The Juvenile Enlightenment: British Children and Youth during the French Revolution

I

'I do from the bottom of my heart *hate* the preference shown in all things to my elders merely because they have been in the world a little longer. I do love equality and true democracy'.[1] So declared an impassioned Louisa Gurney in her diary in July 1796. She was eleven years old. The electric politicisation the French revolution evoked in British youth has normally been associated with young men. One thinks of Wordsworth's eulogy to the experience of living through the revolutionary period, 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven!'[2] It was a trope repeated by middle-aged literati as they recalled the enthusiasm of their younger years. Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb amongst many others all testified to such a phenomenon, the latter referring to the 'boyish heats' of political awareness 'kindled by the French Revolution'.[3] This was not simply the domain of literary coteries. As a child John Fielden departed sharply from the conservative principles of his parents. His father recalling he was 'as arrant [a]

[1] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 31 Jul. 1796, quoted in Augustus J. C. Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, 2 vols. (London, 1895), i, 55.

[2] William Wordsworth, 'The Prelude' in Ernest De Selincourt (ed.), *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (2nd edn, rev. Helen Darbishire, Oxford, 1959), Book xi, lines 108–9, p. 406.

[3] Robert Southey to Caroline Bowles (1824), in William Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey: 1774–1803* (New York, 1917), 99; Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988); Frank Swinnerton, 'Introduction' to P. P. Howe, *The Life of William Hazlitt* (London, 1947, first published 1922), pp. xv–xvi.

Jacobin as any in the kingdom.'[4] Nor was this remembered as an exclusively masculine phenomenon. Joseph Cottle reminisced that 'Almost every young and unprejudiced mind participated in this feeling'.[5] This essay will suggest that whilst subsequently simplified, these were not just retrospectively constructed narratives.[6] They speak of a phenomenon that was tangible to many in the 1790s – the radical politicisation of the young. This included males and females; and it involved small children as well as teenagers and young adults.

In order to understand this phenomenon, I would like to consider how constellations of cultural and social factors could coalesce to produce a 'juvenile enlightenment' in late eighteenth-century Britain. I propose that the various practices and ideologies of the British enlightenment: the rational education of children; the sociable and political opportunities of the Georgian public sphere; and the emergence of juvenile literature and reading practices all had empowering possibilities for young subjects. The kaleidoscope of varying opportunities of which the juvenile enlightenment was composed could interact to create highly aware, often politicised children with the agency to question and critique their own positions, family

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[4] Stewart Angas Weaver, *John Fielden and the Politics of Popular Radicalism, 1832–1847* (Oxford, 1987), 23.

[5] Edith J. Morley, *The Life and Times of Henry Crabb Robinson* (London, 1935), 4; Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London, 1847), 19.

[6] For examples of biographers who query any simple connection between the French revolution and their subjects' radicalism see Swinnerton, 'Introduction' to Howe, *Life of William Hazlitt*, p. xvi; Sidney Colvin, *Landor* (London, 1881), 12. There is extensive debate on the radicalism of the young Wordsworth and Coleridge. See George Watson, 'The Revolutionary Youth of Wordsworth and Coleridge', *Critical Quarterly,* xviii (1976) and John Beer, 'The "Revolutionary Youth" of Wordsworth and Coleridge: Another View', *Critical Quarterly,* xix (1977).

politics, and the world around them. This reached its sharpest point during the political excitement of the French revolution. To test the proposition, this essay will analyse the journal of Louisa Gurney with which we opened. This illuminates not only the complex subjectivities of the Georgian child; it also enables us to consider how radical political ideologies may have been received at the family and grass roots level.[7]

II

What was a child? Both men and women reached full legal capacity at the age of twenty-one years, but beyond this contemporaries had no clear definition as to what constituted a child or youth, and notions differed across discursive fields and practices. There was a degree of consensus that by seven years old a child was usually able to act with some independence and self-direction within their local community. In some texts this was equated with 'childhood' as opposed to an earlier stage of 'infancie', but it is emblematic of the tangled lexicons of age that for others this was deemed the age at which 'youth' began. Legally a girl could be married at seven, although the marriage could not be consummated until she reached twelve years – the age of discretion and sexual consent for girls. The age of discretion for boys was not reached until the age of fourteen, and for Samuel Johnson this was the point at which 'youth' commenced – a period lasting until the late twenties. However, Alysa Levene has found that poor law registers sometimes recorded even eighteen year olds as 'children'.[8]

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[7] See Arianne Baggerman and Rudolf Dekker, *Child of the Enlightenment: Revolutionary Europe Reflected in a Boyhood Diary* (Leiden, 2008), for an analysis in the Dutch context.

[8] Alysa Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Basingstoke, 2012), 17; Sarah Toulalan, 'Child Sexual Abuse in Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century London: Rape, Sexual Assault and the Denial of Agency', in Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (eds.), *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England:*

Within individual families it is likely that attitudes towards the status of the child were fluid, shifting between conceptualisations of the young in day-to-day interactions. But, as we shall see, this indeterminacy and a sense of proximity to the cultures of youth could be empowering for those in late childhood and early puberty.

Nonetheless, scholars have often categorised the eighteenth century as the period in which the idea of childhood was crystallised. In a seminal article published in *Past and Present* forty years ago, J. H. Plumb declared the eighteenth century was 'the new age of the child'.[9] John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) had come to enjoy huge, if varying influence amongst the middling sorts. It crystallised emergent ideas that children's intellects should be cultivated and they should be treated as rational subjects.[10] By the end of the century the educational theories of Maria Edgeworth and her father Richard Lovell Edgeworth, which called for children to be equipped to reason for themselves, reached wide circulation.[11] Lockean ideas had led to sophisticated pedagogical cultures in which children

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Diversity and Agency, 1750–1914 (Farnham, 2013), 27–8; John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770–present* (New York, 1974), 2; Anja Müller, *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity* (Aldershot, 2006), ch. 4; D. A. B. Ronald, *Youth, Heroism and War Propaganda: Britain and the Young Maritime Hero, 1745–1820* (London, 2015), 14.

[9] J.H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present,* lxvii (1975).

[10] Margaret Ezell, 'John Locke's Images of Childhood: Early Eighteenth Century Response to *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xvii (1983).

[11] Susan Manly, *Language, Custom and Nation in the 1790s: Locke, Tooke, Wordsworth, Edgeworth* (Aldershot, 2007), ch. 4.

were encouraged to be creative learners.[12] From the 1740s especially, noted Plumb, educational opportunities grew and the 'cultural and intellectual horizons of the child' widened. Innovations in children's publishing from the likes of Thomas Boreman, John Newbery and Mary Cooper established the potential of a juvenile market. This facilitated a culture in which (for those with the income to enjoy them) children's engagement was actively encouraged through child-friendly formats, designs and educational games.[13] As Margaret Kinnell has established, Georgian children's literature supposed a reader who exercised individual moral judgement and intellectual autonomy.[14] These developments formed a key component of what I am terming the 'juvenile enlightenment'.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's emphasis on boyhood freedom also produced complex streams of debate, as educators grappled with the degree of liberty children should be allowed and the implications of his theories for female citizenship.[15] Lockean metaphors supposed

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[12] Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles, '"Love to Learn Your Book": Children's Experiences of Text in the Eighteenth Century', *History of Education,* xxxiii (2004).

[13] Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic: Children's Literature in England from Its Beginnings to 1839* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1989), chs. 4–8.

[14] Margaret Kinnell, 'Sceptreless, Free, Uncircumscribed? Radicalism, Dissent and Early Children's Books', *British Journal of Educational Studies,* xxxvi (1988).

[15] W. A. C. Stewart and W. P. McCann, *The Educational Innovators: 1750–1880* (London, 1967), ch. 2; Sophia Woodley, '"Oh Miserable and Most Ruinous Measure": The Debate between Private and Public Education in Britain, 1760–1800', in Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin, (eds.), *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices* (Farnham, 2009); Eileen Hunt Botting, *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany, N.Y., 2006), ch. 5.

passive notions of children as 'soft wax' or fertile gardens,[16] and Locke's and Rousseau's works had the potential for authoritarianism with their attention to surveillance and adult authority. However, they also adumbrated a nascent language of children's rights (to shelter, education, recreation and so on). The category of the child, as an entity requiring unique care and worthy of a set of consumer practices devoted to its needs, was emerging.[17] The late enlightenment was creating a science of childhood,[18] but it also presaged empowering models of childhood subjectivity. Romantic conceptions of children were diverse, but Wordsworth in particular drew upon radical strands of enlightenment thought as he imagined new, child-centred theories of cultural production which incorporated complicated juvenile subject positions.[19] Whereas Plumb suggested that eighteenth-century developments positioned children as 'luxury objects' or 'superior pets', I wish to explore the effects on children themselves. Within middle-class cultures especially eighteenth-century children were ever more conceptualised as distinct to and separate from adults, yet the enlightenment simultaneously provided children with the intellectual tools to challenge that division.

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[16] Ezell, 'John Locke's Images of Childhood', 151.

[17] R. S. White, *Natural Rights and the Birth of Romanticism in the 1790s* (Basingstoke, 2005), ch. 7; Müller (ed.), *Fashioning Childhood*; Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London 2003), ch. 3.

[18] Adriana Benzaquén, 'Childhood, Identity and Human Science in the Enlightenment', *History Workshop Journal,* lvii (2004).

[19] Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780–1832* (Cambridge, 1994), ch. 1; David Whitley, '"Hiding Places of Power": The Child as a Site of Resistance in William Wordsworth's Poetry', in Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles (eds.), *Acts of Reading: Teachers, Text and Childhood* (Stoke on Trent, 2009), 120.

The potential these developments had for the politicisation of children was widely acknowledged.[20] The new children's literature often validated a juvenile sensibility and encouraged a sense of agency.[21] Margaret Kinnell has noted that there has been little attention paid to the significance of children's literature in creating political consciousness in this period.[22] The opportunities of education and the experiences of living through prolonged European warfare and political upheaval might encourage the formation of youthful loyalism within some local communities,[23] but here I am interested in the striking ways in which particular ideological currents and international events interacted to facilitate a national phenomenon of juvenile radicalism.

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[20] Matthew Grenby, '"A Conservative Woman Doing Radical Things": Sarah Trimmer and the Guardian of Education', in Donelle Ruwe (ed.), *Culturing the Child, 1690–1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers* (Langham, Md., 2005); Matthew Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery: British Children's Literature and the French Revolution', *Lion and the Unicorn,* xxvii (2003).

[21] Mitzi Myers, 'The Erotics of Pedagogy: Historical Intervention, Literary Representation, the "Gift of Education", and the Agency of Children', *Children's Literature,* xxiii (1995).

[22] Kinnell, 'Sceptreless, Free, Uncircumscribed', 49.

[23] Kathryn Gleadle, 'Playing at Soldiers: British Loyalism and Juvenile Identities during the Napoleonic Wars', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xxxviii (2015); Kathryn Gleadle, 'Gentry, Gender, and the Moral Economy during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Provincial England', in Lana L. Dalley and Jill Rappoport (eds.), *Economic Women: Essays on Desire and Dispossession in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Columbus, Ohio, 2013), 35-38.

