

INTRODUCTION

i

When Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis's¹ 1782 *Adèle et Théodore ou lettres sur l'éducation* was translated into English and published as *Adelaide and Theodore, or Letters on Education* in 1783, it was heralded by the *English Review* as 'by much the best system of education ever published in France'.² High praise indeed for a work which appeared just twenty years after Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education*.³ *Adelaide and Theodore* clearly captured the imaginations of both British readers and publishers in the 1780s and 1790s: a new edition of the translation was published in 1784, and this was reprinted in 1788 and 1796. It could even be argued that the work was a late eighteenth-century pan-European phenomenon, since Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Polish and Russian translations appeared at various points throughout this period.⁴

Part of the attraction of the publication was due to the celebrity of the author herself. Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de Saint-Aubin was born at Champcercy near Autun in Burgundy in 1746, the oldest child of Pierre-César Ducrest and Marie-Françoise-Félicité Mauget de Mézières.⁵ The chateau of St. Aubin, Genlis tells

1 The problem of names plagues those who work on Genlis. She seems to have been christened Caroline-Stéphanie-Félicité Ducrest de St Aubin, but the Caroline was only rarely used. It was standard for aristocratic women to use the third first name (Germaine de Staël was actually Anne-Louise-Germaine) and most biographers refer to her as Félicité. In French scholarship, she is always Madame de Genlis. I have chosen to refer to her simply as Genlis, omitting the 'de', as is always the case with canonical male French Enlightenment figures such as Montesquieu (Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu) and Buffon (George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon).

2 *English Review*, 2 (August 1783), pp. 106–9.

3 First published in French in 1762, and translated almost immediately into English by William Kendrick in 1763, and by William Nugent in 1765, Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education* has been and continues to be hugely influential in debates on education.

4 For details of these translations, see Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval's bibliography *Madame de Genlis* (Paris, Rome: Memini, 1996).

5 These brief biographical details have been compiled from Genlis's own *Mémoires* (1825) of which an English translation appeared in the same year, and several published biographies. The most recent biography, in French, is by Gabriel de Broglie, *Madame de Genlis* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 2001). Two English biographies are also available. The first is a translation of Jean Harmand's 1912 *Madame de Genlis, sa vie intime et politique* (1912), which appeared as *A Keeper*

the readers of her 1825 *Memoirs* 'resembled those which Mrs. Radcliffe has since described. It was ancient and ruinous, and had old towers, and immense courtyards'.⁶ In this state of genteel poverty, Genlis's early education was largely neglected: she was cared for by the staff in her parents' house and taught a little catechism. Genlis's parents' involvement in her education seems to have been minimal as she recounts in her *Memoirs*:

My father had the utmost affection for me; but he did not interfere with my education in any point but one: he wished to make me a woman of firm mind, and I was born with numberless little antipathies: I had a horror of all insects, particularly of spiders and frogs; I was also afraid of mice, and he made me feed and bring up one.⁷

The parental disinterest was only marginally rectified when the young Félicité turned seven. The Ducrests decided she should have a governess, and went on to appoint a Breton girl, Mademoiselle de Mars, who had little formal education herself apart from some knowledge of the harpsichord. The two girls were left to their own devices in devising their educational programme, and had access to the family library, where they read many romances and novels. Although the above quoted passage is reminiscent of the account the Baron d'Almane gives of his daughter Adelaide crying over a pet frog (see p. 47), in all other respects, Genlis's lack of formal education is striking for one who was to write a work containing not only 'Letters on Education,' but 'All the principles relative to three different Plans of Education; to that of Princes, and to those of young persons of both Sexes.'

A financial disaster in Genlis's early teenage years meant that the family could no longer pay Mademoiselle de Mars's wages. Genlis and her mother travelled to Paris, where they depended on the benevolence of various family acquaintances to establish themselves, and to continue Genlis's training on the harp, an instrument for which she showed considerable aptitude. In 1763, Genlis's fortunes were reversed when she married Count Charles-Alexis de Genlis (later the Marquis of Sillery). The marriage was seen as a disappointing one by Charles-Alexis de Genlis's family, and Genlis herself only managed to bring them round to the idea of a daughter-in-law from impoverished circumstances in the months and years following the union.

