. Martha is the main financial provider for her family, working as a cleaner to support her husband and several children. After hearing of her husband’s illness Martha refuses to reinforce his masculinity by being overcome by a fit of weeping, insisting that ‘I’m no little, trembling wife. [...] Those kind has nerves. I only got nerve’ (p. 104). Thus Martha provides YFSM with an example of the ways in which stoic, pragmatic, capable women who possess an unshakable inner strength may become the figurehead of the family and local community. Reading such a novel enables YFSM imaginatively to claim a powerful social role without overthrowing traditional structures altogether. Testing the limitations of conventional social codes is a key feature of YFSM’s reading selections.

To a gathering of strong-minded, upper-middle-class Quaker women, the women of *Cranford* (1853), who exist in a world in which men are marginal, must have seemed particularly appealing. Indeed, Gaskell’s novel appears to have resonated with many of York’s female Friends at the turn of the century.⁹² YFSM ‘read some amusing extracts from *Cranford*’ on December 16th 1909 (p. 24), hearing of how ‘*Cranford* is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses above a certain rent are women’, the reference to a genteel economic status confirming the *Cranford* ladies are the

⁹² In chapter one I mentioned a reference to the ‘old ladies’ of *Cranford* in Hannah Hodgkinson’s School Diary. Winifred Ardley’s school scrapbook contains a Halloween concert programme for 1910 which lists ‘scenes from *Cranford*’ amongst the evening’s recitations. W. Ardley, Mount School Diary. Two years earlier Harrison had written to a friend of how ‘We have been having a very quiet Christmas Day. One very lonely person, a lady who lives entirely by herself, spent part of the day with us it is evening now and she has just gone, with lantern to guide her way *a la Cranford*’. Lucy Harrison to A.J.T. Christmas Day 1908; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, p. 76.

socially-acceptable face of female self-sufficiency.⁹³ *Cranford* provides YFSM with an instance in which a number of forceful women manage to get along together, as each woman ‘has her own individuality, not to say eccentricity, pretty strongly developed, [...] but, somehow, good-will reigns among them to a considerable degree’ (p. 1). In imaginatively interacting with genteel-yet-eccentric heroines YFSM collectively identify with ‘genial’, to borrow from the subtitle to *Aunt Huldah*, forms of unorthodox femininity. These are not the radical challenges posed by many of the female Friends of the seventeenth and eighteenth century.⁹⁴ Rather, these heroines provide examples of how to dissent from the centre, rather than the margins, of the local community, much like the well-connected, upper-middle-class Quaker women of YFSM, whose suffrage campaigning was channelled through the more refined WLF rather than the more drastic WSPU.

The novels chosen by YFSM enable them to imaginatively encounter women with whom they would be less likely to associate in real life. The eponymous middle-aged heroine of *Aunt Huldah* is described as an ‘unprecedented sort of old woman’ (pp. 56), a widow who single-handedly runs a successful ale house while also caring for several orphans. *Huldah* suggests that determination and outspokenness are important qualities if a woman is to provide for those in her care: ‘Huldah was not lacking in business acumen, and she could push her just claims, for the good of those dependent on her’ (pp. 54-55, 207). Female strength and resourcefulness is shown to cultivate upstanding citizens, as Huldah is ‘very proud’ that ‘one of her boys’, Troy Gilbert, has grown up to become County Sheriff (p. 15). For a community of tee-total Quaker women, whose ‘rules and regulations’ stipulate that no wine be allowed at their meetings (Vol. 1), the proprietor of an ale-house makes for rather a surprising heroine. Huldah’s appearance suggests these Quaker readers used fiction to transgress some of the codes of their religious community, interacting with women whose differences in

⁹³ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, [1853] 1998), p. 1. All subsequent references are in-text citations. As Nina Auerbach points out, communities of women in fiction stand as ‘emblems of female self-sufficiency’. Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*, (London: Cambridge and Harvard University Press, [1978] 1998), p. 5. *Cranford* stands in contrast to the radical communities of women to be found between the covers of feminist utopian novels at the turn of the century, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915)

⁹⁴ For discussions of the passionate proselytising of early female Friends, see Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophecy in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775*, (London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Phyllis Mack, ‘Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism’, *Signs*, Vol. 29 No. 1, Autumn 2003, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 145-177; Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: University of California Press, 1992).

circumstance disguise the fact that they share common features with YFSM: Huldah's surname 'Sarvice' alludes to her role as a woman of Christian 'service' within the local community.

For the less assertive members of YFSM, the elderly heroine of *Aunt Jane* provides an example of the power of quiet determination. YFSM read from *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, and its 1911 sequel *The Land of Long Ago*, on several occasions during 1911 and 1912.⁹⁵ Aunt Jane is introduced to the reader as an unaffected woman who sports 'a gingham apron, with a capacious pocket, in which she always carried knitting or some other "handy work"' (p. 4), and her pluck and resourcefulness is shown to effect change. Aunt Jane recollects an occasion in which the men of the local church denied the women's request for a new organ, describing how

Us women didn't say much, but we made up our minds to have the organ. So we went to work in the Mite society, and in less'n three years we had enough money to git it. I've often wondered how many pounds o' butter and how many baskets of eggs it took to raise that money. I reckon if they'd 'a' been piled on top of each other they'd 'a' reached to the top o' the steeple. The women of Israel brought their ear-rings and bracelets to help build the Tabernacle, but we jest had our egg and butter money (pp. 36-37).

Collectively harnessing the skills of thrifty economy acquired in their roles as household managers enables these women to defy male authority. In comparing their domestic resourcefulness to the offerings of the 'women of Israel' Aunt Jane both claims a Biblical precedent for her own and her peers' activities, and elevates the status of their small contributions or 'mites'.⁹⁶ In so doing she calls attention to the latent riches contained in the everyday paraphernalia – the eggs and butter and baskets – of women's lives. Or rather, the everyday riches of working women's lives: like Huldah, Jane is of a different class from the women of YFSM. The term 'mite' refers to the 'poor widow' described in the Gospels of Luke and Mark, who donated 'two mites' to the well at the Temple of Jerusalem, and thus Aunt Jane's work is associated with the contributions of

⁹⁵ See minutes for January 19th 1911, p. 34; February 15th 1912, p. 43; December 19th 1912, p. 49.

