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“Friend Thou Art Often in My Remembrance”

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A New Letter by Elizabeth Ashbridge

Abstract: A recently discovered letter by Elizabeth Ashbridge expands the very small archive of documents related to this important Quaker minister, gives scholars a better understanding of the circles in which she moved, and offers an occasion for reflection on epistolary writing in the eighteenth century. Written to her fellow Quaker Margaret Bowne, the letter fascinates as a dense record of the overlapping transatlantic, commercial, and ministerial connections Friends maintained during the period. It also illustrates the persistence of Pauline epistolary tropes in the context of an ostensibly “secular” familiar letter, reminding scholars of the pitfalls of thinking of the secular in opposition to the religious. Finally, it underscores the importance of reading documents such as Ashbridge’s letter intertextually, alongside Quaker journals, diaries, and even novels.

Keywords: Elizabeth Ashbridge, Quakerism, intertextuality, epistolary writing, Pauline tropes

A recently discovered letter from Elizabeth Ashbridge to a fellow Quaker named Margaret Bowne gives scholars a unique example of her participation in the broader community of Friends, expands the *very* small archive of documents related to this minister and writer, and invites reflection on how we approach both Quaker and epistolary writing in the eighteenth century.[1] The letter is intriguing as a brief but dense record of the overlapping transatlantic, commercial, and ministerial circles Friends formed in the late eighteenth century, and can be read intertextually alongside a variety of other Quaker writings, such as epistles, diaries, and journals; typographic and photographic transcripts of the letter can be found in the appendix to this introductory essay. Ashbridge’s dispatch to Bowne also provokes broader considerations of epistolary genres (whether familiar letters or novels), specifically the way in which particular Pauline Christian tropes persist in presumably secular contexts focused on quotidian

matters. In sum, this letter deepens our knowledge of not only Ashbridge but also of the Quaker circles to which she belonged, while also pointing up the difficulty of making distinctions between the religious and the secular in the literature of this period.

In his foundational 1990 introduction to *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, Daniel Shea writes: "Almost everything we know about Elizabeth Ashbridge is derived from her autobiography" (121).[2] Due to the lack of a holograph for *Some Account*, the only example of Ashbridge's handwriting at the time was a signature on a 1752 epistle from the General Spring Meeting of ministers and elders in Philadelphia to a meeting of ministers and elders in London (124–25, 137). In 2004 Elisabeth Ceppi brought attention to a previously unknown epistle written solely by Ashbridge in her own hand, sent from London to Goshen Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania in 1754 during her final ministerial journey through England and Ireland (141). The new Ashbridge letter introduced by this essay, a different though not unrelated epistolary form than the one just mentioned, was composed in 1747. This locates it roughly between the end of the autobiographical portion of *Some Account*, which concludes around 1740 before Ashbridge's establishment as a Quaker minister, and the 1754 epistle written a year before her death, which illustrates her mature ministerial voice.

Readers of Ashbridge's *Some Account* will recall that her path to Quakerism was difficult, even traumatic.[3] Born Elizabeth Sampson in 1713 in Middlewich, Cheshire, in the northwest part of England, and raised an Anglican, at the age of fourteen she was "carried off in the night" by a young man, married to him, and then widowed upon his death five months later (148). Estranged from her father, after three years among her mother's relatives in Ireland she boarded a ship for the American colonies, signing a four-year indenture upon her arrival in New York in 1732. With three harsh years as an unfree laborer behind her, she bought off the remainder of her indenture—only to wed, a few months later, a man she "had no Love for & that was a Pattern of no good" (154). Her second husband, a schoolteacher, was "Given to ramble" (155), instigating frequent relocations during a period when Elizabeth experienced melancholy and suicidal thoughts in the midst of a spiritual crisis.[4] While visiting relatives in Pennsylvania, she began to find solace among the Quakers, a development her husband thoroughly opposed with verbal threats and physical abuse. In the face of Eliza-

beth's persistent desire to attend Quaker meetings wherever they went, he finally accepted her new faith. But after both found stable work teaching in Mount Holly, West Jersey, their marriage became strained again when he relapsed into physically abusing her. Soon, however, he enlisted to fight in Cuba as a part of the War of Jenkins' Ear, and would eventually die in a military hospital in London, leaving Elizabeth widowed once more.[5] Here *Some Account* ends. Elizabeth later moved to the nearby town of Burlington and became more deeply involved with Friends. In 1746 she married the wealthy Quaker farmer Aaron Ashbridge, joining him as a member of Goshen Monthly Meeting in Goshen, Pennsylvania. Her standing as a Quaker minister late in life is evidenced by the appearance of her signature alongside other prominent Friends such as Anthony Benezet, Jane Hoskens, and John Woolman on the 1752 epistle mentioned earlier. In 1753 she departed on a ministerial journey to England and Ireland, the strenuousness of which probably caused her death in County Carlow, Ireland, in 1755 (Shea 139).

