

'VAIN UNSETTLED FASHIONS': THE EARLY DURHAM FRIENDS  
AND POPULAR CULTURE C.1660-1725

Erin Bell

University of York

ABSTRACT

Participation in popular, or worldly, culture was a moot point for the early Friends. Although they were not encouraged to do so many still took part in aspects of male or female culture, but experienced tension between Quaker and 'carnal' ideals of behaviour. Female Friends were expected to limit their clothing according to the edicts of their Yearly Meeting, although female culture treated clothing as a medium of exchange and gifting clothing was central to female social life. This proved difficult for women such as Sarah Kirkby (d.1692) of Auckland, a fabric seller, who traded with non-Quakers and could not have avoided the expectation that she would participate in aspects of female culture. Even Margaret Fell's daughters succumbed, as their household book testifies, although Durham Quakers and the Fells' meeting at Swarthmore agreed that silk weaving and selling lace respectively were inappropriate trades for a Friend.<sup>1</sup> From the 1680s Women's Quarterly Meetings sent epistles on the subject to Monthly and Preparative Meetings, who reported back their findings. At almost every women's meeting lists of forbidden garments were noted and their wearers, usually young women, were reprimanded. Female Friends who deviated from this rule were likely to be condemned as 'disorderly walkers', and the censure of their families was expected. Such clothing was not merely seen as 'light' or wasteful, but deeply immoral as it sullied the image male Friends had constructed of women as symbols of the purity of the restored Church.

Men were treated with more sympathy than women if they strayed, and the temptations they experienced were more often related to the alehouse than to clothing. Women were sometimes accused of drunkenness and disorder. A disorderly wife was seen as bringing dishonour to Quakerism, as it gave the impression that Quaker men could not control their wives, even though they had arguably already taken steps to do so by instituting separate meetings and limiting the activities of female ministers. However, wives of alcoholic husbands were advised to treat them with respect, not contempt. Friends seem to have appreciated the tensions faced by many men, who had formerly participated in alehouse culture alongside their peers, and found it difficult to break this tie to their old lifestyles. By the early eighteenth century the 'perruque controversy' led Quaker men also to consider their own appearances and condemn the use of wigs as

1 A. Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669-1738* (London: Longmans, 1950), p. 116.

bodily adornment. Although this may seem to suggest equality, alongside their uniform rejection of ostentation surrounding any rite of passage regardless of the participants' social status, it ultimately led to John Wesley's condemnation of Quaker costume as a 'uniform'. This also gave rise to the belief that there was a uniformity of thinking, which had abandoned the originality of earlier thought, most notably their justification of women preachers.

### KEYWORDS

popular culture, Durham, clothing, alehouses, early modern, gender, civility

The early Quakers nationwide rejected what William Braithwaite described as 'the spirit of worldliness',<sup>2</sup> and the Friends' rejection of many aspects of popular culture has been well documented by him and several later historians of the movement. The early Durham Friends were no exception, and analysis of their Minute Books highlights the disciplinary workings of local meetings as they attempted to combat the harmful influences of the world. They also help to identify which aspects of those influences the Friends feared most. A gender division also becomes apparent as female Friends were thought most at risk from the temptations of dress and male Friends from the lure of alehouse culture. This study considers the background to early Quakerism in the county, before addressing some of the issues surrounding Friends' discipline of their members, primarily the control of dress and the rejection of alehouse culture.

## THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF DURHAM FRIENDS

### [I] CONVERSION

In the 1630s and 1640s, Puritans were clustered around Teesdale, the south of Weardale, Durham City and Sunderland.<sup>3</sup> A large proportion were 'middling gentlemen, yeomen-leaseholders and those classes below',<sup>4</sup> such as Cuthbert Hopper and John Langstaff, two of the earliest Friends native to Durham who converted in the 1650s. Geographically and socially, there are similarities between Quaker congregations and their radical Puritan predecessors. Seventeen letters in the Swarthmore Manuscript collection detail the missionary work of early Friends visiting the county between 1652 and 1658.<sup>5</sup>

2 W. C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961 and reprinted York: William Sessions, 1979), p. 509.

3 W. Dumble, 'The Durham Lilburnes and the English Revolution' in D. Marcombe (ed.), *The Last Principality* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Press, 1987), pp. 227-230.