⁹⁶ Exodus 35: 22 describes how the men and women of Israel 'brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold' as offerings to the tabernacle, the tent that they believed housed the presence of God. *The Bible, Authorised King James Version*; Old Testament, p. 111.

less affluent single women.⁹⁷ Yet Jane's ability to overcome financial obstacles perhaps stands as an indirect counterpart to the obstacles YFSM faced in making public contributions. Reading about a woman who defies both gender and class could serve doubly to inspire these Quaker women's activities. This is particularly so given that Aunt Jane's work at the Mite society provides an echo of YFSM's activities. Mite societies were charitable organisations affiliated with Nonconformist churches in America, who raised funds for particular causes by holding craft fairs, selling produce, and publishing cookery books, and appear to have had some overlaps with sewing circles.⁹⁸ The two organisations appropriated Biblical language in describing their work, as many women in antebellum sewing circles also referred to their contributions as 'mites'.⁹⁹ In reading about Aunt Jane's successful ventures at the Mite society YFSM are reminded that female productivity is an important form of religious ministry and worship.

Heroines such as Martha, Aunt Huldah, and Aunt Jane are important models for YFSM, whose religious community held uneven and contradictory attitudes towards the position of women.¹⁰⁰ *Aunt Jane* is particularly useful in its defence of women's right to preach. In the chapter 'Sally Ann's Experience' Aunt Jane recollects her friend Sally Ann standing up to a preacher who had used Pauline doctrine to justify women not speaking in church, cutting through his pompous teaching to assert that 'I've got a message from the Lord to the men folks of this church, and I'm going to deliver it, Paul or no Paul' (p. 15). 'Sally Ann's Experience' began life as a popular short story published in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1898 before eventually forming the first chapter of *Aunt Jane*, and was held up as an important advocate of female outspokenness.¹⁰¹ In a

⁹⁷ The Gospel of Mark 12: 43-44 recounts how Jesus told his disciples that 'this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want have cast in all that she had, *even* all her living'. *The Bible, Authorised King James Version*; New Testament, p. 63; see also Luke 21: 1-4, p. 106.

⁹⁸ Very little has been written on Mite societies. What information I have been able to find has been gleaned from catalogue searches of American university archives, browsing recipe books on antiquarian booksites, and a report from the newspaper for Randolph, Vermont, dated 26th June 2008, detailing the recent activities of the local Mite society. See http://www.ourherald.com/news/2008-06-26/Community_News/com06.html [accessed 9th April 2013]. The Sewing Society of the First Universalist Church in Webster, New York, which ran between 1874 and 1895, was also known as the Mite Society. See <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/library/bms/bms00269.html> [accessed 5.4.2013].

⁹⁹ See Jeffrey, *Silent Army*, pp. 38, 63, 85; Lawes, *Women and Reform*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁰ See above, pp. 41-42.

¹⁰¹ Neidermeier, *Eliza Calvert Hall*, pp. 122, 123.

speech of 1908 to an audience of some twenty-five thousand people President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) recommended the chapter 'for its use as a tract in all families where the men folks tend to selfish or thoughtless overbearing disregard of the rights of their womankind'.¹⁰² Sally Ann's statement doubtless would have appealed to a community of Quaker women whose religious denomination, as several historians have shown, held ambivalent attitudes towards female ministry.¹⁰³ Reading *Aunt Jane* aloud to one another would have helped members of YFSM to challenge such contradictions. In the same year as they read *Aunt Jane*, the group encounter the outspoken female Friend in John Masefield's *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911), from which the Meeting read 'some extracts' soon after it was published (December 14th, 1911, p. 42). *The Everlasting Mercy* is a tale in verse about a man who has been since birth a 'n'er-do-well' until an encounter with a Quaker woman.¹⁰⁴ This 'Friend' possesses a potent combination of fiery 'spirit' and 'a heart just like a child', and her outspokenness against his public drinking inspires him to turn from his reckless ways (pp. 71-77). In collectively reading from a recent publication that celebrates the public voice of Quaker women, YFSM reiterate the importance of female ministry and develop a sense of community resolve towards the issue.

That the Edwardian YFSM read several works featuring outspoken and assertive women suggests that the group's collective readings played an important part in fostering members' convictions about the public rights of women. YFSM read these texts, which promote the importance of women having a public voice, within the context of a more intimate and quasi-private environment. Such reading may have been congenial precisely because it mediated the relationship between members' private practice and their public activity. In a kind of virtuous circle, their public outspokenness is imaginatively brought into their private gathering as a means to foster the group's shared sense of identity, even as reading these texts together helped to develop members' resolve towards their public campaigning.

¹⁰² Quoted in Neidermeier, *Eliza Calvert Hall*, p. 121.

¹⁰³ Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 210-236; Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 107-08; Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities 1770-1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', (unpublished PhD thesis, The University of York, 2000), p. 240; Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁴ John Masefield, *The Everlasting Mercy*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., 1911), pp. 71-77.

Interdenominational faith and practice

That YFSM should use novels and poetry to justify the position of women within their religious community is itself a significant point. The fact that YFSM read imaginative literature during their gatherings cuts against the perception of sewing circles as confined to religious and sectarian reading material. In his *Autobiography* (1881) Mark Rutherford (the semi-fictional persona of William Hale White [1831-1913]) recollected with some disdain attending Dorcas Meetings at the local congregational church during the mid-nineteenth century, in which reading selections were ‘shut up to [all but] the denominational journal and magazines [...] religious and sectarian gossip, religious novels designed to make religion attractive, and other slip-slop of this kind’.¹⁰⁵ It is true to say that Quaker sewing circles did at times focus their attentions on Christian publications and the literature of their own denomination. In my introduction I observed that during the Victorian era YFSM read from a variety of in-house Quaker publications, such as journals, tracts, and *Lives of Friends*, as well as broader interdenominational works, as a means of cementing the group’s collective evangelical identity.¹⁰⁶ During the Edwardian era the minutes of the Ilkley sewing circle contain no mention of books or reading whatsoever, and the Scarborough minutes refer to only the occasional letter from missionaries abroad (see for example entries for January 2nd, April 3rd, and December 4th 1902). This may of course be due to differences in styles of minute-keeping, but at the very least it suggests that if these groups did read literature together they were reluctant to record having done so.