If the narrative of Ashbridge's life in *Some Account* is largely one of an isolated and vulnerable woman persevering amid the perils of the Atlantic world, the familiar letter she wrote on May 30, 1747, illustrates how she later found herself participating in a Quaker community that actively maintained religious bonds spanning the sea.[6] The letter's recipient, addressed as "Margaret Bound at New York," was Margaret Latham Bowne, who like Ashbridge had recently experienced the death of her husband, Robert. Both Margaret and Robert came from Long Island Quaker families, and contacts with Margaret are referenced in the travels of other eighteenth-century Friends (Crane 2117; Wilson 12). For example, Bowne figures prominently in the unpublished manuscript journal of Mary Weston, an English Quaker minister who traveled to the American colonies in 1750. Weston was accompanied by Bowne on multiple occasions, and writes that she "was exceeding loving and tender of me, and is like a Mother, her Company was both pleasant and profitable" (46). Regarding one of their good-byes she writes, "it was no small trial to us both, when the parting Moment came . . . [and] it occasion'd my going heavily on" (73). Additionally, in a shorthand diary entry from the same year, a Quaker merchant from Antigua named James Birket notes that during his trip to the colonies he traveled for a brief time "in Company wth s[ai]d M[ary] Weston [and] Margaret Bownd [sic]" (52), and later he "dined & Suppd wth M[argaret]

Bowne" after a meeting for worship (70). These references to Margaret accompanying an English Quaker minister and hosting a Quaker from Antigua attest to the ways in which Friends from around the Atlantic world depended on each other for companionship, support, and hospitality as they conducted overseas religious visits, as with Weston, or business, as with Birket. Ashbridge's correspondence with Bowne, a woman with whom she held widowhood and a concern for Quaker ministry in common, joined her into this set of dependences.

Ashbridge tells Bowne that she "might have wrote by John Griffeth" earlier had she not been too ill, meaning that Griffith (the more common spelling of his name) might have carried the letter for her—a comment that further develops our sense of how Ashbridge joined in with the work of Quaker ministry. John Griffith was a Welsh Quaker who left his immediate family at the age of thirteen to live with relatives in the Philadelphia area, and who would spend his adult life traveling in ministry to visit Friends in America and Britain (where he would later return to live). Like many Quaker ministers in the mid-eighteenth century, Griffith sought to "labour for a general reformation . . . and to move forward the wheels of discipline" among Friends (215).[7] In May 1747 Griffith began a ministerial journey to New England, setting out from his home in Darby, Pennsylvania, on the 23rd and arriving in Long Island on the 27th, in order to be present at a yearly meeting John Woolman also writes about attending (Griffith 60; Woolman 40). During this first leg of the journey he apparently visited the Ashbridges in Burlington during a time when Elizabeth writes of being "much Indisposed in Body" at a location she refers to as "our house." The Ashbridges were likely in Burlington for the same meetings Griffith mentions attending in his journal on the 24th (60). Elizabeth's association with him confirms the recent direction of Ashbridge criticism that reads her work as firmly engaging in Quaker reform during the mid-eighteenth century.[8]

Ashbridge's letter, however, concerns not only Quakers involved with effecting a transatlantic reformation but also those more local to Burlington, West Jersey, where she composed the letter. She writes that Bowne might hear "a more particular account" of her being bodily indisposed from "Mary Daleplain," a reference to Mary Bustill Delaplaine, who had married Joshua Delaplaine—a wealthy joiner and merchant of Huguenot background—in Burlington Monthly Meeting the year prior to Elizabeth