4 Dumble, 'The Durham Lilburnes', p. 227.

5 Library of the Society of Friends, London (LSF). Swarthmore MSS. 1.113; 1.164; 1.188; 1.252; 1.265; 1.277; 1.281; 1.282; 1.284; 1.317; 1.373; 3.1; 3.2; 3.6; 3.14; 3.33; 3.34; 3.61; 3.70; 3.71; 3.131; 4.25; 4.90; 4.203; 4.209.

They name the earliest converts to Quakerism, and also provide information about the organisation of missionary visits. Most missions originated from the west Auckland home of Anthony Pearson at Rampshaw (or Ramshaw) Hall. This sizeable dwelling, along with its rural location, protected the movement from unwanted attention, and from 1653 provided a missionary centre for Friends' journeys around the county as well as into Cumbria, Westmoreland and Yorkshire. By the late 1650s, Durham rivalled Cumberland and London as a stronghold of Quakerism.<sup>6</sup>

### [II] NUMBERS

It seems unlikely that such a bastion of Quakerism would have suffered immediate decline at the Restoration, but in the mid-1670s, the Durham Archdeacon's Court Book listed 346 Friends, compared to 655 Catholics and other Protestant dissenters.<sup>7</sup> In this total Quakers accounted for four-fifths of Protestants prosecuted. An examination of the 1672 returns for nonconformist indulgencies in the region, and of practising dissenters in 1715, would nevertheless suggest that, after Westmoreland, Durham had the smallest dissenting population in England.<sup>8</sup> However, information provided from the Court Book, and supplemented with the records of Friends' sufferings, particularly the list of those prosecuted as Quakers for non-attendance in 1686, and the Durham Freeholders Book of 1681,<sup>9</sup> which identifies Quakers and Catholics, has allowed the compilation of a database of more than a thousand individuals, covering the period c.1653-c.1700. From the assemblage of these data, it is possible to estimate that there were at least 600 adult Friends living in the county at any one time in the 1670s and 1680s.<sup>10</sup>

### [III] SOCIAL STATUS AND RURAL DECLINE

Freeholders are a group rarely defined in contemporary or modern literature. In 1696, Gregory King divided the category into those with incomes of more than £50 or £84 annually, constituting around an eighth of the heads of households in England.<sup>11</sup> As a landholding elite it is noticeable that there were at least 30

6 M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 199.

7 *Surtees Society*, 47 (1865), Appendix: Causes in the Archdeacon of Durham's Court. Around 978 individuals are named, of whom approximately 216 are identified as Quakers in the source, but another 130 have been identified as Friends from other sources.

8 For details, see R.I. Hodgson, *Demographic Trends in County Durham* (Manchester: Manchester Press University, 1978), p. 10.

9 D.C.R.O. SF/Du/QM/7/1, Durham Quakerly Meweting 1660-1753, Records of Friends' Sufferings, Durham Chapter Library. Raine MSS 25, Durham Freehold Book, 1681.

10 This assumes the majority of Friends listed between 1673 and 1677 in the Archdeacon's Court Book did not die, apostatise or emigrate between 1677 and 1687, but that together this and the 1686 list make a more coherent sample.

11 A table of statistics reflecting King's 1688 calculations is provided in R.T. Vann *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 51.

Durham Quaker freeholders out of the 1902 freeholders listed for the counties of Durham and Northumberland, although more may remain unidentified.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that Friends comprised at least 1.6% of the freeholders in the region in comparison to 0.7% of the total population. This corresponds to changes beginning in the later seventeenth century when Friends experienced a decline in members from the social extremes. The number of skilled craftsmen, such as cordwainers, yeomen and other small freeholders, and young members employed as servants by socially advancing, urban dwelling Friends flourished or remained steady, whilst groups representing the extremes, such as labourers, physicians and gentlemen, declined. Alongside cordwainers there was an increase in the number of weavers, tailors and merchants that represented a predisposition towards urban Quaker trade – an economic shift that is comparable to the changes in the urban community in general. Yet, in spite of the variety of members' social occupations and, along with that of the general population, the slow transition towards urbanisation, Durham Friends generally lived in properties larger than their neighbours.