While there may have been other Quaker sewing circles at the turn of the century who read poems, novels and plays during their meetings, the evidence I have uncovered suggests that the Edwardian YFSM were unusual in incorporating such literature into their reading selections. Indeed, during this period there is little in YFSM’s reading to indicate an emphatically Quaker organisation. The fact that the group seldom read from religious publications does not, however, suggest that their reading activities were divorced from religious concerns. Several of the novels YFSM read were written by Christian novelists and describe church activities, religious discussions, and Biblical references. Moreover, the minutes note that the majority of sessions ended with a ‘portion of scripture’ – though frustratingly there is no record of

¹⁰⁵ Mark Rutherford, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, Dissenting Minister*, (London: Trubner and Co., 1881), pp. 39-41. White was a friend of Lucy Harrison. See Greener, *A Lover of Books*, p. 58.

¹⁰⁶ See above, pp. 20-25.

precisely what these ‘portions of scripture’ were. On occasion, however, the minutes note the reading of a Psalm. In 1912, for example, the group read from Psalm 27, which begins: ‘The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’.¹⁰⁷ The appearance of Biblical passages alongside novels that contain religious themes hints towards the possibility that the group sacralised the literary works that they read. This seems especially likely given that verses such as those from Psalm 27 provide the female Quaker reader with a Biblical assertion of confidence that would complement the themes of female empowerment conveyed by the novels the group read. Just as the reading of scripture promoted religious devotion and principles, so too readings of novels and poetry may have inspired personal belief and conviction.

Like Harrison’s literary criticism and teaching, YFSM use literature to expand the horizons of Quaker belief and identity. The novels read by the association promote the importance of interdenominational similarity and tolerance. In *Aunt Huldah*, for example, the virtue of the local church lies in its denominational indeterminacy:

“Which kind [of denomination is the church] – Methodist, Baptist, or what?” inquired the lady from Georgia, with a severe eye upon Huldah’s unblushing countenance. “I reckon it’s ‘what,’” Huldah replied genially. ... “We got up a small kind of a church buildin’ last year, and were mighty proud when anybody will come along an’ give us the word o’ God in it. We have some very happy times with our little old church – ef it is a ‘what’” (p. 20).

A similar message appears in the short story ‘A Conflict Ended’ by the Congregationalist novelist Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930), which YFSM read on February 17th 1910 (p. 26). ‘A Conflict Ended’ appears in the collection *A Humble Romance* (1887), a book that is popular with YFSM (read in October 1906, and on several occasions in 1910). ‘A Conflict Ended’ depicts two young lovers whose inability to surmount the prejudices of their Baptist and Congregationalist backgrounds forces them to spend almost a lifetime apart. It is only at the end of the story, when the elderly Baptist Marcus realises the futility of his resolve, that he finally enters the Congregationalist church in order to marry Esther with ‘the grand mien of a conqueror’ (the suggestion is not that Marcus is conquering either Esther or the Congregationalist

¹⁰⁷ Carroll and Prickett (eds), *King James Version*; Old Testament, p. 652.

church, but rather his own prejudices).¹⁰⁸ Two years earlier YFSM had read *Bridgeston*, the opening pages of which depict Parson Montgomery, a Baptist, stating to the Methodist Farmer Gregory that ‘The great barrier between the Churches is the ignorance of each other’s life and spirit. If we only got to know each other from within, to understand each other’s point of view, we should have a new faith in each other’ (p. 7). One might add ‘a new faith in ourselves’ as well, for such novels provide YFSM readers with an invitation to reassess the characteristics of their own faith and consider the shared ground between Quakerism and other Protestant denominations. Harrison was not alone, it would seem, amongst York’s Quaker readers in exploring the possibilities of an ecumenical Quakerism.

As well as inviting Quaker readers to see themselves as belonging to a broader religious community, interdenominational fiction provides YFSM with an indirect means to work through the attitudes towards women of their religious community. We have already seen how the group read works that defend women’s right to minister, but they also chose novels that suggest women have an important role to play in cultivating religious understanding. In keeping with the group’s preference for subtle challenges to the status quo, these novels claim the domestic as a sphere in which women are able to side-step religious dogma and develop personal spiritual insights instead. As I noted in my introduction, for all their public outspokenness and campaigning many of York’s female Friends upheld the notion that women were best-placed to make public contributions from the private sphere.¹⁰⁹ On occasion their male counterparts voiced similar opinions. At a WLF meeting in 1913 Arnold Rowntree drew upon separate spheres rhetoric to justify women’s suffrage, advocating their right to the ballot on the basis that they were best equipped to vote on questions to do with the liberty of the family, such as the Medical Inspection of Children Act.¹¹⁰ YFSM’s reading selections seek to reclaim the domestic as a site in which women may cultivate religious authority. Unlike suffrage novels such as Sarah Grand’s *The Beth Book* (1897) or H. G. Well’s *Ann Veronica* (1909), which tend to present the home as restricting space for women, the novels read by YFSM depict the domestic sphere as an empowering place, particularly in regards to women’s religious life. When Aunt Huldah challenges a snotty young lady

¹⁰⁸ Mary E. Wilkins, *A Humble Romance and Other Stories*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), pp. 382-399.

¹⁰⁹ See above, pp. 41-42.

¹¹⁰ *The Yorkshire Gazette*, Saturday 29th November 1913.

from Georgia, who has insisted that she ‘couldn’t think of attendin’ any church but my own’ (p. 20), to consider the common characteristics of Christian denominations she uses a simile associated with domestic activities. Huldah explains that ‘to me Christianity’s just like ‘east [sic]; you can’t lift up folks without God’s grace. But when you have got that, I ain’t a bit particular which kind’ (pp. 21-22). Huldah is shown passing on this belief to the next generation, encouraging the orphans in her care to develop a personal faith: ‘Then came the prayers. Aunt Huldah encouraged originality in this matter, and would have been glad for each member of the little band to address his Maker as he was moved to do’ (p. 51). This association between domesticity and religious understanding re-emerges in *Aunt Jane*. YFSM read the chapter ‘Aunt Jane’s Album’ on January 19th 1911 (p. 34). Aunt Jane shows the young narrator the quilts she has made throughout her life, and discusses how these objects have the potential to serve as forms of religious ministry. Aunt Jane argues that

they ain’t no better sermon to me than a patchwork quilt, and the doctrines is right there a heap plainer’n they are in the catechism. Many a time I’ve set and listened to Parson Page preachin’ about predestination and free-will, and I’ve said to myself, “Well, I ain’t never been through Center College up in Danville, but if I could jist git up in the pulpit with one of my quilts, I could make it a heap plainer to folks than parson’s makin’ it with all his big words (pp. 74-75).

