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FAR FROM THE WHIRLWIND:

Christian Ethics and the Classical Tradition in Genlis' Pedagogy

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The tensions between Graeco-Roman ideals and Catholic norms were one of the key issues in aristocratic education during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While this problematic was largely absent from female pedagogies, Genlis took it up in her oeuvre because of the prominence of Greek and Latin texts in the pedagogy described in *Adèle et Théodore*. Genlis resolved this paradox by manipulating the physical environment of her pupils. By incorporating specific aspects of monastic culture into her pedagogical practices, she helped her pupils to develop a distinctive self-discipline that justified their aristocratic rank. This exploration of Genlis' pedagogical space reframes her pedagogy in its cultural, intellectual and theological context.

In Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis' *Adèle et Théodore, ou lettres sur l'éducation* (1782), the Baronne d'Almane breaks with convention and leaves Paris to educate her children in the countryside. According to the Baronne, this move entails significant sacrifice because she leaves close friends behind in order to teach her children. Indeed, the discipline required for Genlis' rigorous pedagogical program is so severe that the Baronne d'Almane draws on a monastic vocabulary to explain her choice: "la distraction qui naît de tant d'objets divers, devrait mal s'accorder avec l'amour qu'on peint toujours chérissant le mystère et la solitude" (1782, 191). The sense of "mystery" and "isolation" is supported by a disciplined daily regimen of lessons, walks, and educational games that occur far away from Paris.

Genlis' use of a monastic vocabulary is rather unexpected since she consistently criticized schooling directed by religious orders in favor of a pedagogy that radically mixed boys and girls together (Brouard-Arends 2006, 12). In the pedagogical arguments of *Adèle et Théodore*, Genlis harshly criticizes convent schools as breeding grounds for shallow gossip (1782, 588). Likewise, the subplots underscore Genlis' open criticism of convents. The long-suffering Cécile is all but imprisoned in a convent because her negligent parents spent all their money on Cécile's brother and needed to dispose of their daughter without providing a dowry (1782, 119). In both of these examples, Genlis depicts convents as convenient repositories for negligent parents and contrasts her own pedagogical plan that demands considerable time, effort, and discipline on the parents' part.

Unlike single-sex schooling under religious orders, Genlis' plan is radical because she educates boys and girls together under the same roof, even though she maintains many of the differences between the curricula followed by boys and girls. The Baronne d'Almane taught her daughter, Adèle, and her son, Théodore, together in a program that resembles Genlis' work as the royal *gouverneur*. Genlis trained the future Louis-Philippe along with his brothers, sisters, and Genlis' children in the same household at Bellechasse. Genlis' role in this program blurred the gendered separation between certain social roles: she scandalized the court when she was the first woman to tutor the blood prince and when she assumed the masculine title of *gouverneur* (Robb, 35).

Despite her contempt for convents and her defiance of certain gender divisions, Genlis adopts a monastic vocabulary to characterize her educational project because of the intellectual heritage that informs *Adèle et Théodore*. The philosophy and literature of Greece and Rome had been central to aristocratic education since the Renaissance. For Catholic educators like Genlis, however, this Greco-Roman tradition needed to be combined with Christian values even if the Christian ideal of submission contradicts the Greco-Roman emphasis on honor and pride (Durkheim, 242). Over the centuries, educators came up with different solutions; but Genlis is unusual in that she addressed this problem in reference to girls' education.

This problem is particularly acute in Genlis' pedagogy because, unlike many contemporary curricula for girls, her educational program includes Greek and Roman texts in translation. Genlis' fictionalized pupil, Adèle, reads translations of Homer, Virgil, Terence, and Plautus in a curriculum far broader than that

recommended by Fénelon in his *De l'éducation des filles* (1687), which had remained the enduring standard for girls' education throughout much of the eighteenth century. Including Greek and Roman texts in a reading list for young girls, however, required Genlis to reconcile the classical honor underpinning these texts that contradicted the Catholic ideal of self-abnegation and humility. Genlis resolves this contradiction by manipulating the pupil's physical environment for learning. Introducing aspects of monastic culture into the young girl's learning environment allows the pupil to demonstrate a personal discipline that, in turn, is a source of pride and distinction.