Such economic changes were also matched by social change. Richard Vann and David Eversley have explored the frequency of exogamous marriage among Quaker women, especially in urban areas,<sup>13</sup> while local evidence indicates that several female Durham members were disowned for deviating from Friends' marriage customs. These disownments included Ellinor Howell of Stockton Monthly Meeting who in 1698 had been married by a priest to 'one yts noe friend'. The meeting conjectured that her mother was responsible, observing that 'her mother being abroad who is supposed to be ye most to blame'.<sup>14</sup> At the next meeting, Elizabeth Howell was asked to condemn her own actions and the activities of her daughter, and 'signe then another paper to be drawne & made publick against her daughter Ellinor'.<sup>15</sup> It can be presumed that Ellinor was not prepared to show remorse and apologise for her behaviour. Despite such disownments and a gradual decline in members from the 1650s, the influence and affluence of Friends grew from the later seventeenth century onwards. This is apparent from the minute books discussed below, in which there is evidence of the attempts to control and discipline Friends, and dissuade them from spending money on ostentatious goods and clothing, or the frequenting of alehouses.

### DRESS, APPEARANCE AND CIVILITY

In *Some Fruits of Solitude* published in 1693, William Penn wrote about clothing: 'If thou art clean and warm it is sufficient; for more doth rob the poor,

12 'Q' denoted Friends. See Durham Chapter Library: Raine MSS 25, and identified in M.S. Child, 'Prelude To Revolution: The Structure Of Politics In County Durham, 1678-1688', unpublished University of Maryland Ph.D. thesis, 1972, p. 25.

13 R.T.Vann and D.E.C. Eversley in *Friends in Life and Death: the British and Irish Quakers in the demographic transition, 1650-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 123.

14 Durham County Record Office (D.C.R.O.), SF/Da/MM/2/1. Rough minute book of Stockton Monthly Meeting, (1687-1750), minutes dated 8.12.1698.

15 D.C.R.O., SF/Da/MM/2/1, minutes dated 8.1.1698.

and please the wanton.'<sup>16</sup> Early modern attitudes in general towards appearance, especially dress, have been commented upon by historians<sup>17</sup> and literary theorists. Susan Vincent's work on early modern dress suggests that Tudor sumptuary laws served to list and hence tantalise the hearer with sartorial 'forbidden pleasures'.<sup>18</sup> Griffith's study of youth and authority in pre-Civil War England maintains that Puritan 'mistrust of decoration' was only part of broader concerns about the morals of the young, such as attendance of alehouses.<sup>19</sup> Although the Friends shared some of these anxieties, very little work has been done on the attention the Quakers paid to women's clothing, and the gendering of directives regarding dress issued by local meetings in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Young women were seen as particularly susceptible to the temptations of fashionable dress, whilst men were believed to be more vulnerable to the attractions of the alehouse.

One of the most detailed contemporary discussions of the Friends' rejection of worldly customs appeared in the first version of William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown* (1669). Penn described these customs as 'earthly impediments' which 'exercis[e] the minds of men and women below the excellencies of Immortality'.<sup>20</sup> The unredeemed were warned of the perils of facing the Messiah 'in the dark Customs of the World'.<sup>21</sup> Penn juxtaposed the Friends and the world by dressing the unredeemed in their own dark customs rather than the plain garments of the Friends; the former hid the wearer from the censure of the world, whilst the latter led to persecution but ultimately to the delights of the soul. Reasoning that it is not 'an Hat, Thou, or Rayment, nakedly in themselves', but the 'esteem and value' put on them by worldly vanity, he justified the Friends' testimony against them.<sup>22</sup>

Writing to her children from Dublin two decades later in 1686, the itinerant preacher Joan Vokins commented upon the godliness of Irish Friends who

do not suffer the world's fashions to be followed, for both men and women here do go plain in their apparel... And some public friends from hence, are going to England... they will be grieved to see friends' children stain the Truth, by attiring themselves not in modest apparel, and it would also be a great grief to me, if my children should be some of them.<sup>23</sup>

16 W. Penn, *Reflections and Maxims from Some Fruits of Solitude* (London, 1857 edn), p. 11.

17 For example, Margaret Spufford who commented upon the lack of attention paid by social historians towards clothing. See Spufford, *The Great Redclothing of Rural England* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 98.

18 S. Vincent, "'The Fashioning of the Mind and Conditions' Clothing and Identity in Early Modern England", unpublished University of York MA in Historical Research thesis, 1996.