The most important rise in fortune and influence came in 1772 owing to the position of Genlis's aunt, Madame de Montesson (1738–1806), who had long been the mistress of the Duke of Orléans, Louis-Philippe (1725–85), and indeed was to marry him in 1773. This connection with the Orléans family

of Royal Secrets, the Private and Political Life of Madame de Genlis (London: Nash, 1913). The second is Violet Wyndham's *Madame de Genlis: A Biography* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1958).

⁶ See *Memoirs of the Countess de Genlis, Illustrative of the History of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Written by Herself*, 8 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1825), vol. 1, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 23.

gave Genlis the position of lady-in-waiting to Orléans's daughter-in-law, Louise Marie Adélaïde de Bourbon-Penthièvre, Duchess of Chartres (1753–1821) and the richest heiress of her day. Shortly after Genlis's arrival at the Palais-Royal, the central Paris seat of the Orléans family, she became the mistress of Louis-Philippe-Joseph Duke of Chartres (1749–93), Orléans's son. This liaison was the subject of much speculation and gossip. After five years in the Chartres household in 1777, Genlis was made governess to the family's newborn twin daughters, and moved to an estate at Belle Chasse in the outskirts of Paris. She was the first woman to be appointed as 'gouverneur' to Royal children when on 6 January 1782 the care of the sons, the Duke of Valois (future head of the Orléans household, King Louis-Philippe, king of the French, in the July Monarchy of 1830–48), the Duke of Montpensier and the Count Beaujolais, was also entrusted to her. Genlis gave a matter-of-fact account of the appointment in her *Memoirs*:

One evening the Duke of Chartres came, as he generally did to Belle Chasse between eight and nine o'clock, finding me alone, he told me that there was no time to lose in procuring a tutor for his son, for that otherwise his children would have the manners of *shopmen* [...] He consulted me on the selection of one: I proposed M. de Schomburg, whom he refused to accept, alleging, that he would render the children pedantic. I then named the Chevalier de Durfort, who he said would give them a tone of bombast. I next spoke of M. de Thiers, but the Duke of Chartres objected to him as being too careless; and said that he would pay no attention at all to the children. I then began to laugh, and said, 'Well then, what do you think of me?' 'Why not,' replied he seriously.⁸

Genlis, then, was an important member of one of the most notorious French households in the 1770s and 1780s.⁹ After 1789, Chartres himself (he became Duke of Orléans on his father's death in 1785, and was known as Philippe Égalité during the revolutionary years) voted for the execution of Louis XVI, and was guillotined in 1793. For reasons of self-preservation in the 1790s, Genlis was to deny that she had had any relationship with Chartres other than as governor to his children, a concealment she maintained in her *Memoirs*.¹⁰

It was against the background of her controversial appointment as 'gouverneur' to the Orléans heirs that Genlis's educational treatise *Adelaide and Theodore* was published. Contemporary French commentators did not hesitate

8 Ibid, vol. 3, pp. 112–13.

9 The Palais-Royal was the centre of Jacobin activity and political pamphleteering in the years leading up to the Revolution. See Chantal Thomas, *La Reine scélérate: Marie-Antoinette dans les pamphlets* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989) and Robert Darnton, *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature in France, 1769–1789* (London: W. W. Norton, 1995).

