In This Issue of QHE…
Donn Weinholtz - Editor

This fall's *Quaker Higher Education* preserves some of the content and spirit of the historic June 2008 FAHE Conference held, for the first time, at Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Center in Birmingham,U.K. **Jennifer Barraclough** is Woodbrooke's director. Her counterpart. *at* Pendle Hill, the Quaker Study Center in Wallingford, Pennslylvania, is **Lauri Perman.** We open with an invited conversation between the two regarding the opportunities and challenges of leading these two venerable, important Quaker institutions.

Jennifer and Lauri's discussion is followed by a three-article set addressing how the Quaker simplicity testimony, witnessed through "plain" style, might be applied to academic writing. The first article, by **"Ben" Pink Dandelion,** provides an historical and sociological perspective. "Ben," a Professor of Quaker Studies, directs the work of the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke and the University of Birmingham. His article is followed by **Laura Rediehs'** philosophical analysis examining the meaning of "plainness" for different rhetorical contexts. Laura is an Associate Professor, Chair of Philosophy and Coordinator of Peace Studies at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York. **Mike Heller**, Professor of English at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia,

then explores whether striving towards "plainness" is an aspect of, or a departure from, "spirit-led expression."

The next article is by **James W. Hood,** Associate Professor of English at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Jim examines the poetry of Keats, showing how acts of writing and reading may constitute "ethical practice" driving our moral development. Finally, **Steve Smith,** retired Professor of Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, California., delves into some consequences of "scholarly detachment" incompatible with Quaker commitment to community and the spiritual leadings of the heart. I hope that you enjoy all of these selections.

Call for Submissions: The April 2009 issue of *QHE* will focus, in part, upon Quaker perspectives on college-level science education in light of the global sustainability crisis. Submissions for possible publication on this topic, or others, are welcome. Articles should be sent to me, as Word documents, no later than February 15, 2010. Since *QHE* is not wed to any particular referencing format, you may use the professional style of your choice. Please email: weinholtz@hartford.edu or telephone: 860-768-4186. My snail-mail address is: Department. of Educational Leadership, University of Hartford, 223 Auerbach Hall, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford, CT 06117.

Woodbrooke and Pendle Hill: Two Friends Converse
Jennifer Barraclough and Lauri Perman

Donn Weinholtz suggested a set of questions to structure this conversation, but also invited us to suggest our own focus where we wished. For example, Lauri suggested that it would be helpful to her and to others for Jennifer to reflect, at length, on the change process that has taken place at Woodbrooke over the past ten years.

Lauri: Friends may first wish to know that when I became director of Pendle Hill in May 2007, Jennifer Barraclough reached out her hand in friendship and support. I visited Woodbrooke in July 2007 and what I learned there was invaluable. Jennifer arranged for me to meet with all her managers, all the tutors individually and as a group, and she opened Woodbrooke's books and records to me. Among others, I talked to the head of centre operations, the gardener, the chef, the head of housekeeping, and studied Trustee minutes, sat in on management and staff meetings. The Woodbrooke financial officer spent hours looking at Pendle Hill financial records with me. I feel indebted to Jennifer for her friendship, managerial guidance, and spiritual support during a difficult first year. Jennifer has had the vision that Woodbrooke and Pendle Hill could work together, support one another, and thereby strengthen the Religious Society of Friends.

QHE: **How are the missions of Pendle Hill and Woodbrooke similar and different?**

Jennifer: Where Pendle Hill and Woodbrooke are alike is in our common focus on the structured learning which nourishes our life as Quakers. We both offer organizational support for this process. We are both committed to the liberal unprogrammed tradition and see our role as the nurture of intelligent, informed Friends who will in turn nurture and inform both the Religious Society and Friends in general.

Lauri: You're right, Jennifer, that we both see Quaker education as the core of our mission; on the other hand, I am clear that Pendle Hill is called to serve the entire body of Friends, not only the unprogrammed tradition. In recent years, Pendle Hill has been blessed by students from Kenya and Rwanda, whose experience is with the pastoral tradition. As another example, one of the members of our General Board is FAHE member Carole Spencer, an evangelical Friend who is on the faculty of George Fox University.

Knowing that Pendle Hill is to serve the entire body of Friends is part of the call I experienced to come to Pendle Hill. In our recent long-range planning process, the Pendle Hill Board of Trustees affirmed that one of our goals over the next five years is to reach out to serve the entire body of Friends, without "alienating our core constituency," meaning the unprogrammed tradition.

The founders of Pendle Hill were seeking a project to bring together Philadelphia Hicksite and Orthodox Friends. Creating opportunities today to bridge the various divisions among Friends seems an extension of Pendle Hill's original mission.

Jennifer: Our differences are probably around operation. Woodbrooke no longer functions as a residential com- munity, although hospitality remains at its heart. Our visitors are supported by a changing team of Quaker volunteers, rather than by Friends who are enabled to live where they work. Pendle Hill still is a residential Quaker community with both staff and students living on campus.

Lauri: Yes, I think that is what really makes Pendle Hill unique. Visitors step into a living Quaker community. Even our non-Quaker conference visitors remark on the difference a residential community makes. Jennifer, you may want FAHE members to know that Woodbrooke welcomes them to apply to serve as Friends in Residence for periods of two weeks to six months

Jennifer: Yes, we're always looking for volunteer Friends in Residence. Our present mission is to provide a hospitality service in which is embedded the education programme and which incorporates a strong Quaker business model. We hope by doing this to ensure the survival of Woodbrooke as a physical location for Friends, but also to model a sound contemporary business enterprise. Very few Friends today have experience of this stratum of Quaker life. They tend to know only their (relatively) small Quaker meeting, or the more diffuse engagement with social issues which depends on individuals who have learned their skills largely in non-Quaker settings.

Lauri: I know that my visits to Woodbrooke have been very instructive in seeing how a large Quaker enterprise can be professionally managed. I'd appreciate it if you could tell me, and I think other Friends would be interested

too, more about **the change process** that **has taken place at Woodbrooke over the past ten years.**

Jennifer: It has taken nearly a decade to reach the point where I can summarize these aspects of Woodbrooke succinctly. In 1999, Woodbrooke was considering closure. In 1998, a major funder had insisted on a commission report about Woodbrooke's future, anxious because direction had been lost and overall governance and management were weak. The commission's recommendations were clear and substantial, but required Woodbrooke to generate income through acting as a conference centre, in addition to changing its teaching programme to a year-round offering of short courses. None of the operational structures were in place to achieve this; morale was very low; and there was a lack within the organization of skills needed to address the new proposals.

I came as director in April 1999 on a two-year temporary contract. There had been a moment of hesitation on the part of the then trustees, some of whom believed initially that a theological academic would provide Woodbrooke with the leadership needed to turn things around. I have a very different background. At the time, my experience allowed me to know a little of market- ing, budget management, business development, staff management, adult learning, the hospitality industry, and the structures of Quaker life in Britain. This mixed bag gave me just enough to bluff my way through all the areas in which Woodbrooke had to change. I look back and see that I maintained the bluff through some specific strategies!

Lauri: Tell me about them.

Jennifer: Gladly, these are the strategies that I learned, on-the-job, for leading change at Woodbrooke.

1.   Stay cheerful. If they see you worry, your staff worry. And that wastes their energy, which you need them to apply to their jobs, not yours.

2.   Find everything you can about which to be enthusiastic. I praised clothes, jokes, haircuts, the weather, clearing away rubbish bags (which shouldn't have been there in the first place), planting tubs with plants…..I greeted as many people as I could, by name if possible, and walked the building everyday to see staff at work on a casual basis and learn what they did, how and why (still do, though not every day now).

3.   Make decisions. People at Woodbrooke were exhausted because they would go round and round finding solutions which no one could then implement. They also tried to find solutions in areas where they didn't have expertise. I had to show that making decisions was enjoyable and effective, not frustrating and always open to challenge.

4.   Hire capable people and delegate. I knew that it could only be for a short while that I took responsibility for virtually everything; I needed to create systems which could be run by others and find the right people to develop them successfully. The staff who were recruited that first year were exceptional, and we have gone on finding good people.

Simultaneously, we have created systems which will work even if the personnel changes. Woodbrooke had been overly dependent on the individual, which can be immeasurably valuable, but can also be very dangerous if it's idiosyncrasy which rules and not creativity.

5.   Have standards – in everything. Woodbrooke had no real standards to which it operated and bringing in good people showed what could be achieved. One of my earliest and truly important actions was to hire a good graphic designer for our logo and publicity. His great contribution was to show staff here what others saw – the potential for growth, the roots, the beauty in the place – and boost their confidence in a remarkably simple way, by saying, implicitly, you are worth the service of my talents.

