Louisa: The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams

Louisa Thomas
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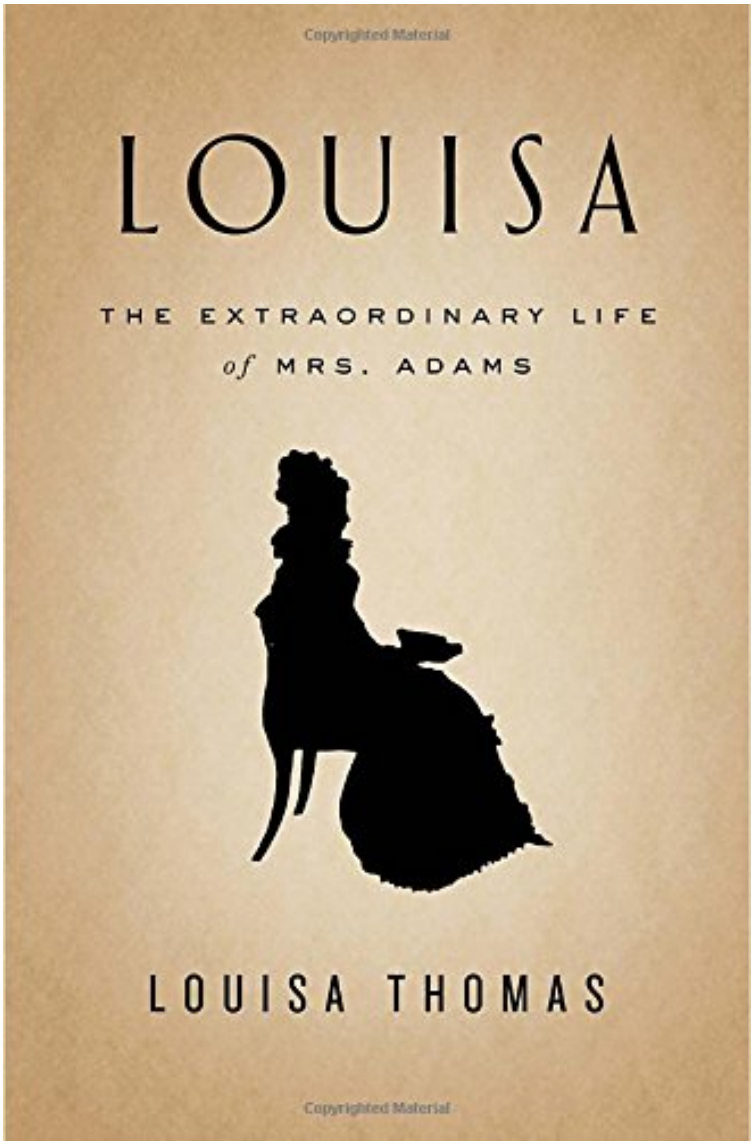

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Louisa Thomas : Louisa: The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Louisa: The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams:

43 of 44 people found the following review helpful. Louisa: A First Rate Biography of A First LadyBy Tina SaysI love biographies, although I feel like I've read more memoirs than biographies in recent years. I also love reading about the presidents and their wives, but have typically read books about recent presidents and their families.Louisa: The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams by Louisa Thomas gives an in depth account of the life of Louisa Adams, the

wife of John Quincy Adams. I'll admit that prior to reading this book, I hadn't thought much about Louisa Adams. Yet, I was extremely interested in her life and did truly find her life fascinating.Just a few tidbits I took away from this book:Louisa's own early life is covered, including the fact that her parents were not married until she was ten herself.She had never been to the United States until after she is married to John Quincy Adams.She suffered from many miscarriages, although the exact number is never known since her diaries may only indicate that she had been sick, so it is speculation as to whether her illness was a miscarriage or a different sickness.For a time she and John Quincy Adams and their youngest son lived in Russia.Louisa knew Napoleon Bonaparte.Louisa had a difficult time forming relationships with other wives in Washington, D.C.Despite the fact that Louisa was frail and often sickly, she found some inner reserve of strength to endure the deaths of her own children and managed to live without the constant help of her husband during challenging situations.Louisa is a comprehensive and researched look at this First Lady's life. Although I hadn't much thought of Louisa Adams prior to reading this book, I thoroughly enjoyed this look at her life. I appreciated Thomas' easy to read writing style and her ability to create a biography that reads almost like fiction and kept me interested up until the last page.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Louisa Thomas has researched and written a wonderful narrative history of a most amazing womanBy Jon HowardLouisa Thomas has researched and written a wonderful narrative history of a most amazing woman. Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams was the wife of John Quincy Adams. Ms. Thomas truly brings her namesake to life. I strongly urge you to read about the important, though little known, strong, intelligent, self-deprecating yet amazing and influential woman.5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Woman's JourneyBy rctnycThis is a highly readable, entertaining, well-researched biography of Louisa Adams, the wife of a brilliant, exasperating, difficult man. Born in England to an American businessman and his British companion -- her parents did not marry until they'd had several children together -- Louisa had led a privileged life before marrying John Quincy Adams, a self-denying, self-centered puritan, prone to depression who, although drawn the lovely, vivacious Louisa disapproved of what he saw as her girlish frivolity. His