and Aaron's marriage there (Gummere 93). Ashbridge conveys that she took "pleasure" in meeting Mary, who perhaps was an associate of Bowne through Joshua's business connections in New York.[9] She also mentions the upcoming marriage of her "old Lanlady" Mary Raper to Joseph Noble. Raper, née Coate, had previously been married to Caleb Raper, an active participant in the affairs of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, who died in 1745 (Levick 104–05; Soderlund 197–98). Evidently Ashbridge was her tenant in Burlington sometime between leaving Mount Holly after the death of her second husband and moving to Goshen upon marrying Aaron. As with Bowne, Raper was a woman with whom Ashbridge shared the experience of being a widowed Quaker. Ashbridge writes she "should be glad to hear" that Bowne might also share in her and Raper's experience of finding new husbands—but whether by choice or by circumstance, remarriage did not occur. She concludes by noting Aaron's return home to Goshen a few days ahead of her, expressing her hope to hear from Bowne soon, "for it will be very gratfull to thy loving friend."

Ashbridge's dispatch to Bowne fascinates as a dense although brief record of the overlapping transatlantic, commercial, and ministerial circles Quakers maintained during the period. Yet as scholars of the epistolary form have pointed out, such fascination can also be a temptation to view "letters as special windows into the past" rather than texts whose purpose "was certainly not to enlighten us in the future" (Dierks xi).[10] Some letter writers do compose with an eye toward posterity, but this is hardly the case with what Ashbridge wrote to Bowne. Indeed, while some of the immediate historical circumstances of the letter can be reconstructed from its details, many questions raised by the text remain: When did Elizabeth see Bowne last? Why precisely were the Ashbridges in Burlington, and what was the place there that Elizabeth refers to as "our house" at a time when they were living in Goshen? What caused her to be "much Indisposed in Body"? How and why was she introduced to Mary Delaplaine? Why did Aaron go home alone, and why did Elizabeth choose instead "to Return in a few Days?" Who carried the letter, assuming it was indeed delivered? Some of the answers to these questions—which would have been already known, or irrelevant, to Bowne as the recipient—could possibly be determined with further historical research and speculation, yielding a better understanding of Ashbridge's participation in the Quaker circles whose outlines one can begin to discern in this letter. But we misapprehend the

text if we view it solely as a record of historical circumstances and not as a literary form put to use by Ashbridge for specific ends.

As Elizabeth Cook describes in her study of late eighteenth-century epistolary fiction in the context of Enlightenment print culture, the "letter-form" was ubiquitous in this period, "used in every kind of writing, from scientific treatises to novels, from conduct books to political essays, as well as in exchanges between ordinary people facilitated by the development of postal institutions" (16–17).[11] Ashbridge's letter obviously falls in the final category (although likely delivered by means of a religious rather than postal institution), but the larger discursive context should be kept in mind. Shea, for example, briefly comments on the resemblances between aspects of *Some Account* and the epistolary novel *Clarissa*, the latter being published around the same time that the former was composed (127).[12] More immediate to our consideration of Ashbridge, however, are the letter forms known as epistles that had been commonly used by Quakers for official communication and encouragement since the seventeenth century. These epistles were no less a part of "Enlightenment print culture" than novels, treatises, and essays.

Early Quaker ministers consolidated authority and maintained the ligaments of the movement by circulating manuscript letters, often written from prison and reproduced in multiple copies—some of the earliest Quaker tracts were printings of such letters (Peters 22–30, 39).[13] As Quakerism spread beyond England to the Caribbean and mainland North America, Frederick Tolles argues, "systematic and constant transatlantic interchange of correspondence," a practice initiated and institutionalized by George Fox, served "not only to induce in individual Friends and meetings a feeling of emotional identification . . . but also . . . to stereotype the thought and practice (and even the language) of that community" (31–33). It thus became conventional for various yearly meetings of Friends to exchange formal epistles annually that consisted of report, exhortation, and advice (Hall 91–95).[14] It also remained common for Quaker ministers to pen epistles to individuals or to meetings, as Ashbridge herself did to Goshen Monthly Meeting. According to Ceppi's analysis of this epistle (142–44), Ashbridge positions herself in the apostolic rhetorical tradition associated with the epistle genre, which originates with Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians 5.3 to be "absent in body" from the church in Corinth, "but present in spirit" (KJV). Ashbridge herself paraphrases Paul when writ-

ing to Quakers in Goshen, saying "that altho' my Body be so far Seperated [sic] yet my Spirit has often been present with you" (quoted in Ceppi 154).[15]