10 The *Memoirs* are a valuable source of information about the composition and publication of Genlis's works, but are of less value concerning her involvement in events leading up to the Revolution and her years in exile, when, for obvious reasons, she wanted to deny close involvement in the Orléaniste faction's affairs.

to draw attention to her relationship with Chartres in an abusive and mocking campaign which also attacked Genlis's perceived 'gender-bending', noting her insistence on the male form of the title, 'gouverneur', rather than 'gouvernante'. One verse ended with the lines 'Je suis monsieur dans le lycée / Et madame dans le boudoir.'¹¹ As Ellen Moers pointed out, 'the official change in title from *la Gouvernante* to *le Gouverneur* [...] is a change as momentous in French as it is in English, for *Governess* is in the nursery, and *Governor* rules the world.'¹² Through the appointment and through the publication of her 'treaty' in 1782, Genlis positioned herself as the authority on the education of princes and children of both sexes. It was a bold statement for a thirty-six-year-old woman to make.

ii

The schema of *Adelaide and Theodore* is relatively straightforward. The Baron and Baroness d'Almane have retreated to an estate in the south of France, and the Baroness is educating Adelaide and Theodore herself, with the assistance of various tutors, away from the damaging influence of the city. She focuses on the eighteenth-century preoccupation that education should move away from rote-learning from books, and that children should learn by absorbing material from their everyday lives. She places a great importance on the study of modern languages, as opposed to Latin and Greek, and these are learnt in conversation with the gardener, the English governess Miss Bridget and the Italian art tutor Dainville, as well as various other foreign employees. History lessons are taught by looking at a series of magic lantern images, and by examining the décor of their apartments. The regime both children follow is not fundamentally different, and their gender does not affect their education. Both Adelaide and Theodore have a similar daily routine which is carefully thought out, and involves much washing in cold water, and bracing walks. They sleep on hard beds, wear no restrictive clothing, eat plenty of fruit and vegetables but few sweetmeats and follow a programme of gymnastics. They are encouraged to act charitably towards those who are less well-off. The emphasis, as is appropriate for the time, is on instruction alongside delight. Indeed, when another character gives an account of a stay at the Almane estate in Letter XIII of Volume II, she claims 'I am here as much instructed as entertained' (p. 214). Later, the programme of reading for the two children is carefully supervised, and Adelaide's 'Course of Reading' is annexed to

11 An approximate translation would be 'I am Mr in the high-school / and Mrs in the bedroom'. Quoted in Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la République des Lettres en France, depuis MDCCCLXII jusqu'à nos jours, ou journal d'un observateur, contenant les analyses des Pièces de Théâtre qui ont paru dans cet intervalle &c.* (Paris: 1782), vol. 20, p. 53, entry dated 15 February 1782.

12 Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: W. H. Allen, 1977), p. 214.

the main text (pp. 473–7). It is an ambitious programme that takes in the French classics, naturally, but also many works of European literature and philosophy.

All the experiments in education are related back to friends in Paris in letters from both the Baron and the Baroness. The Baroness's main correspondents are the Viscountess de Limours, a mother of two children, Flora and Constantia, and Madame d'Ostalis, a younger woman who the Baroness had 'adopted' in the early years of her marriage, when she was still childless herself. Madame d'Ostalis has been brought up to be a perfect society lady; the Viscountess is a flawed character who is often in need of the Baroness's guidance and advice. The Baron corresponds with the Viscount de Limours, and the Count de Roseville, the Viscountess de Limours's brother, who is the preceptor of 'a Prince, born to be a sovereign' (p. 61).

The novel is primarily a work of parallel educations, in which every character to be educated has their counterpart, and we watch the characters develop over a period of around twelve years. Despite the title suggesting an equal focus on the male and female child, it is Adelaide's story. She is the child whose education is described in great detail, and she is the child to whom those with flawed educations are compared. She has an older example of a solid education in Madame d'Ostalis, her mother's first 'experiment', and indeed she herself is encouraged to take on the duty of educating a young Italian orphan, Hermine, as a way of learning skills that will later serve her in the education of her own children. 'Oh, the charming little creature! I will be her Governess!' Adelaide exclaims (p. 321) but as Olwen Hufton points out, 'Madame de Genlis does not permit the borrowed child to pass judgment on the success or failure of the care given – she is presumably one of the lower orders.'¹³ No matter how sceptical a modern reader may be of the benefits of letting children practise educating on other children, according to the novel, the experiment is an astonishing success. The picture of Adelaide's perfections is given to her future husband in the following terms:

