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Author

Korotchenko, Victoria

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The Department of History, Division of Humanities and Fine Arts
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93106-9410

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Letter from the Editors

The Spring 2023 edition of the *Undergraduate Journal of History* is now available, and our team is thrilled to share it with readers. We take pride in offering a platform for undergraduate students to showcase their historical research and encourage open discussions, intellectual debates, and curiosity. Our gratitude goes to the six authors who contributed to this volume and to the faculty and graduate student peer reviewers who made it possible. This latest issue covers various periods and diverse topics to illuminate lesser-known stories and provide fresh historical perspectives. Our undergraduate editors extend a warm welcome to both new and returning readers.

We start this issue with Olivia Bauer's article on Queen Elizabeth I and an examination of her diplomatic relationships with the leaders of the Sa'adian Sultanate of Morocco, the Ottoman Empire, and Safavid Persia, which allowed her to establish trading companies and expand Britain's empire. While the history of English foreign policy towards the Islamic world has often been associated with exploitative enterprises and violent warfare, the author argues that Elizabeth I's relationships with Muslim rulers were founded on diplomatic and peaceful means and explored the politics, gender, and religious factors that contributed to this diplomatic success.

Adrian Hammer's article, "Manufacturing Murder," provides a nuanced examination of the evolution of mass murder methods from 1933 to 1945, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of what happened, why it happened, and who it happened to, all to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future. Hammer discussed the significance of memorializing the severity of such atrocity. "The linear teaching of the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust," Hammer writes, "fails to fully capture the extent of the crimes committed and the deranged mindset of those responsible."

Victoria Korotchenko's essay explores the role of children during the French Revolution and how they actively participated in the events of the time, including joining mobs, petitioning legislators, and fighting in wars. Korotchenko writes that, while most scholarship focuses on the perspectives of grown men and women who participated in the French Revolution, "the sweeping changes, violence, and warfare impacted those who had no choice but to grow up during this tumultuous decade." This essay highlights children's curiosity and active nature during this unstable time.

Alyssa Medin's article deciphers Sor Juana as a "proto-feminist figure" in history. Medin examines three questions related to Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz's work: whether her work was published without her consent, was submissive or subversive, and if it can be considered "proto-feminist theology." Medin categorizes Sor Juana's contributions to theology into three areas: a promotion of intellectual pursuits

for women theologians, an aesthetic theological claim, and a pneumatological argument for deepening personal relationships with God through the Spirit.

O’Gorman’s work focuses on the Christian religion and military upheavals in late medieval Europe. He argues that losing Christian positions in the Middle East after the Fall of Acre in 1290 led military orders to reevaluate their identities. Many returned to their non-militaristic origins or expanded their crusading ideals into new regions. By comparing the founding stories and rules of military orders with their actions after 1290, Gorman demonstrated how the rules of military orders, including the Teutonic and Hospitaller Orders, also emphasized their hospital care in addition to their military actions.

Susan Samardjian retrospects upon how the post-war Vietnamese regime under communism in 1975 faced setbacks that disrupted both the nation’s stability and that of neighboring countries concludes our issue. Samardjian argued these setbacks contributed to an already deteriorating economy and formed the communist leaders to reevaluate their attitude toward their neighbors. In response, the communist government implemented domestic and foreign policy reforms to encourage bilateral trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and eventually normalized relations with the US, which had imposed sanctions on Vietnam, leading to economic investment opportunities.

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**The Child as the Solution and as the Problem:
The Youth of the French Revolution**

*Victoria Korotchenko*¹

“We, the young people, have more than any other class interest in preventing the reestablishment of the feudal tyranny... since we will live with the consequence in this life that we are just beginning.”