mother, the redoubtable Abigail, wasn't keen on Louisa, either. She'd hoped for a more sober spouse for her son. Worse still, Louisa's father went bankrupt shortly after she married John Quincy, an event that caused her shame and distress for the rest of her days.They were wrong. Although their marriage was difficult, Louisa and John Quincy stayed together until his death over 50 years later. Tried by Louisa's many miscarriages, and other family tragedies, they grew stronger as both individuals and a couple. Louisa matured from a girl who could barely write a letter, into a woman whose letters and diaries were eagerly anticipated and read by both her mother-in-law and, after Abigail Adams's death, her father-in-law, John Adams. Bred for the drawing room, she became an astute politician who often stepped in when her rigid, uncompromising, socially inept spouse stumbled. Insecure and lacking a sense of herself, she grew into a woman who navigated the hazardous political and social waters of Tsarist Russia, Europe and the U.S., and made an amazing journey from Moscow to Paris, in the midst of the Napoleonic wars, accompanied only by her young son and a few servants -- the latter of whom ran away when the armies of Napoleon drew near.I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I had previously read an account of Louisa's journey from Moscow to Paris; this bio put that journey in the perspective of her entire life. All I can say is, she deserved ten medals for putting up with John Quincy Adams. Yet clearly, despite the dissatisfaction that both expressed with their marriage, they loved one another deeply. This bio tells their complex tale without simplifying either member of this interesting couple, while at the same time giving the reader a detailed account of the political era in which they lived.

An intimate portrait of Louisa Catherine Adams, the wife of John Quincy Adams, who witnessed firsthand the greatest transformations of her timeBorn in London to an American father and a British mother on the eve of the Revolutionary War, Louisa Catherine Johnson was raised in circumstances very different from the New England upbringing of the future president John Quincy Adams, whose life had been dedicated to public service from the earliest age. And yet John Quincy fell in love with her, almost despite himself. Their often tempestuous but deeply close marriage lasted half a century. They lived in Prussia, Massachusetts, Washington, Russia, and England, at royal courts, on farms, in cities, and in the White House. Louisa saw more of Europe and America than nearly any other woman of her time. But wherever she lived, she was always pressing her nose against the glass, not quite sure whether she was looking in or out. The other members of the Adams family could take their identity for grantedthey were Adamses; they were Americansbut she had to invent her own. The story of Louisa Catherine Adams is one of a woman who forged a sense of self. As the country her husband led found its place in the world, she found a voice. That voice resonates still. In this deeply felt biography, the talented journalist and historian Louisa Thomas finally gives Louisa Catherine Adams's full extraordinary life its due. An intimate portrait of a remarkable woman, a complicated marriage, and a pivotal historical moment, Louisa Thomas's biography is a masterful work from an elegant storyteller.