Mademoiselle Almane was the handsomest person living; the most amiable, the most natural; [...] she possessed all the candour and simplicity of infancy, and all the graces of youth; [...] she sings in Italian, and plays on the harp like an Angel; that she draws in a superior style; [...] she educates a little orphan; [...] she is the best as well as the most charming of mothers. (p. 360)

Here, the emphasis is on female accomplishments, and the attractions of Adelaide as a future wife. But it is Flora, the largely neglected daughter of the Viscountess de Limours and counterpart both to Madame d'Ostalis and Adelaide herself, who recognizes that the benefits of the Almane method of education run deeper

13 See Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe: Volume One, 1500–1800* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 454.

than singing and dancing. Complaining of her mother and the Baroness's constant praise of Madame d'Ostalis, the girl who becomes Madame de Valcy says:

If they look on her as so perfect a pattern, why did they not educate me as they did her? We are both 'just as they made us.' She is very prudent, very reasonable; I am very giddy, very trifling; she knows how to employ herself, to paint, and play on the harp; I know how to dance. We have profited alike, each of us, of the examples, attentions, and education we have received. (p. 245)

It is the responsibility, then, of individual families to educate their daughters. A well-educated daughter will, like Adelaide, live a happy and contented life as a devoted wife and mother, a woman who is also the intellectual companion of her husband. A badly educated daughter can only come to ruin and despair, as the Baroness tells the Madame d'Ostalis with perhaps too much relish:

Madame de Valcy has consumed all her fortune, for her debts far exceed the portion she received. Her husband went away last night; it is said she means to travel for two or three years. Madame de Valcy remains here without assistance, without advice, without resource, abandoned by all her friends, and even by Mons. de Remicourt [her lover]. She is very ill and keeps her bed; at this moment the Viscountess sees only her misfortunes; she forgets the causes of them. (p. 448)

The Viscountess herself is punished for the lack of attention that she has given her eldest daughter. Her younger daughter, Constantia, was educated with the Baroness's guidance, and she is rewarded by becoming Theodore's wife.

When the Baroness herself presents both her children with a book on their wedding day, entitled 'Letters on Education,' she tells them that 'the work reveals all the secrets of education' (p. 472), and moreover that if they find it successful in the education of their own children 'my plan is a good one; my system is not chimerical; and my work is no romance.'¹⁴ (p. 472) The question of whether *Adelaide and Theodore* is a novel or treatise on education is not an idle one, since it is one with which the characters themselves engage. It is certainly a work that reacts and responds to previously published works on education. From Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning* (1693) to Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), to Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education* (1762), Genlis has read all the major (and many of the minor) writers on education, and engages with their writing both in the letters themselves, and in extensive authorial footnotes. From the opening pages, opposition to Rousseau is set up, as in Letter V, from the Baroness d'Almane to the Viscountess de Limours:

J. J. Rousseau say, 'Most people chuse Governors for their children who have been accustomed to that employment. But this is too much to expect; the same man can never compleat more than the education of one.' Experience has proved to me that

14 The French word is 'roman', which would be more likely to be translated as 'novel' today, although both romance and novel were common translations in the eighteenth century.

Rousseau opposes an opinion well founded: the deepest study of the human heart, with every talent united, which is so essentially necessary in a Tutor, will avail nothing, without that experience which alone can be acquired by long practice. (p. 7)