6.   Be prepared – though you can't be – for exhaustion, self-doubt, loneliness, misery, and rage. Whatever will get you through, use it. My strategies included friends – those who would read the balance sheets with me, those who really didn't care a stuff about Quakers and took me shopping, those who took me on holiday and made me look at paintings; a dog, a beloved companion who put up with so much; and books, though for a long time I read very little at length. My quotes wall kept me

going, and I notice with interest that I have still got pinned up two quotes from the very first week:

Andre Gide: *One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.*

George Roth (from *The Dance of Change): The same three elements remain constant, in polo and in organizational change: Joy in the game is crucial. You keep your eye on the goal, not on the mechanics of the job. And your game depends on the quality of contact.*

Lauri: So, Jennifer, what was your goal?

Jennifer: My goal was much less sophisticated than I think my first trustees expected. My image was frequently that of a large, beautiful cow which had fallen over and needed help to get up. My shoulder was in the flank and all I had to keep doing was to push…..I wanted Woodbrooke to be clean, efficient, and functional. Just for starters….

Then I wanted it to be imaginative, joyful, and welcoming. Nothing clever – just people able to say hello with a smile to anyone around the place, or to notice when something could be improved and <u>do</u> it.

Then I discovered I was getting ambitious. Now, I want Woodbrooke to be world famous, an icon for Quaker thought and practice, rich (well, enough to be out of deficit) substantial, attractive to leaders in their field….oh dear…..! And underneath, I know I want to meet God here. I know I have said almost

nothing about "being Quaker." This is because I don't think claiming a spiritual basis to your actions is a substitute for knowing what people who aren't grounded in faith know. I still say, if it looks as if we know nothing about plumbing, why should anyone believe we know something about God? And besides, in 1999, they didn't hire a Quaker theologian….

Lauri, what has been your experience of change in your first year as director?

Lauri: I've been surprised at the extent of staff turnover. In selecting me, Trustees wanted to make sure that I could manage a change process and that I was prepared to make hard personnel decisions. Still, in my naivete, I had expected a relatively low rate of staff turnover. Looking back over the past year, four of the six members of the original management team are no longer with Pendle Hill, and only one serves on the current management team. Altogether, 11 of the 25 full-time staff members at Pendle Hill a year ago are no longer on staff. We have 15 employees who have started just in the last four months, since June 2008.

Jennifer: How does that feel?

Lauri: I find it exciting and energizing. The staff as a whole recognizes the ability of the new management team to work together and to involve others in making decisions. Visitors remark on a palpable sense of optimism and energy that they haven't felt at Pendle Hill in a while. At the same time, I would describe the pace of change as so rapid as to feel violent – even to me. Although I believe the changes have been necessary for Pendle

Hill to survive and thrive, I feel sad to be the instigator of so much disruption in people's lives. In all fairness to the staff who chose to leave, many had served under five different administrations in a little more than three years – there's a limit to how much change people can tolerate in a short period of time. There I was bringing yet another set of standards and expectations to their work. I find myself trying to figure out how to slow the pace of change in order to give staff members the chance to catch up.

Jennifer: What else happened in the first year?

Lauri: Together the Board of Trustees, the General Board, staff, and students engaged in a participatory, long-range planning process. I think this process, which required deep listening in order to develop a shared vision for the future of Pendle Hill, has been instrumental in transforming relationships within the boards, between the boards, and between the boards and management team members. Over the next five years, I have committed to reporting quarterly to the boards and staff on progress toward that year's strategic priorities.

Jennifer: What challenges are you facing now?
Lauri: It's time now to turn more closely to financial matters. Pendle Hill really needs to have a better under- standing of what it costs us financially to have staff live on campus and make sure we structure this in a way that is sustainable long-term for the organi- zation. We also need to improve our financial record-keeping so that we understand the true costs of each of our programs. In order to improve our financial position, we need to know which programs we should be

expanding and which we might need to curtail. In short, we need to know how to allocate our available beds between: staff housing, Quaker workshop participants, conference rentals, sojourner overnights, and our resident educational program. We're also beginning to flesh out a five-year plan for facilities improvements to match our programming decisions.

QHE: **What can Woodbrooke and Pendle Hill offer FAHE members and their institutions?**

Lauri: Both institutions have scholar-ships for **sabbatical research and writing**. The Eva Koch Scholarship and Ferguson Fellowship at Woodbrooke and the Cadbury Scholarship at Pendle Hill are designed to encourage academics to spend several months to an academic year in residence pursing scholarly work. The Cadbury Scholar- ship requires a focus on Quaker faith, practice, or history. Both Woodbrooke and Pendle Hill have on-site libraries as well as arrangements with the University of Birmingham and Swarthmore College respectively for additional library resources.

Jennifer: We each invite FAHE members to propose **short courses or workshops** to test innovative course proposals, to invite the opportunity to engage with highly motivated adult learners, and to teach in a setting that supports spiritual community with both morning Meeting for Worship and evening epilogues (short semi-programmed gatherings at 9:30 or 9:15 p.m.). Woodbrooke invites such instruc-tors to become **Associate Tutors** and form an ongoing relationship with Woodbrooke.
Jennifer: We can offer FAHE members a site to host **small to medium-sized**

conferences and gatherings, including financial management of small grants to support such gatherings. We offer and can create **Quaker education programs** to serve to introduce non-Quaker staff and faculty to Quakerism and to Quaker education. Both Woodbrooke and Pendle Hill can, with enough notice, provide opportunities for **accompanied tours of Quaker historical sites** in 1652 country or Philadelphia, respectively. In short, faculty and students can make history come to life through lived and shared experience.

Lauri: Pendle Hill is prepared to offer **hospitality and spiritual nurture to students** pursuing internships in the Philadelphia area. Students who are able to take a semester's leave from their home institution may apply to enter Pendle Hill's Social Action/Social Witness program. In this program, students spend two or more days a week in a placement in a peace or social justice agency. Pendle Hill is prepared to collaborate with students' home academic institutions to supply the onsite supervision necessary to document the student's work in order for them to receive academic credit for independent study work through the home institution.

Finally, **Pendle Hill's Young Adult Leadership Development program**, a summer program for young adults 18 to 24, is an ideal opportunity for students to combine study of Quakerism, service, and leadership. This application-only program currently does not require a financial contribution from student participants.

*QHE***: How can FAHE members support Pendle Hill and Woodbrooke?**

Jennifer: Of course it was wonderful for Woodbrooke to be able to host the June 2008 meeting of FAHE. Many FAHE members were visiting Wood- brooke for the first time.We hope that they will find ways to return, perhaps with students. Woodbrooke is well
positioned for students embarking on tours of 1652 country as well as Stratford-on-Avon.

Lauri: My fondest hope is to see more FAHE members taking sabbaticals at Pendle Hill. Every year I would like to have an FAHE member in residence as our Cadbury Scholar writing a book or set of articles. George Gorman wrote *The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship* at Pendle Hill, and delivered a new chapter or part of a chapter each week as a Monday Night Lecture. I'd be happy to explore a similar structured opportunity for another dedicated writer.

Jennifer: Woodbrooke has a joint program with FWCC-London to develop and deliver e-courses in Europe. Currently the program is being tested in 12 countries. Pendle Hill, Woodbrooke, and FWCC have an interest in a joint program of e-learning. As more FAHE member institutions develop e-courses, we are eager to avoid duplication of efforts elsewhere but believe there is an interest among both seekers and Quakers for quality non-credit opportunities for learning about Quakerism.

Lauri: I think Pendle Hill would be an ideal location for a faculty orientation program for new faculty at a Quaker institution. FCE runs a similar program at Pendle Hill for teachers new to Friends Schools. I would love to see Quaker institutions of higher education develop a

faculty orientation program for faculty new to Quaker education.

The more FAHE members use Pendle Hill and Woodbrooke, the better!

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Plaining the Academy: How Are We to Write as Quakers?
Laura Rediehs, Ben Pink Dandelion and Mike Heller

Peter Collins has claimed that Quakers can be most readily identified by their tendency to 'plain' and that Quakers collectively have been involved in "plaining" throughout their history. Within Quakerism, the testimony to plainness has been converted into a testimony to simplicity and yet "the plain" endures as a consequence of Quaker affiliation. How then are Quakers to write for the academy where erudition and skill with language is valued? How are we to enhance "clarity" in disciplines driven by a twentieth century agenda based on a scientific model seeking to establish authority and proof? Where are the Quaker role models? What might it mean to write in the plain style? This set of articles offers the reflections of three scholars working in different disciplines on what "plain- ness"means. It also exhibits the "plain- ness" of our own academic writing while sharing our speculations about what could enhance this critical aspect of Quaker integrity within higher education.

