‘Some mode less revolting to their delicacy’:

Women’s Institutional Space in the Transpennine Enlightenment, 1781-1822

JON MEE

Abstract: This essay addresses the question of women’s roles in and around the literary and philosophical societies of the new manufacturing towns of the early industrial revolution. Some male members of the societies argued in favour of women’s education and even their political rights, but in practice women were not allowed to join. Women did participate, but in forms determined by gendered understandings of modes of knowledge exchange. Ideas of public and private may have shaped women’s access to scientific space in the period, but they were far from defining the terms of their everyday experience of a complex and diversified terrain.

Keywords: literary and philosophical societies, manufacturing towns, industrial revolution, knowledge exchange, scientific space, Rational Dissent

This essay considers the participation of women in the literary and philosophical societies set up in the new manufacturing towns of the early industrial revolution, roughly between 1781 and 1822.[[1]](#endnote-1) The members of these societies, with Rational Dissenters to the fore, were interested in ‘improvement’ in technical, scientific, and literary spheres, often subscribing to progressive views on women’s education. Kathryn Gleadle and Jane Rendall have shown that the women in such circles were often involved in philanthropic and even political activities, taking up leadership positions, for instance, in various kinds of charitable organisations that ‘cut across any simple distinctions between public and private worlds’.[[2]](#endnote-2) Despite their role in other aspects of the emergent middle-class culture of improvement, women were not admitted as full members of the early literary and philosophical societies in Manchester, founded in 1781, or, more ambiguously, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, instituted in 1793, although they could attend lectures and participate in other ways. The situation illuminates a specific case of women’s ‘conditional access’ to knowledge in the period and represents a form of absent presence. Women were a constant presence in the penumbra of activities associated with the societies, but nowhere to be seen at their monthly meetings, or in their minute books.[[3]](#endnote-3) Understanding this complicated terrain nuances David Livingstone’s claims about the gendering of ‘scientific space’. Despite the supposedly ‘disembodied character of scientific knowing’, Livingstone claims that in practice ‘female corporeality rendered women unsuitable for intellectual pursuits in general and for science in particular.[[4]](#endnote-4) My analysis here aims to provide a more concrete understanding of the spaces where women intellectuals did and did not appear and the constraints on what they could and could not do in them as they pursued scientific and other forms of improvement.

I

The transpennine Enlightenment was heavily dependent on networks of improvement structured by business, kinship, and religious ties across the expanding commercial and manufacturing towns of Britain. Although they aspired to a civic role that transcended sectarian differences, most of the key figures and office holders at the Manchester society, for instance, were drawn from the congregations of Dissenters.[[5]](#endnote-5) The Manchester and the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Societies might be viewed as hubs in these networks, or as emergent institutions that were expressing a desire for civic involvement among the newly confident middle classes where they were excluded from political representation and local government. They celebrated the free circulation of knowledge, but were not without internal conflict, for instance, when Anglican fears about the Manchester Society being too closely associated with Dissent brought a series of resignations.[[6]](#endnote-6) For their part, scientifically minded Dissenters often sought affirmation from the Royal Society and other centres of metropolitan authority, but remained suspicious of their hierarchical structures and deference to aristocratic patronage.[[7]](#endnote-7) John Aikin junior’s celebratory *Description of the Land for Thirty or Forty Miles around Manchester* (1795) suggested that the fact it was ‘an open town, destitute […] of a corporation, and unrepresented in parliament’ was ‘probably to its advantage’.[[8]](#endnote-8) From this perspective, the old hierarchies were prospective obstructions to the free circulation of goods and ideas.

The role of the societies in developing the relationship between science and technology has been regularly discussed by historians of ‘provincial science’. More recently, Margaret Jacob and Joel Mokyr have seen the societies as playing a key role in the emergence of ‘the first knowledge economy.’[[9]](#endnote-9) Despite the titular connection, literary scholars have not shown much interest in them, even though these associations were committed to the role of the arts in developing the social virtues in the new manufacturing towns, and showed a related concern with medico-literary ideas of taste, imagination, and genius in dialogue with the period’s emergent notion of a science of the mind. The broadly materialist nature of the literary interests of these groups puts them at odds with emergent ‘romantic’ definitions of genius and imagination found, for instance, in Thomas De Quincey’s distinction between ‘the literature of power’ and ‘the literature of knowledge’.[[10]](#endnote-10) Intriguingly, De Quincey came from Manchester. His family physician was Thomas Percival, founder of the Literary and Philosophical Society.

Percival’s literary and medical networks were international, but he was closely tied to circles of Dissenters in Liverpool that included the poet and banker William Roscoe and physician James Currie, both of whom he recruited as members of the society at Manchester. De Quincey more than once used Percival and the Roscoe circle as comic foils in his autobiographical writings.[[11]](#endnote-11) His family connections extended to a trip he took as a youth with his mother to Everton in 1801, then a village outside Liverpool, where he met Currie, Roscoe, and their friend the pugnacious Unitarian minister William Shepherd. Much later, in 1837, De Quincey wrote up his experience for *Tait’s Magazine* where he introduced the visit as ‘an early opportunity of observing the natural character and tendencies of merely literary society’. He saw in the group ‘no strong distinctions in power of thinking or in native force of character’. They were ‘raised into circles of pretension and mark by the fact of having written a book, or of holding a notorious connexion with some department or other of the periodical press.’ The implicit purpose of his group portrait was a polemical point about his very different idea of the ‘literary’ as a category:

to me, who in that year, 1801, already knew a grand renovation of poetic power – of a new birth in poetry, interesting not so much to England, as to the human mind – it was secretly amusing to contrast the little artificial usages of their petty traditional knack with the natural forms of a divine art.