19 P. Griffiths, *Youth and Authority Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 228.

20 William Penn, *No Cross No Crown* (1669), and provided in H.S. Barbour (ed.), *William Penn on Religion and Ethics The Emergence of Liberal Quakerism Studies in American Religion*, 53 part 1 (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 40.

21 Penn, *No Cross*: 'To the unredeemed (of all Ranks and Qualities) from the vain Customs of a wicked World', in Barbour (ed.), *William Penn*, p. 44.

22 Penn, *No Cross*, in Barbour (ed.), *William Penn*, pp. 44-45.

23 J. Vokins, 'To Her Children', dated Dublin, 18th 9mo (November) 1686, and provided in *Journal of the Life, Travels and Sufferings* (1871 edn.), pp. 107-108.

Vokins was most concerned with the appearance of other women. Her priority was the appearance of her daughters, biological and spiritual, and she feared that they would be particularly at risk from the temptations of the world with its 'vain unsettled fashions', which were neither 'comely, or an ornament to any professing Truth', but shameful and foolish. Young women may have been seen as more likely to succumb to the seductions of worldly vanity, and the older generation seem to have feared that the movement might founder in the face of this adversity. Those appointed or self-appointed to deal with the problem were women also. A detailed listing of the various elements of worldly fashion abhorred by the godly originating from the Hull Women's Meeting concluded that 'Mothers of Children and Elders, or Governors of families would take Care to put in practice what is Agreeable to Truth'.<sup>24</sup>

Women's policing of women within their Meetings is also apparent amongst the Durham Friends. Regular exhortations were made by the Women's Quarterly Meeting in 1680 to 'keep out of the Worlds vaine Fashions & Customs... that we may watch over one another, & Exhort one another to keep out of the worlds Spirrit in all things'.<sup>25</sup> The paper was to be read at all local meetings, and not only to the Women's meetings. This disseminated the allotted roles of Quaker women to Quaker men, and if anything highlighted the importance of female Friends to their families and the community as a whole. The paper stressed the part of women as mothers in the upbringing of their children away from the 'Evell company... vanitys Alurements, Snaires; and temptations that are in the world', and it instructed elder women to 'Exhort the younger to all sobriety and modesty in apparel'.<sup>26</sup> Although the Friends were certainly not alone in their criticism of excesses in dress, only they had such a systematic method not only of condemning immodest behaviour and appearance, but also of policing it at a grass roots level.

In 1697, the London Quarterly Meeting of women Friends sent out an epistle addressed 'to Women Friends but more Especially to A Young Generation with Children of Believing Parents'. Again the problem of attire was the prime concern of those who feared the ill effects of

Vanity that in to many of our Sex is Entered Especially Divers of the young sort... wee are heartily sorry to see so much superfluity and such great Pride... Ruffled Phantasticall and high Dresses gawdy attire flowred and Stript Silkes of Divers Colours Leaden Sleavs.<sup>27</sup>

Comments upon the need to actively suppress 'undecent fashion', whether

24 Hull University Library Archives, DQR/18/8/a: 'On Fashion', sheet detached from Women's Monthly Minute Book. It is catalogued as eighteenth century, but appears to be late-seventeenth century/early-eighteenth century.

25 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1. Durham Quarterly Meeting Book (1679-1751), minutes dated 4.11.1680.

26 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 4.11.1680.

27 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 5.8.1697: 'A copey of the Papper from London' (London Quarterly Meeting minutes dated 5.5.1697).

it be 'wearing hoopt pettycoats',<sup>28</sup> or especially 'young Women haveing their Necks too bare... & Scarlet stockings wrought with points of Silke of a different Coulor'<sup>29</sup> continued and seems to have intensified in the early eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The need for such discipline is hardly surprising given the growing temptations of secular society after the decriminalisation of Quaker meetings by the 1689 Toleration Act, after which Friends could worship freely as well as trade openly in the 'carnal' world.