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Plain Art: The Un-embellished Ideal of Quaker and Academic Writing
Pink Dandelion

Within the sociology of British Quakerism, there is a debate between those who see narrative threads of Quakerism running throughout the history of Quakerism, such as Gay Pilgrim, and those who see the twentieth century and the birth of Liberal Quakerism as significantly different to the degree that it represents a wholly new form of Quakerism. Peter Collins has claimed that one of the threads running through the history of Quakerism is the tendency to "the plain" and to what he calls "plaining" (Collins, 1996, 2001, 2008). This article attempts to outline his theory of the plain whilst allowing for the shifts Liberal Quakerism introduced as a precursor to thinking about how far academic writing can be considered plain in Quaker terms (or, as the companion articles ask, how far Quaker academic writing can be considered plain).

The impulse to the plain as a consequence of spiritual transformation came very early in the history of Friends. We find a distinctive set of behaviours readily identifying Quakers from "the world" almost from the beginning. The following quotation, written by one of two cousins appointed to police plainness amongst the homes of the members, is from the 1680s, and depicts well the main concerns.

> As to our own clothing, we had but little to alter, having both of us been pretty plain in our garb, yet some things we did change to greater sim- plicity. But my dear cousin, being naturally of a very exact and nice fancy, had things in more curious order as regards household furniture than I had: and therefore as a testimony against such superfluities and that spirit which led into it, he altered or exchanged, as I did, several articles that were too

fine . . . Our fine veneered and garnished cases of drawers, tables, stands, cabinets, escritoires, &c., we put away, or exchanged for decent plain ones of solid wood, without superfluous garnishing or ornamental work; our wainscots or woodwork we had painted of one plain colour; our large mouldings or finishings of panelling, &c., our swelling chimney-pieces, curiously twisted banisters, we took down and replaced with useful plain woodwork, &c.; our curtains, with valences, drapery and fringes that we thought too fine, we put away or cut off; our large looking-glasses with decorated frames we sold, or made them into smaller ones; and our closets that were laid out with many little curious or nice things were done away (Braithwaite, 1919, p. 507)

"Plain" is the key word here: Peter Collins suggests that Quakers "plained" their lives and their Meeting Houses and that "plaining" acted as the creation of a symbolic order *vis a vis* the apostate church they defined themselves against (1996). Plaining points towards inward spirituality even whilst its emphasis is the outward reduction of superfluity. Collins suggests that theologically it points to the hidden, to God, only to be revealed once the outward is removed (Collins, 1996, p. 285). Fox issued this advice on dress in 1688:

> Away with your skimming-dish hats, and your unneces- sary buttons on the tops of your sleeves, shoulders, backs and behind on your coats and cloaks. And away with your long slit yokes on the skirts of your waistcoat; and short sleeves, and pinching your shoulders so as you cannot make use of your arms, and your short black aprons and some having none. And away with your visors, whereby you are not distinguished. From bad women, and bare necks, and needless flying scarves like rollers on your back (Braithwaite, 1912, p. 511).

Superfluity is contrasted with necessity.

Collins, in his work, places Quaker plain style within the broader context of Christian plain style and the important work by Peter Auksi. Auksi outlines the ideology of plain style:

> If the devotee of Christian plainness in artistic expression has one central premise, it is this: the more lowly, artless, ineloquent, unadorned, and 'earthen' the outward vessel or covering garment of its style is, the more God-given and divinely persuasive appears the excellency of the matter to be conveyed or covered (Auksi 1995, 91)

The plain represents purity, a necessary but unadorned veil to cover the divine. As Collins writes "plain is to grand as spirit is to Flesh" (2001, 127).

In other words, as Collins and I have written elsewhere (Collins and Dandelion, 2006), the holy is "wrapped" by the codes and rules of the group to enforce

cohesion and to protect the means to, and expression of, experience, always central in the Quaker polity: "The plain is rarely artless, it is generally a construction, a more or less conscious means of eschewing establishment" (Collins 2001, 129). However, in plain style, a theological impulse is present too: "The Preacher is pressed to conceal his art and artifice and any mode of artistic expression, plain or not, as representing a formal technical skill" (Collins 2001, 129). Plain is about minimalizing the world behind which or within which the holy operates. Plain is thus about constructing the un-embellished to protect and express the pure, both in terms of the human elect and the spiritual outworkings of transformation and providence.

In the eighteenth century, the plain was increasingly central as a measure of authenticity and the Quaker organization saw its transgression as one form of spiritual delinquency (Marietta 2007). Quaker houses were plain and unadorned. The only picture found in British Quaker homes in the eighteenth century was the ground plan of Ackworth School, plain in its aesthetic and its affect.

The battle over "the hedge" (between Quakers and the world) and its trimming after the 1850s included a battle over whether "plain" could be inhabited without outward expression. The debates in London Yearly Meeting over ending compulsory plain dress and speech were couched in terms of the ability to maintain "simplicity" inwardly. As a result, British Quakerism moved from the collective formality to individualistic choice, a shift mirrored in other parts of the Quaker world.

Testimony no longer functions as an automatic consequence to spiritual experience as it did for seventeenth century Friends, or as a rule of life in the way that it did in the eighteenth century. Testimony rather has become a set of values which are interpreted individually (Jung 2006, 32-56). Testimony as a necessary corporate category has become smaller as less is collectively agreed on as vital and also as the corporate experience reduces more and more to what happens at Meeting, with the home life outside of the control of the Meeting. Friends choose what is and is not plain for them. As Colins notes:

> After the mid-nineteenth century, what had been implicit was necessarily made explicit: the centrality of 'the plain' to Quaker faith and practice gave rise to the associated *process*, that is, *plaining*. Plaining is a learned and cognitive tendency to classify the world in terms of the distinction plain/not-plain. Quakers, as they mature, become more or less conscious of practicing such discrimination. I remember a long conversation between Friends after one Meeting for Worship in 2003 which was explicitly about the pros and cons of various cars. I have time here only to note that the comments could only be understood in the context of the Quaker tendency to plain. The fact that each Friend involved in the conversation preferred a different car in no way weakens my argument: plaining is a process which enables Quakers to justify the

choices they make. For instance, a commodity which might seem far from plain to one Friend can be justified as plain in terms of its good safety record, because of the savings it will generate in the long run or because of the employment its manufacture provides. The criteria used to define the plain or not-plain are neither fixed nor essential. There is nothing necessary about, or inherent in, those things which are perceived to be plain. Things are construct- ed as plain by Friends. (2008, 44)

Collins claims the "simplicity" of the debates of the 1850's, and the term more commonly used by Friends today, as an extension of plainness, as do Quakers:

> The heart of Quaker ethics is summed up in the word simplicity. Simplicity is forgetfulness of self and remembrance of our hum- ble status as waiting ser- vants of God. Outwardly, simplicity is shunning sup- erfluities of dress, speech, behaviours and possessions, which tend to obscure our vision of reality (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995, 20.27*)*

This extract makes it clear the bicycle is to be preferred to the Volvo.

Returning to a more essential view of the plain as unadorned, constructed or conscious or not, what then are we to make of the genre of academic writing? In the early Quaker terms of plain, plainness is not about accessibility or consumption, indeed it plays against popular culture, separating itself off. It is anti-popular, anti-consumption. The ivory towers of academia fit with the sectarian perspective of the early Friends. Rather, it is about integrity and being fit for use without adornment. Good academic writing is surely within these parameters. The economy and directness of style of academic prose, its exactitude, and pedantry is wholly in line with George Fox's desire to avoid carnal and loose talk (Bauman 1983). A reference list, as below, is surely an epitome of plain. Maybe the plain style of academic text attracts Quakers to the academy.

Where academic writing may fail in its inherent plainness is where the author seeks to overplay their wisdom and where the writing becomes adorned with personal aggrandizement. This may be a danger related to the growing trend within the social sciences to use the first person, where the role of analyst can become enmeshed with a more self-reflective style. As a Quaker studying Quakers, my doctoral supervisors were very keen I distance myself from my daily devotional affiliation. I wrote my thesis referring to myself as "this researcher" to deliberately differentiate my role as researcher from my life as Quaker. This may be academically less fashionable now but it served to help me remember who I was, to know where I was, and to remember my place, part of the intentions and impulses underpinning Quaker plain.