[A] lushly detailed, authoritative book. Smithsonian.com Utterly enjoyable...Louisa thus leaps from the page as contradictory, observant, ambivalent, self-pitying, strong, and human.BookforumThomas has written an insightful, compassionate portrait of a young girl expected to be prim and passive, who grew into a strong woman, an avid writer, and shrewd political partner. Readers of biography will find Thomass book engaging as well as educating.Historical

Novels s Subtitled The extraordinary life of Mrs. Adams, this biography does not fail to meet the expectations it sets. Overall,Louisais a crisply written, accessible biography that feels authentic to the lives of women at the time and paints a vivid and engrossing portrait of the sixth First Lady of the United States.Book BrowseLouisa Catherines long years of living in the shadow of her husbands career choices and of the Adams dynasty diminished her own image. Thomas rescues her subject by giving Louisa Catherine her own voice, but also by making this a love story. San Francisco ChronicleA pleasure to read.Louisa manages the difficult balance of exploring [Louisa Adamss] life as the partner of a prominent public man without letting him hijack the narrative.feelings, questions and doubt formed the core dynamic of her life, and Louisa admirably captures that murky mental landscape. In doing so, it fulfills one of her innermost goals: It shows her to be a woman who was.TheNew York Times Book A rich and thorough look at our countrys only foreign-born first lady.Minneapolis Star Tribune Yes, that is why historical biographies are a hard nut to crack. One may know most of the story or all of the story, or one may not even think the story is worth the effort. But great writing is always worth the journey into the past, into a country discovering who it was. This is a life of Louisa Adams; Louisa Thomas gives that life a heart. San Diego Book Louisa Adams consumes us as a demure yet dazzling woman, a somewhat overlooked first lady who is as vulnerable and fragile as she is complex and spirited. One cannot get enough of her. The other treatis the extraordinary voice of the author. Thomass unusual, enchanting choice of words together with her subjects strenuous and glamorous life, make this book an unlikely page turner. American HistoryAs journalist and historian Thomas reveals in her comprehensive and fascinating biography, Adams was an admirable and extraordinary woman. Thomas examines the life and evolving character of Adams through the prism of her nations own development and quest for a national identity Thomas has written an excellent account of the life of this woman, who certainly merits greater attention and praise. Booklist, *starred* A detailed and sensitive narrative, empathizing with Louisas unorthodox life. Thomas uses unpublished diaries along with memoirs to show how Louisa managed in a complicated but intimate 50-year marriage; endured the physical hardships of frequent travel, personal illness, and long periods of separation from her children; and charted a course as a political wife in an age when women were expected to eschew politics.immensely readable. Library JournalIn this elegant, sweeping biography.Thomas wisely avoids the behind every great man canard, acknowledging that while Louisas help was essential to John Quincys career, of greater importance are the ways in which she learned about herself and the world and developed her own voice. Publishers WeeklyDrawing on a rich trove of letters, diaries, and memoirs, historian and journalist Thomas has created an enthralling, sharply etched portrait of Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams (1775-1852), the wife of America's sixth president.Thomas effectively sets Louisas eventful life against the backdrop of a nation transforming itself, debating foreign and domestic policy, including slavery, which John Quincy vehemently opposed. An elegant, deeply perceptive portrait. Kirkus s, starredIn addition to being thoroughly grounded in a wide range of source material,Louisaalso brims with intelligence and pith. This is the most effortlessly readable life of Louisa Adams that has yet appeared. one of the best First Lady biographies in an increasingly competitive field.Open Letters MonthlyIn this engaging and well-researched biography,writer and historian Louisa Thomas rescues a former first lady from near obscurity.Louisais a fascinating portrait of a complex woman, her sometimes tumultuous marriage and the extraordinary era in which she lived. BookPageThe thrilling, improbable life of our only foreign-born First Lady, to whom Quincy, Massachusetts seemed more exotic than Tsar Alexanders St. Petersburg. If, as Louisa Thomas makes splendidly clear, being born an Adams was difficult, marrying one was