Here, religious dogma and rarefied theological learning pose a barrier between the congregation and authentic religious experience and understanding. Meanwhile an everyday female activity such as quilting, in which the quilter works contemplatively and creatively over her materials, becomes an occasion for ‘plainer’ testimony to the importance of personal faith. This is another instance in which Aunt Jane emphasises the importance of female productivity as a form of ministry. Her sentiments are reflected in the activities of YFSM, whose work testifies to women’s devotion and charitable effectiveness. Moreover, the fact that members of YFSM combine reading aloud with philanthropic work underscores that theirs is a productive form of reading which tangibly exemplifies religious devotion and service. Thus YFSM use reading – both content and practice – as a means to affirm the religious significance of their domestic activities.

YFSM’s preference for novels that situate women in the home – when we first meet Aunt Jane she is as much a part of the furniture as her ‘ancient Shaker rockers’ –

needn't be taken as evidence of a conservative strain within YFSM that was antithetical to their suffrage campaigning. The reading choices of YFSM suggest that an appreciation of the pleasures of the private life of the home could complement, rather than compete with, the public world of philanthropic work and political campaigning. Indeed, the sense of security and authority that these female characters cultivate in the home is shown to bolster their confidence in public participation. Taken together, novels such as *Aunt Huldab*, *Aunt Jane*, *Cranford* and *Martha* provide YFSM with a means to challenge the position of women in ways that are more suited to the practicalities of everyday middle-class life. While these novels emphasise the importance of female community, and imagine situations in which women are in charge, nevertheless they defend the uses of the domestic. These novels suggest that by cultivating in the home qualities of assertiveness, practicality, stoicism, and an ability to take things lightly, women are able to achieve their more public goals and tackle the challenges that society poses to their gender. Middle-aged women whose pockets are stuffed with knitting and whose arms are covered in flour may appear to be unlikely leaders, but these characters provide readers such as YFSM with inspiring examples of what female self-sufficiency, productivity, and capability can achieve.

Sewing, reading, and the poetics of minutes

In her early feminist study of sewing Roszika Parker suggested that sewing was an activity which, from the early modern period onwards, had held in tension women's conformity to dominant ideologies on the one hand, and their ability radically to subvert those expectations on the other.¹¹¹ More recently Talia Schaffer and Debbie Stoller have unshackled activities such as craftwork and sewing from these decidedly politicised agendas, suggesting instead that they have endured for the way they have provided generations of women with a personal sense of resourcefulness and self-sufficiency.¹¹² Most importantly, as Stoller points out, because such activities have often involved women spending time sewing or knitting together, passing on skills and techniques

¹¹¹ Roszika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), in particular pp. 11, 18, 198.

¹¹² Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 33, 39; Debbie Stoller, *Stitch 'n Bitch: The Knitters' Handbook*, (New York: Workman Publishing Company Inc., 2003), pp. 3-5, 7-9, 11.

from one generation to the next, these crafts have provided women with a sense of common experience and shared heritage.¹¹³ Members of YFSM would have been alive to this fact at the turn of the century, as they continued a tradition of Quaker women sewing together much as their mothers and grandmothers had done before them. As a cross-generational community, the YFSM would also have enabled older members of the group to pass onto the younger generation a tradition increasingly under threat from competing forms of entertainment and new models of femininity.

In this context, it is unsurprising that the trope of sewing as a means to draw together generations of women occurs in several novels read by YFSM. Indeed, cross-generational interaction appears in many of these novels, including *Aunt Jane*, *Martha*, and *Rebecca*, providing an echo of the set-up of YFSM. The young narrator of *Cranford* notes that one of the pleasures of her visits to Cranford was that '[t]here was all the more time for me to hear old-world stories from Miss Pole, while she sat knitting, and I making my father's shirts' (p. 24). In *Aunt Jane* the elderly heroine tells her young female relative of how sewing has been for her a repository of personal memory:

You see, some folks has albums to put folks' pictures in to remember 'em by, and some folks has a book and writes down the things that happen every day so they won't forgit 'em; but, honey, these quilts is my albums and my di'ries, and whenever the weather's bad and I can't git out to see folks, I jest spread out my quilts and look at 'e and study over 'em, and it's jest like goin' back fifty or sixty years and livin' my live over agin. There ain't nothin' like a piece o' caliker for brinin' back old times, child (p. 59).

Sharing memories in this way means that the stories and experiences of an earlier generation are not lost. Whereas before the narrator had looked upon Aunt Jane's quilts as 'patchwork, and nothing more', now they are 'transform[ed]' into inscriptions of 'memory, imagination, history, biography, joy, sorrow, philosophy, religion, romance, realism, life, love, and death; and all over, like a halo, the love of the artist for his work and the soul's longing for earthly immortality' (p. 82). This longing for immortality, for leaving behind a 'monument [...] to keep folks in mind of 'em"', is achieved for Aunt Jane through her quilts, objects that shall endure as long as they remain treasured: if

¹¹³ Stoller, *Stitch 'n Bitch*, pp. 3-5, 7-9, 11. A twentieth-century Quaker example of this in action is the 'Quaker Tapestry'. Made by over four thousand Friends in fifteen countries during the 1980s and 1990s, the tapestry tells the story of Quakerism. For more on the tapestry see Jennie Levin, *Living Threads: Making the Quaker Tapestry*, (The Quaker Tapestry at Kendal Ltd., 1999); Edward H. Milligan, *Pictorial Guide to the Quaker Tapestry*, (The Quaker Tapestry at Kendal Ltd., 1998); John Ormerod Greenwood, *Quaker Tapestry*, (Impact Books Ltd., 1990).

‘folks values things rightly, and knows how to take care of ‘em, there ain’t many things that’ll last longer’n a quilt’ (p. 79).