I believe strongly that academic thinking is highly creative, artistic: we are artists in our desire and ability to create new ways of thinking about the world. Our writing is plain art.

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"Plain Style" Academic Writing: Not Just for Quakers?
Laura Rediehs

Some academic writing is not "plain" by any definition of "plainness." The lack of plainness is often unintentional. Sometimes authors are themselves genuinely confused about what they are writing about. Other times, authors do not think to give proper attention to their writing style. *They* are aware of what they are trying to say, but may fail to notice that they have not in fact expressed themselves very clearly.

The problem of obscure writing may remain unchecked in the academic world because academic readers are unusually tolerant of difficult writing—they take such pride in their advanced reading and interpretive skills that they are often willing to spend a long time decoding a difficult text. Then, wanting to receive credit for all of this effort, they may decide to publish their interpretation: thus, difficult writing can get more attention and citation than clear writing. The net effect is that obscurity can actually be rewarded in the academic world.

Some academic writers even eschew plainness intentionally. A skilled writer with good ideas can learn to obfuscate just enough to be taken seriously. A writer aiming to persuade may employ logical fallacies in place of good argument since logical fallacies, even though somewhat deceptive, often have an immediate emotional effect, whereas good arguments require thought and effort and often provoke critical inquiry rather than immediate acceptance. At a more extreme level, since language use can be a mark of group identity, sometimes the intent of a piece of writing is not so much to communicate as to show (or show off) group identity and reinforce boundaries of exclusion.

The question of plainness in academic writing is a return to the ancient debate between the sophists and the philosophers. Is the point of writing *rhetorical*—to employ the art of persuasion for the sake of gaining power? Or is the point of writing *dialectical*—to exchange ideas in a sincere quest for truth or greater understanding? While some disparage the term "rhetoric," allowing it only its negative connotations, others argue that all writing is rhetorical, and that even dialectic is one form of rhetoric. We can have noble, truth-conducive reasons for wanting to persuade, and even for wanting to gain power. What I mean to question is morally-problematic uses of rhetoric and power: those uses that not only undermine truth but also deploy power for unjust purposes. Intentional attempts to obfuscate serve dubious power purposes. The Quakerly value of plain speaking is more aligned with the dialectical quest for wisdom.

But what is plainness? Because Quakers now use the term "simplicity" more than the term "plainness" to express a similar concept, at first it is tempting to think of plainness as equivalent to simplicity. But in a recent academic writing workshop I attended, the person leading this workshop, Jeanne Barker-Nunn, offered the following rule of thumb for academic writing: express simple ideas simply, and express complex ideas complexly. Too many writers, she pointed out, are inclined to try to express simple ideas complexly in order to sound sophisticated. But the reverse problem happens too: sometimes writers suffer writer's block because they are attempting the impossible task of expressing complex ideas simply. It is of course still possible to express complex ideas *clearly*. In fact, clarity is especially crucial for the task of expressing complex ideas, if we really want our writing to be understood.

Aligning "plainness" with "clarity" (instead of "simplicity") is helpful, but we need to do even more to specify what counts as appropriate plainness: we need to consider the purposes of writing and the audiences for different kinds of writing. What are we trying to communicate, to whom, and why?

While academics sometimes write for nonacademic audiences, even within academic writing there are different audiences and different purposes. Scholarly books, for example, usually have wider academic audiences than journal articles, and serve different purposes. We write journal articles to share specific ideas and get feedback from highly specialized scholarly communities. We write scholarly monographs to collect our now well-tested ideas, put them together into a larger framework, and share those ideas

with a wider educated audience who may benefit from reading about and learning the latest advances in our field. We write textbooks to share the latest and most well-tested thinking with students. Plainness takes different forms for these different audiences and purposes.

Words can be magical sometimes. There are times when the right string of words can spark helpful new understanding in the one who reads or hears those words. How do we find that magical sequence of words? The same string of words can evoke amazed insight in one person but blank confusion in another. Not everyone, even in the academic world, is a skilled listener or a skilled reader. Perhaps, as Thomas à Kempis said about reading the Bible (and Quakers like to repeat): one has to be in the spirit in which the words were written in order to understand them correctly. We know from our teaching that sometimes the problem is that our students just are not ready to understand a given idea. They may need to learn other things before this new idea can find a meaningful place in their system of thought. We need to remember this in our writing as well. Different audiences require different rhetorical strategies, and so "plainness" may look different for different audiences.

For example, let us consider the jargon dilemma: Which is plainer: using more words and less jargon, or using fewer words and more jargon? Jargon is often an abbreviated way to express an important and recurring complex idea. In its brevity, it is simpler, but it is only "plainer" to someone "in the know." To someone else not familiar with the term, or who has not struggled to understand and integrate the complex idea the term is

meant to express, such jargon is not "plain" at all. It is mysterious and obscure. To someone not "in the know," jargon hides the detail and complexity of the thought it is trying to express.

But if we are clear about what we are trying to communicate, to whom, and why, we can make appropriate adjustments in our use of jargon. For a more specialized audience, the use of one's discipline's jargon is appropriately "plain" because it keeps one's writing clear and focused. But for a less specialized audience, avoiding or minimizing jargon is often "plainer" and clearer. Or sometimes (especially in writing intended to instruct) the correct balance is to introduce some of the jargon to the reader by clearly defining it first.

Jargon can closely resemble another use of language that is more problematic and runs counter to plainness: the logical fallacy known as "equivocation." Equivocation may look like jargon because it uses compact phrasing that can hide deeper meaning to one who is not "in the know." But in equivocation, the word or phrase does not have a stable meaning throughout the piece of writing: it changes meaning in subtle ways. Sometimes equivocation is unintended: the writer has not paused to think about what he or she really means by a rich or contested term or concept such as "objectivity," "justice," or even "God." Other times equivocation can be intentional: a way of hiding a weakness in argument, or a way of persuading people to accept a course of action that may not in fact be in their best interest. Political uses of terms such as "freedom," "security," or "the American way of life," are often used equivocally.

In conclusion, plain style cannot be determined by examining a text alone, but needs to take into account the rhetorical positioning of the text. Those who wish to express themselves plainly need to be clear about what they are trying to communicate, to whom, and why, and then need to adjust their use of language accordingly. While the use of jargon does not necessarily run counter to plainness, equivocation does, and should be avoided. These basic principles of rhetorical sensitivity are appropriate not just for Quaker academics, but arguably for all writers.

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Taking the Meeting with Us
Mike Heller

. . . the Quaker method of conducting business meetings is also applicable to the conducting of our individual lives, inwardly. (Thomas Kelly writing of John Woolman, *A Testament of Devotion* 118)

A Friend in our Monthly Meeting, Bob Fetter, tells the story of his Aunt Eliza Rakestraw who was much admired for her ability to be centered and speak well in many situations.

"How do you prepare so well for every situation?" someone asked Eliza.

"We take the meeting with us," she replied.

When Bob told this story, he added, "And we take the meeting away with us." Eliza Rakestraw's statement speaks to me of the centered presence I often wish for. This summer on my way to Woodbrooke, I was stuck in a snail-paced security line at the Amsterdam airport, when I heard the "last call" for my flight. I was sweaty and tired and my frustration rose. When an attendant directed me to the wrong gate, I was ready to vent my anger on the nearest airline representative. I did not feel like a good Quaker. In many faculty meetings my agitation gets the best of me. At such times, I don't feel like a good Quaker. It is not always easy to walk through a room gracefully, or even to stand in a security line peacefully. In a related way, in my writing I often feel I fall short of my self-image as the plain Quaker. Eliza Rakestraw's statement that "We take the meeting with us" expresses a way of being centered in the spirit, supported by one's community, and living one's testimonies—including simplicity and plainness—wherever one might be. I don't consciously set out to write in a plain style, but if I did, what would I be emphasizing? I'd be setting out to create a particular voice, a disposition, an identity, situating myself, and I would be seeking a relationship with an intended or imagined audience.

What elements of style would I draw upon? There are features in early Quaker writings that we might agree comprise a Quaker plain style. Early Quakers sought in their journals to write of their experimental knowledge of the spirit, often excluding other topics which today we wish they had written of—they practiced a narrative economy; they drew upon a diction of discernment and leadings of the spirit; they used passive structures to signal their surrender to the felt-spirit within; some writings use repetition to capture the chant of vocal ministry. On some level, plainness it seems is not artless but artful. Quaker writers, such as John Woolman, revised

their writings, using syntactical choices and word choices as they sought to express accurately their experiences and ideas.