yet more so. Louisa Catherine Adams knew how to please her husband (study Cicero), as well as how to displease him (wear rouge); we come to admire her on both counts in this nuanced, beautifully crafted portrait.Stacy Schiff, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of The Witches, Cleopatra, and A Great Improvisation Louisa Thomas has written a beautiful, wise, and compelling book about a member of America's Adams clan who may just be the most interesting Adams of them all. Rigorously researched and written with grace, conviction, and insight, Louisa is a marvelous achievement by a biographer from whom we shall be hearing for decades to come. For that in general and for this book in particular we should all be grateful indeed.Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize-winner and bestselling author of American Lion, Franklin and Winston, and Thomas Jefferson: The Art of PowerYou will want to read every word of Louisa--Louisa Thomass dazzling portrait of first-lady Louisa Catherine Adams and her complicated marriage to Americas sixth president, John Quincy, a man who believed women had nothing to do with politics, yet permitted his wife to wage a campaigne in private salons and ballrooms that led to his election. Chances are good that no first lady was unhappier in the White House than Louisa Catherine Adams, but hers was a long life of surprising adversity and high adventure, every chapter of which Thomas relates with brilliant sympathy and insight.Megan Marshall, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Margaret Fuller: A New American LifeFor a long time I have been waiting for a biographer with sufficient style and emotional range to tell the quite extraordinary story of Louisa Catherine Adams in all its splendor and sadness. Louisahas been worth the wait. Joseph J. Ellis, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of The Quartet and First Family: Abigail and John Adams This lyrical and deeply personal tale gives a fascinating glimpse of America at a transformational moment. But more than that, it's a timeless book about what it means to be a woman, how to invent your own personal identity, and how to have the self-awareness and faith to find what to live for and why. These are lessons just as valuable for our fast-changing age as they were for that of Louisa Adams. Walter Isaacson, author of The Innovators: How a Group of Hackers,

Geniuses, and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution, Steve Jobs and Benjamin Franklin: An American LifeAbout the AuthorLouisa Thomasis the author ofConscience: Two Soldiers, Two Pacifists, One Familya Test of WillandFaith in World War I. She is a contributor to the New Yorker's website, a former writer and editor forGrantland,and a former fellow at the New America Foundation. Her writing has appeared intheNew York Times, Vogue,TheParis , and other places.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.***This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected proof***Copyright 2016 Louisa Thomas1The first time Louisa Catherine Johnson saw John Quincy Adams, she thought that he looked ridiculous. When he came to dinner at the Johnsons house in London, on Wednesday, November 11, 1795, the young American diplomat was dressed in a strange boxy Dutch coat so pale that it appeared, absurdly, almost white. Watching him talk at the table, though, she did like him. He seemed spirited, showing no signs of exhaustion after a long and difficult journey from Holland, where he was the United States representative. He was handsome, with penetrating, dark round eyes under a pair of peaked eyebrows, and a mouth that was full and strong. He liked a good story and a good glass of wine. Only twenty-eight years old, he was already a high-ranking diplomatand the son of the vice president of the United States. No one who met him could miss his intense intelligence. Still, after John Quincy had gone, the girls sat in the parlor and joked a little about his unfashionable attire. They were drawn to men who wore well-cut jackets, men who arrived at dinner looking ready for a gallop. John Trumbull, an artist and frequent guest at the Johnsons, who had brought John Quincy to dinner, tried to convince them that Mr. Adams was a fine fellow and would make a good husband. The sisters laughed.More than a month passed before John Quincy came back, and Louisa did not miss him. She was twenty years old, clever, and charming, though she could be shy, and she and her sisters were accustomed to being objects of admiration. There were seven daughters in all beguiling, lively, and lovelyand their mother, Catherine, knew how to exploit their good looks. (A seventh child, a son named Thomas, was at boarding school and then across the Atlantic at Harvard.) Catherine