Rational dissenting pedagogies in particular had radicalising possibilities. Anna Letitia Barbauld's Palgrave Academy was famous for politicising its pupils.[24] In the children's books Barbauld wrote with her brother, John Aikin, *Evenings at Home* (1792–6) the politics of antislavery and pacifism were interwoven with fictional instruction in the natural world.[25] Joshua Toulmin hoped that his book, *The History of Taunton* (1791), which considered the town's role in a British narrative of civil liberty, might spur young readers to make connections with 'national affairs'.[26] Many young readers, across the political spectrum, were doing just that.

However, the 'juvenile enlightenment' was not simply the product of new liberal perspectives nor of the growing coherence of notions of the 'child'. It was the ways in which these entwined with older perspectives that was frequently a critical factor. The continued absence of age-related standards for educational attainment meant that assumptions governing children's intellectual competence were fluid. This in itself could provide the young with opportunities for engagement with enlightened literary and political culture, and this was actively encouraged in many middle-class families. In a poem for George III's birthday seven-year-old Marjorie Fleming jested: 'To days ago was the Kings Birthday / And

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[24] William McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment* (Baltimore, Md., 2008), ch. 8; William McCarthy, 'Performance, Pedagogy and Politics: Mrs. Thrale, Mrs.Barbauld, M. Itard', in Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore (eds.), *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550–1800* (New York and London, 2006).

[25] Aileen Fyfe, 'Reading Children's Books in Late Eighteenth-Century Dissenting Families', *Historical Journal,* xliii (2000).

[26] Joshua Toulmin, *The History of Taunton, in the County of Somerset; a New Edition, Greatly Enlarged and Brought Down to the Present Time by James Savage* (Taunton, 1822), pp. v–vi.

to his healh we sung a lay / Poor man his healh is very bad / And he is often very mad'.[27] Elizabeth Barrett (later Browning) was eleven years old when she penned an epistle to Lord Somers concerning the suspension of habeas corpus.[28] Sometimes schools encouraged such reflection. Thomas Love Peacock was eleven when he wrote a classroom letter to the local press on Pitt's war policies, declaring himself 'impassioned with those sentiments which fire my breast when the dearest rights of humanity are at stake'.[29] Twelve-year-old William Hazlitt declared solemnly to his mother that 'In a state of liberty men improve'. The following year he composed a letter to the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, protesting against the religious persecution of Joseph Priestley in Birmingham. Quoting Addison, he declared that Priestley's name 'shall flourish in immortal youth'.[30] As this indicates, juvenile efforts could result in direct intervention in the public sphere. Thomas Dermody (1775–1802) wrote much-reviewed works on the ideologies of the revolution, including 'The Rights of Justice, or Rational Liberty' (1793).[31] Leigh Hunt is another of many examples, composing politicised literature from twelve to sixteen years old.[32]

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[27] [original spelling], Frank Sidgwick, *The Complete Marjory Fleming: Her Journals, Letters & Verses* (London, 1934), 18.

[28] Beverley Taylor, 'Childhood Writings of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: "At Four I First Mounted Pegasus"', in Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster (eds.), *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge, 2005), 141.

[29] Nicholas A. Joukovsky (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Love Peacock*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 2001), i, 8–9.

[30] William Hazlitt to his mother, Grace Loftus Hazlitt, (9 July 1790); William Hazlitt to Mr Wood ([summer] 1791), in Herschel Moreland Sikes assisted by W. H. Bonner and G. Lahey (eds.), *The Letters of William Hazlitt* (New York, 1978), 48, 57–9.

[31] James Raymond, *The Life of Thomas Dermody*, 2 vols. (London, 1806), ii, 63–4.

Over the eighteenth century, Rousseau's identification of a post-pubescent stage during which the young grew restive was a perception that began to appear more frequently in contemporary literature. This was accompanied by broad agreement on the importance of youths' submission to their elders (especially urged in the case of females).[33] This in itself created a subject position against which the young could react. By the 1790s the category 'youth', long associated with passion, was frequently linked to political exuberance – especially within progressive circles. William Godwin for one praised the 'vivacity' of youth in this respect.[34] When a young delegate of the London Corresponding Society feared his age would be contentious, he was successfully supported by some members on the grounds that the young make the best delegates due to their supposed enthusiasm and lack of prejudices.[35] These perspectives need to be brought into dialogue with the impact of revolutionary thought upon the family. As Eileen Botting has established, the ideal of an egalitarian family was an intrinsic facet of enlightenment debate. This intensified during the revolutionary decade.

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[32] Leigh Hunt, *Juvenilia: A Collection of Poems* (London, 1801). This work went through four editions. It included topics such as the navy, Nelson, Robespierre and war with Switzerland.

[33] Patricia Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination* (London, 1981), chs. 3–5; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London, 1993 (first published 1762)), book iv.

[34] K. E. Smith, 'Autonomy and Perfectibility: The Educational Theory of Godwin's *The Enquirer*', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* v (1982); Joseph Priestley similarly encouraged such a view: Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), 406.

[35] Mary Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792–1799* (Cambridge, 1983), 164.

Mary Wollstonecraft's evocation of 'republican motherhood' is the most famous example, as she traced the ways in which women might achieve citizenship through their childrearing.[36] Other rational dissenters were insistent upon recasting domestic relationships as part of political reform. 'Let public reformation prepare the way for private', Barbauld proclaimed, adding a call for the 'abolition of domestic tyranny'.[37]

French historians have explored how revolutionary principles led citizens to claim egalitarian family structures, facilitating divorce and easing sibling distinctions through the abolition of primogeniture.[38] Beyond fleeting references to the lifestyle radicalism of many progressives with regard to childrearing,[39] this is not a phenomenon that has been investigated for Britain. Contemporary conservatives were acutely sensitive to the implications, though. Laetitia Matilda Hawkins warned darkly in 1793 of the dangers of a culture in which 'the question of right is *fashionably* settled' and where relationships between children and parents were altered.[40] Hannah More poured scorn on contemporary

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[36] Botting, *Family Feuds*, chs. 4 and 5; see also Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Basingstoke, 1982), especially ch. 2.

[37] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (London, 1790), 38.

[38] Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley, Calif., 2004); Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London, 1992), especially ch. 3.

[39] E. P. Thompson, *The Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age* (Woodbridge, 1997), 174.

[40] Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, *Letters on the Female Mind, Its Powers and Pursuits, Addressed to Miss H.M. Williams, with Particular Reference to Her Letters from France*, 2 vols. (London, 1793), i, 85; ii, 71.

'enlighteners', scoffing that the next project would be 'on the *rights of youth*, on the *rights of children*, on the *rights of babies*' and warned of the current 'revolutionary spirit in families'.[41] She pursued the theme in her novel *Cœlebs*, her model mother complaining, 'I know not … whether the increased insubordination of children is owing to the new school of philosophy and politics, but it seems to me to make part of the system … There certainly prevails a spirit of independence, a revolutionary spirit, a separation from the parent state. *It is the children's world'*.[42] This was not just alarmist rhetoric, but, I will suggest, a response to the fact that some were actually seeking to recast family relationships in this way. Analyzing the journal of Louisa Gurney allows us to probe how children themselves may have reacted to these issues, even actively contributing to the processes.

III

Louisa Gurney (1784–1836) was one of the eleven children of Catherine (*née* Bell) (1754–1792) and John Gurney (1749–1809), a prosperous Quaker wool-stapler, who lived in Earlham, just outside the East Anglian city of Norwich.[43] Louisa and her siblings were to make a significant impact upon public life. The sister of Elizabeth Fry, Louisa published on education after her marriage to Samuel Hoare in 1806. Another sister, Priscilla, became a respected philanthropist, whilst Hannah (who married abolitionist M.P., Thomas Fowell

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[41] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, 2 vols. (7th edn, London, 1799), i, 147.

[42] Hannah More, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife* (Bristol, 1995, first published 1809), 127 [original emphasis].

[43] In 1803, John Gurney became a partner in the family bank. See Hannah Geldart, *Memorials of Samuel Gurney* (London, 1857), 9.

Buxton) was an anti-slavery activist.[44] Louisa's unpublished diaries (1796–1806) witness the family still struggling to reconfigure family dynamics following the death of the children's mother in 1792. A much-hated governess left the household in 1796 and at this point Louisa's eldest sibling Catherine (1776–1850), known as Kitty, took primary management of the children.[45] Her influence was particularly marked over her sisters, as the elder of the three boys attended school from an early age. Although Louisa's brother John was educated by the radical William Enfield for a short period, her brothers were largely schooled by broad

[44] The other children were Rachel (1778–1827); Elizabeth, known as "Betsey", (1780–1845, later Elizabeth Fry); John (1781–1814); Richenda, known as "Chenda" (1782–1855, later Richenda Cunningham); Hannah (1783–1872, later Hannah Buxton); Priscilla, known as "Cilla" (1785–1821); Samuel (1786–1856); Joseph John (1788–1847); Daniel (1791–1880). Louisa was thus the sixth child.

[45] Louisa Gurney's journal for parts of the year 1797 has recently been published in Claudia Nelson (ed.), *British Family Life, 1780–1914. Volume 1: Growing Up* (London, 2013), 79–124. This article uses the manuscript versions of Louisa's journal housed in Norfolk record office [hereafter NRO]. This includes a contemporary journal: NRO MC 1593/1–4 and an additional manuscript which Louisa undertook in 1801 and which comprises a subsequent copying of selections from her earlier diaries. This includes some material no longer extant in its original form and is indicated here with the reference: NRO MC 2784/A/2. Augustus Hare published extracts from Louisa's diary in *The Gurneys of Earlham*. Hare had access to parts of Louisa's diary that are no longer extant and so this source is also used here. However, Hare sometimes edited diary entries and so these citations should be treated with caution. Verily Anderson, *Friends and Relations: Three Centuries of Quaker Families* (London, 1980), makes use of further unpublished material but this is a highly fictionalised and inaccurate account and has therefore not been used here.

church Anglicans.[46] In contrast, free from the constraints of formal schooling, Louisa and her sisters immersed themselves in some of the leading scientific, literary, and political works of the day. Indeed, Louisa pitied 'little Sammy' as he went off to school in 1796. This raises the intriguing thought that some young women may have been more enlightened than their brothers.

Journal keeping was an integral feature of Kitty's educational plans. She drew closely upon traditions of Protestant dissent in which diaries were kept as a tool for self-reflection and spiritual improvement.[47] Louisa ceaselessly examined her behaviour and thoughts, and deliberated as to whether she had 'made good use of my time.'[48] However, as Felicity Nussbaum observes, 'Diary serves the social/historical function of articulating a multiplicity

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[46] Samuel went to school first in Wandsworth and then, with Joseph, attended the school of the Rev. Browne in Hingham, Norfolk: Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 39–41; Geldart, *Memorials of Samuel Gurney*, 6–9; Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, *Memoirs of Joseph John Gurney: With Selections from His Journal and Correspondence*, 2 vols. (Norwich, 1854), i, 13.