The Pauline epistolary trope informs not only formal genres like the Quaker epistle, but also, as William Decker has pointed out, the familiar letters of dissenting Christian groups like Quakers in colonial America (73–75). If, as Decker argues, "the function of epistolary writing" is to establish an "addresser and addressee in one or another condition of contiguity despite some measure of geographic separation," then Paul's absence in body but presence in spirit affirms "a contiguity of soul to soul (or a unity in God) while the body of one correspondent is separated from that of the other by an ocean or a continent" (15). While this logic is clearly evident in, say, the letters between John Woolman and his sister Elizabeth Woolman that Decker analyzes, what is striking about Ashbridge's letter to Bowne is that, despite her obvious participation in Pauline and Quaker epistolary traditions in other writings, this familiar letter contains no overtly religious content at all. Thus we may initially observe that a significant formal feature of the letter is that in spite of the discursive weight of multiple epistolary traditions, there appears to be no felt obligation to partake in them.

This is not to say that the letter is not conventional. The fact that approximately two-thirds of the text consists of parallel apologies for not writing sooner ("I've often thought of writing . . . but [for] the cituation of my habitation being so Remote"; "I might have wrote by John Griffeth . . . but I then kept [to] my room being much Indisposed") corroborates Decker's assertion that apology "is endemic to the epistolary task" (19). Also, the concluding third of the letter, in which Ashbridge discusses Mary Raper's marriage, her own husband, and the hope that Bowne will be married again some day and that she will write back soon, conforms to Konstantin Dierks's generalization that "for an ordinary woman . . . abstract concerns lurked far in the background of her own personal priorities. What motivated her to write letters sprang from the immediacy of her own relationships in everyday life" (160). Read in this way, Ashbridge's letter seems less a part of Quaker epistolary traditions than of the general conventions of the familiar letter in her day.

Such an interpretation of Ashbridge's letter would dovetail well with an argument made recently by Jennifer Desiderio about the diaries of late eighteenth-century Quakers Elizabeth Drinker and Hannah Callender Sansom, in which she suggests "attention to a particular sort of detail

forces the reader to reconsider the role of Quaker women in a more secular, yet still traditionally defiant, light" (186), as Drinker and Sansom "focus on physical concerns—like pregnancy and illness—rather than spiritual matters" (187). Desiderio even suggests Ashbridge "serves as an important bridge" between spiritually oriented Quaker journals and Quaker diaries preoccupied with secular affairs (195). I agree with Desiderio that we must expand our sense of what counts as Quaker literature by attending to the diaries of Drinker and Samson while also looking for continuities between their work and the writings of Ashbridge and other Quaker journal writers.[16] But I would suggest that the shift she identifies is more generic than historical, and that a comparison between journals and diaries is bound to point up such contrasts. A more germane question to our interpretation of Ashbridge's letter, however, is whether one can draw such strong distinctions, as Desiderio does, between spiritual and physical, religious and secular, when analyzing eighteenth-century Quaker writing.

While the contents of Ashbridge's letter—reflection on her remote habitation, bodily indisposition, social connections, and marriage—could be construed as "secular" in that they make no explicit reference to God or church, this text is nonetheless informed by and should not be understood apart from her particular religious imaginary.[17] If the historicization at the outset of this essay illustrating the extent to which Ashbridge and Bowne were fundamentally connected through the Quaker community is not enough to make this point, the Pauline logic of absence in body but presence in spirit that characterizes this letter without being directly stated should. The problem of bodily absence is clear enough from Ashbridge's references to "the cituation of my habitation being so Remote," being "Indisposed of Body," and her imminent "Return in a few days" to her home. Presence in spirit may come through less strongly, but it is intrinsic to the letter's most intimate lines: "I've often thought of writing to thee"; "dear friend thou art often in my Remembrance with as much pleasure as ever and hope ever will be"; "I hope thou will let me hear from thee for it will be very gratfull to thy loving friend." As a counter to physical separation, Ashbridge thinks, remembers, and hopes—all noetic acts (the third traditionally being a theological virtue, and also of Pauline origin; see 1 Corinthians 13.13) by which she remains close to Bowne in spite of their bodily distance, and by which readers can ascertain how the letter not only outlines secular concerns but is imbued with an aspiration for "contiguity of

soul to soul." Furthermore, as Naomi Pullin has recently demonstrated, for Quaker women in this period, the realms of the "spiritual and domestic . . . [were] intrinsically linked" (52). That Ashbridge would share domestic concerns and interests with Bowne does not indicate a pivot away from the religious to the secular. Rather, her communication discloses the full scope of experiences related to her vocation as a Quaker and a minister.[18] In sum, while the religiosity of Ashbridge's letter may differ in degree from her other writing, it remains similar in kind, composed with the purpose of maintaining a relationship whose primary context is religious, and whose substance, however quotidian, depends on what can be construed as belief in the spiritual world.