By suggesting that Rousseau knew nothing of the practicalities of educating children, the Baroness – a mother who has chosen to keep her children with her and indeed to devote her life to their education – gives herself authority to speak on this most important of topics, setting out in Letter XI of Volume I, her ‘principles of education’ (p. 25). With regard to strengthening children, and encouraging good health, she tells us that Rousseau ‘exactly follows the system of Mr. Locke; for though he doesn’t quote him, he copies him literally’ (p. 29) – a dependence on other educationalists also stressed, for example, by the Count de Roseville in Letter XXIV of volume I, who writes that ‘Rousseau is indebted to Seneca, to Montaigne, to Locke, and to Monsieur de Fénelon for every thing that is truly useful in his book’ (p. 61). The Baroness similarly challenges another of Rousseau’s statements – that women should breastfeed their children – in Letter XXI, addressed to her adopted daughter Madame d’Ostalis, who admires his views on the issue. The ‘interested and mercenary’ (p. 50) wet nurses that Rousseau scorns, are, the Baroness shows, acting out of desire to benefit their own children: ‘far from being a “bad mother”, the wet nurse ‘has on the contrary shewed herself to be possessed of real tenderness’ (p. 50). The letter concludes that the situation is more complex than Rousseau depicts it when he claims that women who do not breastfeed their children are selfish and unnatural: ‘reflect on the numerous obligations you bring on yourself by determining to suckle your child; and remember, it is better not to impose on yourself such a duty, than to fulfil it imperfectly’ (p. 51). While modern debates on this issue tend to side with Rousseau on the benefits for both the mother and child, Genlis’s argument for the rational individual woman’s right to choose when presented with the evidence must appeal to the feminist reader.

Genlis suffered for her attacks on Rousseau as she admitted in later works, including one written in 1811 in which she addresses her critics:

After the publication of *Adelaide and Theodore*, it was said [...] that I had disproportional pride. To speak on education after Jean-Jacques, to say that his methods were not practical (whilst acknowledging his talents fully) what presumption!¹⁵

It was, however, a matter of fact that Genlis had experience in educating children where Rousseau did not. As a mother of three children herself, the governor of

15 My translation. The original French reads ‘Après la publication d’*Adèle et Théodore*, on dit alors, [...] que j’avois un orgueil démesuré. Parler sur l’éducation après Jean-Jacques, dire que les systèmes de J. J. sont impracticables (en rendant justice entière à ses éminents talens), quelle présomption!’ See *Observations critiques pour servir à l’histoire de la littérature française du XIXième siècle ou réponse de Mme de Genlis à Messieurs M. T. et N. L. etc sur les critiques de son dernier ouvrage intitulé: de l’influence des femmes* (Paris: Maradan, 1811), p. 94.

the Orléans children, and the adoptive mother of two English girls, Pamela and Hermine, adopted to speak English to her young pupils,¹⁶ Genlis could claim first-hand experience of educating, just as Maria Edgeworth was to do in her *Practical Education* (1798).¹⁷ Her account of the Belle Chasse estate in volume 3 of her memoirs is so close to the Languedoc estate in Letter IX of *Adelaide and Theodore* as to be almost indistinguishable:

I tried to render everything useful to my plan of education, even to the furniture of Belle Chasse. The tapestry of the princesses' room was painted in oil, and on a blue ground were represented in rough sketches, from medals, busts of the seven kings of Rome and the emperors and empresses down to Constantine the Great. Over the doors were painted particular scenes from the same history, and over the medallions were the dates and the names of the personages represented. Two large fire-screens represented the kings of France; the hand-screens, &c. and the tops of the dining-room doors were all covered with mythological pictures. The staircase was entirely covered with maps, which could be taken down for the lessons; the maps of the south were at the foot of the stair, and those of the north at the top. I have detailed all these things in *Adèle et Théodore*.¹⁸

Naturally, French contemporaries believed that the characters represented were friends and acquaintances of Genlis's, and as Genlis wrote in her *Memoirs*, there were many who thought they could furnish a key to the work. Genlis defended herself: 'I have painted pictures, and not portraits; I have collected several features to be found in nature, but I always interdicted myself all personality that could offend; and when I have recalled the remembrance of persons either ridiculous or vicious, I have so disguised the likeness as to conceal the person, or in general I have given the likeness a different sex from the original'.¹⁹