[47] Effie Botonaki, 'Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting, and Account Keeping', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxx (1999). The term 'diary' is sometimes used to refer to a shorter, more elliptical process of daily record keeping in contrast to the more expansive and reflective 'journal'. However, the distinction is an artificial one and in common with other scholars, e.g. Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart: Young Women and Emotion, 1780–1830* (Charlottesville, 2007), 7, the terms will be used interchangeably here.

[48] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 30 June 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, ff. 34–5.

of contestatory selves, of unstable and incoherent selves'.[49] Louisa's diary is testament to such uneven notions of selfhood. One entry might find Louisa writing dutifully that she needed to defer to 'those who are older, wiser & better than myself',[50] but elsewhere the text testifies to a process of political experimentation in which Louisa questioned the hierarchies of family life. The journal begins in 1796 – during the period of the collapse of popular radical organisation following the passage of the repressive Two Acts – but its concerns during 1796–7 are illustrative of the continuing strength of Norwich's 'intellectual "Jacobinism"'.[51]

The Gurney family was immersed within a local Quaker and business culture. Louisa's diary regularly references socialising within these networks and her wider Quaker kinship – the Howards, Barclays, and Aggs families, for example. Membership of this network meant that Louisa was closely acculturated into the dissenting discourses of prosperous piety and sober self-scrutiny. Many Quaker communities had become increasingly seclusionist over the eighteenth century, discouraging participation in worldly matters in favour of quietism.[52] However, this was far from universal and in Norwich, Louisa's kinship network was closely involved in contemporary politics. This drew the young girl into the city's vigorous electoral culture. In 1796 Bartlett Gurney (John Gurney's cousin and head of the Gurney bank) stood for election against William Windham. As Secretary of

[49] Felicity Nussbaum, 'Toward Conceptualizing Diary', in James Olney (ed.), *Studies in Autobiography* (Oxford, 1988), 132.

[50] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 31 June 1797, NRO MC 1593/1.

[51] Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), 375.

[52] Sandra Stanley Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780–1930* (London, 2007), 9–12.

War and a former Whig, Windham had incurred the wrath of local radicals and liberals.[53] On hearing of his election, Louisa railed, 'Eliza and I cried. I hated all the aristocrats: I felt it right to hate them. I was fit to kill them.'[54] Eleven-year-old Louisa was clearly experimenting with the language of the French revolution about which she had heard so much. For Norwich was also that 'city of sedition', as one resident put it.[55]

The multi-faceted nature of contemporary attitudes towards children created tensions which emerge clearly in Louisa's diary. Louisa sometimes expressed herself through a conventional childhood voice: 'I spell, read, write & cypher as well as most children'.[56] But she also exhibited a keen awareness of contemporary expectations of childhood behaviour, at times criticising herself or her sisters for their 'childishness' and propensity for bickering.[57] On other occasions she enthused over the carefree existence of the middle-class child: 'Why should not we be as merry & happy as we can, & <u>be children</u> as long as we can'.[58] This was a difficult voice to uphold however. On 19 September she observed that whilst '<u>My age</u>, they

[53]Anna Clark has noted, following the Gagging Acts of 1795, 'elections were one of the few times in which dissent could be openly and legitimately expressed': Anna Clark, 'Class, Gender and British Elections, 1794–1818', in Michael T. Davis and Paul A. Pickering (eds.), *Unrespectable Radicals? Popular Politics in the Age of Reform* (Aldershot, 2008), 107; C. B. Jewson, *The Jacobin City: A Portrait of Norwich in Its Reaction to the French Revolution 1788–1802* (Glasgow, 1975), 71–4.

[54] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 30 May 1796, cited in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 53.

[55] Cecilia Lucy Brightwell, *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie* (Norwich, 1854), 43.

[56] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 1 Feb. 1797, NRO MC2784/A/2, f. 50.

[57] E.g. Journal of Louisa Gurney, 9 June 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, ff. 75–6; (14 Dec. 1797), NRO MC 1593/2, f. 32.

[58] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 13 Sept. 1797, NRO MC1593/1, f. 147.

say, is the age for enjoyment' she was inwardly discontented.[59] Louisa also exhibited a desire to express her growing maturation, writing a week after her twelfth birthday, 'I feel that I am far less of a child than I was'.[60] These divergent modes of juvenile selfhood are equally apparent in her awareness of contemporary discourses of religious childhood. She piously articulated a juvenile, but rationalist religious voice after Kitty had read Sarah Trimmer's *Sacred History* to her, 'I think it is quite right to know the story of the Bible – First reason is, that when we are at an age to fix our principles upon that & other such things, we should know the bible thoroughly.'[61] Elsewhere, Louisa expressed (with paradoxical maturity) a cognizance of the cultural association between childhood innocence and nature: 'Sometimes I feel when I am wrapt up in nature & all its charms, a sort of mental devotion which is truly delightful. I feel my mind raised as it were from this world & all its bustles'. On then confessing to her sister that she felt unable to pray regularly as their friend John Pitchford had exhorted (her mind felt 'too little for it'), her sister assured her this was because 'I was so young'.[62]

The enlightenment's attention to education produced highly literate children capable of these advanced acts of composition. But in so doing it also created sophisticated thinkers who were provided with the very tools to challenge their social position as children. At times Louisa rebelled against the inequalities of age, fuming that 'people treat them [children] as if they were idiots, and never let them judge for themselves'.[63] Blauvelt has observed that

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[59] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 19 Sept. 1798, NRO MC 1593/2, f. 111.

[60] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 1 Oct. 1796, NRO MC2784/A/2, f. 45.

[61] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 21 May 1796, NRO MC 2784/A/2, ff. 17–18.

[62] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Apr. 1797, MC 2784/A/2, ff. 59–60.

[63] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 21 June 1796, in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 55.

young American diarists proved adept in 'multiple emotional communities'.[64] Gurney's diary suggests that we could take such an analysis yet further. Through her participation in a variety of enlightened activities, Louisa developed a democratic juvenile voice through which to articulate her emotions.

IV

Integral to this was Louisa's close association with a radical network. One of the features of the juvenile enlightenment was the appearance of youthful coteries, dedicated to the discussion of progressive politics and culture. Young men such as Francis Horner, John Murray and Henry Brougham were part of a dynamic culture at the University of Edinburgh. Henry Cockburn talked of a generational rift here in which 'youthful philosophers' were inspired by the works of enlightenment philosophes, political economists and chemists. Organisations such as the Speculative Society provided a focus for the expression of juvenile political identities and here again there were political tensions between young and old members.[65] In Oxford too male youths formed republican societies, such as the one established at Christ Church, where members adopted their own uniform; in Cambridge the

[64] Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart*, 11, 146.

[65] Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time* (Edinburgh, 1856), 27, 45–7, 73–6; Henry Brougham, *The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham, Written by Himself* (Edinburgh, 1871), i, 52–4; Speculative Society of Edinburgh, *The History of the Speculative Society, 1764–1904* (Edinburgh, 1905), 11–13.

room of Samuel Taylor Coleridge became a focus for such meetings.[66] These circles could elide distinctions between 'child', 'youth' and 'young adult' creating inclusive subcultures. Notwithstanding the emergent category of 'the child' within literary, medical and consumer cultures, the matriculation of boys at university was a clear indication of the continuance of more inclusive, early-modern practices of lifecycle stages. When this practice coincided with political excitement at the French revolution's liberating philosophies an arresting phenomenon of juvenile mobilisation often occurred. When Thomas Campbell joined the Glasgow debating society he found it to be composed 'almost entirely of boys as young as myself'.[67] In St. Andrews Thomas Chalmers became at the age of eleven, part of a radical circle when he matriculated and was taught by figures like James Brown, John Leslie and James Mylne, known for their republican sympathies.[68]

It is argued here that the enlightened education of the middle-class child led to questioning, self-aware and highly articulate young citizens and that this phenomenon formed one of the most important features of the 'juvenile enlightenment'. However, as the previous examples indicate, the phenomenon of youthful enlightened politics was diverse and multi-faceted. It was not always connected to the newer, sharper distinctions of 'child' and 'youth'. The young from poorer backgrounds sometimes found that their economic activities provided a pathway to radical political engagement. Fourteen-year-old Henry Eaton (son of the more

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[66] Heather Ellis, *Generational Conflict and University Reform: Oxford in the Age of Revolution* (Leiden, 2012), 72–3; Winnifred F. Courtney, *Young Charles Lamb, 1775–1802* (London, 1982), 87–8.

[67] Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, 'The Affective Revolution in 1790s Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xxxiv (2001), 504.

[68] Stewart Jay Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford, 1982), 5–6.

famous activist Daniel) was paid to take admission tickets at John Thelwall's lectures. When he had to appear before the Privy Council as part of their investigation into the activities of the London Corresponding Society, he robustly criticised William Pitt to his face.[69] Many in their mid-teens appear to have been politicised through the work place. Richard Newton was only 14 when he joined the radical publisher William Holland as a draughtsman. Newton was soon producing exceptional visual satire, which mocked both George III and William Pitt. It was during his apprenticeship to a banker in Durham that George Meadley began to read widely in radical literature. Such experiences could lead to independent youthful politics. Edward Baines, the future publisher of the *Leeds Mercury* was born in the same year as Meadley, and was inspired by the advanced political views of Thomas Walker, a printer and stationer in Preston to whom he was apprenticed. The teenage Baines then joined a 'Reasoning Society' in Leeds in the mid-1790s with other young friends.[70]

These milieux were especially associated with rational dissenting circles. The gendered dynamics of such networks could be complex but there were opportunities for females to participate in informal associational life.[71] Baines' Reasoning Society welcomed

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[69] John Thelwall, *The Politics of English Jacobinism: Writings of John Thelwall*, ed. Gregory Claeys (University Park, Pa., 1995), p. xxi; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968), 21.

[70] David Alexander, *Richard Newton and English Caricature in the 1790s* (Manchester, 1998), 28–33; Alexander Gordon, 'Meadley, George Wilson (1774–1818)', rev. Clare L. Taylor, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); Edward Baines, *The Life of Edward Baines, Late M.P. For the Borough of Leeds* (London, 1851), 24.

[71] Kathryn Gleadle, '"Opinions Deliver'd in Conversation": Conversation, Politics, and Gender in the Late Eighteenth Century', in Jose Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford, 2003); Jane Rendall, '"Women That Would Plague Me

female attendees, for example, and in Bury St Edmunds the young Catherine Buck and Sarah Jane Maling thrived in what the latter referred to as a 'glorious tribe of *intrepid thinkers*'.[72] As this suggests, there appears to have been a thriving juvenile associational culture in this period which we have yet to excavate. Fourteen-year-old Henry Brougham and friends established a highly-organised debating body, the Juvenile Literary Society in 1792.[73] Thomas Chalmers owed much to the Political Society of which he was a member aged thirteen to fourteen years old.[74] Such endeavours could often be based in the subcultures of school. Robert Southey was expelled following the publication of an anti-corporal punishment article in a periodical he and his school-friends produced, *The Flagellant*. He viewed the expulsion as kin to the tyrannous treatment received by Thomas Paine.[75]

Louisa Gurney clearly benefited from proximity to the opportunities the late enlightenment afforded to young people of comfortable means.[76] Scholars are agreed that Norwich was one of the key centres of the provincial enlightenment. The Norwich Public Library, founded in 1784, and with which Louisa's family was involved, was one focal point for cultural exchange. Conversable clubs also flourished there. These included the Society of

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with Rational Conversation": Aspiring Women and Scottish Whigs, *c*.1790–1830', in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds.), *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment* (Houndmills, 2005).