“Protest and arrest of students in the city of Angers”

3 February 1789²

When discussing the tumultuous matter of the French Revolution (1789-1799), children and young adults are seldom in the spotlight, even though this decade-long event would undeniably shape how these youths grew and developed into adults who would later shape history. The historiography tends to focus on adult revolutionaries and reactionaries. While some historians, like Lynn Hunt and Adrian O’Connor, focus on children, young individuals are often lumped together and mentioned as monoliths in discussions of the Revolution’s effects, such as how its policies impacted familial relationships and the state of education, respectively.³ Hunt, O’Connor, and others’ monumental monographs featuring discussions of *l’enfant* and *la jeunesse* will be cited further. However, these works view children as *recipients* of effects rather than as subjects of their own narrative. As such, this paper will only seek to add to the understanding of the revolutionary experience and daily life within the tumult, just from a different vantage point. While it has certainly been proven that children felt the effects of the Revolution’s alterations, less attention has been given to the discussion of revolutionary youth as agents of action and change in their own right and as some of the Revolution’s own protagonists: as soldiers in its wars, as dedicated lobbyists, as fiery reactionaries— all roles that youth came to fill in this decade-long stretch of upheaval that certainly complicated the context in which these children grew up. The

¹ Victoria is a fourth-year English, History, and Russian Studies triple major at UC Santa Barbara. After graduating, she is excited to pursue her MA in History and Literature at Columbia’s Reid Hall in Paris.

² “Protestation et arrêté des étudiants en droit de la ville d’Angers du 3 février” quoted in Nicolas Déplanche, “From Young People to Young Citizens: The Emergence of a Revolutionary Youth in France, 1788-1790,” *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 1 (2011): p. 232, accessed January 27, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41678824>.

³ See *In Pursuit of Politics* by Adrian O’Connor and *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* by Lynn Hunt.

Revolution touched children just as it did every other member of society—youth built on precedents past and new revolutionary dialogue in reacting to this life-shaping historical moment.

Defining the Child

Before we explore youth in the throes of revolution, we must first establish the constraints of this conversation and what exactly defined “youth” in late eighteenth-century France. The definition of “childhood” itself was inconsistent before and during the Revolution, complicating any clear answer of exactly what age range embodied “youth.” For example, education in schools is a traditional hallmark of marking childhood. In eighteenth-century France, many children would attend *collèges*, usually between the ages of ten to twenty. However, this was erratic, as many of these schools before the Revolution were charity institutions that varied across regions and had disparate retention rates.⁴ Moreover, during the Revolution, this variance continued as some pupils attended the *collèges* and *lycées* of the “reformed” educational systems while others fell through the cracks or joined the revolutionary armies at very young ages.⁵ Youth occupied many faculties of society, but these were not always the schoolhouses; thus, advancement within education is not the clearest of thresholds between youth and adulthood.

Age is also often looked to as a marker of youth, but that, too, is complicated in the revolutionary era.⁶ The words for child, youth, girl, and boy were fickle and often inconsistent in usage: “*enfant* and *jeune* were employed simultaneously to describe anyone from a newborn to an economically dependent, single person in their twenties,” with age mattering far less than “life stages” like marriage. These life stages varied depending on the sex of the child: the life stage that determined adulthood for a girl was usually marriage, and for a boy, it was finishing his education or obtaining property.⁷ As such, gender also unsurprisingly affected definitions of age and childhood experiences. The average age of marriage for a woman was twenty-four, and men usually achieved independent status at a similar age. However,

⁴ Julia M. Gossard, *Young Subjects: Children, State-Building and Social Reform in the Eighteenth Century French World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), p. 5.

⁵ Antonia Perna, “Bara and Viala, or Virtue Rewarded: The Memorialization of Two Child Martyrs of the French Revolution,” *French History* 35, no. 2 (2021): p. 192, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/craa071>.