The anecdote forms part of a narrative about the emergence of imaginative ‘power’ identified with Wordsworth’s poetry. De Quincey defined ‘the literature of power’ as a category against ‘the literature of knowledge.’ ‘Knowledge,’ for De Quincey, associated with science, technology, and, above all, James Watt and his steam engine, crucial agents, of course, in the industrial development of Manchester’s textile industry.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Partial as they are, De Quincey’s comments help to open the question of the situation of women in these circles. First, the Roscoe circle, especially its female members, as Daniel Sanjiv Roberts has shown, were probably the source of some of De Quincey’s knowledge of Wordsworth in the first place.[[13]](#endnote-13) The surviving copy of a diary from a later visit in 1803 shows him seeking information about Wordsworth and Coleridge from Miss Barcroft visiting from Keswick.[[14]](#endnote-14) De Quincey later republished his *Tait’s Magazine* essay as ‘The Liverpool Coterie’. ‘Coterie’ in this context is implicitly gendered. Even as he elides the presence of women in the Roscoe circle, De Quincey implies the men he notices are fussy amateurs rather than properly masculine artists capable of wielding what he will later call ‘the literature of power’. Secondly, the word ‘connexion’ indicates de Quincey’s awareness that this group was part of a heavily networked landscape. Roscoe’s circle was a node within larger networks of families and friends, often defined by religious affiliation, as well as more formal institutions like the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. Currie, Roscoe, and another Liverpool friend William Rathbone IV were honorary members of the Manchester society, but also had their own ‘Literary Society’ that folded through political pressures in the early 1790s. Much the same group participated in the Octonian Society, some of whose activities during 1787-90 are recorded in the diary of Hannah Lightbody (later Greg). Hannah Lightbody Greg long remembered her delight in these discussions, which she sometimes hosted with her mother, Elizabeth. Mother and daughter were friends of the Percivals in Manchester, who played a part in Hannah’s marrying the Manchester mill owner Samuel Greg in 1790. The diary covering the years immediately before and just after her marriage, when she had just returned to Liverpool from school in Stoke Newington in London, gives an insight into the activities of Octonian Club. Generally speaking, these were circles that supported the female intellectual participation and ambition explored in my next section, within certain conditions.

II

Mokyr claims that what was distinctive about the period of the industrial revolution was its faith in ‘social progress and the improvability of mankind’.[[15]](#endnote-15) Inventions as such were rather less important, he argues, than the continual process of development and dissemination supported by a faith in improvement. Mokyr sees the literary and philosophical societies, especially those in the developing manufacturing towns, as facilitating knowledge networks that sustained a particular idea of improvement as technological advance. This account is rather restricted in its emphasis on technical knowledge, especially given the concern of figures like Rathbone about knowledge advancing without ‘proportionate advance in virtue’. Thomas Percival, as founder of the Manchester society, certainly placed this broader idea of improvement at its heart. A respected literary physician, Percival was probably most famous as the author of *A Father’s Instructions to his Children* (1776), brought out across several editions by the respected reforming publisher Joseph Johnson.[[16]](#endnote-16)

That the Manchester Society seemed to deliberately change its architecture from a private conversation club – or from the kind of more domestic intellectual sociability Currie, Rathbone, and the unmarried Hannah Lightbody enjoyed in Liverpool – to a role more visibly part of Manchester’s civic life was manifested most obviously in its decision to circulate its transactions as *Memoirs of Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.* Regularlyreviewed in the national and international press after its first volume was published in 1785, *Memoirs* gave the society a public presence. Print was important to the Manchester Society’s mission, but it understood part of its own generative technology as lying in robust conversation between bodies-in-rooms:

Science, like fire, is put in motion by collision.—Where a number of such men have frequent opportunities of meeting and conversing together, thought begets thought, and every hint is turned to advantage.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Managing these collisions within a corporate body that aspired to maintain ‘polite’ discourse across a diversity of political and religious positions was never easy, especially after Manchester’s politics polarized in the 1790s. In 1791, for instance, several radical members resigned because of the society’s failure to pass a motion of support for Priestley after his home and laboratory were destroyed in the loyalist riots earlier that year. The chapels in Manchester attended by Percival and the Gregs were attacked in similar fashion the following year.[[18]](#endnote-18) Mokyr’s emphasis on the networked circulation of knowledge free from ideology via institutions like the Manchester Society underplays the conflicts that were often uncomfortable corollaries of its commitment to improvement, even sometimes, as in the debates on materialism discussed below, between those who shared same general commitment to freedom of enquiry in matters of religion.

One of the early papers encouraging a broad remit for the principle of improvement at the society was Thomas Henry’s ‘On the Advantages of Literature and Philosophy in General,’ read to the society in October 1781. Developing literary tastes, Henry told his listeners and readers, would allow them to ‘indulge […] in sweet converse with the fair sex. A Montague, a Carter, a Barbauld, and a Seward, justly demand his notice’. Henry imagines that contact with these women writers will ‘refine his taste, polish his manners, and meliorate his morals’.[[19]](#endnote-19) When Manchester physician John Ferriar published his *The Prince of Angola* (1788) in support of the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade supported by fellow members of the society like Henry and Percival, he made a point of celebrating the role of women in the moral education of commercial society, ‘which every man of a right heart will be proud to obtain’.[[20]](#endnote-20) If Ferriar and Henry figure women as a softening influence on male manners here, Manchester’s sense of the capabilities of women was also evolving into what Arianne Chernock calls ‘a lively, even if highly contested, conversation on the rights of women’.[[21]](#endnote-21) In March 1787, when Ferriar’s friend Thomas Cooper read his ‘Propositions respecting the Foundation of Civil Government’, he suggested that assumptions about ‘self-direction’ for ‘unmarried women at years of discretion’ appeared ‘to be inequitable’, a situation, he suggested, extended, ‘perhaps indeed to the married’.[[22]](#endnote-22) When the essay was republished as an appendix to his *Reply to Mr. Burke's invective against Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Watt, in the House of Commons* (1792), he added a lengthy note on ‘the Rights of Woman’, a subject he claimed he had repeatedly considered since the essay was originally published. The note complains that women’s ‘Minds and […] Persons are kept in Subjection’, praising the work in particular of Barbauld, Seward, and Wollstonecraft as evidence against ‘the present and most iniquitous and most absurd notions on the Subject of the disparity of Sexes’.[[23]](#endnote-23) A fellow member of the society, George Phillips called for women to be given the vote in his *The Necessity of a Speedy and Effectual Reform in Parliament* (1793), although he later recanted these ‘wild enthusiastic hopes’ as ‘unattainable’, blaming his earlier enthusiasm on the influence of Cooper and Ferriar.[[24]](#endnote-24)