If Ashbridge's letter serves as a reminder to scholars that the religious and the secular should not be schematized oppositionally, it also underscores the importance of reading intertextually.[19] My argument that a religious imaginary informs an ostensibly secular letter—an admittedly speculative claim—gains strength when one reads the letter alongside Ashbridge's unequivocally religious works, or the writings of peers like Mary Weston or John Griffith. It becomes more nuanced when also read along with the quite different diaries of Elizabeth Drinker or Hannah Callender Sansom, not to mention a novel like *Clarissa*, to which Sansom frequently alluded.[20] While reading the ministerial writings of Ashbridge, Weston, and Griffith together confirms the accounts by Tolles and Peters of Quaker manuscript and print culture as basically consolidating and standardizing, the writings of Drinker and Samson, along with Ashbridge's letter, illustrate that these cultures were not hermetically closed off from other discourses, such as that of the epistolary novel and its partiality toward offering social and moral guidance. Rather, as Christine Levenduski has argued concerning Ashbridge, these texts are best understood in terms of "multivocality" (4). Unfortunately, eighteenth-century Quaker literature has tended to be read in a fairly hermetic way, employing important but simultaneously circumscribed categories like spiritual autobiography or antislavery rhetoric.[21] While Ashbridge's letter is brief and prosaic, its dense intertextual warp and weft should serve as an impetus for deeper reflection on her position within the wider circles of Quakerism in the eighteenth century, and on the variety of ways Quakers used manuscript and print to navigate the difficulties that arose from inhabiting a transatlantic world—from religious and societal reform to the maintenance of distant friendship.

My Dear Friend Burlington 7th 30d 1747
M, B
I've often thought of writing to thee
before now since I saw thee but the Cituation of
my habitation being so Remote have had no oppo
rtunity to Convey any Dispatches your way but
now being at Burlington Design to let thee see
I have not forgot thee, no my Dr frd thou
art often in my Remembrance with as much plea
sure as ever and hope ever will be. I might have
wrote by John Griffeth who is gone your way
and was at our house alittle before he set out but
I then kept my Room being much Indisposed in
Body a more Particular account of which I shal
Refer thee to Mary Daleplain who I had the
pleasure to meet here, I suppose thou may have head
that my old Lanlady Mary Raper is going to be
Married to Joseph Noble of Phi;a who I believe
will make her an agreeable Husband I should be
glad to hear thou was likely to do as well
my Husband brought here but is gone home
and left me and I design to Return in a few days
I hope thou will let me hear from thee for it
will be very gratefull to thy loving
friend
Eliz:a Ashbridge

FIGURE 1. *The holograph of Elizabeth Ashbridge's letter to Margaret Bowne.*

This transcription of Ashbridge's letter to Bowne aims to create a typographic facsimile. It reproduces—as closely as typography can—the manuscript's spelling, punctuation (or lack thereof), spacing, and lineation. Line numbers have been added for reference purposes, and instances of the eighteenth-century long or medial *s* have been changed into a conventional *s*.

In the interests of presenting a clear text, the letter's few unidentified characters and cancellations are not included in the transcription but are

recorded here. In line 1 a small *l*-shaped mark appears above the superscript *m*, probably part of an abbreviation for "month." In line 15 an indiscernible word is blotted out after "Daleplain." And in line 24 an indiscernible word is blotted out after "very."

Readers wishing to assess the accuracy of the transcription may consult the photographic facsimile (fig. 1).