Is revision toward plainness a departure from spirit-led expression? The tension between artifice and artlessness is connected with other tensions or paradoxes of Quaker faith and practice. Richard Bauman, in *Let Your Words be Few*, describes the paradox of worshipping in silence in order to find words to speak. The opposition of silence and speaking dramatizes the tension between the spirit and the flesh. Peter Collins expresses the paradox in terms of inward spiritual reality and outward material reality: ". . . To be artful . . . is to deny the Light Within" (127), and later he writes that "The plain style . . . emphasizes spirit above 'flesh' (the material world)"; he follows a Marxist argument that, in a consumer culture, art trivializes and triumphs over reality; and the plain style might "bring to mind a reality over and above that suggested by commodification and consumerism" (132). I feel something of these tensions when I choose between a linear argument and an associative line of thinking, or when I choose between personal narrative and formal persuasion. For a long time, I sensed that Quaker worship was counter to my own creative impulse. Now I am not so sure. Writers like Alice Walker make me question my assumptions. She expands the definition of Art (with a capital A). In her essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," Walker speaks of "the Black woman's" spirituality which helped her grandmothers and mother survive; she writes of a spirituality "which is the basis of Art," a spirituality which these women knew as reality (233, 237). The plain style, for Quakers, had the purpose of recovering the inward reality–a reality which transcends the market place. When early Quakers sought simplicity, they did so to live within that spiritual reality.

From classical rhetoric, how we conceive of ethos and style is suggestive for a consideration of Quaker plainness. Aristotle and others classified style as high, middle, or low. High style was called grand or ornate; the low style was the plain style. Rhetoricians wrote of the virtues of style, which include "appropriateness," "clarity," "purity," and "impressiveness" (Aristotle 351, Demetrius 419 ff.). "Purity" can be seen as a verbal representation, another kind of construct. How we conceive of ethos is relevant to how one shapes his or her identity, as it is evoked through speaking and writing. Northrop Frye, in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, writes that ethos is primarily concerned with social values, which he calls "moral values," including "sincerity, economy, subtlety, simplicity. . ." (22). In classical rhetoric, ethos is determined by the impression which one creates of being trustworthy, having wisdom, and good will. Collins writes that both the grand style and the plain style are influenced by the author's disposition (130).

"Clarity" seems to me a high priority in academic writing. In *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America*, Daniel Shea argues that Woolman saw the essence of his rhetorical task in terms of making clear to others what he had seen: "The literary art of Woolman's *Journal* consists largely in the author's essential act of clarification" (65). This observation interestingly equates Woolman's desire for clarity with the essence of his art. Note in the following quotation from

Woolman's *Journal*, his interest in "purity" and "clearness": "My heart hath often been deeply affected under a feeling I have had that the standard of pure righteousness is not lifted up to the people by us, as a Society, in that clearness which it might have been had we been so faithful to the teachings of Christ as we ought to have been" (153-54). Accuracy to one's observations is also an expression of honesty (Barbour and Frost 41-42), a Quaker testimony and a contributing factor to one's persuasive ethos. Plainness, then, is useful. It is evocative and it creates access. Access is inward and outward: the writer goes inward for discovery, invention, creation, and heart-felt guidance; and then he or she goes outward to make writing understandable to readers. Plainness is a marker of group identity. The writer who chooses to use obscure or convoluted sentences is also asserting an identity.

Vocal ministry is a spiritual practice. In vocal ministry, one focuses on watching how words arise within, being sensitive to an inward spiritual guide, listening to others, shaping a message, and making a statement. In worship I make choices about when to speak and how to speak. In worship I return to George Fox's question, "What canst thou say?" Preparing to speak in worship, sitting with one's inward words, is part of the spiritual practice. We can see this at the end of Woolman's *Journal* chapter 5, describing the Yearly Meeting of 1758, where he did not speak through several sessions. He writes that "The case of slavekeeping lay heavy upon me," and when he does finally speak, he tells us that he said "nothing is more precious than the mind of Truth inwardly manifested" (92). Woolman's spiritual practice of waiting upon the spirit not only allows him to "save up" his thoughts but also to deepen his understanding of what needs to be said. It is easy to imagine that this discipline carried over into his writing, although, as J. William Frost points out, the kinds of expression in Woolman's essays and *Journal* represent different modes of thought.

My experience with vocal ministry has been shaping my writing and teaching. I have been experimenting with ways to use narrative, scene, and dialogue--trying to be guided by my heart and my sense of inward leadings. In worship, we are composing and we are being composed. In worship, as I am moved to speak, I think about shaping what I can say, with some sense of clarity and emphasis—but it is not always easy to walk through a room gracefully. I have written about how with journal writing students can center down and can value their inward lives (without an overt spiritual focus), and how asking students to share small writings about their experiences parallels sharing a message in worship (27-49). In discussions, I have been experimenting with having students pause after each person speaks, and not rush in to speak next, so that we can listen and consider what to say next.

If style is a matter of choice, and choice makes speaking and writing more art than artless, what do we say to the objection that in worship one surrenders to the motion of the spirit? Should individuals revise inwardly in worship? This need must vary with individuals. I am also drawn to following my initial impulse and speaking spontaneously. There was a place in previous times for chanting and sing-song, a seemingly "automatic" expression, or more recently for the spontaneous in vocal ministry. In aca-

demic writing, as well, there is a place in the composing process for free writing, automatic writing, and letting go—whether or not such writing must be shaped and revised later to reach an audience. Whether revision happens inwardly (before speaking or writing), artfulness is involved in moving a piece of writing from private communication, meaningful to the writer alone, to public communication, meaningful to others.

I want to work more in the direction of writing from the heart and trying to write with integrity, which means owning or standing by the meaning expressed. Rebecca Mays quotes or paraphrases Isaac Penington saying that we must be careful "not to profess what we do not possess." Speaking of Woolman, Kelly writes, "He yielded to the Center and his life became simple. . . . These become our tasks. Life from the Center is a heaven-directed life" (117, 123). Now I see that writing has a good deal to do with temperament. What am I cut out for? I make hundreds of choices each day and watch my courage and cowardice, confidence and fears, obscurity and light.

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John Keats and Ethical Practice
James W. Hood

Introduction

John Keats's "Ode to Psyche" first appeared in a lengthy journal-letter he wrote to his brother and sister-in-law between February 14 and May 3, 1819. Introducing the poem, Keats emphasizes the unusual care he has taken composing it and the happy consequence that ensued. "Psyche" is "the first and the only [poem]," he says, "with which I have taken even moderate pains." Others have been "for the most part dash'd of[f] . . . in a hurry," but "Psyche" "reads the more richly for it and will I hope encourage me to write other thing[s] in even a more peacable [sic] and healthy spirit" (*Letters* 253).[1]

Keenly conscious (as ever) of his ongoing development as a writer, here Keats both celebrates his progress and longs for something more, casting his desire predictably in the language of health and peacefulness, ideals that eluded him for most of his life and especially in that most productive poetic year of 1819 as he struggled with falling passionately in love, the lack of money, and the twin specters of his brother Tom's recent death and a creeping sensation that his own might follow shortly. A similar tension inheres to "Ode to Psyche" itself: ostensibly it praises an insufficiently celebrated goddess, but a subtle countercurrent in the poem ends up focusing attention on the writer himself. Though he adopts a modest pose at the outset, calling his poem "these tuneless

numbers" (1), in the concluding verses the poet/speaker trumpets his own ability:

So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
. . . .
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,..
(44-51; 58-62)

These lines may place Psyche at the center of interest, but the thudding repetition of "thy . . . thy . . . thy" underscores the "my" and "I" that reference the sub-textual star of the poem.[2] Much as Keats may wish to be writing here in "a more peacable and healthy spirit" of openness to the other, his writer's ego remains, in Iris Murdoch's formulation, "fat [and] relentless," the chief "enemy" of the "moral life" (51).[3]

Yet even as the ego impedes, here we can also see Keats straining toward something finer, practicing that turning of one's attention away from the voracious self. His struggle in this and other late poems dovetails potently with the "practice" that lives at the core of Quaker engagement

[1] All quotations from Keats's letters come from Robert Gittings' *Letters of John Keats*, hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

[2] Daniel Watkins suggests that "While the poem purports to be about Psyche . . . it actually focuses on the male poet's imagination" (99) and that the poem operates according to a "Sadeian logic" that insists on "the absolute domination of femininity by masculinity" and "of pleasure *as domination*" (101).
[3] Understanding the term "psyche" to refer to the self, the title of the ode might be read as "Ode to Self."

with the world, that ongoing attempt to become centered, to live in the life of the Spirit. Keats said very little in his writings about faith of the traditional Christian variety except to question it, but his letters and poems reveal a young person (he died at 25) deeply engaged in considerations about how to become better—as a friend, a sibling, a lover, and, above all, a writer. It is that striving to which I want to attend here, considering a progression of poems where Keats engages in what I will call "ethical practice," a divestment of the ego and a deepening regard for the claims of the other. There's something heartening about watching Keats practice getting better as a poet and a person because it reminds me that the spiritual/ethical journey is not about, to paraphrase Emily Dickinson, getting to heaven at last, but going all along.