[72] Ellen Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (London, 1989), 93.

[73] Brougham, *Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham*, i, 84.

[74] William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D. LL.D.*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1849–52), i, 20–21.

[75] William Speck, *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters* (New Haven, Conn., 2006), 22–3.

[76] For an initial consideration of the potential of the new urban practices of the enlightenment see Peter Borsay, 'Children, Adolescents and Fashionable Urban Society in Eighteenth-Century England', in Müller, *Fashioning Childhood,* 53–62.

United Friars, the Speculative Society and the Tusculan School (a radical debating society with which many of Louisa's friends were involved).[77] The Unitarian Octagon Chapel, where William Enfield was a minister (1796–7), provided another focus for intellectual culture. Kitty Gurney recorded attending Enfield's lectures during her teens.[78] Norwich was also at the vanguard of scientific enlightenment pursuit. It had a Natural History Society and a Botanical Society, leading institutions of their kind, and prestigious botanists such as James Edward Smith and James Sowerby (both visitors to the Gurney home) were based in the city.[79]

Those who have studied the political profile of the city in the 1790s have been struck by the predominance of young radicals in the city's progressive culture.[80] This included a cohort in their late teens and early twenties: especially Thomas Starling Norgate (b. 1775), John Pitchford (b. 1772/3), Hudson Gurney (b. 1775) (Louisa's cousin), Ollyett Woodhouse (b. 1769), Charles Marsh (b. *c*.1774), and Thomas Amyot (b. 1775). These men were leading

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[77] Angela Dain, 'An Enlightened and Polite Society', in Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds.), *Norwich since 1550* (London, 2004); Jewson, *Jacobin City*, ch. 12.

[78] Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 80.

[79] Paul A. Elliott, 'Towards a Geography of English Scientific Culture: Provincial Identity and Literary and Philosophical Culture in the English County Town, 1750–1850', *Urban History*, xxxii (2005); Pleasance Smith, *Memoir and Correspondence of the Late Sir James Edward Smith, M.D.*, 2 vols. (London, 1832), i, 17, 18, 31, 41–4, 107–8, 128–31, 219; Journal of Louisa Gurney, 31 July1797, 5 Aug. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1.

[80] P. J. Corfield and Chris Evans (eds.), *Youth and Revolution in the 1790s: Letters of William Pattisson, Thomas Amyot and Henry Crabb Robinson* (Stroud, 1996); Jewson, *Jacobin City,* ch. 5; J. E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England, 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), 93.

figures in the city's periodical, *The Cabinet.* Amyot represented it modestly as 'rather a display of juvenile Abilities than a Repository of political Knowledge.'[81] However, it was hailed by E.P. Thompson as 'perhaps the most impressive of the quasi-Jacobin intellectual publications of the period'.[82] The network also included some older figures in their late twenties and early thirties, such as Amelia Alderson (b. 1769), William Taylor (b. 1765) and the Plumptre sisters Anne and Annabella (b. 1760 and 1769) – all of whom contributed to *The Cabinet*. The Plumptres were emphatic about their political ideals, Anne referring to herself as a 'citizen of the world' who felt it her duty to relieve misery and promote the radical cause amongst the 'citizens' of Norwich.[83]

The Gurney siblings were frequently drawn into the peripheries of this network. The editor of Priscilla's memoirs recalled that the children 'did not escape contamination from the speculative philosophy' which 'infected' Norwich and its environs in the 1790s.[84] Kitty later referred to 'the literary young men of Norwich with whom we were acquainted'; all but two of these, she noted, were known for their 'infidelity'. These two were Joseph Kinghorn (b. 1766, a young Baptist minister who was beginning to revise his fervent support for the revolution by the mid-1790s) and more importantly John Pitchford (a chemist in partnership with a local radical quaker, John Sims).[85] Retrospective accounts dwell on their positive

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[81] Thomas Amyot to William Pattisson, 5 Feb. 1795, in Corfield and Evans, *Youth and Revolution*, 117.

[82] Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 155.

[83] See Anne Plumptre to 'Dear Citizen' [possibly George Dyer], 1796, NRO MS 4262, 5 B4.

[84] MS Memoirs of Priscilla Gurney, NRO MS 11294, vol. 1.

[85] Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 83; Jewson, *Jacobin City*, 116. See also Braithwaite, *Memoirs of Joseph John Gurney*, 11.

religious influence upon the Gurneys.[86] Pitchford, as we have seen, encouraged Louisa and her sisters to regularly pray and in many of their encounters religion was a key theme, as it was in her journal more widely.[87] However, Pitchford was an ardent supporter of the French revolution and a key figure in local radical intellectual activity. He wrote over a quarter of the articles that appeared in *The Cabinet*, and was a secretary of the Tusculan debating school.[88] He was voted off the public library committee in 1799 for his democratic principles.[89] During 1797 there were long periods during which he visited the siblings daily. Louisa was clear as to the radical politics he represented, effusing that he was 'so democratical'.[90]

The Gurney children socialised with other members of Pitchford's coterie also, such as John Taylor and Hudson Gurney.[91] They dined with Amelia Alderson and her father (who was also their family doctor). Louisa wrote of her admiration for Amelia: 'a truly virtuous & good character'.[92] She felt close too to Anne and Annabella Plumptre, referring to them as

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[86] Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 82; Hannah Buxton, *Memorials of Hannah, Lady Buxton, from Papers Collected by Her Granddaughters* (London, 1883), 16–17; Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck,* ed. C. C. Hankin (London, 1859), 492; Katharine Fry and Rachel E. Cresswell (eds.), *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry, with Extracts from Her Journal and Letters* (London, 1847), 16–17.

[87] e.g. Journal of Louisa Gurney, Friday [28] July 1797, NRO 1593/1, f. 75.

[88] Corfield and Evans, *Youth and Revolution*, 188–9; Jewson, *Jacobin City*, 54–5, 59, 116, 141.

[89] John Warden Robberds, *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich* (London, 1843), i, 307.

[90] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Friday [28] July 1797, NRO 1593/1, f. 77.

[91] e.g. Journal of Louisa Gurney, 26 Apr. 1798, NRO MC1593/2, f. 88.

[92] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 15 Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 150.

'so liberal – generous & really democratical'. When they were in Norwich the Plumptres' residence was a further location for socialising with John Pitchford.[93] When they moved to London, Louisa missed them greatly and appreciated their correspondence: 'I was truly glad to hear from them I do love & admire the Plumtrees'.[94] Meanwhile, Kitty actively cultivated relationships with radicals of whom her mother had come to disapprove. This included her cousin Margaret (Peggy) Lindoc, a local Unitarian who strongly supported the French revolution, and the Enfields. William Enfield, a minister at Octagon Chapel, a member of the Speculative Society and one of the older contributors to *The Cabinet*, enjoyed close links to metropolitan radicalism and wrote for the progressive periodical the *Monthly Magazine*. Prior to his sudden death, late in 1797, Enfield educated the eldest Gurney boy, John, in his home and Louisa and her sisters were extremely close to Enfield's children.[95]

The figure of the rational dissenting William Enfield clearly loomed large, although the religious background of this network was fairly diverse. Indeed, Pitchford came from a Roman Catholic family. There were aspects of Louisa's own religious heritage which may well have encouraged her radical political sensibilities. The egalitarian outlook of Quakers – their disavowal of titles for example and early championing of the antislavery cause – clearly had radicalising potential. Louisa was not alone in making such connections: Thomas Paine was himself raised as a Quaker.[96] In Ireland a new generation of young Quakers, self-designated the "New Lights", were adopting democratic political ideals often in tension with

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[93] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Mar. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 54.

[94] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 163.

[95] Peggy Lindoc frequently came to stay at Earlham during this period, see Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, pp. i, 21, 54, 58–9, 78, 80–2. For William Enfield see Arianne Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* (Stanford, Calif., 2010), 141.

[96] Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought* (London, 1989), 101-3.

those of mainstream elders. Figures such as the American Quaker, Hannah Barnard, who toured Britain and Ireland during this period, were also influential. Barnard was rejected from the American Friends for sympathies for Paineite radicalism.[97] Louisa's sister, Elizabeth, was to meet Hannah Barnard in 1799. Whilst she did not warm to her, she reports how Barnard 'encouraged the young people to say what they thought' concerning a grammar school they examined together.[98]

The culture of Quakerism and rational dissent was typically associated with greater opportunities for women. Nonetheless, Norwich's associational culture was an ambivalent space for women to occupy. They could attend the Tusculan debates but do not appear to have spoken themselves. *The Cabinet* published articles on the rights of women, yet the participation of tory women in the city's elections produced a backlash in which some decried petticoat influence.[99] Progressive women could carve out their own public identities, though. Susannah Taylor, an Octagon chapel member and a close friend of Barbauld, established an informal salon to which many of the region's leading literati were attracted.[100] Eleven-year-old Louisa recorded Anne Plumptre's determination to attend a Norwich library

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[97] Judith Jennings, *Gender, Religion and Radicalism in the Long Eighteenth Century: The 'Ingenious Quaker' and Her Connections* (Aldershot, 2006), 145–6; Kerby A. Miller, Arnold Schrier, Bruce D. Boling and David N. Doyle, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (Oxford, 2003, 201-2.

[98] Fry and Cresswell, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry*, 80.

[99] Clark, 'Class, Gender and British Elections, 1794–1818', 109-13.

[100] Janet Ann Ross and Susannah Taylor (eds.), *Three Generations of Englishwomen, Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs. John Taylor, Mrs. S. Austin and Lady Duff Gordon* (London, 1888), i, 7–8.

committee from which she and her father had turned away as only men were present: 'Oh she said she did not care for that, she would go.'[101] In 1796 Amelia Alderson and Anna Plumptre organised a series of lectures by John Thelwall on the Roman Republic.[102] Thelwall's choice of ancient republicanism as a subject was to circumvent the gagging laws which had resulted in the closure of the metropolitan debating societies. Thelwall was known to be a thrilling lecturer who was emphatic on the right of open communication. His provocative presence led to riots in Norwich in June 1797,[103] but he claimed his audience often consisted of 'very genteel people' 'of both sexes and of all ages'.[104] One of these was eleven-year-old Louisa. Some of the youthful attendees questioned his zealous manner,[105] but not Louisa: 'Thelwall spoke so charmingly – I felt so enraptured with him – I felt a sort of admiration & love for him'. In the diary, Louisa then revised these emotions acknowledging that such intense

[101] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 1 Sept. 1796, MC 2784/A/2, f. 36.