⁶ It is difficult to define childhood even now: in the United States, the legal definition of adulthood may be strictly eighteen, but there remain social complexities. A teenager is often defined as a child, as much as that adolescent may not want to be lumped in with the little ones; in publishing, the genre of “children’s literature” often encompasses stories meant for the tiniest of tots to young adults. Even legally there remain loopholes: one may become an adult at eighteen, but there remain restrictions until the ages of 21 or 25 like buying drugs or alcohol or being deemed responsible enough to rent a car. In France, the age of consent is 15, but one cannot drink until eighteen and is not a full adult until 21. The age of so-called “childhood” remains mutable centuries beyond the Revolution.

⁷ Gossard, *Young Subjects*, pp. 14-15.

that was obviously not true for everyone, with some women getting married well into their thirties and men not establishing themselves until after twenty-five.⁸

There were efforts to characterize the *range* of youth, but they, too, were varied. The Académie Française defined childhood as lasting “until the age of ten or twelve.”⁹ One philosopher wrote that “leaving the *collège*, upon entry into the world, [is when] one’s ‘adolescent’ education begins,” signaling even different markers within childhood itself.¹⁰ In contrast, others defined minors as “young men under the age of twenty-five who did not yet have the administration of his own goods.”¹¹ The latter would be reflected in the Constitution of 1791’s minimum voting age requirement, which declared that only those twenty-five and older could fulfill this duty of an “active” citizen.¹² However, legal definitions often do not coincide with social connotations and understandings: when examining sources from this period, one will see the word *jeune* concurrently describing six-year-old revolutionary menaces and twenty-something-year-old law students at university. Also, as seen prevalently in discussions of young revolutionary martyrs, individuals in power, like those in the National Convention, would also twist these labels of “child” and “adult,” of “boy” and “man,” to suit their propagandist purposes, further complicating and eluding definition. For example, martyred child soldier Joseph Bara was initially referred to as a “young man”; however, as soon as Maximilien Robespierre saw an opportunity to vilify the royalist murderers and pantheonize this loyal revolutionary, Robespierre’s speeches, as well as later portraits and writings about the thirteen-year-old boy, increasingly stressed his “young age” and status as a “heroic child.”¹³ There was an understanding of at least two different phases existing within one’s life – childhood followed by adulthood, although perhaps also a period of adolescence in between – but the location of the dividing line remained elusive.

As the above discussion of education and adolescent development suggests, children’s lives were incredibly varied and were mainly shaped by class and economic factors, even after the Revolution attempted its sweeping equalization. In the years leading up to the Revolution, the contrast between the children of the Second Estate and the Third Estate was quite clear— this is evident in the written record, including within the general complaints of the Third Estate and, later, the revolutionary concentration on equality, but also within artistic depictions. At the same time, portraits of Marie Antoinette and her children feature silk taffeta gowns, coiffed hairstyles, meticulous detail, and promenades in the park.

⁸ Margaret Darrow, “Popular Concepts of Marital Choice in Eighteenth Century France,” *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 2 (1985), p. 265.

⁹ Perna, “Bara and Viala,” p. 199.

¹⁰ Adrian O’Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics: Education and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 37.

¹¹ Gossard, *Young Subjects*, p. 15.

¹² “The Constitution of 1791,” (*Conseil constitutionnel*, Paris: 1791).

¹³ Perna, “Bara and Viala,” p. 199.

Depictions of the mass youth often present vague sketches of youth in tattered clothing and with solemn expressions on their faces.¹⁴ Each group lived different lives with very different levels of privilege, evident in the clothes of the royal children and the rags of the poor. However, the influence of class and economics on childhood did not change following the events of 1789: although the Revolution attempted to make all citizens—and thus their families—equal, children’s development, lifestyle, and education remained dependent on external factors such as parental wealth and involvement in revolutionary (or counterrevolutionary) politics. After all, the Parisian child who lost his parents to the guillotine would come to live a very different life than a peasant child in the provinces, where the revolution’s arrival was delayed and not always as violent. Such economic influences also further determined the definition of childhood, as someone who could not provide for themselves retained minority status, while those with some wealth could be legally considered adults. As historian Julia Gossard writes, “if a young man failed to sufficiently provide for himself, he could have his childhood extended.... parents could send their offspring to juvenile detention centers for idleness or squandering their finances even after the child was 25.”¹⁵ Not only was childhood variable by our modern criteria of education and age, but a child’s minority status was dependent on their class and privileges.