was petite and pretty, with a sparkling wit and a talent for putting guests at ease while keeping them on their toes; she was, Louisa remembered, what the French call spiritul. When they were little, Catherine had dressed her children in matching clothes and marched them into church by twos. We were objects of general curiosity and permit me to say admiration to the publick, Louisa would remember with a touch of unembarrassed pride. When they were older, the girls had ostrich feathers for their hats, buffons of starched muslin, and hairdressers to curl, sculpt, and powder their hair. They ordered gloves by the dozen. The three oldestNancy was twenty-two, two years older than Louisa, and Caroline eighteen, two years younger had already been introduced to society, and society was happy to be introduced to them.There were frequent visitors to entertain them, dinners with dignitaries, merchants, scientists, ministers, British abolitionists, wealthy American plantation owners, young men and old. Their elegant house, No. 8 Coopers Row on Tower Hill, perched above the Thames and the Tower of London, was known as a welcoming place. Visitors from the United States were treated especially well. Louisas father, Joshua Johnson, a merchant from Maryland, was the American consul in London, appointed by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson in 1790. He interpreted his responsibilities liberally. (Perhaps a little self-interestedly, too, which was not uncommon for a consul.) His ships carried Americans mail to and from the United States; he found them a doctor when they were sick; he pled their case when they were in trouble; he offered his house as their haven. Americans came to Coopers Row to collect their letters and stayed for tea. They came to discuss a trading scheme and found themselves at dinner. After dinner they would linger for card games, conversation, and music in the parlor. They came for the comforts of the sofa in the parlor, the oil paintings on the walls, the cook in the kitchen, the harp in the corner, and the eleven servants who would suddenly appear at their elbow to whisk away their finished plates or materialize in the drawing room with a glass of good brandy. They also came, perhaps, for the women.Louisa barely noticed John Quincys reappearance at the dinner table in December, but he returned and returned again. He could be found on Tower Hill almost every night. He would linger after dinner with the sisters to watch their skits, play their games, and listen to their laughter. He teased them and was teased; they called him Mr. Quiz. He sat on the sofa next to Louisa and held the end of a string as Louisa threaded spangles on it for her embroidery. He loved watching them performNancy played the pianoforte, Caroline the harp, and Louisa sang. Evening at Mr. Johnsons. His daughters pretty and agreeable . . . Late home, he would record in his small, strict handwriting, logging his visits to the Johnsons night after night.He was drawn to them, this warm feminine circleto the sound of a soprano voice, the mellifluous laughter, the suggestion of a life not of strain and hardship but of modestly easy luxury. It was so different from the atmosphere of expectations in which hed been raised, so different from what he told himself he wanted. He noted the difference and it disturbed him; yet he could not seem to stay away.The Johnson sisters could sense the increasing attention from this almost-stranger, serious and somewhat supercilious, though not unable to smile. He was unusualbut then, there were ways in which they were unusual tooand perhaps Louisa most of all.. . .She was almost an outsider by birth. At the time the American Revolution broke out across the Atlantic, when she was only two months old, her father was the buyer for a firm based in Annapolis. He was a proud American patriot unafraid to show his allegiance, which meant that it became neither safe nor profitable for him to live nearly in view of the Tower of London. When Louisa was three, her family moved to Nantes, France, where Joshua worked for a time as an agent for the nascent American government and tried to establish his own business. His house there, on Lle Feydeau, in the middle of the Loire River, the part of town