Debates on the education of women were part of the common traffic that flowed between Liverpool and Manchester: Currie regularly insisted on his delight in the conversation of women, and in February 1792 told Graham Moore that the Literary Club had debated the question of female education.[[25]](#endnote-25) He had shown no compunction about discussing cutting-edge intellectual issues with the young Hannah Lightbody Greg, going over her commonplace book with her at length, and recommending weighty reading like Thomas Reid’s *Essays on the* *Active Powers of Man* (1788), which he had reviewed for the *Analytical*.[[26]](#endnote-26) Her diary contains some vivid accounts of her involvement with Currie and other members of the Octonian Club: ‘a Society of Men’, she wrote, ‘who bring together in their various characters, Learning, Science, Vivacity, Seriousness and solid worth. In their conversation the heart and head share profit’. Currie visited her a few days after she wrote this entry and discussed the controversy between Clara Reeve and Anna Seward in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* on the right of women to choose and interpret literature.[[27]](#endnote-27) When Currie’s friend Thomas Christie, editor of the *Analytical Review*, came to see him in June 1787 to assess the intellectual life of the region, Currie engaged Hannah Greg to see him two days running.[[28]](#endnote-28) She was certainly alert to controversial topics exercising the Literary and Philosophical Society at Manchester. A diary entry in February shows Mathew Nicholson had visited and discussed ‘the dispute between Mr. Cooper and Dr. Barnes on Materialism’. This exchange of papers at the Manchester society between the minister Barnes and the radical firebrand Cooper had clearly travelled to Liverpool and continued to ruffle more than a few feathers:

Dr. Currie and Mr. [Richard] Godwin dined with us and had an argument on

materialism on which Dr. C shone very much – Mr. Godwin was a very liberal

defender of this doctrine.

Debates on materialism were not regarded as improper topics for the Lightbody family tea table, even though the *British Critic* thought the dispute ought not to have been given publicity in the Manchester society’s published transactions. [[29]](#endnote-29)

Even among Hannah Lightbody’s female friends, however, there were those who thought such topics might be a distraction from traditional female duties. Ann Cropper feared her young friend was endangering her marriage prospects by ignoring ‘the accomplishments peculiar to the female province in domestic life’. The lengthy account of their exchange in Lightbody’s diary records her firm reply: ‘a woman of Sense and taste was likely to apply those faculties to whatever duties her situation presented […] a cultivated mind performed best the vulgarest of duties’.[[30]](#endnote-30) As it was, Hannah Lightbody met her future husband Samuel Greg through the networks that connected Liverpool with Manchester in a business world ‘where personal contact was the essence of success’.[[31]](#endnote-31) Greg had set up his first cotton mill in 1784, securing loans through social and family contacts; relationships that must have been cemented further when he joined the Literary and Philosophical Society in 1790, just after his marriage. Initially, though, Hannah Greg’s experience of married life in Manchester was not a happy one. She chafed against the ‘constant rain confinement and constraint &c of Manchester’. Even early on in her diary, back in March 1787, with marriage still only an indistinct prospect, she worried about losing ‘my favourite system of single blessedness – independence &c’. After her move to Manchester, William Rathbone offered understanding for her ‘wish to be unfettered by the common offices cares & employments that form a woman’s province’.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Nevertheless, the enquiring woman of the 1780s, with her developing interest into the science of the mind, did not simply disappear into married life. For one thing, she continued her intellectual exchanges with Currie and William Rathbone in Liverpool. Currie advised on her first book, recommending that she should write her own preface and not ‘deprecate or apologise too much’.[[33]](#endnote-33) Initially printed privately as *Virtue made Easy* (1799) for circulation among friends and family only, it was soon published as *A Collection of Maxims, Observations, etc*, and updated several times over the next few years. Making use of the book of extracts she and Currie had discussed a decade earlier, it included excerpts, for instance, from Reid’s *Active Powers of the Mind*, in one instance using Currie’s review in the *Analytical* as a source, as well as quoting Mary Wollstonecraft.[[34]](#endnote-34) Rendall has shown the importance of Reid and his disciple Dugald Stewart to women of ‘moderate liberal backgrounds’, including Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Hamilton, but her account would certainly fit Hannah Greg too.[[35]](#endnote-35) Out of Reid’s response to Hume’s skepticism, Stewart’s *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792-1827) developed a system of practical morality that placed great importance on early education predicated on his hope that ‘by watching over the impressions and associations which the mind receives in early life, to secure it against the influence of prevailing errors; and, as far as possible, to engage its prepossessions on the side of truth’.[[36]](#endnote-36) In *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (1793), originally intended for students, he imagined the development of ‘a science of the mind not inferior in certainty to the science of body’.[[37]](#endnote-37) Greg was proud that she had read the ‘large works’ of Reid and Stewart, and told Rathbone that *Outlines* was just what she needed when ill: it would provide her with ‘a text book for conversation’.[[38]](#endnote-38) Greg’s dedication to her daughter Bessy at the start of her collection of maxims shares Stewart’s faith that early measures would cement ‘the natural alliance between our duty and our happiness’.[[39]](#endnote-39) Addressing Bessy as a ‘beloved companion’ to be influenced by ‘esteem and confidence’ rather than simple ‘filial duty’, Greg encouraged the regular perusal of her maxims to ‘strengthen their impression on your mind’ so that they will ‘more readily occur to you on the several occasions of application which your progress through life will supply’. [[40]](#endnote-40)

Lightbody Greg’s esteem for Reid and Stewart extended to Maria Edgeworth, who she admired both as an educational writer and as a novelist (one of the few she recommended for her children). Her discussion of Stewart’s *Outlines* in 1806 moved naturally to her belief that ‘perpetual observation by older person’s is particularly necessary in reading Novels to young people’, and then on to the merits of Edgeworth’s fiction.[[41]](#endnote-41) When the writer visited the area in 1813, Hannah Lightbody Greg hurried to meet her, disappointed only that Richard Lovell Edgeworth continually talked over his daughter.[[42]](#endnote-42) Like Barbauld, who she had visited as a young woman, Edgeworth offered a model of the powers of the female mind of the kind celebrated in her maxims:

Nature has, perhaps, made the sexes mentally equal, but fortune and man, seem to have established an oppression which degrades woman from her natural situation; […] The books that are intended for the instruction of the female sex, are commonly addressed to them as women, not as rational, accountable, individual human beings; their duties are made to refer to their connexion with men, and those are most insisted on which are most important to them, as those of wives, housekeepers, mothers, daughters, etc, whereas wisdom and virtue are the same to both sexes.[[43]](#endnote-43)