Although the word “youth” encompasses various age groups and individuals, indulging in this variety allows a broader, more detailed view of revolutionary conditions. Children during this era admittedly lived very different lives, but accounting for this context allows multiple entryways into the diverse reactions of each kind of youth toward the Revolution. For example, we can examine the methods and responses of each group in comparison to each other: when addressing revolutionary changes, different youth groups would take advantage of the different institutions they found themselves in, whether that be within the family, in their social circles of friends, in schools, in universities, or in youths’ political clubs. This essay will work within the realms of this ambiguity and mutability by looking at the revolutionary reactions of children, adolescents, and young adults as encompassing the French “youth,” as is evasively described by the sources themselves.

History of Children’s Activism in Pre-Revolutionary France

¹⁴ Eugène Bataille, *Marie-Antoinette and Her Children in the Jardin anglais du Petit Trianon in 1785*. Artstor. 1867, Oil on canvas, 270 x 194 cm. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.15670277>; Anonymous French draftsman, *Peasant woman with two children*. Artstor. 18th Century, Drawing. National Galleries of Scotland. https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_29781731.

¹⁵ Julia M. Gossard, “Why Do We Doubt Capable Children: Constructing Childhood in the Revolutionary Era,” *The Junto*, last modified 17 April 2018, <https://earlyamericanists.com/2018/04/17/why-we-doubt-capable-children/>.

The action and reaction that occurred in the heat of the Revolution may seem unparalleled and drastic— as will be discussed later, youth became politically involved with the National Assembly and young children partook in revolutionary violence— but just as the French Revolution had roots in centuries past, children’s responses and movements were not new or unprecedented. Even though youth’s reactions to the French Revolution would be tailored to its specific conditions, these reactions existed in a long history of youth activism and response, building on precedents set in prior decades. Furthermore, although children of the 1790s had not directly witnessed these precedents, these influences trickled down through time, coming to shape the conscious and unconscious factors that molded the moment that revolutionary youth found themselves in.

For example, the preceding decades of the eighteenth century saw a growing emphasis on the idea of a child as a separate individual with their own capabilities. This is evident in the increasingly popular genre of children’s literature, which directly targeted a child audience. This genre featured children as protagonists in their own right, affirming “the child...as an autonomous being” by portraying their perspectives as worth publishing and thus worth reading.¹⁶ Children and their decisions had been increasingly valued before they became pivotal for securing a Republican future. This century witnessed an ongoing turn towards “regarding children as separate individuals deserving of affection and educational concern.” Such literature embodied and emboldened this narrative of autonomy and independent individuality.¹⁷ Importantly, this medium was targeted directly to children rather than their guardians, thus recognizing youth’s autonomy and reinforcing how children could think for themselves. Revolutionary children eventually adopted this mindset: it is reflected within their assertions that they were acting of their own volition and that they were of “political significan[ce].”¹⁸ This unconscious yet prevalent mindset of youth’s autonomy and liberty exhibits how society was shifting its conception of children, but its presence in the later messages of youth themselves demonstrates its influence on their revolutionary motivations— children were being told that they could think for themselves, and they did.

This burgeoning notion of children as autonomous, independent individuals was also evident in the responsible and authoritative role children increasingly took in their schools. In the century leading up to the French Revolution, to be a student was also to be a Catholic reformer and promoter of *ancien régime* values outside the classroom. Children were expected to use what they learned in school to better the “quality and knowledge of their parents, siblings, and their households.” Schoolmasters

¹⁶ Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 25.

¹⁷ Hunt, *The Family Romance*, p. 18.