My Dear Friend Burlington 3^{m} 30^{d} 1747
M B
I'^{ve} often thought of writing to thee
before now since I saw thee but the cituation of
5 my habitation being so Remote have had no oppo
rtunity to convey any despatches your way but
now being at Burlington design to let thee for
I have not for got thee, no my dear friend thou
art often in my Remembrance with as much plea
10 sure as ever and hope ever will be. I might have
wrote by John Griffeth who is gone your way
and was at our house alittle before he set out but
I then kept my room being much Indisposed in
Body a more Particular account of which I shalt
15 Refer thee to Mary Daleplain who I had the
pleasure to meet here, I suppose thou may have heard
that my old Lanlady Mary Raper is going to be
Married to Joseph Noble of Phi'^{a} who I believe
will make her an agreeable Husband I should be
20 glad to hear thou was likely to do as well
my Husband brought me here but is gone home
and left me and I design to Return in a few days
I hope thou will let me hear from thee for it
will be very gratfull to thy loving
25 friend
Eliz'^{a} Ashbridge

NOTES

1. The letter is held privately by Max Strachan, a resident of Woodgate Beach in Queensland, Australia. Strachan purchased the letter on eBay from a seller who

had bought it at an estate sale in Chautauqua, New York. Beyond this, the provenance of the letter is not known. Visual collation with the handwriting from an epistle to Goshen meeting and a signature on an epistle sent from Philadelphia to London confirms that this letter is a holograph written by Ashbridge. It is addressed on the folded reverse side of the letter "For Margaret Bound At New York," referring to the letter's intended recipient Margaret Bowne. The letter is unstamped and unendorsed.

2. The first edition of *Some Account* was published in 1774 in Nantwich, located in the same English county, Cheshire, where Ashbridge was born. Shea speculates that it was published "under the auspices of the author's family," which might explain its "deletions and rewordings for fluency" when compared with manuscript copies (142). The first American edition of *Some Account* was published in 1807 in Philadelphia. Shea's own edition, the standard critical text, is based on two manuscripts that may have been copied from a holograph in possession of Ashbridge's family (143).
3. The biographical details of this paragraph are taken from Ashbridge's *Some Account* and Shea's archival research. While Shea reports that Ashbridge was received as a Quaker minister in 1738 (137), no reference is given for this claim, and it seems odd that this significant event would not be reported in *Some Account*, which covers Ashbridge's life up to 1740. Short of further archival research in the records of relevant monthly meetings like Mt. Holly, Burlington, and Goshen, we may postulate that Ashbridge's recording took place sometime in the 1740s, the period during which she likely began composing *Some Account*.
4. Regarding the name of Ashbridge's second husband, Shea writes, "we only know [him] as Sullivan" (121), based on the fact that Ashbridge's third husband, Aaron, requested a certificate from Goshen Monthly Meeting "in order to marry Elizabeth Sullivan" (quoted in Shea 138). While it is common in scholarship and criticism to use the name Sullivan when referring to Ashbridge's second husband, she does not use the name in *Some Account*—a choice scholars have perhaps not appreciated enough.
5. On the British Empire's haphazard plans to attack Cuba, and the recruitment of North American colonists for these plans, see the dated but still standard account in Pares (87–93). For a more contemporary and briefer treatment, see Lenman (157–58).
6. The date written on the letter, "3m 30d 1747," follows Julian and Quaker calendrical conventions: regarding the former, the new year began in March prior to the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752, and, regarding the latter, "pagan" names for months based on Roman deities were replaced with a plain numerical system.
7. Quaker reform in the eighteenth century was characterized by a renewed zeal for conformity to church discipline and a refusal to treat religion as separate from society and politics. Quaker reformers emphasized the importance of corporate worship and adherence to personal practices of plainness and asceticism, while

also advocating for Quaker commitment to pacifism and antislavery. The standard work on eighteenth-century Quaker reform is Marietta; see also Larson (198–231).