Lightbody Greg demonstrated those powers by looking after her husband’s business affairs when he was away, as well as by resolutely defending her own liberal opinions and the family’s Irish connections through the political reaction of the 1790s.[[44]](#endnote-44) Her later educational interests extended from her own children to the workers at the mill, where she started a school, a sick club, a savings scheme, and a club for women, even recommending Robert Owen’s ‘excellent schemes’, despite her husband’s reservations about Owen based on ‘early impressions of his character’.[[45]](#endnote-45) Through various trials and tribulations in Manchester, she preserved her faith in a general improvement, even when her friend Rathbone doubted his: ‘We will hold fast our Enthusiasm,’ she told him ‘whatever betide and I believe it is at least one means of holding fast our Integrity’.[[46]](#endnote-46)

III

Hannah Lightbody Greg seems to have entertained members of the Literary and Philosophical at her home in King Street after their meetings and eventually developed a salon of her own at Quarry Bank that allowed her to recreate something of the intellectual sociability she had enjoyed as a young woman in Liverpool.[[47]](#endnote-47) Eliza Fletcher, herself a hub of intellectual sociability in Edinburgh, credited her with raising the aspirations of improvement beyond merely commercial matters:

We stayed a week with them and admired the cultivation of mind and refinement of manners which Mrs. Greg preserved in the midst of a money-making and somewhat unpolished community of merchants and manufacturers.[[48]](#endnote-48)

Nevertheless, despite Hannah Lightbody Greg’s demonstrable engagement with the debates that flowed around the Society, there is no record of her ever visiting it, despite Thomas Henry’s promise that members of the society would enjoy the conversation of women. The rules allowed visitors into the society’s meetings ‘with permission of the chairman’, but there is no mention of women ever having been among them, even if they did attend public lectures held under its auspices, as Bessy Greg did when he went to hear John Dalton lecture on electricity in 1807.[[49]](#endnote-49)

The brightest luminary in Henry’s list of conversable women writers was undoubtedly Barbauld, something of a local hero, with whose ‘chearful friendliness’ Hannah Lightbody had been ‘much pleased’ when she visited her in Hampstead in 1787. Although she left Warrington in 1774, Barbauld’s poetry retained a strong sense of the mission of a transpennine Enlightenment emerging from the region and spreading across the globe:

But tell each land, (while every toil they share,   
Firm to sustain, and resolute to dare,)   
MAN is the nobler growth our realms supply,   
And SOULS are ripen’d in our northern sky.[[50]](#endnote-50)

Much later, her poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* imagined a pilgrim from America asking after Roscoe’s abode, while, to the fury of the Tory critic J. P. Croker, London’s faded glories are left to oblivion.[[51]](#endnote-51) De Quincey’s ‘Liverpool Coterie’ essay was to some extent picking up a note sounded by Croker in *The Quarterly* decades before in its disparagement of the claims of provincial opinion. Croker and De Quincey were equally aware of the range and effectiveness of the ‘connexion’ that linked Barbauld and Roscoe, and equally hostile. With her brother, John Aikin junior, Barbauld served almost as London agents for their friends in the north. In 1795, Aikin’s *Description of …Manchester*, published with the help of information gathered by Thomas Percival and his friends, had offered a vision of Manchester as ‘the heart of this vast system, the circulating branches of which spread all around it,’ a renovated body politic that challenged the aristocratic hegemony Tory’s like Croker cherished.[[52]](#endnote-52)

Recent literary criticism has been astute on the way Barbauld figured her poetry as a form of gift relation cementing the connections that Croker and De Quincey despised. Interestingly, in this regard, Hannah Greg described her collections of maxims as a ‘gift’ to her children, and even imagined them appearing as ‘mottoes on common jugs, cups, &c; those that are too long for this purpose might be printed on handkerchiefs, or used for writing copies in charity schools.’[[53]](#endnote-53) Joanna Wharton has shown how Barbauld’s poems exploited such ideas to create a materialist understanding of the operations of mind, a topic much debated, as we have seen, in Liverpool and Manchester.[[54]](#endnote-54) These poems also frequently figure themselves as part of a process of network formation that is potentially fragile and needs actively creating and maintaining, especially when faced with the kind of dispersal that followed, for instance, graduation from Warrington or, especially, for her women friends after marriage. No poems register these more affectionately than those on the departure of Mary and Joseph Priestley from Warrington in 1767.[[55]](#endnote-55) Joseph Priestley had taken the ministry of Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds, across the Pennines from Warrington, where Barbauld visited the couple on more than one occasion. On one of these trips, she also met Priestley’s close friend William Turner, minister at Wakefield, to whose son, also William Turner, she presented the poem ‘Verses written in the Leaves of an Ivory Pocketbook’ with its associationist linking of the development of the boy’s mind to her inscription on the tablet.[[56]](#endnote-56) The inscribed ivory pocketbook itself was a memorial of the networks to which Croker and De Quincey objected, a gift that preserved the Aikin-Barbaulds’ links with the Priestleys and the Turners. It was not merely a friendship gift, but also intended, as Wharton shows, to make an ‘impression’ (l.5) on the boy’s mind with Barbauld’s ‘pencil of Instruction,’ (l.6) exactly the kind of impression Hannah Greg hoped her maxims would make if painted onto cups and jugs.

Barbauld made sufficient impression on Turner for him to remember her as ‘unquestionably the first of our female poets, and one of the most eloquent and powerful of our prose writers’ in the obituary he provided to *The Newcastle Magazine* in 1825. The obituary also saw the first printing of the ivory pocketbook poem – with several others – and effectively, one might say, confirmed the indelible success of her attempt to bind the boy into the networks of improvement that emanated from Warrington.[[57]](#endnote-57) Young William Turner went on to become a student at the Academy from 1777 until 1781.[[58]](#endnote-58) Barbauld herself had left the area by this stage, of course, but he would surely have been aware of her virtual presence, at least via ‘conversation’ in Henry’s sense of reading, but perhaps also by word of mouth. Equally unsurprisingly, as if fulfilling a script written by Barbauld, Turner was made an honorary member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society in 1783. By this stage, he had taken over a Dissenting congregation in Newcastle-upon-Tyne but took with him the Society’s self-organizing principle of knowledge association. Initially he set up a small informal conversation ‘club’ with friends, and, continuing Percival’s trajectory, then published *Speculations on the Propriety of Attempting the Establishment of a Literary Society in Newcastle* (1792), explicitly acknowledging the importance of the precedent set at Manchester, not least via the ethos of conversation between bodies in rooms: ‘Knowledge, like fire, is brought forth by collision; and in the free conversation of associated friends many lights have been struck out, and served as hints for the most important discoveries, which would not, probably, have occurred to their authors, in the retirements of private meditation’.[[59]](#endnote-59)