¹⁸ “Protestation et arrêté des étudiants en droit de la ville d’Angers du 3 février” in Déplanche, “From Young People to Young Citizens,” p. 232.

even visited pupils' homes to check their progress.¹⁹ At the same time, they were also vessels of surveillance with the “responsibility of building nascent early modern French nationalism or at least, loyalty to the French state.” This surveillance usually took the role of correcting accents and dialects, reporting “misdeeds of their parents, siblings, and other household members to their teacher and schoolmaster,” and policing small illegalities that they may have witnessed. However, this put children in positions of power and responsibility.²⁰ When the Revolution came, children still fulfilled these duties but in a new context, as the “pledges of greatness and prosperity of republics;” they remained authorities within their realms and as agents of reform and policing, tattling on those who seemingly threatened the new foundations they were being told to protect.²¹ But by then, such duties and propagation had a long relationship with the youth in France: it was not a new concept, just an expanded one.

Not only were children being distinguished as autonomous individuals, but from the beginning of the eighteenth century, youth were also being presented with authority and, more importantly, used it according to their thoughts and whims. These developments—decades in the making— contradict any ideas that children were just copying adult revolutionaries. Instead, they were subject to top-down and bottom-up influences, like political propaganda in schools and messages in the books they read. More importantly, however, revolutionary children were building upon a long history that had increasingly preached their autonomy, the importance of their perspective, and their ability to wield authority. These were the ideas that, alongside revolutionary encouragements, would be the unconscious permission children used to act of their own accord.

The Effects of Revolutionary Dialogue and Change

As the French Revolution dawned, it did not come quietly or disproportionately: it was not a distant event, touching even the youngest within society. For immediate proof, one just has to look at popular baby names during the Revolution, some of which include Brutus, August the Tenth, Fructidor, and Civilization-Jemmagés-Republics.²² In these cases, the Revolution defined these young individuals' identities from birth, imbuing them with revolutionary connections and sentiments before they were even cognizant of what their names implied. From this perspective, the individual child was less important than parental (and then later the child's) devotion to the Revolution.

¹⁹ “Visite Générale” quoted in Gossard, *Young Subjects*, p. 78.

²⁰ Gossard, *Young Subjects*, pp. 87-88.

²¹ “...la fête de la Jeunesse étoit celle des vertus naissantes, parce que c'est par les vertus que s'établissent et se conservent les empires, et que les vertus de la jeunesse sont surtout le gage de la grandeur et de la prospérité des républiques.” in “Distribution des prix de moralité [3529],” (Newberry Library French Pamphlet Collection: Paris, 1798), p. 4.

²² Jean Robiquet, *Daily Life in the French Revolution*, (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 63-64.

This naming trend also reflects the broader “ideal” revolutionary child being crafted and increasingly promulgated through popular and political influences: this character was an active participant, contributing to and sustaining the Republic from a very young age. From the age of six, for example, schoolchildren were expected to know and identify with the new iconography and values introduced by the Revolution and, more importantly, carry them beyond the 1790s. In the National Convention’s framework regarding primary school, for example, the curriculum involved the expected reading and math education but also instruction in revolution-related material:

IV.4. In both sections of each school the pupils shall be taught: 1st, reading and writing, and the reading selections shall make them conscious of their rights and duties; 2nd, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, and the Constitution of the French Republic; 3rd, elementary instruction in republican morality; 4th, the elements of the French language, both spoken and written; 5th, the rules of simple calculation and land measurement; 6th, the elements of geography and of the history of free peoples; 7th, instruction concerning the major natural phenomena and the most common natural resources. They shall be taught the miscellany of heroic deeds and triumphal songs.²³

Not only were these pupils meant to be learned and literate individuals, but they were also being raised to be active citizens, carrying out France’s new patriotic Republican values and understanding that they were to preserve the legacy of the “free peoples.”