My argument regarding Genlis' pedagogical space reconstructs the blend of cultural, theological, and intellectual influences that shaped Genlis' educational thought. In particular, this article draws attention to the centuries of Catholic thought that inform Genlis' embracing "mystère et solitude." For instance, Isabelle Brouard-Arends highlights Genlis' debt to Rousseau in Genlis' claim that the learning environment is characterized by both epistemological transparency and emotional sensibility. The Baronne d'Almane's educational goals determine every tapestry, flower, and toy at the estate in Languedoc. Brouard-Arends claims that such epistemological focus reflects Enlightenment values: "une architecture entièrement subordonnée à un projet éducatif, politique, conçu par un maître d'ouvrage exigeant une dépendance absolue des hôtes du lieu impliqués dans la démarche, sous la tutelle éclairée d'un héros modèle porteur de toutes les valeurs des lumières: progrès, générosité altruiste, vertu, travail, concorde" ("Introduction" 28). Brouard-Arends extends this comparison between Genlis and Enlightenment contemporaries such as Rousseau to identify how, in Genlis' learning environment, visual details inspire sentimental emotions much as in Rousseau's emotionally wrought fiction (29).

In Genlis' model, however, this focused pedagogical environment always serves a larger Catholic purpose. At her salon, Genlis frequently hosted the theologian Adrien Lamourette (1742-1792), who promoted a moderate theology that integrated certain aspects of Rousseau's sentimentalism. Lamourette studiously avoided the firebrand positions of either radical *philosophes* or the partisans of the bitter Jesuit-Jansenists debates (Sorkin, 274-282). Surely Genlis agreed with the moderate Lamourette since she entertained him and she quoted him extensively in her edited anthology about religious and secular thought, *La Religion considérée comme unique base de bonheur et de la véritable philosophie* (1787). In *La Religion*, however, Genlis goes a step further than the conciliatory Lamourette: she ener-

getically excoriates Voltaire and other living philosophers for lacking erudition, attacking religion, and inciting the emotions (225).

As on many other occasions, Genlis straddled two somewhat different positions in regards to Enlightenment thought. On the one hand, Genlis socialized with moderate theologians and she voiced support for a constitutional monarchy as a solution to the growing political crisis. On the other hand, she vigorously opposed Voltaire and mocked d'Alembert for decades after they famously quarreled over Deism and he allegedly jettisoned her nomination to the Académie française (Orr, 318). Little of that ambivalence shows in *La Religion*, however, in which Genlis stridently declares that true Catholic devotion is the well-spring of all knowledge and virtue.

To impart religious devotion, Genlis relies on an adroit use of physical space in *Adèle et Théodore* that blends aspects of the aristocratic estate with those of a Catholic convent. As scholar Nicholas Brucker has pointed, Genlis is quick to recast the Catholic ideal of charity to suit her purposes (268-271). Indeed, Genlis culls her ideal of self-abnegation from centuries of schooling based in Jesuit and Oratorian monasteries and convents run by the Ursuline Sisters and Sisters of the Sacred Heart orders, but Genlis reshapes this ideal into a form most helpful to noble women.

In Genlis, self-abnegation becomes a marker of refined social superiority because women can prove their moral superiority and justify their social critiques by adopting an ethos of discipline and self-abnegation. As Genlis puts it, self-control is at the heart of class distinction: “nous ne sommes véritablement nobles qu'autant que nous savons rester à notre place” (1782, 138). By integrating monastic ideals into eighteenth century girls' education, Genlis offers a novel solution to the tensions between Greco-Roman honor and Catholic humility that vexed aristocratic education since the sixteenth century.

Situating Genlis within the history of aristocratic education underscores both her relationship to other pedagogues and the originality of her contributions to the field. Before Genlis embarked on her educational career, the tension between classical honor and Christian humility had shaped noble education for centuries. During the sixteenth century, aristocrats wished to forge a society that was both lettered and worldly, unlike reclusive monks, who had hitherto been the only literate group in medieval Europe. Looking to Greece and Rome, educators like Erasmus (1466 –1536) and St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) developed a humanist education that demarcated the nobility. Even a diluted classicism, nev-

ertheless, clashed with Christian ethics that valued submission over honor (Durkheim, 242).