Following theorists like John Guillory and Geoffrey Harpham, I want to draw a clear distinction between the ethical and morality, a difference that gets flattened out in ordinary usage. Fundamentally, I'm defining morality as a prescriptive determination between right or wrong and the ethical as the presentation of a choice between competing goods. Morals are an algorithm, a plug and play device, if you will; the ethical is a situation, the fleeting moment or realm one inhabits prior to making a decision. A matter is considered ethical when it presents us with a genuine dilemma, any outcome of which will produce positives and negatives. Sophie's choice, in the William Styron novel by that name, presents a classic and horrifying example: the Nazis force her to select which of her two children they will spare, and if she refuses to choose they will kill both. When we enter the domain of the ethical,

things get much more complex, just like they do in a tragedy like *Othello*. But by entering that realm, whether in actual situations or compelling fictions, we practice development of the *ethos* or character critical to fuller humanity.

Ethical practice, disinterestedness, and negative capability

In an essay entitled "The Ethical Practice of Modernity: The Example of Reading," John Guillory argues that the act of reading attentively can be an ethical practice, an action that occupies a certain domain or space on a continuum midway between simple, pleasurable aesthetic enjoyment and didactic morality. For this to occur, however, a certain reorientation of current reading practices must take place. He begins by distinguishing between "professional reading" and "lay reading." The former is a kind of "work" that is a "disciplinary activity" governed by rules; it is "vigilant" in that it is "wary" of pleasure, and it is a "communal practice" (31). The latter is "practiced at the site of leisure," has very different conventions from that of professional reading, is a "solitary" practice by and large, and is mainly "motivated by the experience of pleasure" (32). This discrepancy has caused, according to Guillory, a cultural bifurcation, a split between the professors and the masses in which the highly sophisticated and professional interpretive technique utilized in the academy has inoculated them with the fantasy that such reading will have a far greater moral/political impact upon the world than is practicable and, at the same time, has relegated the reading of ordinary mortals to "the level of immediate consumption" (33). What we need, Guillory wants to argue, is an intermediate practice of reading between

"the poles of entertainment" and "vigilant professionalism" (34), one that incorporates both the aesthetic pleasures of reading for fun *and* the moral awareness derived from reading with keen diligence. He calls for a kind of reading that falls within "the domain of the ethical" (34).

Clearly distinguishing the ethical from morality, Guillory asks us to imagine a continuum that places morality, where one chooses between absolute right or wrong, at one end of the spectrum and the aesthetic, where one chooses between various objects of beauty, at the other. The ethical, he suggest, occupies the "terrain" in between these two poles as the space in which one considers the choice between competing goods (38). If we think of reading as a domain in which we can experience both pleasure and moral instruction, and also as one in which we choose between competing goods—Do I read a Wendell Berry essay, a novel by Margaret Atwood, or a play by Eve Ensler today?—I think we begin to understand what Guillory has in mind.

Guillory calls for (though not expressly) a healing of the fracture between lay and professional reading, the goal of which would be care or improvement of the self. Time and time again, Keats's letters attest to a similar amelioratory goal, mainly with respect to his own practice of writing. For Keats, writing can be an ethical practice in a sense similar to Guillory's reading practice, and to view his 1819 odes as exercises in the development of such a practice aids us in understanding their complex movement between deep, often desperate ego-involvement *and* its opposite—what Keats called "negative capability."

The concept of "negative capability" Keats broaches in a December 1817 letter to his brothers has been the subject of considerable attention. Keats was influenced greatly by William Hazlitt's ideas about "the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind" (W.J. Bate 256), about which he read in Hazlitt's books or heard in his *Lectures on the English Poets* in London. Hazlitt emphasized the writerly capacity Shakespeare exhibited for identification with the other, with real or imagined persons outside himself, noting that "The striking peculiarity of Shakespeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds . . . . He was the least of an egoist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they would become" (55-56).

Keats utilizes Hazlitt's word "disinterestedness" in various letters, most particularly noting how uncommon a feature it has been of human experience. "Very few men," he writes in the same journal letter to his brother and sister-in-law composed in the spring of 1819, "have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness of Mind: very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others—in the greater part of the Benefactors of & to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness—some melodramatic scenery has facinated [sic] them . . ." (*Letters* 229). However confident this sounds, the letter is rife with rhetorical fits and starts here, the self-questioning that constitutes his 1819 mindset. Most poignantly, perhaps, he characterizes himself as "young writing at random—straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness" (*Letters* 230).

Ethical practice in "Melancholy" and "To Autumn"

The personal "great darkness" Keats lived within during 1819 certainly informed his writing of the "Ode on Melancholy." We can see him "straining at particles of light" in this poem, however, wishing to engage more fully in writing as ethical practice by presenting neither a simple moral pronouncement nor a merely sensuous celebration of things beautiful but a more complex articulation of competing goods. Some of that complexity introduces itself through the preposition "on" Keats chooses as the fulcrum of the title. This is not a poem written "to" melancholy, in praise or derision, but one that balances itself upon melancholy's mysterious vagaries.[4]

 The poem counsels engagement with, not retreat from, "the melancholy fit" that falls "Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud." Neither escape into the aesthetic realm for aesthetics' sake—figured, perhaps, in the poem's initial imagery of forgetfulness and suicide—nor stiff and outright rejection of melancholy will suffice. The necessary embrace of melancholy and its productive "wakeful anguish" comes only through movement toward the natural or human other:

But when the melancholy fit shall fall . . . . .
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
  Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
  Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
  Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
  And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.
                    (11; 15-20)

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[4] Keats actually moved back and forth between different title possibilities with different prepositional configurations (from "On Melancholy" to "Ode, to Melancholy" to "Ode on Melancholy", see Poems 374n), struggling to get the balance just right.

"Melancholy" situates itself in the middle space between Chatterton-esque Romanticized suicide and the "Thou shalt not" of the moralist. In its final stanza, the poem imagines Melancholy as a goddess, dwelling with Beauty, enshrined "in the very temple of Delight." Two striking images that point toward the paradox of competing goods help constitute this poem as an engagement with ethical practice. The first is of Melancholy abiding next to Pleasure, "Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips." This remarkable image from the natural world juxtaposes honey and poison, two productions of the same bee body, one necessary for sustenance, the other for protection, both distilled from the beauty of flowers. It captures the paradox of good and bad deriving from the same source, in a puzzling and complex figure. The second image is that of a "strenuous tongue / . . . burst[ing] Joy's grape against his palate fine," one that encodes the friction of strength and gustatory thrill against the hollowness of loss. He or she truly sees Melancholy who knows viscerally the paradox of gaining and losing in the same moment, who understands the delight of consuming something delicious but knows the potency of its taste depends upon its ephemerality.

If "Ode to Psyche" undercuts its intentions towards the ethical through a display of ego involvement, signified grammatically through the significant use of the first person, and a moralistic certainty, "Ode on Melancholy" moves much further toward a focus on the other and competing goods. It operates in the grammatical realm of the second person, addressing the reader as its object of interest. When we come to the last of the odes Keats composed in 1819, "To Autumn" written in September, we move

into a second person address not to a reader but to a definitively separate entity (a season) and find ourselves with a poem that even more deeply engages the claims of the natural and human other even as it does not eliminate Keats's own deeply personal concerns about death and poetic fame. Here, the great cycles of the natural world embrace and subsume ego. From the writer's standpoint, "To Autumn" achieves even more fully the kind of disinterestedness or negative capability Keats desires, the capacity of the writer, absenting him or herself momentarily from the vicious grip of ego, to fashion a space into which readers may enter imaginatively through the process of identification. Its rich imagery of the natural world and complex allusion both to Keats's personal situation and the broader political milieu invite the reader into relationship with that which lies beyond the borders of the self.