Youth were also mandated participants in public, inculcating ceremonies like the Fête de la Jeunesse that “encourage[d] not just obedience, but civic performance, public participation, and preparation for engaged citizenship.” Specifically, at the Fête de la Jeunesse, children gave speeches, reenacted revolutionary dramatic moments, competitively recited revolutionary mantras from the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, and sang patriotic songs.²⁴ Some of this can rightfully be considered indoctrination attempts, but that does not discount the fact that children participated in the revolutionary atmosphere alongside adults who had their own festivals. Children also often encountered—and were therefore shaped by—other public revolutionary markers, like protestations and violence, getting caught in the frustrated crowds or walking past the victims of the guillotine.²⁵ The Revolution was not just a political context but a social one, with its imagery and action shaping how children matured.

However, children were not only witnesses to change: because of this familiarity with revolutionary ideals and processes, children and youth also came to co-opt and participate in the rhetoric

²³ “Decree relative to Primary Schools,” (*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité: Exploring the French Revolution*, Paris: 1794).

²⁴ O’Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics*, p. 207.

²⁵ Robiquet, *Daily Life*, pp. 125-127, p. 170.

of the Revolution and its mobilizations, including its violence, when they desired to make their feelings heard. Combined with the encouraging republican rhetoric and legacy of childhood activism and participation, fervor and revolutionary conditions led to an emergence of youth involvement within the French Revolution from its very beginning.

Looking to language first, youth were indirectly and directly encouraged to be active citizens, and to be involved in shaping this republic. So they tried emphasizing their Republican concerns and intellectual autonomy along the way. Just as the adults expressed their complaints in *cahiers de doléances* and then in letters and manifestos to the Assembly, children wrote letters to the National Assembly, hoping to have a part in shaping their new Republic and to fulfill the patriotic duties they kept hearing about. In 1795, Parisian students wrote to the Committee of Public Instruction to “advocate for better instruction in ‘beaux-arts,’... [saying] subjects like reading and math were prioritized over artistic subjects like drawing, sculpture, and painting.”²⁶ Students wrote “proposals for reform, pleas for resources, justifications for existing practices, and condemnations of alternatives or abuses” alongside “teachers, administrators,... and local authorities.”²⁷ In yet another case, *lycée* “correspondents...complained that they were still using works from the Ancien Régime,... suggested establishing a company of learned men to draft suitable texts, and submitted their own works for consideration.”²⁸ When youth partook in the established tradition of petitioning, they were often interested in the realm of education with which they were all too familiar. They asserted themselves as authorities and worthy contributors by suggesting their ideas be considered alongside those of legislators and adults. This had precedence in past youth activism and mentalities, but prominent revolutionary narratives also seep into these words of child activists: especially in the latter example, one can see their concern with the correct integration of Republican values in the curriculum that would shape their growth into the aspirational active citizen.

However, it must be accentuated that these youths were not necessarily mimicking surrounding and preceding adults: many youth movements coexisted with and even predated significant adult reactions. The young people of Brittany and Anjou, for example, began to mobilize in late December 1788, rallying around the Third Estate prior to the meeting of the Estates-General, and then printed pamphlets in 1789 that publicized their thoughts on developing matters, including their perceived degrading subservience to the other two estates and their desire for political representation.²⁹ Even broadly speaking, “immediately after the fall of the Bastille, young men and women, among them

²⁶ Gossard, *Young Subjects*, p. 202.

²⁷ O’Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics*, p. 161.

²⁸ O’Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics*, p. 209 [taken from multiple letters including “Letter to the National Convention from students at the Collège de Condrieu in the Rhône, 1793”].

²⁹ Déplanche, “From Young People to Young Citizens,” p. 228.

children, formed political associations and military bodies, gathered in assemblies, and sent addresses and delegations to Paris.”³⁰ The movements of youth did not just follow those of famous adult revolutionaries, but rather, these youths were among the fray contributing and reacting to revolutionary change.