For YFSM, of course, the physical garments they produced were not retained as sources of community memory but were sent away to be used by others instead. What endures is not the craft itself, but the meeting’s minute book. While the YFSM minute books can be explained away as either as a typical example of Quaker business practice, or an indication that members wished to professionalise their work, they were much more than this: like Aunt Jane’s albums, these minutes were collective memoirs.¹¹⁴ The act of sewing and the act of minute-keeping were intertwined for, as Christine Bayles Kortsch has argued, during the nineteenth-century women possessed what she terms a ‘dual literacy’ in the ‘the language of cloth and the language of print’, women using both sewing and writing as a means for self-expression.¹¹⁵ In collectively authoring the minute books, the women of YFSM textually conflate these two skills, each book a patchwork of entries by various hands which are pieced together over time to create a whole. Catie Gill reminds us that multiple authorship is a regular feature of Quaker writings, which seek to ‘produce an impression of community, since they implicitly unite Friends around an issue, or a series of concerns, within a single work’.¹¹⁶ The ‘impression of community’ conveyed in the YFSM minute books is one that is woven together by philanthropic work, leisure time, and reading aloud, which emerges as a prominent and recurring thread that gathers together a century’s worth of community experience.

¹¹⁴ Minute-keeping is a well-established Quaker tradition, as the business affairs of all Preparative, Area and Yearly Quaker Meetings are carefully documented. The proceedings of social groups are often minuted, too. At a similar period to YFSM the YFBS and BFLA also kept detailed accounts of their proceedings.

¹¹⁵ Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women’s Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 4, 10.

¹¹⁶ Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Quaker Identities, 1650-1700*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 4-5, 7.

CONCLUSION

Reading Jerusalem

In May 1912 Lucy Harrison gave her final address to the Mount Old Scholars Association, on the subject of female education and democracy. Opening with a quotation from Blake's 'Jerusalem' (1804-1818), 'Let every Christian, as much as in him lies, engage himself openly and publically before all the world in some mental pursuit for the building up of Jerusalem', Harrison went on to present the Mount School as exemplary in its encouragement of female citizenship.¹ 'Reading, studies, intellectual interests form our thoughts, and thoughts form character', Harrison argued,

and it is for this reason we must all feel grateful for the educational chances and advantages we have had either at the Mount or elsewhere. And at such a time as this we may perhaps find something of an answer to questions which sometimes rise in our minds when we try to gauge the meaning of the relationship of the school constituents and of her connection with the outside world and ourselves. "What has our school done? What is she doing? What is she going to do?" Well, through our School we have had the chance, at any rate, not only of learning to think rightly, but of gaining true notions as to character and conduct, for we have had through her the tradition of earnest and noble effort in the past; we see to-day our contemporaries, or in school phrase our "age-sides" out in the world doing their part in one direction of usefulness or another; we see the present School taking a foremost place amongst the schools in England; we believe that greater developments are still before her (pp. 314-315).

For the assembled audience of Mount Old Scholars – which may well have included Hannah Hodgkinson, Gertrude Nicholson, and members of York Friends' Sewing Meeting (YFSM) – Harrison's lecture would have expressed familiar and welcome sentiments. As this thesis has shown, between c. 1885 and c. 1925 reading imaginative literature was central to the belief, identity and practice of the female Quaker community in York. For York's female Friends, reading fulfilled primarily a social purpose. Chapter one explored how at the Mount School in the 1880s literature was

¹ Lucy Harrison, 'Address to Old Scholars' (Whit-Saturday Evening, May 25 1912); in Amy Greener, *A Lover of Books: The Life and Literary Papers of Lucy Harrison*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd, 1916), p. 312. All subsequent references are in-text citations.

used to invite students into the local Quaker community, demonstrating to young Friends the importance of imaginative literature to this religious group. Chapter two revealed how Harrison's essays and lectures emphasised that the act of sharing literature was just as important as identifying and responding to its content and form. At YFSM, the subject of chapter three, reading together enabled members to foster a shared sense of female Quaker identity. Reading aloud emerges as an important practice in all three case studies, revealing the way in which reading could incorporate the individual into the religious community and operate as a form of community worship.

In revealing the extent to which, for York's Quaker readers at the turn of the century, literature was intertwined with community belief, identity, and practice, this thesis challenges the broader narrative forwarded by historians who argue that literature replaced religion's social function over the course of the nineteenth century.² My hope is that this study will inspire further research into the complex, fascinating, and hitherto overlooked relationship between literature and religion during this period. Most obviously this thesis opens up further questions about representativeness. To what extent were York's Quaker readers typical of Friends elsewhere in the United Kingdom or abroad in making reading imaginative literature an important community activity? Were turn-of-the-century Quakers unique amongst nonconformists, or indeed Anglicans, in their appropriation and appreciation of imaginative literature? And how does a recognition of the connection between literature and religion alter our current narratives about the roles these played in late-Victorian and Edwardian society?

Harrison's address to Mount Old Scholars presents the Mount school and its students as existing at the forefront of women's education and public participation. This highlights another important strand of this thesis: the connection between reading, gender, and citizenship – in particular the ways in which women's private and public activities were mediated, and indeed merged, by acts of reading. In chapter one I explored the ways in which the education offered at the Mount School in the 1880s used reading as a means to equip Quaker young women for leading roles within the Quaker community and participation in middle-class society. The roles these young

² For examples of this narrative see Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 60-62; Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell [1983] 2000), pp. 20-23; Peter Widdowson, *Re-Reading English*, (London and New York: Routledge, [1992] 2003), p. 5. As I discussed in my introduction, even William McKelvy, who otherwise makes a strong case for the relationship between literature and religion in the nineteenth century, maintains that by 1880 literary education had become a secularised pursuit. William R. McKelvy, *The English Cult of Literature: Devoted Readers 1774-1880*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), pp. 1-19.

women were invited to occupy, however, were normative rather than equalising: the books presented by the school inspired pupils to emulate a form of Quaker femininity that was closely aligned with a patriotic vision of the nation, and which stressed the civic importance of women's contributions as wives and mothers. In chapter two I revealed how Harrison's private appreciation of literature found its way into her public essays and criticism, where she presents imaginative literature as moral and spiritual guidance for Quaker readers. For Harrison, literature inspires the reader to develop the kind of 'character' necessary for public participation.³ In chapter three I discussed the ways in which YFSM combined reading with philanthropic, political and sociable activities. These combinations, I noted, enabled YFSM to interpret texts in a variety of ways that fed into members' political and philanthropic campaign work. The relationship between gender, reading, and citizenship is a complex and varied one that merits greater consideration. While some work has already been done on the relationship between reading and consciousness-raising in the feminist literature of the 1970s and 1980s, the more subtle ways in which reading shaped the political participation of women in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century have yet to be explored in any depth.⁴ Hopefully this thesis has pointed towards a need for further research into the ways in which, prior to female enfranchisement, reading enabled women to cultivate a sense of citizenship.