Genlis left herself somewhat open to these accusations when she insisted that the inset stories such as the Gothic Duchess of C*** (pp. 267–96) were true, that she had met the Lagarayes personally (p. 164 and note 138 to Volume I, p. 497) and that she knew a mother exactly like the Baroness d'Almane, that is to say,

16 The story of the adoption of Pamela and Hermine into the Orléans household is a complex one. Contemporary observers, in Britain in particular, believed Pamela to be the illegitimate child of Genlis and Chartres, sent to England to avoid scandal, and then brought back under cover as an 'educational tool'. Today, generally speaking, French scholars believe that Pamela was, as Genlis always argued, Nancy Sims, born in Newfoundland, whereas British scholars believe that she was an illegitimate child. Pamela became the celebrated Pamela Fitzgerald, wife of United Irishman Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763–98). For different views of her parentage, see *La Belle Pamela (Lady Edward Fitzgerald)* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1924), a biography of Pamela by her great-granddaughter Lucy Ellis and Joseph Turquan, and Jacques Bertaud's unpublished thesis, 'Madame de Genlis et l'Angleterre: La femme et l'œuvre de 1779 à 1792' (University of Paris III: Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1974).

17 See *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, 12 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), vol. 11, ed. Susan Manly.

18 See *Memoirs of the Countess de Genlis*, vol. 3, pp. 76–9.

19 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 147.

herself (p. 394 and note 45 to Volume III, p. 510). Even the tragic tale of Cécile, the beautiful nun had its roots in a true story. Cécile 'was Madame de Rochefort, daughter of the Marquis of St. Pouen, and sister of Madame de Balicour. Her father has forced her to take the vows, at the age of seventeen.'²⁰ The blending of fact with fiction is characteristic of Genlis's later works, including her *Memoirs*, and was a technique that she used to great effect in her historical romances when she was to frustrate British critics with hybrid compositions that blended 'truth with fiction in such a manner as to confound our knowledge of past events.'²¹

In many ways, *Adelaide and Theodore* can be seen as Genlis's doctoral dissertation, a thesis from which she was to draw articles and expand comments for future publications over the remaining fifty years of her writing career in further works on religion, education and what could be called anti-*philosophe* writings and fiction.

iii

In France, the reception of *Adèle et Théodore* was inextricably linked to Genlis's public position, but the work was still extremely popular: the first edition sold out before any announcements had appeared in the press, and a total of twenty-nine editions appeared between 1782 and 1810. Malcolm Cook has compared the French re-editions of Genlis's novel with the late eighteenth-century classic of the epistolary genre, Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, also published in 1782, in this case anonymously.²² *Adèle et Théodore* far outsold Laclos's work in the 1780s and 1790s, and even in 1810 the editions of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* numbered only one more, thirty. As portraits of decaying and corrupt Ancien-Régime high society, the two novels are remarkably similar, although, whereas Genlis suggests that the 'solution' to the problem is individualism, religion and education, Laclos's novel offers no 'solutions' as such – simply punishing the evil Merteuil and Valmont, in much the same way as Monsieur and Madame de Valcy are punished, and sacrificing the young Cécile de Volanges and the Présidente de Tourvel in much the same way as Cecilia is sacrificed in *Adelaide and Theodore*. Of course if Genlis had shocked her French contemporaries by daring to write on female education, they would naturally been more shocked had she been the author of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. She gives an account of the confusion that arose when one friend mixed up the two novels, sending *Adèle et Théodore* without a note to a friend in Italy, swiftly followed by *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, with a letter saying the author was Genlis:

20 Ibid., vol. 3, p. 140.

21 See the review of Genlis's *The Duke de Lauzun*, in *Continuation of the History of the Duchess de la Vallière* (1808) in the *Critical Review*, appendix to third series (1808), pp. 449–57.

22 See Malcolm Cook, 'Adèle et Théodore ou les liaisons dangereuses', *Studies on Voltaire & the Eighteenth Century*, 284 (1991), 371–83.