Not only did youth mobilize to lobby and petition for change like those in the provinces of Brittany and Anjou, but some youth groups also used more brutal, violent means to profess their opinions. At least one pamphlet, published in 1789, spoke about the dangers of “a small troupe [made up of those] who were barely three years old” that fought violently with other children on Parisian streets, resulting in the loss of some young eyes and hands.³¹ While this source is likely exaggerated given its heavily emotional, moralizing message to mothers to protect their future “petits Césars,” this mention of youth violence was one moment that existed alongside other revolutionary brutality, with youth’s physicality coming out on the streets, in their institutions, and on the battlefield. When the controversy around the Civil Constitution sparked conflict across France in 1791, students at the University of Poitiers threw the school into “violent disarray” because of the juror and non-juror debate that had taken hold of their teaching faculty; students ended up “jeer[ing] the political authorities as they installed their preferred instructors” with the backing of national guardsmen.³² From child gangs to passionate university students, these youth resorted to violence to defend their beliefs and what *they* thought would be best for the new France. In doing so, we see that youth were not necessarily always passive reformers — even the very young participated in the French Revolution’s institution of violence.

Also noteworthy are the youth that participated in pro-revolutionary battles against monarchists, counterrevolutionaries, and foreign forces, fighting as “a soldier and a citizen; in this dual quality, [they are] permitted no squeamish thoughts,” thus forgoing their individuality for the preservation of a republic they were being told was worth protecting.³³ Although exact numbers of how many were present are difficult to acquire since only able-bodied men aged eighteen to twenty-five were technically drafted, children aged twelve and up were present on battlefields, sometimes dying while fighting for France and the Revolution. For example, the royalist Baron de Sainte-Croix reported that when the National Guard captured him, he “always had next to me a child [*un enfant*] of fourteen to fifteen years, born in MaLucène with a pistol pointed at my chest.”³⁴ From this source, we can see how

³⁰ Déplanche, “From Young People to Young Citizens,” p. 226.

³¹ Anonymous, “Danger des patrouilles exercées par les enfants: avis aux pères & mères,” (Paris: Chez Cressonnier, 1789), pp. 2, 7.

³² O’Connor, p. 182.

³³ Robiquet, p. 170.

³⁴ “J’avois toujours à côté de moi un enfant de 14 à 15 ans, natif de MaLucène, avec un pistolet armé sur ma poitrine.” Guillaume-Emmanuel-Joseph Guilhem de Clermont-Lodève, baron de Sainte-Croix, “Déclaration de Monsieur de Ste. Croix, officier au régiment de Beauvoisis, concernant sa détention,

youth were commonplace characters within revolutionary armies, even taking higher positions such as guarding important prisoners of war. Some gave more to the revolutionary cause: numerous children were recorded as revolutionary martyrs, dying in the name of the republic. The cry of “Vive la République!” was said to be the last words of one such child-revolutionary, François Joseph Bara. He was born in 1779 and thus grew up in the upheaval leading to the Revolution. His story is complicated in its veracity, but it is true that he defied army rules to become a drummer boy at twelve in Vendée, dying at counterrevolutionaries’ hands in 1793. Bara is arguably the most famous of French child martyrs, largely due to Robespierre’s fascination with elevating him and Jacques-Louis David’s ethereal painting of the child. However, Bara was one of many who died for the revolutionary cause. There were also fifteen-year-old Joseph Viala, a boy named Mosnier, and eleven-year-old Pierre Bayle³⁵— all fought on the Revolution’s side, finding its values and messages worth dying for.

The Revolution’s broad goal was to overthrow tyranny, but in doing so, it also sought to create a bright future. By looking at their words and actions, youth were willing, enthusiastic participants in shaping and creating this— *their*— future. This participation took many shapes, from petitioning and proposing patriotic violence. All of this demonstrates how youth came to see themselves as critical to the processes changing France— they were not outsiders looking in. Youth were involved in the broader conversation and part of those processes shaping history.