[102] Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, 404; Anne Plumptre to 'Dear Citizen' [possibly George Dyer],1796, NRO MS 4262, 5 B4.

[103] Jewson, *Jacobin City*, 81–2. Thelwall's strategies led to a bitter debate with Godwin, who argued for improving rationality through private debate and reading: Gillian Russell, '"Spouters or Washerwomen": The Sociability of Romantic Lecturing', in Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, (eds.), *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840* (Cambridge, 2002), 126–8; Martin Hood Wilkin, *Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich: A Memoir* (Norwich, 1855), 270; Susan Manly, *Language, Custom and Nation*, 90–8.

[104] Russell, 'Spouters or Washerwomen', 127.

[105] Thompson*, The Romantics,* 158.

feelings might prove transient.[106] In writing to another child, Eliza Enfield, there was no such restraint: 'how does thee like Thelwall… If thee has only a crum Of brain, thee must admire him I am quite in love with him I do like him so **so very much'**.[107]

Louisa evidently felt enmeshed in the progressive networks of enlightened Norwich, and – significantly – young adults within this circle appear to have paid little heed to her age. To develop this analysis we will piece together her reading practices to reveal how participation in various reading communities intersected to produce an enlightened juvenile selfhood. Next, we will probe the nature of Louisa's personal interactions with this youthful community. This indicates the existence of a revolutionary youthful subculture of affective interaction which both inspired and troubled those within it.

V

To function as an active reader was at the heart of the juvenile enlightenment.[108] Louisa largely expressed satisfaction at the educational works she consumed. This included referencing works emanating from the late British scientific enlightenment like Jacson's *Botanical Dialogues*, Goldsmith's work on natural history and Bonnycastle's *Introduction to*

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[106] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Tuesday, July [this appears to be an error for June] 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 27. Here and elsewhere, if Louisa underlined a word three times this is indicated with the underline style of two wavy lines.

[107] [Original spelling.] In the original the words "so very much" are underlined multiple times in bold ink. Louisa Gurney to Eliza Enfield [n.d.], NRO MC 2784/A/1/11. Gurney was apparently unaware of John Thelwall's dismissal of female public opinion: Clark, 'Class, Gender and British Elections, 1794–1818', 111.

[108] For children as active readers see Matthew Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700–1840* (Cambridge, 2011), especially ch. 5.

Astronomy. [109] In addition to British history, she recorded reading works from the Scottish enlightenment such as William Robertson's *History of America*.[110] However, she responded with much greater creativity to texts which encouraged a juvenile sensibility. Maria Edgeworth's creation of young subjects who 'speak in a juvenile voice'[111] appealed especially. Louisa recorded, 'I have been reading the Story of the Bracelets in Parents' Assistant. The character of Cecilia has reminded me of my own.' Using the text as a tool to develop self-awareness, she analysed the character in comparison to herself, concluding, 'I think I see myself clearly tonight.'[112] Other radical children also responded imaginatively to

[109] Jacson, who moved within the circles of Erasmus Darwin, sought to introduce children to the Linnaean system: Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760–1860* (Baltimore, Md., 1996), 108–20.

[110] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 16 Dec. 1796, cited in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 61; Thurs. 26 Aug. [this appears to be an error for 25 Aug. 1797], NRO MC 1593/1, f. 113. Of William Hayley's *The Triumphs of Temper* (a poem frequently commended to adolescent girls and which advocated a feminised form of patriotism) she was ambivalent. The poem had been reissued in 1795, see Susan Matthews, *Blake, Sexuality and Bourgeois Politeness* (Cambridge, 2011), ch. 3. Louisa liked it 'to-le-ra-bly': Journal of Louisa Gurney, Apr. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 58.

[111] Mitzi Myers, 'Reading Rosamund Reading: Maria Edgeworth's "Wee-Wee Stories" Interrogate the Canon', in Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff (eds.), *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature* (Detroit, 1994), 60. Myers, 'The Erotics of Pedagogy'.

[112] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 15 Apr. 1798, NRO MC 1593/2, f. 82.

Edgeworth's works. Frederic Hill and his sister saved up to buy the *Parent's Assistant*. The siblings acted out one of the stories, making scenery for the occasion.[113]

Louisa often read in solitude, but this was just one facet of the sisters' sophisticated literary practices. During their 'family settlement' Kitty read aloud to them whilst they did their needlework. In a departure from class norms, this consisted of making and mending their own clothes in a bid to be 'independent of others'. (Louisa stated that the rich relied too much upon servants.)[114] Their curriculum enabled them to participate actively in the political and intellectual concerns of their wider network. Having attended Thelwall's lectures on the Roman republic Louisa spent much of this period studying Roman history – in solitude and in concert with her sisters. The latter Louisa expressed as a quasi-public event – 'our History meeting' – in which she and her sisters considered critically their reading.[115] In her journal Louisa related these themes to contemporary issues of governance and war. Whilst shocked by aspects of Roman law, such as the punishments meted out to slaves, Louisa noted (adopting a conventional feminine voice) that, 'We read of some of their laws, which I like better than the very very little I know of the present laws. They seem to me more equal & just'.[116] She wrote reflectively on the political implications of Roman constitutions, stating on 5 September 1797, 'What an unjust institution Plebeans & Patricians was! It divided the

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[113] Constance Hill (ed.), *Frederic Hill, an Autobiography* (London,1894), 26, 33.

[114] Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i. 5–6. Journal of Louisa Gurney, 1 Feb. 1797, 23 May 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, ff. 50, 62; 19 June 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 14.

[115] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 12 Aug. 1797, 14 Aug. 1797, Thurs. 26 Aug. [this appears to be an error for 25 Aug. 1797], NRO MC 1593/1, f. 109–10, 113.

[116] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Thurs. 26 Aug. [this appears to be an error for 25 Aug. 1797], NRO MC 1593/1, f. 112.

Roman people so much'.[117] Karen O' Brien has shown how women might construct an empowering version of womanhood from their reading of Roman history.[118] Louisa's journal testifies to other modes of identification the subject enabled, foremost among them the expression of a politicised selfhood.

What is significant is not just the practice of critical reading, but that these girls felt part of a progressive constituency of youthful readers. The text they were studying was Livy's *Roman History*. This was the same work that other young Norwich radicals were scrutinising. Their close friend Joseph Kinghorn reported that he read a portion of the work each morning.[119] Eleven-year-old Priscilla urged another member of their coterie, Eliza Enfield, to tackle the work too; 'We are now reading Livius' Roman History, which is very interesting; it is so clear and he writes in such a manner that it brings one entirely to the place', she enthused.[120]

At the end of August 1797 Louisa recorded with great satisfaction that she had begun Helen Maria Williams's *Letters from France*, much discussed by the reading public for its vivid portrayal of revolutionary events.[121] Williams lived in Paris during the revolution, was intimate with the Girondin circle and became a severe critic of Robespierre. In England, she

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[117] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 5 Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 136.

[118] Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2009), 113–20.

[119] Joseph Kinghorn to his parents, 2 Aug. 1796, quoted in Wilkin, *Joseph Kinghorn*, 265.

[120] Priscilla Gurney to Miss Enfield, Aug. 1797, cited in Buxton, *Memorials of Hannah, Lady Buxton*, 6.

[121] Louisa began reading the text in August 1797, she identifies the author in November: Journal of Louisa Gurney, 31 Aug. 1797, MC 1593/1; 7 Nov. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 161.

moved in the radical circles associated with Norwich, being close to Godwin, Alderson, Barbauld and the Plumptres.[122] Furthermore, William Enfield had defended Williams' work in the *Monthly Review* for its political ambition.[123] This sense of a personal connection may well have given an impetus to Louisa's desire to closely engage with the work, and she preferred this to her study of Roman history.[124] A few years earlier Pitchford had introduced a debate at the Tusculan society, 'Is the constitution of the French Republic superior or inferior to those of Greece or Rome'?[125] This question Louisa herself now tackled, fuelled by her reading of Livy and Williams:

> I have lately been really studying the French Revolution – It has given me some real knowledge. It is a wonderful event … I wonder if it is possible for a real republic to subsist in the present state of things. From the little I know on the subject I think not. It seems natural that there should be some head to every thing & if in governing the power of that head is limited, & equality is as much distributed as possible it would be more likely to be durable. The Roman government was excellent, I think, till they became so rich with their conquests as to degenerate from their first greatness of character.[126]

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[122] Roger Lonsdale, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (Oxford, 1989), 492; Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790–1827* (Oxford, 1993), chs. 2 and 6; Deborah Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (London, 2002).

[123] Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism,* 74–5.

[124] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 5 Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 135.

[125] Jewson, *Jacobin City*, 56.

[126] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 29 Nov. 1797, NRO MC 1593/2, ff. 20–1.

Aghast by the revolution's excesses, ('The partizans of liberty begin to fall in my estimation'),[127] Louisa applied the precepts of enlightenment education to Robespierre, arguing that his education may not have been adapted to overcome his disposition. '[W]icked men', she concluded, 'are far more to be pitied than to be blamed'.[128] Juxtaposing these two contexts is indicative of Louisa's critically aware reading practices and her indebtedness to a radical reading constituency.

Louisa's response to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788) also indicates her participation in a wider community of enlightened readers. In common with children in many progressive households, Louisa was permitted to read a wide range of novels.[129] She employed the language of rational knowledge to defend this, 'I think (by experience) that if we may read as many as we like we don't wish it.'[130] Set in the French colony of Mauritius this Rousseauian novel portrayed the education and development of two adolescents. Brought up as quasi-siblings they develop romantic attachments to each other. For Lynn Hunt this text, in which fathers are absent from the narrative whilst children were conceptualised as central to it, epitomised the radical sensibilities of the early revolutionaries. It was, she notes, the most re-printed novel in France during the revolutionary decade.[131] The

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[127] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 5 Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 135.

[128] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 12 Nov. 1797, NRO MC 1593/2, ff. 4–5.

[129] E.g. Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck*, 54, 104; Diary of Joseph Hunter, 1 June 1797, 14 Aug. 1797, British Library, Add. MSS 24, 879, f. 17

[130] i.e. they wouldn't wish to read many more. Journal of Louisa Gurney, 24 Sept. 1796, NRO MC2784/A/2, ff. 43–4. Elizabeth was sometimes referred to as 'Betsy', but I have kept 'Betsey' here (unless quoting from another source) as that is the spelling Louisa herself most commonly used in her journals.