Further following the script he had been given by Barbauld as a boy, he supported women’s education, as Ruth Watts has shown, encouraging his daughter to read Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* and to attend science lectures at the Royal Institution.[[60]](#endnote-60) Mary Turner later married John Gooch Robberds, minister at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester, part of a network of exchange between Manchester and Newcastle whose lines Elizabeth Gaskell also travelled.[[61]](#endnote-61) Late in her life, Mary Robberds fondly remembered visiting the Aikins and the Barbaulds on a trip to London.[[62]](#endnote-62) Her father described his obituary for Barbauld as a ‘grateful tribute’ from someone ‘who, in his earliest years, was honoured by her notice, and through his whole life by her friendly regard.’[[63]](#endnote-63) Nevertheless, an anxiety about making public manuscript poems addressed to family and friends runs throughout it. Questions of the conditions of female participation also appeared during the early years of the Literary and Philosophical Society.

Here the fact that the archive of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society has survived reveals that the question of female membership was explicitly raised there (and, so, at least, it was not simply unthinkable that Henry’s ‘conversation’ might be literal). In 1798, not long after signing a request for the library to order the posthumous works of Wollstonecraft, a new member, named John Clennell, got wind of a discussion of female membership at the committee. He wrote a note in the recommendation book asking after the committee’s intentions. He received the following reply:

Ladies are and always have been admissible as members, by the way set down in the Rules of the Society; what was suggested, was, whether some mode less revolting to their delicacy could not be adopted; but as that required an alteration of, or addition to the Rules, it was necessarily deferred till the anniversary meeting in March.[[64]](#endnote-64)

The mode of membership less revolting to their delicacy was ‘reading membership’ agreed by the committee in March 1799. It allowed for privatised reading, borrowing books from the library, but not for participation in the collision of mind at the meetings (only two women had joined by 1810). When Clennell suggested that the decision about new membership be advertised in the newspapers, ‘as the first to admit Ladies into its circle’, in order to encourage other societies to follow its example, the committee refused, drily responding via the recommendation book: ‘The Committee does not think any information of this sort is necessary’.[[65]](#endnote-65) Women were, however, encouraged to attend Turner’s lectures on Chemistry, held under the auspices of the society, but open to paying non-members, repeating the pattern found in Manchester. The situation suggests a nuance to Livingstone’s claim that ‘scientific space, by and large, was masculine space’.[[66]](#endnote-66) ‘Space’ in these societies was being implicitly defined not just in relation to female ‘corporeality’, but also by assumptions about practises, where, for instance, a lecture was assumed to be, like reading, a more passive form of intellectual participation, more appropriate to female ‘delicacy’, than a meeting where the collision of mind with mind might grow heated.

Just as Hannah Greg’s daughter Bessy was able to attend John Dalton’s popular lectures, so too Turner’s daughter Mary helped prepare the diagrams for her father’s lectures on Chemistry in the rooms of the Literary and Philosophical Society at Newcastle: ‘As I could do them privately before the lecture there could be no objection, & I quite enjoyed the work; it also enabled me better to understand the lecture’.[[67]](#endnote-67) ‘Privately’ is a word that communicates a frisson that surrounded women’s ‘public’ access to knowledge. These assumptions even within progressive groups may have been reinforced c. 1800 by political tensions that made them seem unpropitious to Turner for pushing at the boundaries of participation within the society. Both Barbauld and Mary Hays were nominated for honorary membership on 14 July 1801. There were six proposers, including Clennell, but not Turner. The men proposed were elected, but the women were not. The monthly minutes from the summer of 1801 onwards show a significant increase in the number of establishment figures joining the society.[[68]](#endnote-68) Turner’s circumspection may reflect his desire to have the Newcastle society survive ideological differences, notwithstanding his continuing personal reverence for Barbauld reflected in the obituary twenty years or so later.

John Clennell, though, did not allow matters to rest there. Around 1807, failing in his hat-making business, Clennell left Newcastle for London. He set up the Hackney Literary and Philosophical Society in 1811 and then, after it failed, probably because he went to prison briefly for debt, the Hackney Literary Institution and Subscription Library in 1815.[[69]](#endnote-69) ‘A respectable number of ladies’ were present at its inaugural meeting in the Lamb Tavern in Homerton on 18 October. Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* was the first book proposed for purchase at its first meeting. Women also participated in the meetings that convened – initially in Clennell’s home – to discuss papers given by members. The society struggled to keep its membership much above seventeen, but at least two women can be identified as active participants: Miss Williams and Miss Wafford. Wafford ‘politely attended’ a committee meeting in December 1816 to indicate her intention to remain a subscriber, but there’s no mention of her speaking. On 6 March 1817 when a Mr. Lumby – who had proposed Miss Williams as a member back in 1815 - gave a paper on ‘the character of the female heart’ at which ‘some ladies expressed disapprobation’. The meeting was adjourned after the exchange. A scribbled final note in the minute book says the society was dissolved in May with the funds divided between the remaining members. It is hard not to grant this final episode some symbolic import. Moving from Newcastle to Hackney, Clennell had continued to seek the active participation of women in his idea of knowledge networks, but other men – however progressive their aspirations may have been about female ‘conversation’ – struggled to find a way to conduct themselves when faced with the vocal and embodied participation of women.