M. d'Hericourt thought for about a fortnight that I was the author of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. He thereupon wrote to M. de Rulhières to express how great was his surprise, to find that a woman who was still young, and the instructress of the princes of the blood, had the inconceivable effrontery to publish such a work. M. de Rulhières showed me this letter, which affected me deeply; I could not support the thought that a person of understanding should have entertained such an opinion of me, and I was not restored to a state of self-satisfaction until M. de Rulhières brought me a second letter from M. d'Hericourt, which proved that he was undeceived, and that he had read *Adèle et Théodore*.²³

The reception of *Adelaide and Theodore* in the British periodicals and reviews was less connected to the scandalous reputation Genlis was gaining in her native country, and was almost uniformly enthusiastic, as the quotation from the *English Review* at the beginning of this introduction made clear. There was much in the novel for British reviewers to admire: the citing of Richardson's works as the only novels 'which have any morality in them' (p. 114), the inclusion of many British works in Adelaide's course of reading and the placing of Locke above Rousseau. There were, however, some reservations. In the *European Magazine*, although the reviewer admired the novel, finding the characters 'various and well-supported', the sentiments 'virtuous' and the strategies adopted 'ingenious', the work on the whole, he judged, 'suits France rather than England'.²⁴ The *Critical Review* went further, seeing a clear danger from French morals:

to hear of a married woman's lover, without it being followed with marks of infamy and disgust, might blunt that acute sensibility, which makes every approach to vice, and every hint of impropriety, so painful to a female of delicacy and virtue.²⁵

Concerns about depictions of French morals and manners did not prevent the novel from being widely serialized in the British Magazines, or represented in the form of the interpolated stories, such as that of Cecilia, the beautiful nun (pp. 52–9), the Dutchess of C*** (pp. 267–96) and St André (pp. 174–86). As Robert Mayo's research has demonstrated, Genlis was one of the most widely translated French authors in British magazines, second only to Marmontel.²⁶ *Adèle et Théodore* was the most popular single work in the magazines, with two rival translations. The first was published in the *Universal*, which serialized the novel rapidly after the French publication, between June 1782 and December

23 See *Memoirs of the Countess of Genlis*, vol. 3, pp. 145–7.

24 *European Magazine*, 4 (August 1783), pp. 117–18.

25 *Critical Review*, 56 (1783), pp. 300–3. There are several occasions when there is a reference to a married woman's lover in the novel. On the whole, however, Genlis prizes virtue and condemns licentiousness, as the comparison between Madame de Valcy and Adelaide, quoted above, makes clear.

26 See Robert Mayo, *The English Novel in the Magazines 1740–1815* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962), in particular his catalogue of serialized fiction, entries 9 and 12, which give full bibliographic references to the translations in the *Universal* and *Lady's Magazines*.

1786. This serialization, running to twenty-seven parts, was the longest novel this magazine offered. The second was published some years later, in the *Lady's Magazine*. It ran between May 1785 and April 1789, in forty-nine instalments. British women readers were clearly considered able to judge for themselves whether the work was worthy of their attention. Notable women writers of the 1780s and 1790s such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Macaulay, Hannah More, Clara Reeve, Anna Seward and Frances Burney all read and responded to Genlis. Nor did later Romantics neglect her: Mary Shelley and Susan Ferrier's journals both give accounts of reading *Adelaide and Theodore*.²⁷ When Jane Austen published *Emma* in 1814, she included a telling reference to the work which she clearly expected her readers to be familiar with. Speaking of the birth of a daughter to her former governess, Emma rejoices that Mrs Weston has already had experience of educating:

'She has had the advantage, you know, of practising on me,' she continued – 'like La Baronne d'Almane on La Comtesse d'Ostalis, in Madame de Genlis's *Adelaide and Theodore*, and we shall now see her own little Adelaide educated on a more perfect plan.'²⁸