Harrison's epigraph from Blake's 'Jerusalem' gestures towards the ways in which, as this thesis has detailed, York Friends used literature to align Quakerism with a mainstream version of the nation. This mainstream, however, is one with close connections to traditions of dissent. As a poem written by a notoriously idiosyncratic figure whose work has nevertheless become absorbed into mainstream culture, 'Jerusalem' is an important selection for Harrison to make: advancing an alternative vision of the establishment in which the nation's leaders are outsiders challenging

³ Harrison's literary criticism provides fascinating insights into the relationship between gender and public participation – in education, literary criticism, nation and religion – and deserves far more attention than I have been able to give it here. My hope is that this study will inspire a renewed interest in the life and work of this important Quaker figure.

⁴ See for example Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, 'Consciousness-Raising: Linking Theory, Criticism, and Practice', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Feminist Historiography in Rhetoric (Winter, 2002), pp. 45-64; Lisa Maria Hogeland, *Feminism and Its Fictions: The Consciousness-Raising Novel and the Women's Liberation Movement*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

orthodox constructions of nation.⁵ This ‘dissenting establishment’ culture has emerged in all three of the case studies in this thesis. Pupils at the Mount School in the 1880s were taken to political events that demonstrated the extent to which Quakers were prominent and influential members of wider society, and the currents between nonconformism and the establishment were channelled into pupils’ reading. Pupils were exposed to literature that sought to secure them the cultural capital necessary to move confidently in upper-middle-class circles. They also read books that presented Protestant young women in significant patriotic roles. Similarly, in the 1900s members of YFSM read contemporary novels together as a means to cultivate a shared female Quaker identity that celebrated the leading role women could take in both local and national communities. In her literary criticism of the 1890s and 1900s Harrison conceptualised a canon of English Literature that was closely aligned with Quakerism and an Arts and Crafts vision of the nation, revealing how readers could use literature to insinuate nonconformist belief and tradition into a national story.

As I noted in my introduction, the relationship between Quakerism and the Arts and Crafts Movement deserves to be considered in more detail.⁶ Pamela Manesseh has already explored the two groups’ commitment to social reform, with particular reference to the Quaker community in Bryn Mawr, Wales.⁷ York Friends undoubtedly worked within this reforming tradition, establishing the model village New Earswick, near York, in 1902 to provide a decent living environment for Rowntree employees.⁸

⁵ In recent times ‘Jerusalem’ has become something of an unofficial English national anthem, although the lyrics are of course taken from the preface to ‘Milton’ (1804) rather than ‘Jerusalem’. The anthem ‘Jerusalem’ featured at the beginning of Danny Boyle’s magisterial opening ceremony to the London 2012 Olympic Games, providing the introduction to a national story that, Boyle implied, began with the emergence of the working classes during the industrial revolution. The tagline to the ceremony read: ‘This is for everyone’. If ever proof were needed that ‘Jerusalem’ had transitioned from margins to mainstream, in July 2012 the British newspaper *The Independent* reported that the Tory Prime Minister David Cameron would vote for the song to become England’s national anthem at sporting events. *The Independent*, Sunday 15th July 2012. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/cameron-would-choose-jerusalem-as-national-anthem-for-englands-sports-teams-7945250.html> [accessed 24.6.2013].

⁶ See above, p. 15, f.n. 17.

⁷ Pamela Manesseh, *The Brynmanwr Experiment 1928-1940 Quaker Values and Arts and Crafts Principles*, (Ph.D thesis, University of Plymouth, 2009), pp. 8, 35, 38.

⁸ For more on the development of New Earswick as a response to the Seebohm Rowntree’s *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (1901), see Barbara Spender, Christopher Noden, and Alison Stott, *Education, learning and community in New Earswick: an enduring Rowntree legacy*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011, chapters one and two.



Figure 12: The Folk Hall, New Earswick

But the Quaker interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement, I would argue, was due to more than a desire for social improvement. It is my belief that the Arts and Crafts aesthetic helped to legitimise the Quaker appreciation of art and beauty. Further investigation of this relationship would prove particularly interesting, especially as this would pave the way for a broader study of British Quakerism, art and beauty across the century (or indeed centuries).⁹ Such a study would provide a corrective to the perception of Quakers as disapproving of aesthetic appreciation. In chapter one I described how for pupils at the Mount School in the 1880s books functioned as pretty objects to be given or shared, and these young Friends were surely not unusual in treating books in this way. In her *Memories of Ninety Years* (1924) the artist Henrietta Ward (1832-1924) recollected how

In 1876 I exhibited *Mrs. Fry at Newgate Prison*, and I was amused at the number of letters it brought forth, full of criticism. One wrote that no Quakeress would 'possess such a disgraceful thing as a scarlet Bible. And thus to malign Mrs. Fry was unpardonable'. The Bible, which belonged to Mrs. Fry, had been lent to me by her daughter, and it showed by many marked passages how carefully it had been studied.¹⁰

⁹ Some important work as already been conducted on the American context, problematizing the view that Friends have been immune to aesthetic appreciation. See Emma Jones Lapansky and Anne A. Verplanck (eds.), *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflection on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. Unfortunately I only discovered this volume during the very final stages of my research, and so have been unable to engage with it in an depth on this occasion.

¹⁰ Henrietta Ward, *Memories of Ninety Years* (1924); in Pamela Gerrish Nunn (ed.), *Camassing: Recollections by Six Victorian Women Artists*, (London: Camden Press Ltd., 1986), p. 121.

The role played by art, literature and beauty in the personal and corporate lives of Friends would, I suspect, challenge many of the conventional historiographies about Quakerism during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Aside from the obvious aesthetic and ideological overlaps between Quakerism and the Arts and Crafts movement, it is significant that during the period 1885 to 1925 the two communities moved from marginal to mainstream positions in society. Identifying firm connections between members of the Society of Friends and Arts and Crafts consumers, patrons, and practitioners would lay the foundations for a study into how far late-Victorian and Edwardian Quakerism, in aligning itself with the Arts and Crafts Movement, was able to propose an alternative form of dominant culture based upon political, religious and social dissent.