Female Friends faced a real tension between their faith, dress code, and their participation in aspects of female culture outside the home and meeting house. Indeed, clothing and linens were of profound importance in female social and economic interactions, as 'textiles were almost as fluid as money as a medium of exchange'.<sup>31</sup> They consequently may have sacrificed much of their participation in this aspect of female culture by limiting their dress and clothing. Women often treated their clothes as a form of cash to be pawned if necessary, and their own creations 'formed the basis of social and cultural as well as economic networks'.<sup>32</sup> According to Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford they were gifts, even amongst the lower classes.<sup>33</sup> One entry in the account book of George Fox's stepdaughter Sarah Fell refers to the purchase of three handkerchiefs for her sister Susannah, 'yt she gave away'.<sup>34</sup> Quaker rejection of any superfluity would have undermined an important aspect of female culture, and it may be that many of the garments criticised by the Women's Meeting were given as gifts. Regardless, Quaker women were not entirely deterred from wearing fashionable clothing, as the constant reiteration of warnings and accounts of those reclaimed to the plain way suggests. It may be that the 'fetishizing' of forbidden garments, as identified by Vincent, made such clothing much more desirable.<sup>35</sup> Even Margaret Fell's daughters were not immune to temptation. Sarah Fell's accounts include references to black and 'sky coulered' ribbon for one sister,<sup>36</sup> green ribbon and black silk for another,<sup>37</sup> stockings dyed in a variety of shades from 'sky couler' to 'sea greene' and a petticoat dyed red.<sup>38</sup> Tension between the world and the Friends was not limited to less wealthy or well-known Quaker families by any means, and shortly before her death, in a passage suppressed from the printed edition of her epistles in 1698, Margaret criticised the 'whimsical,

28 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 2.8.1716.

29 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 4.8.1720.

30 Margaret Spufford has noted the lack of sources on early modern dress, while minute book entries provide descriptions of the clothing of women who were seldom members of the nobility, and were only occasionally gentlewomen. See Spufford, *The Great Recloning*, p. 99.

31 S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 222.

32 Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 223.

33 Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 223.

34 N. Penney (ed.), *The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 7 (entry dated 23 October 1673).

35 See Vincent, 'The Fashioning of the Mind', p. 3.

36 Penney, *The Household Account Book*, p. 7 (entry dated 16 October 1673).

37 Penney, *The Household Account Book*, p. 7 (entry dated 18 October 1673).

38 Penney, *The Household Account Book*, pp. 17, 293 (entries dated 20 November 1673, 18 July 1673).

narrow imaginations' of those decreeing that Friends should 'be all in one dress and one colour'.<sup>39</sup> The suppression of the passage is a significant reminder of Friends' attempts to unify their standpoint on issues of discipline towards the close of the seventeenth century.

In the late 1670s, the Darlington Friend Will Bimley was summoned to the monthly meeting over his 'going to the silke weaveing traid'. This was seen to threaten Quaker unity and overall condemnation of trades profiting from superfluity.<sup>40</sup> However, Sarah Kirkby of Auckland, who suffered for her faith before her death in 1692, was a successful material and hosiery seller. The inventory appended to her will shows that she dealt in a vast variety of material, including 'scotch stuff', yellow and green gingham, blue and printed linen and calico, white, blue and coloured hose, and men's and boys' blue stockings.<sup>41</sup> Even amongst Friends in the same county policy differed as Sarah continued her trade unmolested until the end of her life.

The Friends' method of dealing with those thought to be walking too closely to the ways of the world, or who tried 'to imitate the world in that Antick fashion', was to have them 'Reproved & Admonished', so that the stray lamb might be 'reclaimed'.<sup>42</sup> Raby Monthly Meeting in 1681 reported to the Quarterly Meeting that they had successfully laboured to bring several young women who had delighted in fashionable clothing 'to see the vanity and emptiness thereof'. The concept of fashion was inherently contradictory to the beliefs of the Friends, and 'Fashion', which to the Friends meant anything worldly and transitory, in this case referred to self-ornamentation by certain styles of clothing and haircut. The same report concluded with the assertion that 'Fashions & Customs may Chainge, because the World is Variable... But The Lord is unchaingable'.<sup>43</sup> As Penn commented in *No Cross*, it was a misplaced interest in changeable customs and excesses. Penn also likened the state of the true primitive Church, which the Friends claimed to have revived, to a woman returning to the ways of godly simplicity, as an outward sign of an inward state:

she put off her old conversation, which was after the fashions and customs of this world, that she might be adorned with the robes of righteousness - fine linen, white, the mark of innocence - fitly trimmed for the delight of her beloved.<sup>44</sup>

39 Lloyd, *Social History*, p. 73 n.45.

40 D.C.R.O., SF/Da/MM/1/1. Darlington, Shotton and Norton Monthly Meeting Book (1675-1687), minutes dated 8.8.1678.

41 Palace Green Archives, Durham University (Special Collections). The will (1688) and inventory (1692) of Sarah Kirkby of Bishop Auckland.