Austen's comments are clearly light-hearted: Emma herself is hardly the model of a good female education that Madame d'Ostalis, at only fifteen, represented: 'the most distinguished young person of her age, for her talents, knowledge, and disposition' (p. 7). Nor does Austen suggest that such a character is desirable in a novel, or in life: 'pictures of perfection', she famously wrote in a letter from Chawton 'make me sick and wicked'.²⁹

Despite Austen's and the English critics' reservations about *Adelaide et Theodore*'s suitability as an educational manual for the mothers and daughters of England, one mother used the work in exactly that way, and the experiment was much more successful than Richard Lovell Edgeworth's attempt to bring up his eldest son 'à la Jean-Jacques'. Margaret Chinnery adopted Genlis's ideas for the learning of modern languages, history, gymnastics – indeed, her entire programme was taken from Genlis, and applied enthusiastically. The two women became friends, corresponded for several years, and Genlis was to dedicate her 1806 historical novel *Madame de Maintenon* to Chinnery.³⁰

27 For an account of these responses, see my doctoral dissertation 'Reviewing Madame de Genlis: 'Gouverneur', 'Mère de l'Église', 'Hypocrite'' (University of Oxford, 2004).

28 *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Austen: Emma*, ed. Richard Cronin and Dorothy Macmillan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 375.

29 Letter to Fanny Knight, 23 March 1817, in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 335.

30 For more details about this friendship, and its eventual rupture, see both Denise Yim, 'The Chinnery Family Papers (1793–1843)' (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Sydney, 2000) and

Many British women took advantage of the Peace of Amiens to visit Genlis in her apartments in the Arsenal. In a published portrait of Genlis, appearing just after her death in 1831, Joseph Fiévée wrote of a ‘hoard of foreigners’, for whom Genlis held a saint-like position, especially ‘English women who came to have their children blessed’.³¹ One of these women, Maria Edgeworth, came without children, but with a background of distinguished contributions to the debate on education herself: *Letters from Literary Ladies* (1795), *Practical Education* (1798) and even a much earlier, unpublished, translation of *Adèle et Théodore* of her own.³² Her letter to her aunt Mary Sneyd dated 19 March 1803 gives an account of the visit. It paints a picture of Genlis as an embittered old woman, tied up in political scandal and intrigue. Edgeworth says she ‘could not like her’, although she confesses that ‘I might be prejudiced or mortified by Mme de Genlis’ assuring me that she had never seen any thing I had written except *Belinda* – that she had heard of *Practical Education* – had seen it mentioned in Miss Hamilton which she was just reading – heard it much praised but had never seen it.’³³ Despite this blow to her pride, Edgeworth remains admiring of Genlis’s talents as an educator. She comments in the letter on the excellence of a translation that one of Genlis’s pupils is working on, and tells the anecdote of Louis-Philippe being turned into such an accomplished Mathematician by Genlis that he had been able to find work as a university professor in exile in Germany.

Edgeworth concludes:

If we could see and converse with one of her pupils we should be able to form a better judgment than from all that her books and her enemies say for and against her. I say her books and enemies, not her friends and enemies for I fear she has no friends to plead for her except her books.³⁴

If any work can indeed ‘plead for’ Genlis’s importance as a writer, it is the ambitious *Adelaide and Theodore*. Often controversial, always impressive in both scope and aims, it deserves to be resituated within the context of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debate on female education, as a key work of instruction and delight.

Denise Yim, *The Unpublished Correspondence of Mme de Genlis and Margaret Chinnery and related documents in the Chinnery family papers* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003).

31 My translation: original French read ‘foule des étrangers [...] Les Anglaises qui venait faire bénir leurs enfants’. See Joseph Fiévée, ‘Madame de Genlis’, *L’Artiste*, 1 (1831), pp. 5–9. Also quoted in Yim, *Correspondence of Genlis and Chinnery*, p. 30.

32 For details of Edgeworth’s work on *Adèle et Théodore*, see Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) pp. 147–9.

33 Christina Colvin (ed.), *Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 101. Elizabeth Hamilton’s *Letters on Education* were published in 1801–2.

34 Colvin (ed.), *Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland*, p. 102.