External Reactions

By writing letters, suggesting political contributions, and physically “defending” the new republic, these youth acted according to the duties and values preached to them by higher powers. However, despite their efforts, adult revolutionaries, authorities, and legislators did not always reciprocate these actions. Some efforts were successful: the aforementioned Poitiers students were backed by national army men, and the youth of Brittany and Anjou became negotiators with the National Constituent Assembly.³⁶ However, most of the youth’s efforts to fulfill their civic duty were met with mixed or no response from those who could install their proposed changes. The Committee of Public Instruction read the letter from Parisian students advocating for beaux-arts “but appears to not have [been] followed up in any meaningful way;” instead, the Committee imposed a curriculum “upon children [that had] little-to-no input from students.”³⁷ Students in Paris “took advantage of the institutional and discursive space opened up by the events of 1789” by petitioning for an updated curriculum. However, despite the

au quartier général des brigands sorties d’Avignon,” (Newberry Library French Pamphlet Collection: France, 1791), p. 4.

³⁵ Perna, p. 197, 215.

³⁶ O’Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics*, p. 128; Déplanche, “From Young People to Young Citizens,” p. 233.

³⁷ Gossard, *Young Subjects*, pp. 202-03.

reasonableness of such a request, the petition was not acted upon.³⁸ Although violence became a central tenet of the Revolution, it was heavily condemned when present among “innocent” children. For example, the earlier pamphlet that described gangs consisting of toddlers and children was written in a condemning, disgusted tone that judged the children and particularly the parents that allowed the hooligans to run about and get themselves hurt, maimed, and killed.³⁹ Even the success of the students of Brittany and Anjou was complicated: it was more “renegotiation” between youth leadership and political authorities and not recognition of worth or equal civic standing.⁴⁰

It might be too forward to call this hypocrisy, but it contradicts the narrative being spread by higher revolutionary authorities. Even though “the yearly Youth Festival, male morality prizes, or debates surrounding female education [all] expressed... anxieties over the longevity of the republic,”⁴¹ and political and educational authorities went to great lengths to mold the ideal, politically involved revolutionary child, youth were often met with indifference and even condemnation for partaking in activities that were encouraged as well as practiced by revolutionary authorities themselves. Children were the solution to their problem of longevity, but at the same time, youth posed a problem in the way they took matters into their own hands; the youth’s actions demonstrate a hope of molding the new system and its future according to their ideas and interests— interests that did not always align with those of the individuals in power.

Conclusion

When molding a revolutionary child, control of influences is critical. Children are undoubtedly opinionated from a very young age and will act upon their thoughts in frameworks provided by the world surrounding them. Revolutionary authorities sought to control how children learned and grew. Studying such influences on children is a popular subject in French Revolution studies — whether the effects of education or revolutionary propaganda or catechisms — but rarely are children mentioned as the protagonists within these faculties, and not just as the monolithic pool of experimental subjects. Instead, youth have the potential to be useful reflections of the difficulties experienced and the understandings required to grow up in such a tumultuous, ever-changing society as that of France in the late eighteenth century.

This essay is a very brief study of youth participation during the French Revolution. It could be expanded with deeper research looking at archives and media produced by children themselves, like artwork, doodles, and even graffiti. Going further, a continuation of this study may also include how

³⁸ O’Connor, *In Pursuit of Politics*, p. 165.

³⁹ “Danger des patrouilles exercées par les enfants: avis aux peres & meres,” p. 4.

⁴⁰ Déplanche, “From Young People to Young Citizens,” p. 233

⁴¹ Gossard, *Young Subjects*, p. 207.

this rhetoric of their youth may have shaped Napoleonic adults and policy-makers. Nevertheless, even from such a precursory survey, it is evident that children saw a place for themselves within the changes of the Revolution. After all, the Revolution took place roughly over ten years, during which many new minds were born and grew into citizens in a radically different world — one in which they were being encouraged to participate and would do in a multitude of ways, including through words and actions that certainly warrant our attention.