"To Autumn" manifests a kind of conspiration, a breathing together of Keats's personal concerns with the larger social and political ones of the very particular moment in 1819 when he composed the poem. His own worries about death and poetic fame abide within the poem's imagery of autumn as a time of transition and ending, of ripeness and its passing, and in the figure of music that dominates the third stanza. The poem cautions autumn, and by extension its own writer, not to fret over the "songs of spring" because it "hast [its] music too." Individual anxieties take second seat to the rich imagistic celebration of the other's "mists and mellow fruitfulness," its bending, budding, swelling, plumping, and o'er-brimming.

As Vincent Newey has helped us see, "To Autumn" also engages—albeit to a limited extent—with the politics of its historical moment, nodding toward the recent Peterloo Massacre through its imagery of "Conspiring," bees as workers, and "clammy cells" that may evoke imprisonment suffered under the notorious Six Acts (186). The final stanza's imagery of small and vulnerable beings singing—gnats, "full-grown lambs," hedge-crickets, a red-breast, and "gathering swallows"—coupled with its admonishment that "thou hast thy music too," suggests a revolutionary, if subtle, reminder to all the dispossessed to bleat out the voice that must be heard. "To Autumn," therefore, focuses its energies outward from the poetic ego toward a celebration of the other of nature (the season of autumn) and the other of the politically disenfranchised even as it remains cognizant of Keats's own personal needs and fears. It articulates concerns of the I and the not-I, both of which are goods, like the competing goods it further underscores of fruition and departure.

Conclusion: reading as ethical practice

Geoffrey Harpham argues that the purpose of ethical discourse lies not in solving problems but in structuring them: "Articulating perplexity, rather than guiding, is what ethics is all about" (395). Just such a structuring of the dilemmas of loss, poetic and political voice, melancholy, and death characterizes Keats's odes. Like a photograph, "To Autumn" suspends opposing forces in a snapshot image that reads in different directions. An encounter with Keats's poems, therefore, seems capable of directing a reader toward an apprehension

of competing goods, of differing and equally worthy principles.[5]

The second mechanism by which the act of reading might lead to a positive development of the self inheres to the way reading structurally negotiates an encounter with the claims of an other. In the same mode as negative capability (for a writer) requires a suppression of the ego in order to make space for the imaginative creation of other beings, the act of reading challenges us to suspend self-concern in a moment of powerful engagement with the not-I, whether human, animate, or inanimate.[6] Any child who has ever been "lost in a book" knows this. On the simplest level, the imaginative operation of identification with a character takes one out of one's self, placing the claims of that other—a mere, fictive creation of linguistic signs—ahead of the self's needs.[7]

Reading Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" or "To Autumn" with attention to his biography, we may recognize the struggling Keats himself as an other worthy of our attention, identifying with his fears, frustrations, and desire to let the music made right now suffice. Alternately, reading "To Autumn" we meet the infinity of natural cycles, of the seasons, life, and death in such a way that the needs of the fat, relentless ego may subside momentarily.

Silvia Benso has argued that the crisis of environmental destruction we now face demands a new ethic toward "things," the animate and inanimate world beyond the contours of our bodies. Keats's personification of autumn, anthropo-centric as it might be, may broach a proto-environmentalism we would do well to acknowledge.[8] More generally, however, we can note that Keats's 1819 odes constitute the layered archaeological evidence of a writer developing a greater capacity for disinterestedness through which he shapes a lyrical space wherein a reader encounters the claims of the not-I in a powerful way. Such writing and reading do constitute ethical practices, the ends of which, one hopes, might be a deeper understanding of the claims of others, both beings human and things natural, and a concomitant development of responsible partnership therewith. And isn't it just this sort of practice, a surrender of self into the abiding Light of that absolute Other, that our meeting for worship requires of us, and that I, for one,

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[5] Harpham goes on to discuss, in very general terms, the relationship between the ethical and narrative structure itself, positing narrative as "a representational structure that negotiates the relation . . of is and ought" (403). Narrative moves from an initial position of what is but ought not to be to a final position of an "inevitable condition that is and truly ought-to-be" (403). He suggests, therefore, that the impulse toward the ethical, deeply concerned with the question of what ought to be, may be fundamental to narrative itself.

[6] Emmanuel Levinas has probably theorized most powerfully the manner in which the encounter with an other (in particular, the apprehension of the other's face) constitutes an ethical imperative. For Levinas, the recognition, through an encounter with the other's face, of the "infinity" beyond the self annihilates the self's former "totality" and thereby creates an imperative to recognize the demands of that other upon the self.

[7] More specifically, in reading we move toward what Richard Rorty calls "solidarity" with others, a recognition that those beyond the ken of our

own cultural or personal knowledge can be seen as "one of us" (190).

[8] Jonathan Bate has argued persuasively for Wordsworth's place in the development of the environmental tradition.

continue to find so difficult and so deeply illuminating?

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SCHOLARLY DETACHMENT AND QUAKER SPIRITUALITY
Steve Smith

*The Lord . . .opened it to me how that people and professors . . . fed upon words, and fed one another with words, but trampled upon the life . . . and they lived in their airy notions . . .*George Fox[i]

In December 1972, at the annual conference of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association held in Boston, Massachusetts, I delivered my first professional philosophical paper. As a recent Ph.D. who had little confidence in his academic standing, I had approached this event with great fear and trembling. My anxieties proved to be well grounded. While my paper contained (I still believe) a modest but useful insight into a central dilemma in ethical theory, my relative inexperience and ignorance were exploited mercilessly by my critics, leaving me in a state of humiliation and shame that lingered long after the event. It felt to me as if I had blundered into a professional philosophers' version of Hobbes' state of nature—a state of war in which each is enemy to all. My first and only appearance before an audience of the Eastern Division of the APA had proved to be, in Hobbes' pungent phrase, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." Fast-forward more than sixteen years, to June 1989. Again I am delivering a paper to an academic audience, this time during my first visit to the conference of the Friends Association for Higher Education, held that year at Swarthmore College near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Again I had approached my presentation with fear and trembling. After all, the topic of my paper was controversial—a veritable minefield of potentially explosive observations about sensitive issues in gender politics. Yet my actual experience was worlds apart from my unhappy encounter at Boston. Here were highly educated, competent academics whose underlying attitudes toward one another—and toward me—were respectful and kind, whose predominate interest lay not in destroying what little credibility I might have had, but in discerning the truth together in a loving community.

As we of FAHE know well, scholarship and spirituality are not intrinsically at odds with one another. At the philosophers' convention, the toxic environment was not a result of too much intellect and learning, but too little heart — a lack of openness, vulnerability and kindness. There (as is all too often true in academic environments) highly trained intellects used their well-honed skills as weapons. Though pockets of trust and comfort between ideological allies could be found here and there, the overall emotional landscape was anarchic, a shifting scene of guerrilla warfare, of overweening posturing, of frontal attacks and brilliant counterattacks. For many on the sidelines, the appeal of the convention lay precisely in the ringside seat that it afforded to view these mind-battles. The convention was not unlike an academic coliseum (or a vast video game) in which star combatants triumphed or were destroyed, while others applauded or muttered in stunned disbelief.

When academic discourse is divorced from the heart, the outcome is not always intellectual warfare, to be sure. Sometimes the salient symptoms of this separation are not hostility and attack—but indifference and empty theorizing. At the college where I have taught for nearly 40 years, a recent colloquium on just war theory was held over an elegant dinner. The presentations were erudite and witty, the ensuing dialogue salted with urbane *bon mots* and self-indulgent laughter. The actual reality of war—its soul-destroying viciousness, its role in the

death of numberless innocents, the blighting of life prospects for generations, the lingering, unresolved hatreds—none of those bleak realities appeared in that dinnertime performance. The audience—mostly students, with a smattering of faculty—walked away from the event well satisfied with the fine food, wine, and sparkling intellectual banter that they had enjoyed.

Such an event would be unthinkable at a Quaker gathering. And the reason is not simply that Quakers from a very early date adopted a principle of opposition to "all bloody principles and practices."[ii] The more fundamental reason is that this opposition arose from a profound spiritual experience that, in the words of George Fox, "took away the occasion of all war."[iii] When Fox uttered these words, he was not voicing a conceptual proposition arrived at through theological ruminations; rather, he was testifying to an unshakable conviction that had taken possession of him body and soul, arising from "the power of the Lord" flooding into his life. When pressed again to become a soldier, he declared that he "was dead to it."[iv] Standing in the Light, Fox's whole being affirmed love, connectedness, joy—and repudiated violence and death.

