David Sox, *Quakers and the Arts: 'Plain and Fancy': An Anglo-American Perspective* (York: Sessions, 2000), pp. viii + 127. Paperback £12.00. ISBN 1-85072-245-5.

The dispositions of Quakers toward the visual and performing arts are complex and changing. In a normative gesture, Solomon Eccles, a contemporary of Fox and a member of a distinguished musical family, renounced music and smashed his viols because it diverted him from divinity[1]. Time was when the only illustrations to be found in a Quaker home were a picture of William Penn's treaty with the Indians, an instructive diagram of a slave ship drawn by Thomas Clarkson and the plan of Ackworth school. The functions of the ethic of plainness, of the aversion to 'cumber', of the proper stewardship of time and of the vanity of sitting for portraits have occupied the authors of various secondary accounts of which one of the more scholarly is Elizabeth Isichei's *Victorian Quakers*.[2] Similarly, Frederick Nicholson[3] traces the constraint of a Quaker ethic upon the practice of those inclined to artistic expression and while

1. K.C. Barnes, *Integrity and the Arts* (York: Sessions, 1984), p. 8.
2. E. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
3. F.J. Nicholson, *Quakers and the Arts* (London: Quaker Home Service Committee, 1988).

invariably starts a generation or two back and is exclusive of much engagement of the kinds of issue that its title might be thought to promise The personal tensions of recognizing talents within an environment of explicit taboos are barely traced. There is little sense of the potential of art as ministry. The theme of 'plain and fancy' appears in the subtitle but does not survive long in the text.

Lastly, one wishes at times for the hand of a more meticulous editor. There are sentences that break into parenthetical details with commas or dashes but do not recover. There are spellings pardonable only by Americans, such as the verb form *practice*. Was it in 1894 or 1895 that Roger Fry portrayed Edward Carpenter? The date varies from one place to another. These are irritations to the reader rather than profound obstacles, but the book would be better without them.

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