The tensions between classical and Christian education reemerged and assumed a new shape, however, during the eighteenth-century as philosophers such as Rousseau contested existing models of human nature and as a generation of women educators experimented with fiction as a vector for new pedagogical ideals. Genlis entertained a complex and ambivalent relationship with Rousseau. In the pages of *Adèle et Théodore*, Genlis replicates and praises some of his major educational ideals, but she also castigates his morality and contests his vision of human nature. The most salient distinction between Rousseau and Genlis is in their conception of human nature: to Rousseau, humankind is inherently good and the best education strives to eliminate the insalubrious influences that could interfere with a child's natural blossoming. Genlis, however, strongly adhered to the doctrine of original sin that asserts that humans are inherently flawed. Genlis states this view rather bluntly in *Adèle et Théodore*: "Rousseau a dit fort éloquemment que l'homme naît essentiellement bon, et qu'entièrement livré à lui-même, il le serait toujours, etc. Je crois cette idée fausse; l'homme livré à lui-même, serait nécessairement vindicatif, et par conséquent il n'aurait ni grandeur d'âme ni générosité" (1782, 110-111). Due to their different conceptions of human nature, Rousseau and Genlis propose different methods of steering their fictional pupils towards virtue. Rousseau advocates a negative education in which the tutor constructs an environment that allows Émile's natural goodness to shine through, whereas Genlis strives to manipulate the pupil's thoughts and feelings as thoroughly as possible in an educational environment constructed with equal care (Martin, 55).

Rousseau does see a use for Christianity's potential to regulate human behavior in the civic model he proposes in *The Social Contract* (1762). Even if man is inherently good, living in community distorts his natural inclinations towards self-respect into selfishness and egotism. Such selfishness was counteracted by patriotism in Sparta, Rousseau's civic ideal. As Rousseau transfers these principles to eighteenth-century France, he proposes that Christian religion could regulate individual behavior much as patriotism allegedly did in ancient Greece (Garrard, 79). For Rousseau, therefore, Christianity serves to keep individualistic pride in check, whereas for Genlis, women could find glory precisely in their selfless adherence to Christian mores. Like Rousseau, Manon Phlipon looked to ancient republics as her ideal of gender relations and contended that patriotism

motivated women to serve their husbands and children in her 1777 essay *Comment l'éducation des femmes pourrait contribuer à rendre les hommes meilleurs* (Bloch, 252-253).

For all her protests to the contrary, Genlis does echo many of the ideas that Rousseau puts forth in *Émile* (1762), particularly in Genlis' ambition to construct a totalizing educational experience. Genlis' appetite for knowledge and her ambition to fashion an encyclopedic education bears noticeable similarities to her peers who were greatly influenced by classical learning. According to literary scholar Didier Masseur, Genlis resembles her contemporaries in her dream of a comprehensive education: "*Adèle et Théodore* est un exemple parmi d'autres de cette volonté de totalité qui anime les esprits les plus divers durant les dernières années de l'Ancien Régime: immensité du savoir, pouvoir dominateur d'une écriture visant à user de toutes les techniques offertes par les genres en vigueur" (39). Another important similarity between Genlis and Rousseau is the omnipotence of the tutor. As Masseur points out, both Genlis and Rousseau present idealized tutors, modeled on themselves, who control every detail of the educational experience (27-28, 39).

Genlis' blend of scientific learning, academic achievement, and Christian morality was typical of her generation of French women educators. At the end of the eighteenth century, a small group of French and British women embraced a moderate form of Enlightenment education that advocated both scientific learning and moderate Christianity. Along with Hannah More (1745-1833), Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont (1711-1780) and Marie-Élisabeth de la Fite (1750-1794), Genlis advocated Christian values in part because they positioned the women writers as superior to libertine society (Orr, 307). By the same token, rational thought and a basic scientific education are considered a right, indeed, an obligation, of well-educated women. In *Le Magasin des Adolescentes* (1760), Le Prince de Beaumont stages imaginary dialogues between a young aristocratic girl and their wise governess. In one dialogue, Madame Affable expounds that "the science taught by Socrates, is called moral philosophy, and you will see clearly, my children, that it belongs as much to women as to men" (quoted in Orr, 311). Likewise, Genlis praises Fite as an influential source for *Adèle et Théodore*, not least in how Fite, a governess in the English court of George III, emphasized a sentimental piety in stories starring fictional versions of her royal charges (1782, 316).