[131] Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, 27–32.

translation of this text (Louisa read an English version, *Paul and Mary*) would have been much discussed in Norwich's literary circles. Helen Maria Williams published an acclaimed English translation during Robespierre's reign of terror. Louisa evidently read the novella with an awareness of the transnational literary debate over radical sensibility and the emotions such texts were supposed to evoke.[132] To claim to have cried on reading *Paul et Virginie* was a widespread feature of its reception, as was the assertion of multiple readings. Louisa wrote that she had read the novel twelve times, and that on this occasion it 'almost made me cry'. She thought it was 'most silly' to cry at books but that regarding this novel 'I could always cry at it'. (Another cosmopolitan child, Eugenia Wynne, who was touring the continent in 1792, found that she was unable to weep at reading the novel even though she tried reading it more than once).[133]

VI

If cosmopolitan reading discourses provided Louisa with a frame of reference through which to approach *Paul et Virginie*, then the sociable micro-community centred around Pitchford was pivotal to her response to the three central authors in the progressive canon: William Godwin, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Paine. Kitty later wrote with shame of the influence of these three writers upon them, 'we were truly in the wilderness of error'.[134] As

[132] April Alliston, 'Transnational Sympathies, Imaginary Communities', in Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (eds.), *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (Princeton, 2002).

[133] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 11 Sept. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2/, ff. 37–8. Malcolm Cook, *Bernardin De Saint-Pierre: A Life of Culture* (London, 2006), see especially chs. 7–8; Anne Fremantle, *The Wynne Diaries*, 3 vols. (London, 1935), i, 151–2.

[134] Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 81–2.

we shall see, the study of Godwin and Rousseau appears to have influenced the Gurneys' perspectives of interpersonal relationships. Louisa was probably not aware that the politicisation of children was one of the 'key accusations' faced by Thomas Paine during his trial for seditious libel in 1792.[135] However, the ready vernacular of his *Rights of Man* seems to have facilitated Louisa's questioning of the hierarchical nature of family relationships.[136]

In embracing these authors the Gurneys were typical of many youthful politicians. Rousseau was also the favourite philosopher of the teenage Leonard Horner, for example, a member of the Edinburgh Juvenile Literary Society.[137] It was Godwin though, who exerted an especially catalysing effect upon youthful readers. Godwin's *Political Justice*, first published in 1793, of which there were two copies in the Norwich Public Library, argued that through the use of their critical faculties individuals could be liberated from the erroneous bases of the establishment and the need for laws and institutions would wither away. Henry Crabb Robinson, who moved within the Norwich coterie with which we are concerned, claimed the book (lent to him by a young woman, Catherine Buck, when he was nineteen) 'directed the whole course of my life'.[138] Robert Southey was bowled over by reading it at

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[135] Matthew Grenby, '"Very Naughty Doctrines": Children, Children's Literature, Politics and the French Revolution Crisis', in A. D. Cousins, Dani Napton, and Stephanie Russo (eds.), *The French Revolution and the British Novel in the Romantic Period* (New York, 2011), 20–1.

[136] For Paine's vernacular: James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford, 1994), 5–6.

[137] Kenneth Bourne and William Banks Taylor (eds.), *The Horner Papers: Selections from the Letters and Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Horner, M.P. 1795–1817* (Edinburgh 1994), 32.

[138] Morley, *Life and Times of Henry Crabb Robinson*, 3.

the same age: 'I am studying such a book!' he declared exuberantly. Whilst he later departed sharply from such views, at the time he claimed to have 'read, and all but worshipped';[139] fourteen-year-old Thomas Chalmers was 'enamoured' with the text.[140]

By the time the Gurney children were reading Godwin, the 'Gagging Acts', which restricted political discussion in the public sphere, were heightening the importance of domestic-based radicalism.[141] Godwin's 1796 revision of his text, which accorded greater significance to informal, conversable politics was therefore most timely. This was further underlined in 1797 in his *The Enquirer*, which looked to domestic discussion as a means of advancing democratic communication.[142] The Gurney children had already been exposed to the long-standing tradition within radical dissent of viewing conversation as a vehicle for frank analytical exchange.[143] William Enfield, their close friend and educator, adhered to a model of 'companionable education', believing in open discussion to advance political harmony.[144] In October 1797 he called upon the Norwich Speculative Society to consider the

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[139] Quoted in Pamela Clemit, 'Readers Respond to Godwin: Romantic Republicanism in Letters', *European Romantic Review*, xx (2009), 702; Speck, *Robert Southey*, 38.

[140] Brown, *Thomas Chalmers*, 7.

[141] Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830* (Oxford, 2011), ch. 2 and p. 138; John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford, 2006) for in depth discussion of the reconfiguration of public and private in this decade; Gleadle, 'Opinions Deliver'd in Conversation'.

[142] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 140–57.

[143] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 143–8; Anne Janowitz, 'Amiable and Radical Sociability: Anna Barbauld's "Free Familiar Conversation"', in Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability.*

[144] Felicity James, 'Writing in Dissent: Coleridge and the Poetry of the Monthly Magazine', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, iii (2006) [published online:

subject of conversation and means to improve it.[145] These discussions occurred during a period of exchange with Godwin himself. Godwin's close metropolitan community was beginning to dissolve by 1797 (especially following the death of his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, in August),[146] but he entertained many links with the young radical network within which the Gurney children moved during 1796–7. He had himself lived in Norwich as a boy and in 1796 he visited the city three times. Here he socialised with Norgate, Enfield, Pitchford's business partner Sims, John Taylor, Hudson Gurney (Louisa's cousin), the Plumptres and the Aldersons. He was a particularly close friend of Amelia Alderson's (he stayed with her and her father when in Norwich). During the summer of 1796, John Pitchford paid three visits to Godwin at his London home.[147]

Clemit suggests that progressive readers interpreted *Political Justice* 'as a guide to daily living'.[148] This accords with the efforts of many radical intellectuals in the 1790s to consider how men and women might interact within a democratic republic.[149] The new emotional economy of radical interaction drew inspiration from the French revolutionary model of transparent social intercourse. Influenced by Rousseau, transparency would dissolve the distinction between public and private, and virtuous interactions would transform the

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http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/viewFile/448/308], 6–8; Jewson, *Jacobin City*, 137.

[145] Jewson, *Jacobin City*, 144–5.

[146] Mark Philp*, Godwin's Political Justice* (London, 1986), 222 .

[147] http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/index2.html

[148] Clemit, 'Readers Respond to Godwin', 703.

[149] See Margaret C. Jacob, 'Sociability and the International Republican Conversation', in Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 25.

polity.[150] In Britain various attempts were made to liberate social exchange from the artificiality of convention, one of which was the rejection of formal appellations. In Bury St Edmunds young Catherine Buck and her friend Sarah Maling refused to address each other as 'Miss', deciding instead upon 'citoyenne'.[151] Henry Crabb Robinson, an associate of both the Bury and Norwich progressives, recalled 'I recollect the days when it would have been a mortal offence had any one of us been guilty of a "Mister" or "Miss" or "Sir" or a "Madam".'[152] Richard Dinmore Junior wrote an apology for the Norwich 'Jacobins' in 1796, in which he defended their use of 'citizen' as a form of address.[153]

VII

Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob have argued for an 'affective revolution' during this decade. They suggest the intense 'emotional registers' detectable in the letters they studied of contemporary youths such as Gregory Watt and William Creighton reveal a pattern of 'affective experimentation'. They explain, 'the young radicals of the 1790s wanted more equality for themselves and much greater intensity in their personal relationships'.[154] Louisa's diary was frequently preoccupied with expressing her love and gratitude for Kitty

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[150] Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787–1799* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996), 68.

[151] Sarah Jane Maling to Catherine Buck, 10 Sept. 1794, St John's College, Cambridge, Slavery Box 1, see Gleadle, 'Opinions Deliver'd in Conversation', 61–78.

[152] Letter from Henry Crabb Robinson to Catherine Clarkson, 30 Oct. 1804, cited in Morley, *Life and Times of Henry Crabb Robinson*, 3, n. 1.

[153] Richard Dinmore, *An Exposition of the Principles of the English Jacobins* (Norwich, 1796), 37.

[154] Hunt and Jacob, 'The Affective Revolution in 1790s Britain', 496, 505.

and assessing the degree of intimacy she enjoyed with her siblings.[155] Moving within the orbit of this radical emotional community provided an alternative, politicised conduit for the articulation of affective ties. Expressing intense emotions and defying social conventions became a striking feature of the children's interactions with progressive young men during 1797. As twelve-year-old Louisa wrote of Pitchford in February, 'we are so perfectly free with him. I can't say how I admire him'.[156]

Hunt and Jacob's study of the 'affective revolution' was based on male youth, but the Gurney archive suggests a similar process for mixed-sex relationships. Louisa was thrilled by the freedom she and her siblings were given, 'We had our liberty it was delightful'.[157] Kitty later recalled with shame that their progressive principles had deeply affected their behaviour: 'The foundations of truth and duty, such as had existed for us before, were shaken, and we were led astray in conduct.'[158] When the children's father discovered that Rachel had developed a romantic attachment to Henry Enfield he was furious and forbade contact between them until she reached the age of 21. Through the continued exchange of letters, books and diaries, the Gurney and Enfield youth maintained a close and emotionally-charged relationship, however.[159] Moreover, the siblings' socialising remained fraught with sexual

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[155] E.g. Journal of Louisa Gurney, 21 May 1796; Mar. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, ff. 19–20, 52–3.

[156] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 24 Feb. 1797, quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 63.

[157] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 29 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 78.

[158] Quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 81.

[159] Catherine Gurney later claimed that all the siblings were forbidden contact with the Enfields: *ibid*. i, 81–2. In fact, extant manuscript letters indicate a continuing and rich relationship between them during this period, including visits. NRO MC 2784/A/1/1–12.

tension. Pitchford developed a strong attraction to Rachel,[160] and Louisa observed that her Betsey and Henry Bevan were 'so close', 'I never saw such flirtationing', she complained.[161] The girls' sense of being liberated from conventional manners is palpable. When twenty-one-year-old Prince William Frederick visited Earlham whilst in Norwich, the eschewal of formal manners was clearly exciting. Richenda wrote, 'He and a great many of us ran up to Betsy's room, and Rachel gave a most capital sermon. I never saw anything so droll as it was to see the Prince and all of us locked up in Betsy's room'.[162] The encounters with the prince unsettled Louisa's republican views. Although she mocked the 'folly' of deference to the prince, she confessed that she too was 'infatuated by le Prince'.[163]

Louisa was now beginning to perceive herself as a sexual being. At times she bemoaned her appearance or weight; on other occasions she revelled in her flirtatiousness.[164] Hudson Gurney (a member of the Tusculan society) especially attracted her. She referred to his good looks, and recorded, 'Hudson spent the evening. I liked him, and I think he likes me more than most girls; how pleasant it is to be liked.'[165] On one occasion Louisa reported a conversation about her character she and Hudson had had in her bedroom.[166] The times spent with Pitchford were also bewildering and exciting. She wrote with elation of their encounters,

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[160] Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham,* i, 84-85.

[161] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 15 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 54.

[162] Journal of Richenda Gurney, 12 Jan. 1798, cited in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 72.

[163] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 29 Dec. 1797, NRO MC 1593/2, f. 38.

[164] e.g. Journal of Louisa Gurney, 26 Nov. 1797, NRO MC 1593/2, ff. 15–16; and 19 Oct. 1797, Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 67–8.