fashionable among the newly rich, became a frequent meeting point for Americans passing through Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Paul Jones, and dozens of others, including John Adams, perhaps with his middle son in tow. They came for business, and perhaps for pleasure; Joshua Johnson projected a sense of living well. His apartments were in a mansion called Le Temple du Gotthe Temple of Taste. Rows of wrought iron balconies curved and curled into delicate tendrils; long windows opened like doors; the fireplaces were made of marble; and the ceilings soared. Later, Louisa blamed Le Temple du Got for encouraging a certain showiness and ruinous cupidity in her mother, but it molded her own aesthetic as well. Long after she had been to the Hermitage, to the Tuileries, to Peterhof, to Sans Souci, she would remember Le Temple du Got as a singular marvel, elegant and perfect.She remembered her childhood, she would later say, like a dreamscape. She wouldnt remember the revolutionaries who came to tea, thoughthey meant little to her then, and anyway, she often wasnt home. Her parents sent her to a Roman Catholic boarding school located in Le Temple du Got, up the mansions spiral staircase. The Johnsons werent Catholic, and Joshua probably wasnt too interested in formally educating his tiny children at that point. (Americans in France sometimes enrolled their children in Roman Catholic schools; Thomas Jeffersonhighly skeptical of religionsent his daughter Patsy to a convent.) But Catherine was frequently pregnant, all the Johnsons often sick, and Joshua prone to feeling overwhelmed. The school left an impression on Louisa, though the only nun she could later recall was the one who brought toys. What she would remember were the trips to convents and cathedrals, where she would stand in the tinctured light and then drop to her knees to pray before the cross. She was imprinted with a certain sacerdotal sensitivity, an openness to awe. She also would remember the French she learned.The school was only upstairs from her parents family, but to judge from how much she liked to come homeeven if it meant falling sickit felt far away. With her mother, the lessons were of a different order. Louisa learned to dance on top of a table. Catherine dressed her children in the latest French fashions, in silks and tiny hoops, and took them to childrens balls, where they were exhibited, admired, and perfectly ruined by adulation and flattery. One of Louisas earliest childhood memories, a kaleidoscope of colors and textures, was of a partyin fact a wedding. Late in her life, she could still picture the bride of her fathers coachman: the f lowers on her dress, the flowers in her hands, the flowering flush upon her cheeks. The bride opened the ball, Louisa wrote in 1825, with all the gaiety of French sprightliness. In 1781, Joshua rejoined his old partner Charles Wallace and another Annapolis merchant, John Muir, to form Wallace, Johnson Muir, focusing on commission trade with Europe. Two years later, when Louisa was eight, with the end of the Revolution imminent, the Johnsons returned to London. They moved into the graceful mansion on Tower Hill, a short walk from the fortress and the long artery to the sea below it. Louisa and her sisters were sent to a boarding school in Shacklewell, near Hackney, about four miles north of Tower Hill. The school aimed at preparing middle-class English girls to become marriageable young women; it was run by a headmistress named Elizabeth Carter, who was well read, somewhat narrow minded, and very fat. Students were taught drawing, needlepoint, how to play the harp, and sloppy Frenchall considered necessary adornments for a wife.Louisa was young and shy, which at times could make her seem haughty; the other girls called her Miss Proud. Later in her life, she would remember a persistent feeling that she did not fit in. She had arrived at school wearing a stiff silk dress, as was the style in France, and chattering with her sisters in French only to find her schoolmates wearing high-waisted frocks with pretty sashes and f lowing chemise skirts, speaking in proper English idioms coded with signals of birth and bearing. Louisa and her sisters, she wrote in Record of a Life, became objects of ridicule to the whole school. But Louisawasalso proud. Being different might mean being something more than ordinary. There was power in that. She had an innate f lair for the dramatic. A story about the first time she went to a church service with her schoolmates in Hackney is telling: when a teacher told her to kneel to pray, she fell as it were dead upon the floor. Echoing what shed heard from the nuns at the Catholic school she had attended at Le Temple du Got, she declared that she was surrounded by hereticks. Likely, her fear of heresy and hell was real and overwhelming; young and impressionable, she had been influenced by what the nuns had told her. But her response was assertive and perhaps a little strange, since her own parents went to an Anglican church (and, when she was home, she likely went with them), and since her sisters seem to have had no similar trouble. She was sensitive, and she had a sense that those around her believed and behaved unlike her.What happened next, after the fainting, was also characteristic: Louisa fell so ill she had to be removed from school. This time she did not go home. Instead, her parents, distracted by the demands of their growing family, their own frequent illnesses, and the vagaries of a merchants business, sent her to stay with family friends, John and Elizabeth Hewlett. Parents could be remote, if not seemingly indifferent, in the eighteenth century; nonetheless, sending Louisa to friends seems harsh. Yet Louisa came to see it as a blessing. It shaped her independence and intellect at a very early age. Elizabeth Hewlett was the widow of another American merchant who had remarried a young, bold-minded Anglican minister named John. Louisas father, Joshua, deferred to John Hewlett in religious and educational mattersnot so much, it seems, because he admired Hewletts renowned scholarship as because he admired his connections. Anglicanism made sense for a socially ambitious family in England, and Joshua did not care what dogma his daughters actually believed. He had been raised on a Chesapeake plantation, where women were worshipped but not for their independent minds. What mattered was that his daughter not make a fuss. A lady was not supposed to disagree with the ministers creed, much less faint upon the floor. Joshua asked John Hewlett to coax Louisa into line. As in regard to women he always said there was little

danger in believing, Louisa later wrote of her father, but there was destruction in doubt.John Hewlett did bring her around to a more or less conventional religious view (although, she would write in 1825, I am not quite sure that some people do not think me a little of a fanatic even now). But he did something that Joshua did not intend when he asked John to minister to Louisa: he listened to her, talked with her, recommended books for her to read, and treated the child with unusual respect. On her visits over the years, he and Louisa would engage in serious conversation. His wife, too, treated her with unusual attention and care. Elizabeth Hewlett was a very eccentric woman of strong mind and still stronger passions. She was a woman for the age of sensibility but also a counterpoint to the woman Louisa would have encountered in popular advice manuals of the day. Elizabeth was not quiet and delicate; she did not blush and fade. So forceful was her personality that her neighbors, including the formidable Mary Wollstonecraftthe author ofA Vindication of the Rights of Womanfound her bossy and intimidating. (Wollstonecraft, at the time a local schoolmistress, complained of Elizabeths power over John Hewlett: How he is yoked!)John Hewlett, Louisa wrote, led me early to think. Thinking was not something that most young women were encouraged to do. John Hewlett was something of a radical. He ran a boys school in Shacklewell and was a sizar of Magdalen College at Oxford, and he would go on to have an illustrious career as a scholar and preacher, but in the 1780s and 1790s, his friends included famous dissenters and writers, and he had unusual ideas about the education of young women. Even as he was encouraging Louisa, John was urging Mary Wollstonecraft to write an essay about her ideas about the education of young women, which he carried to the publisher himself. ThoughThoughts on the Education of Daughterswas less explosive than Wollstonecrafts more famous work,it still had an incendiary message: a woman should learn to think for herself.So Louisa began to imagine she might have a mind of her own, which further set her apart. At school, she later wrote, I was universallyrespected, but I was never beloved. While she was there, she and her best friend, Miss Edwardsanother misfit, an East Indian very dark, with long black Indian hair; not handsome, but looked up to by all the teachers as a girl of uncommon talentswere the decided favorites of a teacher named Miss Young. By conventional definitions of the time, the Miss Young she described was hardly a woman at all. Her uncle had her educated with boys for many years; and obliged her to wear boys clothes: and in this way she had in a great measure acquired something like a classical education, Louisa wrote in Record of a Life. In Louisas world, there was nothing natural about a lady who acted like a man, and Louisa would routinely express her uneasiness with women who did. Yet in the same breath, she would often also express her admiration. Miss Young was, Louisa wrote, a most extraordinary woman. She was the kind of womanstrong, forceful, unconventional, educated, masculinewho would always both impress and confound her. Louisa flourished under her attention. Miss Young conversed freely with us upon the books we read, and taught her and Miss Edwards how to recognize the most beautiful and striking passages. She took the lessons to heart. When