In Genlis' pedagogical program, intellectual training is literally at a girl's fingertips. The estate is designed such that the pupils are always surrounded with educational games and objects. The d'Almane estate is decorated with tapestries depicting historical events in chronological order, magic lantern shows are given in English about historical events, and a walk in the garden is a pretext for a botany lesson (1782, 86-87). Storytelling, for instance, is an occasion for scientific explanation. The longest and most popular tale in Genlis' *Les Veillées du château* (1782), "Alphonse et Dalinde," recounts the fantastic travels of two young children, who encounter myriad natural phenomena from volcanoes to insect infestations. In copious footnotes, Genlis draws on what was then cutting-edge scientific research to provide scientific explanations for these natural wonders. In 1777, Genlis had a well-publicized quarrel with Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783) over the authority of Catholic doctrine. As a result, she has often been categorized as a Counter-Enlightenment figure. In assessing Genlis' relationship to Enlightenment thought, however, her fierce defense of Catholic doctrine must be weighed against her enthusiasm for science and her insistence on girls' academic training.

Genlis delicately balances the Greco-Roman tradition, Enlightenment rationalism, and Christian humility in her pedagogy by depicted the physical environment as simultaneously characterized by social superiority, intellectual self-improvement, and humble self-sacrifice. Although the pedagogy assumes a largely secular guise, the academic curriculum serves the overarching moral goals, which are in turn rooted in Catholic values. Indeed, for many of Genlis' peers, the religious and moral nature of girls' education went without saying. As historian Dale Van Kley has argued, the Catholic Church overwhelmingly dominated the culture of eighteenth-century France, such that, if they married, even the most fervent *philosophes* were married according to Catholic rites (3). Especially in this environment, a fervent supporter of Catholic moral education such as Genlis would certainly design a program that advanced Catholic values.

Even if the overarching goals were Catholic in nature, Genlis' curriculum is broad and unusually intellectual for its time. For Genlis and her contemporaries, academic study was considered a useful strategy for orienting young people towards faith, virtue, and moderation. For instance, Manon Phlipon (1754-1793), known as Madame Roland, and Germaine Necker (1766-1817), also known as Madame de Staël, both argued that intellectual study helps women develop the virtuous feelings that help them guide their husbands (Bloch, 252-253). In *Adèle et*

Théodore, Genlis argues that training a girl's intellectual faculties also develops her temperament: "Quand elles se donneront le temps de réfléchir et de penser; quand elles ne préféreront pas à des qualités précieuses et naturelles des prétentions vaines et ridicules, leur société sera la plus agréable de toutes; elles pourront juger sainement de tous les ouvrages de goût" (1782, 163). To this end, Adèle pursues an ambitious course of study that includes geography, botany, history, Italian, English, philosophy as well as several Greek and Latin texts in translation. Although the Vicomtesse de Nimours claims that the demanding curriculum is within the reach of only a few exceptional pupils, the Baronne d'Almane reassures her that the material is broken down into smaller elements that are accessible to the average girl. This emphasis on academic study, including that of classical texts, required Genlis to negotiate a compromise between classical and Catholic values.

What distinguishes Genlis' pedagogy, however, are her specific reading lists and teaching methodologies as well as her inclusion of Latin texts in translation. Since Genlis sought to validate the intellectual rigor of her program, she also includes translations of key Greek and Roman texts in her curriculum, even if few girls studied classical texts in eighteenth-century France. Adèle reads the *Odyssey*, the *Illiad*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Georgics* as well as plays by Terence and Plautus (1782, 632-633). The mother carefully bowdlerizes certain myths, however, so that Adèle is not exposed to salacious plots before she has properly honed her commitment to Christian chastity (1782, 422). Nevertheless, including any classical texts, even in translation, was unusual for eighteenth-century girls' education. Educational treatises rarely mention Greek or Latin, an indication of the subjects' marginal status in girls' education. In *De l'éducation des filles*, Fénelon (1651-1715) passes over classical texts to warn of the dangers posed by novels, fables, and poetry. Several centuries later, Albertine-Adrienne Necker de Saussure (1766-1841) makes no mention of Greek and Roman texts when she examines female reading in her ambitious *Éducation progressive* (1828-1838). Tracing these trends, historian Isabelle Havelange found that educational fiction for children almost unanimously presented Latin as a subject for boys and French as a subject for girls in children's literature written in France between 1750 and 1830 (578).