The extent to which Quaker audiences in general drew upon art and literature to construct a model citizenship and support the 'building up of Jerusalem' has yet to be revealed. However, as this study has shown there existed a distinct trend amongst female Quaker readers in York to engage with imaginative literary culture in ways that positioned Quaker women at the forefront of an ideal nation.

APPENDIX I

The Mount School Library Catalogue 1885

As the catalogue runs to several thousand entries it would be impossible to list them all here. Instead, I offer a representative sample from each of the categories.

Poetry and Literature (c. 1220 entries)

The English Men of Letters Series (ed. John Morley)

Ancient Classics for English Readers Series (ed. Rev W. Lucas Collins)

Joseph Angus, *Handbook of the English Tongue* and *Handbook of English Literature*

William Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of British Poets*

Henry Morley, *A First Sketch of English Literature*

Principal Sharp, *On Poetic Interpretation of Nature*

Arnold, Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Cowper, George Eliot, Herbert, Keats, Longfellow, Scott, Shelley, Tennyson, Wordsworth, *Selected Works*

There are no novels listed in this section

History (c. 900 entries)

Epochs of History Series

J. B. Marsden, *History of the Early Puritans*

Dr. Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*

James Stephen, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*

Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*

G. Waddington, *History of the Reformation on the Continent*

This section contains numerous *Histories* of Ancient Greece and Rome, Europe from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, histories of England from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, and the *Lives* of British monarchs.

Geography, Topography &c. (c. 800 entries)

Black's Picturesque Guide to Yorkshire

York and its Vicinity

Isabella L. Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*

Catherine M. Buckton, *Health in the House*

Elizabeth Rundell Charles, *Sketches of Christian Life in England in the Olden Time, by the Author of "The Schonberg Cotta Family"*

Clara M. S. Lowe, *Punrooty, or the Gospel winning its way among the Women of India*

Samuel Smiles, *Self Help*

Science and Natural History (c. 120 entries)

Bloxam, *Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture*
W. B. Carpenter, *Vegetable Physiology and Botany*
Rev. C. A. Johns, *Flowers of the Field*
Justus Von Liebig, *Familiar Lectures on Chemistry*
David Thomson, *Handy Book of the Flower Garden*
Rev. J. G. Wood, *The Illustrated Natural History*

Dictionaries and Books of Reference (c. 20 entries)

Rev. J. Bosworth, *A Compendious Anglo-Saxon and English Dictionary*
Thomas Cooper, *A New Biographical Dictionary*
William Smith, *Classical Dictionary*

Biblical Literature, Biography and Miscellaneous (c. 600 entries)

Robert Barclay, *Sermons*
Anon, *Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of Members of the Society of Friends*
Anon, *Ministering Children*
Christian Discipline of the Society of Friends
James Backhouse, John Ford, Stephen Grellet, Charles Kingsley, Joseph Sturge, William Wilberforce, Daniel Wheeler, *Lives and Memoirs*
Elizabeth Rundell Charles, *The Voice of Christian Life in Song*
Sister Dora, Elizabeth Fry, Jane Taylor, *Lives*
Kitto's Daily Bible Illustrations Series
C. J. Leland, *Abraham Lincoln*
Mark Guy Pearse, *Thoughts on Holiness*
William Smith, *Students' Old and New Testament History*
B. F. Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*

Source: The Mount School, York, *Catalogue of Books in the Library of the Friends' School, The Mount School, York, January, 1885*, York: William Sessions, 1885; Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York: MOU 4/1/8/2.

APPENDIX II

Lucy Harrison's publications and lectures

Publications

Lucy Harrison, 'The Place of History in the School Curriculum', *London Association of Headmistresses*, 1880.

Lucy Harrison, *Spenser for Home and School: Poems of Spenser*, London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883.

Lucy Harrison, 'A Teacher's Ideal,' in *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, Vol. XXX, London: West, Newman and Co., 1896, pp. 207-223.

Lucy Harrison, 'On The Cultivation of Artistic Taste', *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, Vol. XXXIV, London: West, Newman and Co., 1900, pp. 81-96.

Lucy Harrison, 'The First Religious Conference Held in Yorkshire', *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 4th December 1903, pp.800-802.

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Lucy Harrison, 'The Renaissance and Reformation in English Literature', 12th March 1909, in *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 1909, pp. 162-164.

Lucy Harrison, 'Meredith Made Easy', 24th December 1909, *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 1909, pp. 865-866.

Lucy Harrison, 'Vivisection', *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 9th December 1910, pp.834-835.

Lucy Harrison, 'Treasure Trove', 2nd December 1910, in *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 1910, pp. 802-803.

Lucy Harrison, 'An Apostle of Joy: Thomas Traherne', *The Vineyard*, December 1910; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 233-240.

Lucy Harrison, 'The Poems of Emily Brontë', 20th January 1911; in *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 1911, pp. 38-39.

Lucy Harrison, 'John Woolman', *The Vineyard*, May 1912; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 221-232).

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Lucy Harrison, 'Charlotte Brontë and the Brussels Episode', 27th March 1914, in *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 1914, pp. 214-215.

Lucy Harrison, 'Tagore's "Chitra"', *The Friend: A Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, London: Headley Brothers, 3rd July 1914, pp. 489-490.

Lectures

'Some Lovers of Books' (undated; Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

'Three of Shakespeare's Women' (undated) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp.142-160)

'The Story of Two Travellers' (undated; Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

'An Old Explorer' (York Friends' Book Society, March 3rd 1896)

'Jane Austen' (1896) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp.97-117)

'Elizabeth Barrett Browning' (York Friends' Book Society, October 4th 1898)

‘Some Aspects of Medieval Life’ (York Friends’ Book Society, March 6th 1900)

‘A Peep into the England of the 15th Century’ (York Friends’ Book Society, April 5th 1901; in Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

‘King Alfred as a Man of Letters’ (York Friends’ Book Society, November 5th 1901; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp.205-220)

‘On Simplicity of Life’ (York QM, January 1903) (Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

‘Some Old Essayists’ (Jan. 20th 1903; Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

‘Address on the Opening of the Mount School Library’ (Whit-Monday 1903) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 301-303)

‘The Practice of the Presence of God’ (York Oct. 9 1904; Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