As the example of Fox and early Friends makes clear, Quaker spirituality at its best is an *embodied* spirituality, in which the conventional divisions of mind and body, intellect and feeling, sacred and secular are overcome in favor of an *un*divided life of wholeness and integrity. William Penn, writing of George Fox in prayer, gives us a glimpse of this state: "the most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld."[v] Indeed (as we all know) the very name "Quaker" testifies to this

powerful unity of Spirit and body in the Light.

Shall we view such moments as so exalted and rare that they are essentially irrelevant to our daily lives? While we cannot expect to live in a constant state of religious ecstasy, still, as Friends we are called to cultivate a growing awareness of Spirit, and to manifest that awareness in our behavior. To cite just one example: the Advices and Queries of my own Yearly Meeting include the following challenging question: "Do I live in thankful awareness of God's constant presence in my life?"[vi]

If in fact I lived "in thankful awareness of God's constant presence in my life," what would be the implications for my career as an academic, scholar and teacher? At the very least, I would *not* use a scholarly presentation as an opportunity to shame and humiliate others, nor would I treat war as a topic of idle intellectual entertainment. These conclusions are easy; more challenging are the implications for the conduct of rigorous academic scholarship, in which personal values and spiritual orientation are commonly regarded as irrelevant to the topic under discussion.

It is difficult to imagine the study of fine points in, say, linguistics, botanical research or quantum mechanics as an occasion for spiritual ecstasy—difficult, but not impossible. Indeed, the finest researchers and scholars often approach their work with what amounts to spiritual appreciation and religious zeal. This observation suggests an important distinction for our purposes, between matter and manner, the "what" of scholarly work and the "how". One would not normally expect tenets of religious belief to enter explicitly into the subject matter of quantum mechanics.

(Though precisely this seems to have been true of Albert Einstein, who famously declared that "God does not play dice with the universe!") One may hope, however, that when they engage in the study of botany, or linguistics, or quantum mechanics, scholars and academics do so as whole persons, open to the vastness of the world they are exploring, the wonder of unanswered questions, the humanity of their fellow researchers and students, and perhaps also the potential benefits of their work for the easing of suffering and promotion of peace and justice.

When we speak of "scholarly detachment," we may mean one of two very different things. Detachment is commonly understood to be a species of abstraction, in which irrelevancies are stripped away, leaving a simplified, purified subject for scrutiny. This model is implicitly Platonic—a divorce of the mind from the messy, muddy realities of everyday life—including especially the body, emotions and personal state of the scholar. It is well to remember that the word "academic" derives from Plato's own Academy, established during his lifetime and continuously operating thereafter for approximately 900 years. Despite many efforts to dislodge it, the Platonic model of scholarly detachment remains entrenched in many parts of today's Academy. Through Socrates in the early Platonic dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato puts this view very plainly: "If we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything, we must get rid of the body and contemplate things by themselves with the soul itself."[vii]
Platonism is the *locus classicus* of what may be called "dualistic detachment"—detachment by separation and exclusion. In this view, true knowledge and wisdom can be achieved only by rising above and even scorning that which is transitory, imperfect and incomplete. It is this model that was at work in the American Philosophical Association Convention in Boston in 1972, and in the elegant dinner discussion of just war theory described above. Because we continue to exist in each moment as embodied beings, subject to a thousand "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," dualistic detachment is inherently dishonest, a shared pretense that denies what is manifestly true. Its root emotion is fear: fear of loss of control, fear of the intrusion of unwanted elements, fear of fully experiencing the messages of one's own body and feelings.

It is possible to focus one's attention without disregarding larger realities, however; even as the scope of attention narrows, the scope of awareness may remain broad. We may, for example, address technical issues in mathematics, or chemistry, or history, while remaining aware of a broader background of meaning, seeing "out of the corner of our eye," as it were, the humanity of our students and fellow scholars, the condition of our body and its emotional state, even the wider reality of the human condition. Indeed, one part of what we call wisdom is the ability, even while giving attention to a specific topic, to keep in view the larger context and meaning of that topic. These observations suggest another model of detachment, what may be called *non-dualistic detachment*—or perhaps better, *non-attachment*. Whereas the root condition of dualistic detachment is fear and a desire to exclude, the root condition of non-attachment — a broader, more generous model of intellectual activity — is an inclusive openness and loving acceptance.

In religious practice, non-attachment is found wherever spirituality entails not hierarchy, separation and rejection, but equality, inclusion and compassion. In Christianity, the guiding metaphor for this compassionate breadth of vision is the Crucifixion. As the story is told in the Gospels, Jesus released attachment to his own desires and bodily needs ("not what I want, but what you want"—Matthew 26:39) and was, even as he was cruelly treated, open to the suffering of others. His spiritual awareness did not protect him from his own suffering; we are given to understand that in the "Passion of Christ," Jesus fully experiences the worst that a human being can endure — yet his primary attention remains fixed upon the redeeming power of Love. His spiritual awareness does not exclude his rational mind, but engages it in the service of an encompassing compassion for all of creation.

In Buddhism, a similar message is conveyed through the archetypal image of the lotus flower. The pristine, exquisite beauty of the lotus exists not in another time and place, above all inferior things—but here and now, immersed in filth and disorder, "at home in the muddy water." The spiritual life, a life of integrity, entails not divorce from this life, but openness to it and awareness of our intimate interconnections with "the ten thousand things."

While expressions of Quaker spirituality have sometimes tended toward the otherworldly, on balance Quakerism contrasts significantly with dominant strands of Catholic and Protestant Christianity through its insistence upon a spirituality centered in *this* life, *this* time and space. Its distinctive fusion of mysticism and activism, its insistence upon an experiential basis for religious conviction, its testimony of equality and its non-dogmatic inclusiveness—these key features of Quakerism repudiate dualistic detachment, and thus by implication the academic scholarship that perpetuates such dichotomous thinking.

So . . . what does it mean, what *can* it mean, to be both deeply grounded in Quaker spirituality, yet also a successful scholar and teacher? I cannot recommend my own example to others. I have largely opted out of the professional academic scene. Many years ago I dropped my membership in the American Philosophical Association. I do not read professional philosophical journals, and I rarely take part in scholarly professional exchanges. Though I draw upon philosophical and religious traditions, my own writing tends toward the personal and confessional, and is often intended (as is true here) for a primarily Quaker audience. I do not, however, dismiss the activities of my fellow Quaker scholars who have remained active in the Academy. There are numerous models in our own recent history of Quaker researchers, scholars and teachers who successfully integrate impeccable scholarship with Quaker spirituality, including active engagement in the world. My own personal favorites include such giants as Rufus Jones, Thomas Kelly, Henry Cadbury and Howard Brinton. As contemporary models of successful integration of spirituality, scholarship and activism, I would include the plenary speakers chosen for the 2008 FAHE Conference; Jocelyn Bell Burnell, John Punshon, and Satish Kumar.

In all honesty, however, I believe that the challenge of spiritual wholeness is never

fully met. We are always on the road toward (or away from) integrity; we never fully arrive. The pressures that the Academy puts upon us to withdraw, deny and ignore, to cling to our privileged position and preserve our comforts at the expense of others, are indeed very difficult to resist. To maintain the unity of one's life as a Friend in the face of these pressures takes courage, persistence and practice. The Friends Association for Higher Education serves an absolutely indispensible function in this cause. I am profoundly grateful to FAHE, although I know that even here we are not always on unambiguously solid ground, that even at FAHE it is possible to forget the insights of our faith and drift away from wholeness. And so I leave us with a query: if George Fox were to appear among us, magically informed of the contemporary world and of Friends' place in it; if he attended this conference and listened to our presentations and discussions, what would he do? Would he sit back in quiet satisfaction at our continuing faithfulness to the original insights of early Friends? Or would he stand up among us, brashly interrupting, denouncing and declaiming, calling us back from our "airy notions" to live more fully in the Light? If (as I suspect) the second scenario is more probable than the first, where—*specifically*—do we imagine that he would lodge his sharpest protests? What in ourselves might we look at honestly and keenly? How may we find our own way to walk cheerfully through the Academy, answering that of God in everyone?

[i] *Journal*, Nickalls ed. p. 19

[ii] From the 1651 Declaration, drafted by George Fox and eleven other Quaker men.

[iii] *Journal*, p. 65.

[iv] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[v] *Journal*, xliv.

[vi] *Faith and Practice: A Guide to Quaker Discipline in the Experience of Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends* (2001), Query on Spiritual Life, p. 48.

[vii] *Phaedo*, 67 (Tredennick translation).