[165] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 30 May 1796, 19 Sept. 1796, in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 53, 58.

[166] Journal of Louisa Gurney, July 1797 f. 54.

but was sometimes unable to express the intense feelings evoked: 'I can't write any more. I am so un-in-the-mind – Ding dong – Ding dong Ding'.[167] When Pitchford read an extract from his journal in which he recorded that 'he likes me rather the best' Louisa struggled to be magnanimous, 'I was sorry because I wish him to like us four exactly alike – yet I am rather pleased'.[168] Louisa later confessed that 'I feel some^thing to Pitchford that I cannot explain – I recoil at all his words of friendship & romanticity'.[169]

Pitchford was twenty-three to twenty-four years old, Louisa was twelve; but she had reached the age of consent and Pitchford's apparently equal interaction with the girls, whilst a contravention of respectable mores, would not have been perceived as sexually deviant. We have seen that she also enjoyed a degree of intimacy with Hudson Gurney, who was then twenty-two. Louisa was only just thirteen when she recorded, albeit with some distaste, being kissed by Samuel Hoare at one of their social gatherings. They later married.[170] Mark Philp has delineated how Godwin's progressive circles transgressed the conventional divisions of class and religion.[171] In the sociable practices of exchange common to these circles, Pitchford sometimes defied gender norms.[172] He personally sewed Louisa a pincushion as a gift, for example, and familiarised the girls with his laboratory. As Louisa exclaimed after spending a day with him in Norwich, 'How few men would take us girls, & do all these sort of

[167] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 19 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 63.

[168] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 28 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 77.

[169] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 164.

[170] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 19 Oct. 1797, cited in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 67–8.

[171] Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice*, 172–3.

[172] For the feminism of some of the young men in this coterie see Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*, 22–3, 72–3.

things'.[173] Was Pitchford's disregard of age distinctions, in addition to gender progressivism, a determination to practice truly revolutionary social manners? These encounters occurred within an intellectual context in which they could be interpreted thus by participants – it was a milieu which often explicitly validated the expression of emotion as part of a wider political critique. Louisa articulated a radical selfhood which championed a dissolution of the hierarchies of age: 'I do from the bottom of my heart *hate* the preference shown in all things to my elders merely because they have been in the world a little longer. I do love equality and true democracy'.[174]

The values of democratic communication had significant implications for Louisa's journal keeping. Life-writing became highly politicised during the 1790s as Rousseau's autobiography was heralded by radicals as a model text for the pursuit of self-scrutiny. Clemit has described how during the mid-to-late 1790s, Godwin, following Rousseau, developed life-writing to articulate his political emphasis on the importance of feeling and individual, rather than collective, action.[175] Within the dissenting tradition diaries were frequently swapped between friends and kin, or read aloud within intimate circles.[176] These ideals of frank exchange and personal scrutiny enmeshed easily with the revolutionary values of interpersonal transparency. During the summer of 1797 the Gurney sisters also used their diaries in this manner. On 4 July Louisa was encouraged to read her journals in front of her

[173] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 19 July 1797, 1 Aug. 1797, 4 Oct. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, ff. 63, 90, 167–8.

[174] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 31 July 1796, quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 55.

[175] Pamela Clemit, 'Self-Analysis as Social Critique: The Autobiographical Writings of Godwin and Rousseau', *Romanticism*, xi (2005), 162–4.

[176] See Cynthia Aalders, 'Writing Religious Communities: The Spiritual Lives and Manuscript Cultures of English Women, 1740–90', (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2014).

sisters, their Quaker companion Elizabeth Freeman, and John Pitchford. Despite Louisa's initial reluctance, Rachel read out Louisa's journal: 'almost every word all my feelings & everything'.[177] Pitchford recalled a visit to the Gurney siblings towards the end of July which lasted 17 hours and during which he read parts of his journal to them. Afterwards they vowed 'an eternal friendship' together 'with rapturous feelings'. He then recounted that 'Rachel now read some of Henry Enfield's journal, which he regularly sends her, and Betsey read part of her journal, in which she acknowledges all her faults with the most charming candour. Finally Kitty read part of her journal'.[178] Louisa wrote of Pitchford's journal that, 'He writes of his virtues & faults so sincerely'.[179]

The Gurneys had constructed a micro-public sphere which encompassed both sociable and literary exchange. This baring of the soul was a selective and performative act though. Pitchford omitted to read aloud those sections in which he described his feelings for Rachel.[180] Louisa also struggled with transparent practices and this complicated her efforts at radical journal composition. At one point Louisa addressed potential readers of her diary and complained that she felt constrained at having an audience.[181] Catherine too had some misgivings about the effect of Louisa's outpouring of individual sentiment. On one occasion she complained that Louisa was writing it, 'as I would eat my dinner', without seriously considering her faults. Kitty recommended that it would be better to stop the diary until

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[177] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 4 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 41.

[178] Journal of John Pitchford, 27 July 1797, quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 83–6, quote at 85.

[179] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 29 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 78.

[180] Journal of John Pitchford, 27 July 1797, quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 84–5.

[181] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 28 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 78.

Louisa was able to compose it properly.[182] Equally, the radical selfhood Louisa articulated remained one of a number of competing voices within her journal. Thus the same entry which recorded a meeting with Pitchford and praised the Plumptres for being 'really democratical' also deployed the constructed voice of middle-class girlhood, 'I know I have powers to be a good little darling'.[183]

Nonetheless, the exchanges with John Pitchford, both oral and written, deepened Louisa's ability to articulate personal interactions within the lexicon of revolutionary values. In one entry Louisa described Pitchford as representing 'universal benevolence'.[184] This was a highly charged political term in the 1790s. Evan Radcliffe has explained, 'none was more hotly debated' and 'nearly every supporter of the Revolution spoke in favour of universal benevolence.' It was a concept utilised by Price, Paine and Wollstonecraft, and reached its apotheosis in Godwin's *Political Justice*.[185] William Enfield had written an article in the *Monthly Magazine*, earlier that year, on precisely this issue.[186] Louisa did not apply this label parrot fashion; she had clearly thought through some of the subtleties of the term. 'I think Pitchford's finest characteristic is an universal sort of benevolence. I do not think it is quite universal though, for I think is governed by his private likes & dislikes. He has too much party spirit to be perfectly benevolent.'[187]

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[182] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 24 Feb. 1798, NRO MC 1593/2, f. 69.

[183] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Mar. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 55.

[184] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 2 Aug. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 93.

[185] Evan Radcliffe, 'Revolutionary Writing, Moral Philosophy, and Universal Benevolence in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, liv (1993) 221, 229.

[186] *Ibid*., 232.

[187] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 2 Aug. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 93.

VIII

The politics of family life, which featured in the works of both Paine and Godwin provided yet more immediate points of connection for a juvenile readership. Scholars have recently started to unpick some of the tensions which beset Georgian family life of the middling and elite classes. Sibling rivalries and intergenerational discord could pull against the hierarchical assumptions embedded within the early modern household.[188] However, the family could also function as a more politicised space for the re-negotiation of domestic relationships. The testimony of the Gurney sisters reveals the extent to which the family provided a social context for the opportunity to experiment with a new radical politics. Paine had no wish to see children endowed with greater public rights but he wrote powerfully of the ways in which aristocratic government was perpetuated by unequal family relationships, declaiming: 'aristocracy is kept up by family tyranny and injustice'. This included sibling dynamics, for primogeniture led to the eldest son 'trampling on all their younger brothers and sisters'. 'Establish family justice,' suggested Paine 'and aristocracy falls'.[189] Having traced the effects of tyranny upon the upbringing of children in his novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), Godwin's *The Enquirer* also turned the spotlight on family interaction and adults' unwitting exploitation of their authority: 'of all the sources of unhappiness to a young person the greatest is a sense of slavery. How grievous the insult, or how contemptible the ignorance, that tells a child that youth is the true season of felicity, when he feels himself checked, controled [*sic*.], and

[188] Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and Social Relations in Georgian England: Share and Share Alike* (Manchester, 2012); Nicola Phillips, 'Parenting the Profligate Son: Masculinity, Gentility and Juvenile Delinquency in England, 1791–1814', *Gender & History*, xxii (2010), 92–108

[189] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (1791), in Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford, 1995), 133–4.

tyrannised over in a thousand ways'.[190] Godwin envisaged (in contrast to Rousseau) an egalitarian relationship between educator and child in which the latter was accorded considerable autonomy.[191] Philp has emphasised the importance of locating the evolution of Godwin's ideas within the sociable circles in which Godwin moved. Godwin began writing *The Enquirer* during 1796 when he had considerable contact with the enlightened juvenile circles of Norwich. We cannot say whether the Gurney children's ideas about family democracy were mentioned to him by their mutual friends. Nonetheless *The Enquirer*, once published, provoked considerable discussion in this milieu. The library with which they were involved voted it too radical for inclusion in their collection in 1797. Unitarian William Taylor (a contributor to *The Cabinet* and a close friend to many in these circles) wrote a furious letter to the *Norwich Mercury* to complain against the move.[192]

Evidence from those who were progressive parents during the 1790s suggests that an attempt to tackle such hierarchies was a distinctive feature of some families. James Green, the radical M.P. for Arundel, later regretted such 'wild schemes of visionary liberty', but at the time he and his wife were reported to bring up their children in Monmouthshire in accordance with 'republican manners'.[193] The progressive doctor Thomas Beddoes recorded his

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[190] William Godwin, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (London, 1797), part I, essay viii, 66–7.

[191] Smith, 'Autonomy and Perfectibility'; Godwin, *The Enquirer*, part I, essays x–xi, xiv. Pamela Clemit, 'Godwin's Educational Theory: *The Enquirer*', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, xii (1993).

[192] *Norwich Mercury* (26 Aug. 1797).

[193] http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/greene-james-1759-1814. James Green later separated from his wife accusing her of adultery. Annie F. Wedd (ed.), *The Love-Letters of Mary Hays (1779–1780)* (London, 1925), 238.

admiration of one acquaintance 'whose admirable plan of education' enabled his young daughter to demur from 'mere pleasantries' of conversation in favour of radical subjects 'very far beyond the measure of her age & almost of her sex'.[194] The family of Mary Schimmelpennick (*née* Galton) mixed with the enlightened circles of the 'lunar men' in Staffordshire and were very close to the Gurneys. Her parents were radical supporters of the revolution and this had direct consequences for their parenting. As one contemporary observed, 'being of the new Philosophy they think their daughter ought to be independent of them'.[195] Schimmelpenninck later recalled, with considerable distaste, the proposals to abolish family inequalities and age distinctions, writing 'marriage was a monopoly; that parents, teachers, and the aged were to be treated with an insolent contempt designed to manifest emancipation from the shackles of former things.' She talked of 'the revolutionary doctrines I had heard in our circle, concerning the tyranny of parents and governors, and the equal rights of all, whether men, women, or children'.[196] The private statements of many radicals would have confirmed her fears. Benjamin Flower wrote to his fiancée in 1799 that at a recent sociable encounter, 'In talking about *Aristocracy* and *Republicanism*, I launched out against the abominable Aristocratical distinctions which prevailed in private life'.[197]

Louisa's diary provides us with insights into how children may have interpreted such ideas. She often delineated a self fully committed to the democratic ideal, indeed more committed than the adults around her: 'I do do love equality & true democracy – though I

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[194] Thomas Beddoes to Davies Giddy, May [1793?], Cornwall Record Office, DG 41/27.