42 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 31.1.1691, 27.1.1692: papers from Raby and Darlington Women's Monthly Meetings in reply to the 1690 paper.

43 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 3.11.1681 entitled 'Att our Monthly Meeting att Raby the first of the 9th mo 1681.'

44 W. Penn, *William Penn's Journal of his Travels in Holland and Germany, in 1677, in the service of the Gospel* (London: Darton and Harvey, 4th edn., 1835), p. 172: 'Penn to Elizabeth, Princess Palatinate of the Rhine 1676'.

Here the importance of the appearance of female members of the Society becomes clear. Even Penn, who stressed the similarities between Friends and other Christians,<sup>45</sup> believed that female Quakers symbolically represented the state of the renewed Church, the innocent Bride of Christ purified of the sins of the Fallen world. Although the Women's Meetings modestly limited the role of women to a holy profession of Truth 'whose Adorning... was to be Inward & not Outward', the use of the figure of a woman in plain clothing to signify the primitive Church, alongside comments on the 'fashions and customs' of the world, unites fashion in clothing and religion as part of the fallen world to which Quaker women exemplified the antithesis.

Penn believed it to be the duty of both men and women to avoid and condemn such behaviour, but it seems likely that much of the responsibility for godly domestic life, including the regulation of apparel, was expected to fall on the shoulders of female Friends. Phyllis Mack has noted that early Quakerism stressed 'womanly simplicity' as a virtue, for their female prophets at least.<sup>46</sup> This combined with the status of the Church as Bride of Christ links individual Quaker women, their ideal demeanour and appearance to broader issues of Quaker church organisation and theology, with the ideal of simplicity at its heart. Even in the *Spectator* of 1714, a young Quakeress is described as appearing 'in all the elegance of cleanliness' with hair like 'purest cambric'.<sup>47</sup> She is the antithesis of the dirty beau with whom she shares a coach, whose wig alone, Marcia Pointon believes, symbolizes 'human filth and corruption' and 'failed masculinity' in contrast to the purity of the young woman.<sup>48</sup> To the Quakers such cleanliness was not simply an external state, but an internal one also. In the north-west of England, Samuel Watson's description of his late wife Mary as living 'in sweetness and cleanness in her life time'<sup>49</sup> was intended to be both a testimony to her virtue and an exemplar for the edification of others. The methods employed by the Friends to maintain godly purity also set them apart from their contemporaries, as they published accounts of the lives of exemplary Friends to serve as role models for others, whilst maintaining a network of meetings even in times of great persecution which served both to support and discipline members.

There are nevertheless very few references to male adornment amongst the minute books of the Durham Friends. Occasional criticisms of female hairstyles occur throughout the Quarterly Meeting minute book, but there is only one identifiable case of unacceptable male dress, that of Cornelius White, whose father Enoch was questioned by other male Friends 'for what reason his son

45 For example, see 'The humble, meek, just, pious and devout souls, are everywhere of one religion... though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers.' Penn, *Reflections*, pp. 49-50.

46 P. Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (California: California University Press, 1992), p. 252.

47 *The Spectator*, 8 no.631 (entry dated 10 December 1714).

48 M. Pointon, *Hanging the Head* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 121-122.

49 S. Watson, *An Epistle By way of Testimony, To the friends of Manchester* (1695), p. 9 entry entitled 'A Short Testimony concerning my dear Wife, Mary Watson'.

Cornelius hath cut off [f] his haire & got a wig'.<sup>50</sup> This occurred at a relatively late stage after decades of warnings from the Women's Meeting on the evils of the fashions of the world. This suggests that women were more likely to come into contact with the grey areas of Quaker practice, having especially to shop and trade in the world, at least up to the early eighteenth century. It also suggests that by this time young men were not immune to the temptations, or cultural pressures, which young women had been under for some decades.