A few women educators were exceptional in their advocacy of a classical education. Anne Dacier (1647-1720), for instance, received in-depth, classical training in Pre-Revolutionary France and became one of the most respected

translators of Plautus, Aristophanes, and Terence (“Biographical Sketch” 290). A great admirer of Dacier, Genlis was exceptional in advocating that Greek and Roman texts in translation should form part of a general curriculum for girls’ education.

Beyond the inclusion of canonical Greek and Roman texts, Genlis wrestles with their ideological legacy as she negotiates the competing ideals of Christian humility and classical honor. By turning the country estate into an educational retreat, however, Genlis transforms discipline into a marker of social superiority that distinguishes her virtuous protagonists. For the Baronne d’Almane – and by extension, Genlis herself – leaving the Parisian court demonstrated both humble devotion to the children’s education and eminent superiority over their hedonist peers who left their children in the care of servants. The Baronne d’Almane’s blending of self-effacing devotion and moral superiority exemplifies a novel solution to the contradiction between Christian and classical ideals that plagued French aristocratic education and, unusually, Genlis negotiates this solution within the realm of girls’ education.

The key to Genlis’ solution is her protagonist’s self-imposed isolation from Parisian society in favor of teaching her daughter with a discipline evocative of monastic life. Although this curriculum is largely secular, it is rooted in the culture of Catholic orders because of the program’s emphasis on self-isolation, selfless commitment, and chastity. When the Baronne d’Almane lays out her educational project, she insists that leaving Paris is absolutely necessary to executing her plan: “il fallait ou quitter le monde entièrement, ou renoncer aux projets les plus chers à mon cœur” (1782, 64). Friends of the d’Almane family are aghast at their decision to sacrifice the social splendor of Parisian court life. Their friends’ reactions highlight the d’Almane’s uncommonly high standards. Within the eyes of the court, the d’Almane family is making a “sacrifice éclatant et pénible” (1782, 59). Substituting academic study for court balls requires serious dedication quite unlike the luxurious lifestyle at court. The Baronne d’Almane’s protégé, the Vicomtesse de Nemours, protests at first that she would be incapable of the serious study and self-reflection demanded by the Baronne d’Almane’s pedagogical program. Indeed, the Baronne d’Almane embraces a regimented daily schedule: she wakes at seven, attends mass daily, supervises Adèle constantly, consults with tutors regarding her lessons, and evaluates their progress with her husband every night. Even her dreams are subsumed by this all-consuming educational project. Likewise, the dedication required of fathers is also considerable. The

Baron d'Almane echoes his wife when he declares: "je me consacre entièrement à leur éducation" (1782, 59). Compared to contemporary pedagogical programs, Genlis' project demands far more parental involvement. In *Émile*, Rousseau admits that aristocratic parents have too many social engagements to supervise their children closely; therefore, a private tutor is necessary (Brouard-Arends, 15). Although many of their contemporaries left their girls in the hands of servants, tutors, and teaching nuns in convent schools, Genlis advocates a rigorous educational program that demands all of the parents' time.

The all-consuming nature of the educational project is a theme that occurs again and again in Genlis' pedagogical writing. When she describes her work as the royal *gouverneur*, Genlis characterizes her work as a renunciation of worldly pleasures and a complete devotion to service: "En acceptant un tel emploi, il doit s'y consacrer sans réserve. Ce n'est pas assez pour lui de renoncer à la dissipation, aux affaires, ni de conserver une seule ambition, celle de former un bon Roi; il faut encore qu'il se prive de toutes les douceurs de la société; qu'il rompe l'intimité des liaisons les plus chères" (qtd. in Masseau, 28). By employing a vocabulary of renunciation, privation, and isolation to describe her pedagogy, Genlis likens her educational project to the work of a Catholic monk or nun.