These were not hard and fast rules operating in a fixed landscape. Boundaries were obviously in operation, but they were continually tested and revised as circumstances and practices altered. These were matters of ‘small change’, in Harriet Guest’s terms, where definitions of space were continually being negotiated and contested within, outside, and around the architecture of institutions.[[70]](#endnote-70) From the 1790s, as Kathryn Gleadle and Jane Rendall have shown, liberal women like Eliza Fletcher began to take a role in managing various philanthropic ventures that often brought vociferous opposition for their ‘democratic’ tendencies. Gleadle argues this activism was an important aspect of provincial Unitarian networks that helped foster a political consciousness among women into the nineteenth century.[[71]](#endnote-71) There are other avenues for research into the place of these initiatives in the transpennine Enlightenment. There is every sign that by c.1820 women were pushing against the invisible barriers in and around the literary and philosophical societies. In 1819, for instance, a correspondent to the *Leeds Mercury* argued that a new society being proposed for the town ought to follow the policy ‘at the celebrated societies of Liverpool and Manchester’, where ‘ladies are admitted’. Women do seem to have gained entry to exhibitions and lectures at the Philosophical and Literary Society of Leeds, but only became members in 1845.[[72]](#endnote-72) Earlier, the larger patterns of sociability and philanthropic activity encouraged by Barbauld, Lightbody Greg, and others, helped sustain the literary and philosophical societies, but women never gained full access to them. Lightbody Greg ended up creating her own shadow institution for her children and their friends in the shape of the Duodecimo Club set up as a holiday game in 1811. In a letter to her nephew Tom Pares, she described it as ‘a domestic Literary & Philosophical Society’.[[73]](#endnote-73) Her presidential address survives along with some of the papers prepared by the children, chosen for reading after the model of the ‘Budget box’ in Barbauld and her brother’s *Evenings at Home* (1796).[[74]](#endnote-74) Although she claimed it was partly intended to ‘give [Robert] the opportunity of feeling his way with papers intended for the [Manchester] society’, it is difficult not to read the episode as a sign of Hannah Lightbody Greg’s own unfulfilled desire to participate there, but I’d like to end with a counterpoint to De Quincey’s account of the Roscoe circle. Mary Robberds recalled a visit arranged by Mrs. Crompton to ‘the celebrated Mr. Roscoe’ in the ‘Recollections’ written towards the end of her life:

His conversation was a great treat and I enjoyed the evening very much … there were several other clever men in Liverpool at that time, some of them I saw, Dr Currie, Dr Shepherd, Mr Yates &c. I like to recollect the visit.[[75]](#endnote-75)

Here is De Quincey’s ‘Liverpool coterie’ remembered very differently, certainly as a product of ‘connexion’ but one that included women as a positive presence in the conversable networks of the transpennine Enlightenment.