The Quakers' rejection of wigs also applied to other groups in the eighteenth century, but was particularly intense in the Friends' discourse.<sup>51</sup> Although Lloyd asserted that Friends' attitude to wigs was simply an 'unsmiling' application of principled simplicity to all aspects of life,<sup>52</sup> Pointon comments that the wig was a powerful signifier capable of a variety of occasionally contradictory connotations,<sup>53</sup> the Friends regarding it as, amongst other things, symptomatic of worldly vanity. Once it became customary for men to wear wigs, to appear without one was considered deviant,<sup>54</sup> so unsurprisingly renunciation of the wig often directly followed spiritual revelation. The wig did not simply symbolise an aspect of the superfluity of a sinful world, but had a particular significance apparent in the case of Cornelius White, serving to symbolise the wider influence of an ungodly world upon him. Less than two years later, he was questioned about 'Evill reports' heard of him,<sup>55</sup> and his 'Evill conversation viz of his being Drunk & fighting'.<sup>56</sup>

#### ALEHOUSE CULTURE

Alehouses and drunkenness were aspects of worldly masculinity and culture which the Friends were keen to reject in their meetings, insulating an alternative masculinity in the mould of Fox's Christlike suffering or Penn's charitable businessman. Alehouses at the lower end of the market provided alcohol for the mass of society and were seen as the most disreputable of places to drink, as well as a hotbed for social disorder.<sup>53</sup> It is not surprising that the Friends continued to condemn alehouses and their culture throughout the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In many respects the alehouse was associated with elements of society and customs with which the Friends did not wish to be identified, and in many cases they strongly objected to them.

In the north of England at least, the traditional link between the established church and public drinking continued into the seventeenth century with illicit

50 D.C.R.O., SF/BA/PM/1/1, Bishop Auckland Preparative Meeting Book (1715-1717, 1729-1774), minutes dated 12.11.1715.

51 M. Pointon, 'Quakerism and Visual Culture 1650-1800', *Art History* 20.3 (1997), p. 411.

52 Lloyd, *Social History*, pp. 72-73, which includes an (undated) example from the Sunderland Register Book.

53 Pointon, *Hanging*, p. 116.

54 Pointon, *Hanging*, p. 117.

55 D.C.R.O., SF/BA/PM/1/1, minutes dated 29.7.1717.

56 D.C.R.O., SF/BA/PM/1/1, minutes dated 3.9.1717.

57 D. Carlile, 'Religious, Legal and Moral Approaches to Alcohol Abuse in the Northern Province, c.1660-1725', unpublished University of York MA thesis, (1998), p. 15.

clerical victualling.<sup>58</sup> The alehouse was, for men, an alternative to established family life for much of the period, and this too was anathema to the Friends. In some ways the men's meeting may be interpreted as a godly alternative to this, as it too dealt with credit, which in the alehouse was 'an invaluable lifeline for the poor',<sup>59</sup> debt and business matters. Richard Allestree, sometime King's chaplain and Provost of Eton, condemned the excuses given by those drinking immoderately, 'good fellowship' and 'the maintaining of friendship', concluding that time spent in the alehouse led to 'madness and phrenzy, turns the man into a Beast', and would be better spent being 'thrifly husbanded to that end in actions of good life'.<sup>60</sup>

There seems to be no reason why the Friends' view of immoderate drinking should have differed greatly from Allestree's. However, this was only part of their rejection of the ways of the world. Whilst drunkenness was certainly perceived as a vice, being in an alehouse amongst carnal influences was seen as inherently perilous because of the danger which the Truth might be put into by such an association. With this in mind the Lanchester Quarterly Meeting in 1672 called upon members to 'draw up a paper agt disorderly marriages, drunkenness & ordering of Families'.<sup>61</sup> Those who were sanctioned by the Friends' system of internal policing included Elizabeth Lindley of Yarm Preparative Meeting, a stereotypically unruly woman accused of 'the falce liberty' of drinking and 'disorders in her Famaly'.<sup>62</sup> By exhibiting such scandalous behaviour, Lindley not only risked her own soul, but by failing to provide for her family, and act as a virtuous wife, she contributed to the breakdown of a Christian household. Moreover, by acting in such a manner she put her family at risk from the vices of the carnal world, and threatened the reputation of the Society.

Drunken fathers and husbands, in one example at least, received more sympathy. In part, this may have been due to an appreciation of the temptations of alehouse culture and the tension between this aspect of male culture and the beliefs of the Friends. In 1713, a testimony was recorded against John Younger by the Sunderland Friends when they visited his family and reported that they found 'the discord & disturbance therein yett to remain'. Rejecting their advice Younger continued drinking excessively, and two male Friends were asked by the meeting to speak to his wife Miriam, that 'shee take care to give no Just Occassion nor carry her self in any respect contemptuously towards her Husband, but to indeavour by a Loving & Submissive carredge, becoming the Truth to retrieve him out of his Lost Condition'. He seems to have been viewed as more worthy of pity than of contempt. Furthermore, concerned Friends warned that the couple's quarrels had 'not onely tended to great dishonour of

58 P. Clark, *The English Alehouse* (London: Longman, 1983), p. 75.

59 Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 137.