‘Fellowship’: Address to Old Scholars’ (Whit-Saturday 1905) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 304-311)

‘An Hour With Dickens’ (1906-1914) (first delivered to York Friends’ Book Society, 18th March 1906; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp.118-142)

‘Some Aspects of Wordsworth’s Teaching’ (1907) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp.161-182)

‘William Blake’ (York Friends’ Book Society, December 1st 1908)

‘A Cloud of Witnesses’ (A Paper read before the York Anti-Vivisection Society 1909; Papers of Lucy Harrison, 1896-1909, University of York: Borthwick Institute for Archives, MOU 5/1/4/3)

‘Ann Radcliffe, Novelist’ (York Friends’ Book Society, November 7th 1911; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp.183-204)

‘Address to Old Scholars’ (Whit-Saturday 1912) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 312-318)

‘Leisure Hour Pursuits’ (December 15th 1913) (in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 293-300)

'Rabindranath Tagore' (York Friends' Book Society, November 17th 1914; in Greener, *A Lover of Books*, pp. 241-262)

In her biography of Charlotte Mew Penelope Fitzgerald incorrectly attributes *Conversations on Social Geography for Teachers and Infants* (1903) to Harrison; this work is actually by a Mrs Lucy M. Harrison (see Fitzgerald, *Charlotte Mew*, pp. 29, 211).

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John W. Graham, 'Books and their Writers', *The Friend*, 5th January 1917, p. 9.

S. E. Wells, 'A Book of Friendship', *The Friend*, 5th January 1917, pp. 76-77.

APPENDIX III

List of titles mentioned in the minute books of York Friends' Sewing Meeting, 1906-1927

- 1906:** Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman, *A Humble Romance* (1887); Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903).
- 1907:** 'Letters from Myra <Cumber> in China'; 'Psalm 72'; 'Letters from Mrs AS Davidson'; '<Lebanon?> Hospital reports'.
- 1908:** 'Sweated Labour (women)'; Mark Guy Pearse, *Bridgestone* (1908); 'Answered Prayer by Mrs Maynard'; 'Psalm 24'; Shakespeare, *Macbeth*; Grace MacGowan Cook, *Aunt Huldah: Proprietor of the Wagon-Tyre House and Genial Philosopher of the Cattle Country* (1904).
- 1909:** 'Our Missions'; John Brown, *Marjorie Fleming: A Sketch* (1864); 'Tame Dog's <Diary?>'; 'Precious Stones'; William Wyndmark Jacobs, *Light Freights* (1901) (recorded as 'Five Freights'); 'The Model Husband Mrs Pierce'; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford* (1853); 'Letter from Myra <Cumber?>'.
- 1910:** Chapters from *A Humble Romance*: 'Far Away Melodies', 'A Conflict Ended', 'The Coronation'; '<Tom Terry Dream?>'; 'The Legend of St. Christopher' (version by Sarah Warner Brooks, 1869?); 'Letters from Myra Cumber, Miss Fox, and Mrs Hilcok'.
- 1911:** Eliza Calvert Hall, *Aunt Jane of Kentucky* (1907), including 'Aunt Jane's Album'; 'Two Strings to her Bow'; John Masefield, *Everlasting Mercy* (1911); 'Letter from Mrs Davidson in China'.
- 1912:** 'Mrs Green'; *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, including 'Aunt Jane's Visit'; Psalms 27 and 29; Letter from Constantinople; Letter from Miss Cowtter; 'Silence is Golden'; Eliza Calvert Hall, *The Land of Long Ago* (1909).
- 1913:** 'The Locking in of <Elsbeth?>'; extracts from *The Friend*; *Aunt Hulda*; Julie M. Lipmann, *Martha by the Day* (1912); Psalm 72; Letters from India, Edith Backhouse.
- 1914:** *Martha by the Day*, Mary E. Manners, *The Bishop and the Caterpillar* (1892); Psalm 111; Psalm 16.
- 1915-1918:** no reading records.
- 1919:** 'Jan Mallasam Nathaniel'.
- 1920:** letters from Mrs Pontefract in Poland and Armenia.

1921: Letters from Miss Very, and Miss Pontefract in Poland.

1922: John Howard on prison reform; Ian MacLaren, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894); letters from Poland; minutes from the last Meeting.

1923: ‘Pillars of Contentment’; Hymns 91, 107, 206, 21; Letters from Miss Pontefract.

1924: letters from Miss Pontefract in Poland.

1925: letters from Miss Pontefract in Poland; there are many references to recitations and readings, but none are mentioned by name.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| BFLA | Bradford Friends' Literary Association |
| MHU | Missionary Helpers' Union |
| NUWSS | National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies |
| YFBS | York Friends' Book Society |
| YFSM | York Friends' Sewing Meeting |
| WLF | Women's Liberal Federation |
| WSPU | Women's Social and Political Union |

GLOSSARY

Throughout this thesis I have adopted the Quaker terminology used by nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Friends, some of which is no longer in use. The glossary below provides definitions of these obsolete terms, along with their current label.

Meetings for Business (or Committee Meetings): meetings to discuss administrative and business concerns.

Epistle: an open letter sent by Yearly Meeting to attenders and members of the Religious Society of Friends, which may attract the attention of a wider audience as well.

Friend: the title Quakers use to address and refer to one another.

Friends House: the administrative centre of the Religious Society of Friends, situated on the Euston Road in London.

Meeting for Worship: a gathering of Friends who meet to worship. Quaker worship centres around a period of collective silence, during which time anyone may offer spoken ministry if they feel divinely inspired to do so.

Minute: a recorded note of an administrative or business decision taken during a Meeting for Business (or similar gathering), which seeks to capture the ‘sense of the meeting’ (consensus as to what the group discerns to be the divine will).

Monthly Meeting (now known as Area Meeting): a collection of Preparative (or Local) Meetings; similar to a parish.

Preparative Meeting (now known as Local Meeting): a gathering of Quakers from the local community; similar to a church congregation.

Quarterly Meeting: a collection of Monthly Meetings; similar to a diocese, although without a figurehead.

Yearly Meeting: annual gathering of Friends in Britain, who meet to worship and to discuss business affairs, that is open to all members of a Monthly (or Area) Meeting.

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Josephine Butler Letters Collection, London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library, 3JBL, c.1816-1907.

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