8. In her early study, Levenduski focuses on Ashbridge's connection to Quaker persecution in the seventeenth century rather than Quaker reform in the eighteenth century. Still, by arguing that in "the case of Elizabeth Ashbridge . . . Quaker cultural history becomes visible in a single life" (7), she takes the same historicist approach that informs the more recent scholarly emphasis on Ashbridge's alignment with eighteenth-century Quaker reform. For examples, see Sievers and Ceppi.
9. Joshua Delaplaine, the son of Huguenot refugee Nicholas de La Plaine, was apprenticed to a Quaker joiner and became a prominent figure in a "Huguenot-Quaker craft network" in the New York City area, but the "origin of the Delaplaine family's conversion to Quakerism is unclear" (Kamil 787). For an analysis of Delaplaine's extensive account books and business practices, see Johnson, chapters 2 and 3.
10. Dierks argues that "in our haste to immerse ourselves in the mystery and magic of old letters" written by people in the past, we often neglect to imagine "the meanings *they* assigned to the writing and conveying and reading of letters" (xi). Decker makes a similar point by observing that "[a]lthough their value as primary documents is indisputable, letters do not really provide transparent access to history; nor do they generally conform to anything like self-evident story lines" (9).
11. Cook gives a helpful catalogue of various epistolary genres: "poetical epistles, letters on botany, and monthly newsletters on literature, fashion, and business conditions"; "travel letters, letter-writing manuals, and 'letters from the dead to the living'"; "editions of the letters of classical authors and of a few modern political and literary figures" (17).
12. Shea gestures not only toward *Clarissa* but to other books like *Moll Flanders* and *Charlotte Temple*, observing that passages in Ashbridge's narrative "might have been taken from any of several important eighteenth-century novels titled after their heroines" (127). Levenduski makes similar observations (10). While Ashbridge makes no mention of reading novels in *Some Account*, she does describe a period during her time in New York when out of a desire to join a "Play house company" she took "no small Pains to Qualify my Self for it in Reading their Play Books, even when I should have Slept" (153). It could safely be assumed she had access to novels as well. Hannah Callender Sansom, another eighteenth-century Quaker woman who is discussed later in this essay, composed a diary that is noted for being influenced by contemporary novels, especially *Clarissa* (Klepp and Wulf 6, 33n17, 162–63, 275). On teaching Ashbridge's narrative alongside eighteenth-century novels, see Todd 357.
13. According to Peters, these letters "could consist of individual counselling of those unsure in their faith; others were sent to sustain newly formed commu-

nities by providing them with news, religious invective and repeated instructions to hold regular meetings." Furthermore, "[l]etters were sent where itinerant ministers previously had been in person, and were expected to play an important part in meetings for worship" (39). Moore conducts close analysis of many of these letters in her account of early Quakerism (18–19, 26–27, 208–13), giving special attention to the ecstatic and even erotic language they sometimes employed (77–78); see also Mack's brief analysis (160–61). Ames's recent study of the letter network headed by Margaret Fell indicates that early Quakerism could truly be called an "epistolary community" (93).

14. The practice of yearly meetings exchanging epistles continues to this day. Examples can be found on the Friends World Committee for Consultation website ("Epistles from Quaker Groups").
15. Ames catalogs the many ways Paul was frequently invoked and imitated in early Quakers letters; see chapter 4, "Apostolic Epistolary Influences."
16. Henderson has also argued recently that Ashbridge "deserves to be situated alongside other Quaker women who found that life writing genres such as letters, memoirs, journals, and diaries opened up a literary space for recording and valuing their lives" (148).
17. Using the terminology of Taylor, we might say that while the letter displays a linguistic version of "secularity 2," "falling off of religious belief and practice," it exists within and is marked by religious "conditions of belief" that prevent it from embodying a form of "secularity 3" where belief in God "is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest" (2–3).
18. Pullin's well-documented *Female Friends* makes clear that "the household was far from a peripheral concern in ministerial women's lives and shaped their public personas as preachers and as members of communities" (58). See especially chapter 1, "Spiritual Housewives and Mothers in Israel: Quaker Domestic Relationships." See also Lindman, whose current project explores, among other things, how the Pauline trope I have described informs eighteenth-century Quaker spiritualities of suffering.
19. Decker argues, "we must place the familiar letter amid an intertextuality that exceeds any one aesthetic or generic field and that does not readily answer to the containments of the life or the book," and that "the letter, perhaps more than any other form of writing, enacts a recognition of the tendency of language to leak from established placements into the interstitial space of informal occasion, trial and error, play, and reinvention" (36).
20. See note 12. For examples of Sansom's allusions to *Clarissa*, see her diary from November 1758 to February 1759 (77, 83, 85, 86, 89, 97).
21. A nuanced exploration of Quaker print and manuscript culture might complicate the argument made by Dierks in his recent and comprehensive study of epistolary practice in early America. While he is right to point out that an eighteenth-century ideology of agency imagined letter writing as "a proving ground and measure of the mastery and modernity of the self" part and parcel with the "dark

side of modernity" (283–85), what could be called the technological determinism of his study misses the ways in which epistolary practice might vary and be directed toward other ends. For examples, see Carey and Sassi on the literary and print cultural dimensions of Quaker antislavery, which Ashbridge may have been connected to through Woolman and Benezet.

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