60 Richard Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man* (1657), pp. 170-171, 179, entry entitled 'Temperance in Drinking'.

61 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/2/1, Durham Quarterly Meeting Book (1672-1727), minutes dated 25.4.1672.

62 D.C.R.O., SF/Ym/PM/1/1, Yarm Preparative Meeting Book (1688-1762), minutes dated 10.1.1689.

themselves, and an hurtfull Example to their Children & servants, Butt also (had) given Occasion to the World to Speak Evill of the Truth'. By ignoring their advice and 'persisting in his former perverse & irreconcilable Spirit... often overtaken with the Sin of Drunkenness', they were nevertheless denied fellowship with Friends.<sup>63</sup>

Although the Friends condemned his actions entirely, they warned his wife against judging him too harshly, and she seems to have been partially blamed for the situation. However, this was one of very few cases dealt with in the period. This may represent a great deal of inner unity on the subject amongst the Durham Friends, with a coherent and well-publicised rejection of early modern alehouse culture. They may also have tried to deal with the problem as subtly as possible in the knowledge that personal disorder would give Friends' enemies most pleasure. For example, in 1709 Friends of Darlington Preparative Meeting used the initials of those accused of frequenting alehouses in their minutes, but the men involved were warned that if they did not refrain, they would be 'called by name' in the next meeting. Here, Durham Friends followed the Yearly Meeting's advice in 1673 that publicity should not be greater than the offence but should simply 'clear truth'.<sup>64</sup>

By the early eighteenth century, young men seem to have been those most likely to be spoken to about their frequenting of alehouses. This parallels the greater number of young men and women reprimanded for following the fashions of the world in other ways such as in dress. The Darlington Preparative Meeting minutes provide examples of 'undue liberty in frequenting ye Ale Houses & staying their when they have no business'.<sup>65</sup> Whilst the Friends seem perhaps, through some ambivalent wording, to have accepted the place of the alehouse in contemporary culture as the setting of many business dealings, they were not at all supportive of it as a legitimate leisure activity.

In conclusion, the Durham Quaker minute books reflect the preoccupations represented elsewhere in the movement and to some extent in wider society. Friends attempted to reform the world by example, and were partially successful. Darlington Monthly Meeting reported to the Quarterly Meeting in 1695 that superfluous provision of food and alcohol at births and burials was against Quaker discipline, whilst by living plainly Friends were an exemplar for others who 'say wee take a better way than they Doe and Wishes they could Doe Soe'.<sup>66</sup> Friends' published journals identified the key elements of Quaker discipline for both a Quaker and non-Quaker readership, including their rejection of alehouse culture and other forms of superfluity. However, the figure of Quaker womanhood as the antithesis of the worldly and carnal meant many differences in priorities between Men's and Women's meetings, and

63 D.C.R.O., SF/Su/2, Sunderland Preparative Meeting Book (1706-1737), minutes dated 11.11.1713.

64 Vann, *Social Development*, p. 138.

65 D.C.R.O., SF/Da/PM/1/1, Darlington Preparative Meeting Book (1703-1753), minutes dated 9.8.1709.

66 D.C.R.O., SF/Du/QM/3/1, minutes dated 29.7.1695.

contradictions between Friends and the world, were destined to be defined along the lines of gender.

#### AUTHOR DETAILS

Erin Bell studied at York University for her undergraduate BA in History and for her MA in Historical Research. As a postgraduate of the History Department at York she has recently submitted her Ph.D. thesis entitled 'Discipline and Manhood in the Society of Friends', which is largely based on early Durham Friends. She has spoken widely on Quakerism at a variety of conferences, including the Quaker Historians and Archivists at Haverford in June 2002 and at the 350<sup>th</sup> George Fox Anniversary Conference held at Swarthmore College in October 2002.

Mailing address: 9 North Lane, Haxby, York YO32 3JR, England.

Email: eab108@yahoo.co.uk