The focus, self-sacrifice, and chastity required by this educational program are inspired by the culture of Catholic orders. Catholic values underpin all of Genlis' principles. As the Baronne d'Almane advises: "que la religion soit la base de tout ce que vous ferez; ou vous ne ferez rien de véritablement solide" (Genlis 1782, 154). In particular, developing Adèle's chastity is the particular focus of Genlis' moral project. Early in *Adèle et Théodore*, the Baronne asserts that her primary goal is to steer her daughter away from the sexual impropriety that plagues aristocratic womanhood: "Mon premier principe est qu'il faut employer tous ses soins à préserver son élève d'un défaut commun presque à toutes les femmes, et qui en entraîne tant d'autres, la coquetterie" (1782, 73). Using the code word of "coquetterie" to designate all manner of sexual misbehavior from flirting to extramarital affairs, the Baronne d'Almane identifies licentiousness as the chief impediment to women's integrity, well-being, and social stature.

Leaving Paris is essential to extricating Adèle from the noisome court that jeopardizes a woman's chastity and surrounding Adèle with impeccable role models. In the bucolic countryside, Adèle will be exposed to fewer licentious women who would contradict her mother's lessons. A retreat to the countryside is a retreat from the destructive forces of lust:

Paris est le centre du tumulte et de la dissipation; la distraction qui naît de tant d'objets divers, devrait mal s'accorder avec l'amour qu'on peint toujours chérissant le mystère et la solitude ... et dans les provinces, loin du bruit et du tourbillon, on ne voit point les femmes, retirées dans leurs châteaux, se prendre de grandes passions pour leurs voisins; elles aiment communément leurs maris, et la vie champêtre ne leur inspire point d'idées romanesques (1782, 191).

By surrounding Adèle with devoted wives, her mother presents a consistent vision of sexual continence and thereby strengthens her moral message. Although this ideal of rustic virtue might recall Rousseau's idyllic Clarens in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Genlis distances her vision of bucolic virtue by drawing it closer to Catholic ideals than to Rousseau's. With terms such as "mystère et solitude," Genlis likens the provincial environment to a convent or monastery much more than Rousseau's Clarens, which is rarely associated with Catholic "mystère."

This conventual environment helps Adèle achieve the chastity that is so important to Genlis' educational program. Indeed, sexual desire should be avoided even within marriage. Shortly before Adèle's wedding, her mother advises her to suppress her desire for her husband because it might diminish with time: "ne lui laissez voir que les sentiments qui peuvent durer toujours ... en montrant de la passion, vous augmenterez pour un temps celle que vous inspirez; pendant quelques mois vous serez aimée plus vivement, mais vous le serez d'une manière moins solide et moins durable" (Genlis 1782, 612). Sexual desire should be suppressed for fear that it might cause the husband's affections to fluctuate and therefore destabilize the relationship.

With her rigorous educational program, the Baronne d'Almane succeeds in repressing her daughter's sexuality. The triumphant mother vaunts that her daughter has so thoroughly assimilated the moral lessons that she can read even racy fiction without fantasizing about dashing princes: "elle n'a point de *passion*! C'est précisément parce qu'elle est véritablement sensible, parce que son cœur est rempli des plus doux sentiments. *Le besoin d'aimer* ne la tourmente pas, puisqu'il est satisfait; elle ne passe point les nuits à lire *Zaïde, la Princesse de Clèves, le Siège de Calais, Cleveland, etc*" (Genlis 1782, 556). As if she were raising a future nun, the Baronne d'Almane stresses avoiding erotic desire, including within marriage. This emphasis on chastity and its cultivation within a controlled environment grows out of Genlis' efforts to integrate classical and Christian ideals in aristocratic education.