NOTES

1. On the broad context of the societies in Manchester and Newcastle, see Jon Mee and Jennifer Wilkes, ‘Transpennine Enlightenment: The Literary and Philosophical Societies and Knowledge Networks in the North, 1781-1830’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.4 (2015), 599-612. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See Jane Rendall, ‘Women that Would Plague Me with Rational Conversation: Aspiring Women and Scottish Whigs, c. 1790 – 1830’, in *Women Gender and Enlightenment*, eds. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 327, and Kathryn Gleadle, ‘British Women and Radical Politics in the Late Nonconformist Enlightenment, c. 1780-1830’, in *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Amanda Vickery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 123-151. My essay has also benefited from Rendall’s keynote address ‘Female Improvers: Women, Philanthropy and Border Crossings’ at the British Association for Romantic Studies conference, University of York, 28 July 2017. Catriona Kennedy and Felicity Nussbaum’s generously responded to earlier drafts. I am grateful to the staff at Quarry Bank for their help with the archive and to Michelle Levy and Simon Fraser University for inviting me to give an early version of this paper. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See Michele le Doeuff, *The Sex of Knowing*, trans. Kathryn Hamer and Lorraine Code (London: Routledge, 2003), 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 78. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The meetings of the Society were in rooms at Cross Street Chapel, where Thomas Barnes, a founding member, was a minister. Nearby Mosley Street Chapel was set up in 1789 with the more distinctly Unitarian liturgy used by John Yates at the Liverpool chapel where the unmarried Hannah Lightbody Greg worshipped. Priestley told Theophilus Lindsey that Barnes ‘could not conceal his jealousy of Mr. Hawkes’s Unitarian chapel’. See Priestley to Rev. T. Lindsey, October 1789 in *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Priestley*, ed. J. T. Rutt, vol. 2 (London, 1832), 35. Hannah Lightbody Greg wrote from Liverpool to encourage her future husband, Samuel Greg, to attend ‘of your own inclination rather than a compliance with my opinion & desires’. They worshipped there together after their marriage. See Hannah Greg Papers, Quarry Bank, National Trust. QBA765.1/9/6/5. I use the name Hannah Lightbody Greg throughout to refer to the unmarried and married woman. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Arnold Thackray, ‘Natural Knowledge in Cultural Context: The Manchester Model’, *American Historical Review*, 79 (1974), 693, notes various issues in the 1780s that provoked Anglican members to resign. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Priestley claimed that the Royal Society ‘shunned’ him ‘on account of his religious or political opinions’, and ‘at length withdrew myself from them’. See Priestley, *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Priestley* (London: 1809), 108. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. John Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles around Manchester* (London: 1795), 191. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. See Thackray’s article, note 6 above; Roy Porter, ‘Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England’, *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 3 (1980) 20-46; Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution, 1700-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); and Margaret Jacob, *The First Knowledge Economy: Human Capital and the European Economy, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. De Quincey began developing this opposition as early as the 1823, when he published his ‘Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected’. See, X.48. His famous elaboration appeared in a review of an edition of Pope edited by Roscoe. De Quincey offered it as a categorical difference between the fine and the mechanical arts, especially the improvability of the steam engine as opposed to the singularity of ‘power’ as the expression of ‘sympathy with the infinite’. See *Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey*, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, (1889-90), XI.56 and 57-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. De Quincey’s treatment of Percival was kinder than his account of the Liverpool circle. He enjoyed telling the story of Percival shocking his mother by reading from correspondence with freethinkers in France, and misremembered, somewhat maliciously, the title of Percival’s most famous book (see note 17 below), but then recalled one of its tales as ‘deep and memorable: my sister wept over it and wept over the remembrance of it’. See *Collected Writings*, I.131. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. ‘A Manchester Swedenborgian and A Liverpool Literary Coterie’, *Collected Writings*, II.123 and 129. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, *Revisionary Gleam: De Quincey, Coleridge, and the High Romantic Argument* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 73 and 77-8. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. ‘The Diary of Thomas De Quincey’, Liverpool Record Office, 920 MD 424/1. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Thomas Percival, *A Father’s Instructions to his Children* (London, 1776) was published by Johnson over several editions with William Eyres at Warrington, publisher of the early volumes of the Manchester *Memoirs*. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Mokyr, *Enlightened Economy*, 33. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. See Francis Nicholson, ‘The Literary and Philosophical Society 1781-1851’, *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society*,68 (1924), 105, and Pauline Handforth, ‘Manchester Radical Politics, 1789-94’, *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 66 (1956), 87-106. Percival remained in the society, as did John Ferriar and Samuel Greg. Thomas Cooper resigned and shortly afterwards left for the United States with Priestley. Currie wrote to Percival in November 1791: ‘I heard the decision at Manchester with great regret, as well as its consequences. Some hesitation I would have felt on the propriety of bringing forward the subject at all; but as it was brought forward, at any case I should have assuredly voted for such an address as you would have proposed, which I think would have done the society honour’. See *Memoir of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of James Currie*, ed. W. W. Currie, 2 vols (London: 1831), II.69-70. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See Thomas Henry, ‘On the Advantages of Literature and Philosophy in General’, *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society* 1 (1785), 18. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. John Ferriar, *The Prince of Angola: A Tragedy Altered from the Play of Oroonoko* (Manchester: 1788), viii. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Arianne Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 23. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. See Thomas Cooper, ‘Propositions respecting the Foundation of Civil Government’, *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society*, 3 (1790), 491. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. See Cooper, ‘*Reply to Mr. Burke's invective against Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Watt, in the House of Commons* (London: 1792), 81. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Phillips recanted his earlier ideas. See his manuscript autobiography, written c. 1845, Warwickshire Record Office, MI 247, and David Brown, ‘From “Cotton Lord” to Landed Aristocrat: The Rise of Sir George Phillips Bart., 1766-1847’, *Historical Research*, 69 (1996), 66-82. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Currie told Ann Duncan: ‘Of all society I must esteem that of men of sound sense and enlarged understandings; and next to that, I am fond of the company of women’. See *Memoir of ... James Currie*, I.58, and for the letter to Moore, ibid. II.141. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. The diary shows that she studied ‘Reid on the active Powers’ in August 1788. See ‘The Diary of Hannah Lightbody 1786/1770’, ed. David Sekers, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 24 (2008), 13, 15, 79, 135-6. Currie reviewed Reid’s book for the *Analytical Review* 1 (June and August 1788), 145-53 and 521-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. ‘Diary’, 11. In this exchange that ran over several issues of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1786, Seward, a favourite author in these circles, defended the right of women to choose and interpret literature. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. The diary, 30, shows that Currie took Christie to call on Hannah Lightbody on 18 June 1787 and then the next evening entertained her at supper with Christie and Roscoe. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. ‘Diary’, 14 and 23. The key texts in the exchange on materialism were Barnes ‘On the Influence of the Imagination and the Passions upon our Understanding’, read to the society in February 1783, published in the first volume of the society’s *Memoirs*, and Thomas Cooper’s ‘Sketch of the Controversy on Materialism’, read on 17 Jan 1787, published in his *Tracts Ethical Theological and Political* (London: 1789). See also *The British Critic* 2 (December 1793), 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. ‘Diary’, Sunday 19 May 1787, 23-27. Their exchange took place a week or so after she had been present at the argument between Currie and Godwin on materialism. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Mary Rose, *The Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill: The Rise and Decline of a Family Firm, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 16. Rose sees Samuel Greg joining the Manchester society as a consolidation of his Manchester commercial networks. David Sekers, [*A Lady of Cotton: Hannah Greg, Mistress of Quarry Bank Mill*](https://kindle.amazon.com/work/lady-cotton-hannah-mistress-quarry-ebook/B00ABLFVFM/B00APDX8AG) (Stroud: History Press, 2013), 89, speculates that Hannah Greg may have influenced her husband’s decision to join the society. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. ‘Diary’, 117 and 17 and Rathbone to Greg, RP II.1 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. See Currie’s to Hannah Greg letter of 27 March 1800 in *Memoir*, ed. W. W. Currie, II.188. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. *A Collection of Maxims, Observations, etc* (Liverpool, 1799) was developed into *The Moralist* (Liverpool, 1800) and *The Monitor, or a Collection of Precepts, Observations, etc*. (Liverpool, 1804). Lightbody Greg described her book as a‘useful legacy to her children, gleaned from her reading and reflection’, printed only because of difficulties in gaining enough copies for a large family, and ‘not intended for the public,’ *Collection of Maxims*, [i]-ii. An extract on the principle of self-love from Currie’s review of Reid and a sentence from Wollstonecraft are at 3 and 49 respectively. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. See Jane Rendall, ‘Adaptations: Gender, History, and Political Economy in the Work of Dugald Stewart’, *History of European Ideas*, 38, no 1 (March 2012), 144, and the elaboration in ‘“Elementary Principles of Education”: Elizabeth Hamilton, Maria Edgeworth and the Uses of Common Sense Philosophy’, *History of European Ideas*, 39 no. 5, (2013): 613-630. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. See Stewart’s *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* 3 vols (London, 1792-1827), I.20. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Stewart, Outlines of the Philosophy of Mind (Edinburgh, 1793), 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Lightbody Greg told Rathbone that she had ‘both Reid and Stewarts’ large works from which I have formerly experienced more pleasure as well as improvement than perhaps from any books I ever read’, but as she was unwell [Stewart’s] ‘“Outlines” will just suit us – and be a text book for conversation into which my reading generally subsides’. Rathbone Papers, LUL, RP II.169. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. See Stewart, *Elements*, I.40. Hannah Greg’s papers contain an exercise book addressed to her children’s Duodecimo Society in which ‘Stewarts Philosophy of the Human Mind’ is copied as a preface. QBA 765.1/9/6/33. In 1814, she told her son of her concern that she had passed her taste for poetry to him rather than the stronger fare of Stewart. QBA765.1/9/6/17. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Greg, *Collection of Maxims*, iv. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Greg described Edgeworth as ‘inimitable in telling a story, or drawing a character, but I question whether I should have read “Leonora” to them had I not found that they had picked it up at Lpool last winter − It is rather too French I think’. (Rathbone Papers, LUL, ibid). [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. She described the Edgeworths as ‘amiable, attached and most happy in each other’, but complained ‘Mr E talks so incessantly & in such a boastfully egotistical manner that we could scarce hear Miss E speak’. Edgeworth gave her own account to Charlotte Sneyd on 19 April 1813: ‘While we were at Mr Holland’s Mrs Gregg, wife to Mr Ewart’s partner came from Manchester to spend a day with us. She is a particular friend of Mr Holland’s & behold we found her to be the very lady with the 12 well behaved children at whose house Mrs E Hamilton spent so much time. She described the family to us in one of her letters’. I am grateful to Jane Rendall for providing this reference from the Edgeworth correspondence in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, MS 10166/7, no. 901. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. *Collection of Maxims* (1799), 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Nothing better conveys Greg’s situation in the 1790s than the letter written to her nephew Tom Pares written in 1823: ‘I have lived thro’ the French Revolution and the Irish Rebellion, and tho’ it may sound absurd for an obscure Female to say that I became almost personally versed in the tumults of the national interests … in the busiest period of it, and even in my own family, I was called to think and feel – if not to act upon subjects that seldom fall much into a woman’s way. All this is over now but if it has not qualified me for a Counseller – …, let me remind you that my inferior judgment can sometimes from advantage of position at a distance more of the Outline of the general bearings, of a station than they who absolutely occupy it’. To Thomas Pares, III, 9 June 1823, Pares Collection, Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, D5336/3/214/30. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. See Rathbone Papers, LUL, RP VI 1.109. Samuel Greg’s views probably stemmed from their time in the Literary and Philosophical Society before Owen left for New Lanark in 1799. See E. M. Fraser, ‘Robert Owen in Manchester, 1787-1800’, *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical*, 82 (1937-8), 29-41. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Greg to Rathbone, 29 July 1794, RP II.162**.**  [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. See *A Lady of Cotton*, 98 and 214-25. The source for the claim that Lightbody Greg entertained members of the society at her home is Ellen Melly’s MS ‘Reminiscences’ (1889) now in the archives at Quarry Bank. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. *Autobiography of Mrs Fletcher: with Letters and Other Family Memorials* (Edinburgh, 1875), 97. See the discussion of Fletcher’s circle in Rendall, ‘Women that Would Plague me’. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. *A Lady of Cotton*, 215. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. See ‘The Invitation’, ll. 151-4, *The Poems of Anna Letitia Barbauld* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 9-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. ‘Eighteen Hundred and Eleven’, in *Poems*, 152-160. Croker’s review appeared in *Quarterly Review*, 7 (1812), 309-13. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. See Aikin, *Description of … Manchester*, 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. *Virtue made easy* (1799), iv. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Wharton, ‘Inscribing on the Mind: Anna Letitia Barbauld’s “Sensible Objects*”*,’ *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 35. 4 (2012): 535-550. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. See, for instance, ‘To Mrs. P, with some Drawings of Birds and Insects, written for Mary Priestley’, discussed by Wharton, ibid., 542. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. *Poems of Barbauld*, 27-8. See Wharton’s excellent discussion, ibid., 536-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. William Turner, ‘Mrs. Barbauld’, *Newcastle Magazine*, 4 (April 1825) 183. The poem was printed at 185-6. The obituary continued into the next number. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. On Turner, see Stephen Harbottle*, The Reverend* *William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle: Northern Universities Press, 1997). [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. *Speculations on the Propriety of Attempting the Establishment of a Literary Society in Newcastle* [Newcastle, 1793], 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (London: Routledge, 1988), 66, 68, and 123. See William to Mary Turner, 29 January 1812, in *Private Voices The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, ed. J.A.V. Chapple and Anita Wilson, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996). Turner notes that his daughter has ‘perused the strong and often coarse, though too often well-founded strictures, of Mrs Wollstonecraft’, 115. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Gaskell stayed with the Turners in Newcastle before her marriage. See John Chapple, *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 351-70. Her father was reputedly a tutor at Manchester Academy, ibid. 33, and certainly worshipped at Cross Street, 33-4. Her husband – William Gaskell – became Unitarian minister there. Hannah Greg knew Gaskell’s Manchester networks. See ibid., 139-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Mary Robberds, ‘Recollections of a Long Life’, in *Private Voices*, 109-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Turner, ‘Mrs. Barbauld’, 183. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. See the manuscript volume ‘Books Recommended to be Ordered’, Library of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne. The new category of membership was confirmed at the annual meeting 15 March 1799. See *A Historical Sketch of the Transactions of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1807), 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. ‘Books Recommended to be Ordered’. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Livingstone, *Putting Science*, 78. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. ‘Recollections’, 110. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. ‘Committee Minutes, 1794-1806’, Library of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne. I am grateful to the Society’s current President Paul Gaulinas, for this and other information regarding the Society. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. See Clennell’s obituary, *Monthly Repository* 17 (1822) 771-2 stresses his Unitarian piety, but notes his predilection for ‘literary pursuits’ over business. Clennell was related to Turner through marriage. Clennell applied to the Literary Fund for relief from his debts in 1812. See Loan 96 RLF 1/285/1, Royal Literary Fund, British Library. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. See Guest, *Small Change:* *Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. See Gleadle, ‘British Women and Radical Politics’. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. See *The Leeds Mercury*, 20 February 1819 and R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party: The Making of the British Middle Classes, Leeds 1820-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 242. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Hannah Greg to Thomas Pares III, 10 July 1812 Pares Papers, DRO, D5/36/3/214/6/2. Papers relating to the Duodecimo are at QBA765.1/9/6/29-43. Robert Hyde Greg did join the Manchester society. He was part of a group that founded the Manchester the Statistical Society, whose enquiries into social conditions of Manchester in the 1830s and 40s, in a dark turn to the dialectic of this transpennine enlightenment, were intended to prevent the regulation of working hours. See M J. Cullen’s [*The Statistical movement in early Victorian Britain: the foundations of empirical social research*](https://yorsearch.york.ac.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/myAccountLoan.do?command=details&loanID=33907819770001381&type=active&pagingActivated=true&partialResult=false) (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1975), 107-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. See Aikin and Barbauld, *Evenings at Home; or, the Juvenile Budget Opened* vol. 1 (London, 1792), 2-3.  Lightbody Greg, though, claimed to have built on practices at the home of the Percivals. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. ### Robberds, ‘Recollections’, 112.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-75)