[195] Marianne Thornton to Mrs Robert Thornton, 2 Nov. 1803, University of Cambridge Library, MSS ADD 7674/1/M, f. 75.

[196] Schimmelpenninck, *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck*, 186–7, 221.

[197] Benjamin Flower to Eliza Gould, 24 Sept. 1799, National Library of Wales, MS 13587F, 34.

think there is not a character out of ten thousand a real Democrat – I am rather more than most of us'.[198] Blauvelt notes how emphatic punctuation could form part of the expression of sensibility for young women.[199] For Louisa this applied to her use of underlining; such textual markings expressing the quotidian frustrations of family life. When venting her fury at her brother, she expostulated: 'How I do hate real Tyrannicalness! John is really tyrannical. He has stolen my Inkstand. He didn't do it out of play but in a way that is truly Aristocratical.'[200] She responded similarly when exasperated by her sisters. 'Hannah', she seethed after an argument in which the girls had slapped each other, 'is grown so extremely aristocratical'.[201] At another point she criticised Betsey for behaving 'so aristocratically because she is the eldest & nothing makes me so angry as that'.[202] 'Aristocratical' was a term employed by Paine and to which Godwin devoted a whole chapter.[203] Louisa was thus experimenting with an emerging progressive vocabulary.

It is not merely the lexicon of radical political theory which is of significance, but the consequent desire for more egalitarian family praxis. The duties that children owed their parents were much discussed by radical authors like Wollstonecraft.[204] In France this even

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[198] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 29 July 1796, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 31.

[199] Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart*, 31.

[200] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 17 July 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 62.

[201] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 26 Jan. 1798, NRO MC 1593/2, ff. 60–1.

[202] Journal of Louisa Gurney, Apr. 1797, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 58.

[203] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (London, 1798), ch 5; in Paine, *Rights of Man*, the term is employed fourteen times.

[204] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Harmondsworth, 1985, first published 1792), ch. 11.

included the degree to which parents should have control over adult children.[205] The questioning of paternal authority was an issue for many young Britons politicised by the revolution. As Robert Southey wrote to Charles Bedford in 1796, concerning the latter's girlfriend and their perspective engagement, 'As for her father and mother – if they do not love it – what is that to you? Down with paternal tyranny. That sacred guardianship must never be perverted into oppression.'[206] Even young children demonstrated a capacity to apply political principles to their family. Francis Hare, an eleven-year-old English boy living in the Cisalpine republic, exasperated his family and tutors by his passionate avowal of political principles, declaring himself to be, 'An English citizen who swears himself an enemy to all that dare to touch the rights of the people.' At one point this included a refusal to obey his tutor.[207]

The Gurney siblings grappled with such issues. Kitty looked back with chagrin that, 'our sense of duty became gradually lowered, especially towards my father'.[208] Her more conventional sister Elizabeth distanced herself from her siblings' behaviour, recording piously that tending to her father was 'one of my first duties.'[209] On some occasions Louisa wrote with filial sensitivity to the needs of her father and her wish to please him.[210] Yet she also queried the extent of parental authority. She acquiesced that parents should be able to

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[205] Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, 65.

[206] Robert Southey to Charles Bedford, 22 June 1796, in Kenneth Curry (ed.), *New Letters of Robert Southey*, 2 vols. (New York, 1965), i, 110.

[207] Augustus J. C. Hare, *Memorials of a Quiet Life* (London, 1875), i, 104, 111.

[208] Quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 78.

[209] Journal of Elizabeth Fry, 30 July 1797, cited in Fry and Cresswell, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry*, 21.

[210] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 21 Aug. 1796, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 36.

decide for their children 'until they are quite grown up in body & mind.' But she emphasised that 'Parents then have no right to command.'[211] Louisa was sensitive to the exercise of any authority on the basis of age. At times she was piqued at Kitty's attitude, 'her present plan of treating us as children rather hurts me.[212] More usually Louisa praised Kitty's behaviour in comparison to that of Rachel. Rachel, she noted, utilising the language of enlightenment rationalism, 'treats me as other girls are treated, but Kitty treats us as though we were reasonable creatures'. Louisa continued, 'I hate the common way of teaching children – people treat them as though they were idiots, & never will let them judge for themselves. I do not mean that they should judge for themselves entirely because I do not think that their reason is advanced enough but to have such an entire strictness over them is what I ca'nt [*sic*.] bear'.[213] Louisa developed the theme further later that summer, exclaiming, 'I felt angry with Rachel … She treated Chenda so differently from us, merely because she is a little older. Nothing on earth I do detest so much as this sort of difference I think they ought to be treated according to their merits, not to their age. I do love democracy, wherever it appears, or in whatever form'.[214]

IX

John Gurney sometimes made bold interventions into his children's lives – as in forbidding Rachel's relationship with Henry Enfield – but on the whole the siblings were, as their nieces

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[211] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 5 Sept. 1797, NRO MC 1593/1, f. 135.

[212] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 24 Feb. 1797, cited in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i, 62.

[213] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 25 June 1796, NRO MC 2784/A/2, ff. 26–7.

[214] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 19 Aug. 1796, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 35. Although she could also criticise Kitty for similar behaviour, see Journal of Louisa Gurney, 17 Aug. 1796, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 34.

later explained, 'left to their own resources'.[215] However, in 1798 John Gurney interceded forcefully into the children's enlightened sphere of conversable sociability, when, at the prompting of local quakers, he requested Pitchford to restrict his visits.[216] From this time Louisa's diary shifts in tone: 'If people command, or treat me aristocratically, I do not know how to bear it. Oh how angry I do feel! but in this world we cannot only learn to obey when we are asked kindly; we must also learn to obey when we are commanded.'[217] Here, Louisa is rehearsing a selfhood which incorporated a radical subjectivity, whilst articulating with pointed irony, the moral constraints upon its practice. She also articulated a modified version of her former ideas, although expressed too the difficulties this wrought, 'I still think the greater equality there is in every thing the better, but it is the duty of younger people a little to bend to those that are older – it prevents trouble, & often quarrels, & it is proper to shew a little respect to those older than oneself. At least I find that it must be so – though I own it often provokes me to do it when my heart does not go along with what I must submit to.'[218]

The altered tone of the diary is not only attributable to the intervention of Louisa's father. Hunt and Jacob have pointed to the fleeting nature of the 'affective revolution', these intense youthful relationships proving evanescent. So it was with Louisa's coterie. As the dynamics of the group shifted so too did Louisa's journal record a more conservative diet of literature: Dr Gregory, Mrs Chapone, Lord Chesterfield.[219] The diary became increasingly concerned with religious themes, perhaps conforming to the pattern Blauvelt discerned of a

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[215] Fry and Cresswell, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry*, 13–14.

[216] Journal of John Pitchford, 27 July 1797, quoted in Hare, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, i. 86.

[217] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 16 Jan. 1798, NRO MC 1593/2, ff. 56–7.

[218] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 3 Dec. 1797, NRO MC 1593/2, ff. 29–30.

[219] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 14 Jan. 1798, 25 Nov. 1798, NRO MC 1593/2, f. 54, 155; 3 Mar. 1801, NRO MC 1593/3, f. 95–6.

narrowing 'cultural repertoire' as teenagers approached womanhood.[220] Whereas male literati later boasted of their youthful radicalism, the constraints of gendered discourse meant that women tended to erase these episodes. As we have seen, Schimmelpenninck later distanced herself from her family's radicalism; Kitty recalled the period with shame; and Elizabeth Fry destroyed her childhood diaries. Louisa wrote out lengthy extracts from her childhood diary but added a note next to one of her paeans to democracy: 'And now I do dislike it in all its forms – so things alter'.[221]

X

So pivotal was education to the Georgian enlightenment that it seems strange it has not been explored from the child's perspective. Studies have focused upon educators and pedagogies,[222] yet it was children who had most to gain from the enactment of enlightenment values and whose identities would be most dramatically shaped by them. Here we have seen how the juvenile enlightenment could encompass various layers of intensity and potential. This included dynamic reading cultures which provided avenues for empowering modes of juvenile subjectivity; the appearance of enlightened coteries of youth with distinctive subcultures of sociability; and the appropriation of political discourse to the re-evaluation of family relationships. As the category of the child crystallised in the eighteenth century, so too were enlightened children equipped with the means to resist such an identity and to articulate

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[220] Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart*, 147.

[221] Journal of Louisa Gurney, 19 Aug. 1797, comment added Jul. 1801, NRO MC 2784/A/2, f. 35. See also McCarthy, *Anna Letitia Barbauld*, 24–5, 507; Fry and Cresswell, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry*, 7.

[222] For the best recent treatment see Hilton and Shefrin, *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain*.

their own agendas. Older, more age-inclusive assumptions of 'youth' also provided an additional conduit through which young enlightened subjects could gain a political voice. This provided a sometimes contradictory current to a parallel process in which definitions of 'the child' were coalescing. In the case of Louisa Gurney these different modes of enlightenment interacted to provide one of the sharpest illustrations of the phenomenon of the 'juvenile enlightenment', whilst also indicating its many complexities. Whilst it would be a mistake to romanticise juvenile agency, the constellation of political and cultural structures within which Louisa was operating provided a fragile, but distinct form of juvenile consciousness.

Associational and sociable activities formed a critical dimension of Louisa's sense of political development and engagement, but it was within the familial setting that her ideas were usually debated and it was amongst her father, siblings and cousins that her subversive views had the sharpest implications. Families were an integral constituent of political culture, especially significant for the reception and discussion of news and ideas. Enlightened children were frequently drawn into these sociable domestic practices and their responses contributed not only to their own intellectual development but also to the ongoing formation of the political identities of the adults around them. Louisa Gurney's journal reveals that girls could be significant agents in creating and challenging family practices.

The various forms which the juvenile enlightenment might take could be fleeting and unstable; nonetheless, they had the potential to be empowering to young subjects themselves and also to have an impact upon broader political developments. Mark Philp has argued that political ideas are not static but created through practice and sociability, through 'the act of writing and speaking'.[223] He insists upon the importance of the social and political

[223] Mark Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', in Mark Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), 72.

communities in which seminal texts such as Godwin's are composed. The cultural activities of young people formed a significant feature of this reciprocal phenomenon. A study of Louisa Gurney's diary reveals that children as young as eleven years old were active in this process. They were audience members at lectures; they wrote, disseminated and sometimes published texts; and they could voice independent opinions in the progressive forums of sociability as well as the home or school. Far from being the 'superior pets' of Plumb's Georgian Britain, enlightened children and youth were active agents in the complex constitution of political culture.