The product of this training, Adèle becomes morally superior to her peers and thereby achieves honor through the exercise of discipline and chastity. Towards the end of the novel, the d'Almane family holds a small, informal concert for friends. Adèle's friend, Séraphine, performs poorly and is scolded by her mother. Out of pity for her friend, Adèle invents an excuse for her friend. Adèle fibs that Séraphine played badly because she was sick with a terrible headache and slight fever. Sensing her daughter's lie, the Baronne d'Almane chastises her daughter for not adhering to the strictest standards of honesty and discipline. The Baronne asserts that Adèle should aspire to a higher degree of probity than most of her peers: "Je vous le répète, le monde dans ce cas, c'est-à-dire, la multitude, vous excuserait, et même vous approuverait; mais le petit nombre des gens strictement vertueux trouverait que vous manquez à l'exacte probité" (Genlis 1782, 493). Only an élite cadre would censure every lie, even those that protect a friend, but the Baronne d'Almane expects her daughter to demonstrate her social superiority by submitting herself to the highest moral standards. In this strong anti-Machiavellian position, the Baronne d'Almane articulates a particularly Christian outlook. Still, it is this Christian outlook which proves her daughter's superiority. In attaining distinction through modesty, chastity, and discipline, the Baronne d'Almane's educational ideal yokes the twin ideals of humility and honor and thereby unites the Christian and Greco-Roman strands of aristocratic education.

This idealization of a secluded, academic environment possibly served a more personal purpose for Genlis. It is likely that her praise of retreat from Parisian society was inspired by a private desire to pursue an academic and literary career at a distance from the criticism faced by intellectual women. As women intellectuals faced increasingly harsh criticism, women such as Genlis perhaps felt more comfortable working in a secluded setting. Isabelle Brouard-Arends claims that women who published professionally in eighteenth-century France defied so many social norms that they were obligated to define their own moral codes (Brouard-Arends 2004, 189-190). Indeed, Genlis' memoirs and her autobiographical fiction gesture at the pain she experienced when her behavior and her writing was scrutinized by ungenerous critics.

At the end of her life, Genlis summarized her attitudes towards women, writing, and fame in her memoirs. Genlis advocates for a stronger education for women and claims that, if more women received better education, they would publish fewer frivolous romances. Still, Genlis warns women to tread carefully

when it comes to publicity. The most important of three rules for women writers is to avoid publicity and publication, especially when they are young: “elles ne doivent jamais se presser de faire paraître leurs productions, durant tout le temps de leur jeunesse, elle doivent craindre toute espèce d’éclat, et même le plus honorable” (1825, 359). The ingenuousness of Genlis’ advice is somewhat questionable: Genlis had relentlessly sought the limelight since the beginnings of her career. After enduring decades of criticism, she wrote her memoirs, at least in part, to have the last word.

Still, this yearning for a sheltered area for private study appears again and again in Genlis’ texts. In *La Femme auteur* (1802), the title character, Natalie, publishes her first novel under circumstances very similar to those that drove Genlis to release her first published text, *Théâtre d’éducation à l’usage des jeunes personnes* in 1779 (Reid, 231). The fictional Natalie and her creator both publish texts that had been in their desk drawers in order to raise the funds necessary to contribute to a cause célèbre, that is, to keep gentlemen condemned of crimes out of jail (Reid, 118-119). Natalie’s love interest, Germeuil, is outraged that the public can read the amorous sentiments she once expressed in her letters to him, albeit in a fictionalized form (Genlis 1802, 124). In *La Femme auteur*, Natalie’s fame and reputation eventually threaten her physical safety when she seeks asylum after the French Revolution, but is often rejected by different hosts because of her literary fame (1802, 149). Dorothee, Natalie’s modest and steadfast sister, is able to recover her fortune because of her solid reputation, but Natalie lost everything when she returns from exile (1802, 149). The moral of the story is that Dorothee lives happily ever after because she does not court literary fame: “Dorothee fut toujours, dans tous les temps, plus heureuse que sa sœur [...] elle fit le bonheur de sa famille, tout cela vaut bien un roman, et cette félicité si pure vaut bien la célébrité d’une femme auteur” (Genlis 1802, 149-150). Although Natalie enjoys momentary literary celebrity, her intellectual pursuits cause financial and emotional hardship avoided by her modest sister Dorothee.

Unlike Natalie, who is punished for publishing, the Baronne d’Almane enjoys free rein to study, to write, and to engage with sympathetic interlocutors, all within the sheltered educational space that the Baronne crafted for her children’s education. The monastic environment shelters the Baronne from vicious critics just as much as it protects Adèle from Parisian licentiousness. The idealized space envisioned in *Adèle et Théodore* was perhaps Genlis’ fantasy of the ideal conditions, not just for her children’s education, but for her own work and study.

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