her father gave her a guinea, Louisa used it to buy the kinds of books Miss Young and John Hewlett had encouraged her to read: MiltonsParadise Lost and Regainedand John MasonsSelf-Knowledge: A Treatise, Shewing the Nature and Benefit of that Important Science, and the Way to Attain It.Louisa was pulled, then, between seemingly incompatible imperatives. A woman should not think for herself, because a woman pursued knowledge at the cost of a husband. When she recalled her purchase as she did more than once, even into old ageshe said she regretted buying those books and studying them closely. How often since that time have I thought it injured me; by teaching me to scrutinize too closely into motives, and looking too closely at the truth, she wrote.Too closely at the truth!Understanding the truth was not the goal of a young womans education. A wife did not need self-knowledge; she needed self-effacement. As Hannah More, the most popular author of her day, had written inEssays Addressed to Young Ladies, Girls should be taught to give up their opinions betimes, and not pertinaciously to carry on a dispute, even if they would know themselves to be in the right. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, another author whom Louisa read, taught herself Latin and Greek in secret and urged her daughter to teach her granddaughter how to hide a good education. Book learning, Lady Montagu wrote, should be concealed with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness.When Louisa was around fourteen, she was taken out of school, and the point of her schooling was made plain: she had been educated to be married, not to learn about Miltons poetry or the science of self-knowledge. To this end she was brought home to finish her education her embroidery, her dancing, her paintingunder the half-mindful eye of the younger childrens governess. Before long, she was introduced into societywhich is to say, she was brought into the marriage market. The search began, as it were, for a man in possession of a fortune and in want of a wife.What Louisa called work was mostly embroidery, stitching that was elegantly useless. Her daily tasks were made easy by the assistance of a team of servantsservants to wake her in the morning, to cook her food, to carry her plates, to drive the carriage to the theater or the park. In her spare time (and all of her time was spare), she painted or drew, or visited acquaintances, or received verses from admirers, or played games and gossiped. Some evenings, at parties or in the parlor, she danced. Some afternoons, she read novels that taught her to waste away from love.Louisa romanticized her childhood, but imperfectly. As she herself evocatively put it, her youth was fraught with bliss. She was, she would later sayprotesting a bit much, perhapshappiest at home, among her siblings and parents, singing to calm her father at the end of a long day, or perhaps rolling up the carpets and dancing. At parties and balls, she was timid as a hare.She had to be careful, too, because at those partiesat the Johnsons rich friends the Churches, say, or the Pinckneys or the Copleys she was tasked with remembering that she was different:

she was an American. Learning to be an American, of course, was not exactly on the curriculum at Mrs. Carters school, and it was hardly an identity her mother could impart to her. She had missed the critical experience of the first generation of those growing up in the United States, the Revolution itself. Most of her sense of it was formed, it seems, by whatever story or testimony she happened to hear from Americans visiting for tea or dinner, and from her fathers stories, which generally played up his daring and dangerous actions on behalf of the rebels during the Revolution. He would describe visiting Americans in prison, or General Washington, of whom he spoke with a degree of enthusiasm which fired our young hearts with the purest love and admiration. He would tell them how, on learning that he held Benedict Arnolds pen in his hand, he had picked up the pen with a pair of tongs and thrown it in the fire. He had named Louisas younger sister, born in 1776, Carolina Virginia Marylanda. All of this made its impact, and it didnt. The girls were British by their habits. As a child, Louisas favorite game was duchess; she answered only to Your Grace. But their Americanness was forcefully impressed upon them after Lord Andover took a liking to Caroline: the girls were told they must marry Americans.Joshua planned to get them to America before they fix their affections on any object here, he wrote to his brother Thomas, the first Revolutionary governor of Maryland, but business kept him in London. It helped that if Joshua could not bring them to America, he could bring Americans to them.