Romance, Pedagogy and Power: Jane Austen Re-writes Madame de Genlis

SUSAN ALLEN FORD
Susan Allen Ford is Professor of English and Writing Center Coordinator at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. She has published essays on Jane Austen and her contemporaries as well as on detective fiction.

Near the fulfillment of her own romance, reflecting on her satisfaction that Mrs. Weston is the mother of a little girl, Emma authorizes Mrs. Weston's experience and talents as an educator in terms of literary precedent: "'She has had the advantage, you know, of practising on me . . . 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'"(461). Emma's playful compliment resonates. Although Madame de Genlis's *Adelaide and Theodore* presents itself as a collection of "Letters on Education," her work, like that of her model Samuel Richardson, blends discourse (practical and theoretical) with narrative, strictures on conduct with the pleasures of romance. What, at her peak, was Jane Austen about in resorting to this French recipe for perfection?

In 1772 Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Genlis (1746-1830) accepted a position as lady in waiting to the duchesse de Chartres, soon becoming mistress to the duc de Chartres, later the duc d'Orléans, Philippe-Egalité. After their relationship ended, Mme. de Genlis was appointed *gouverneur* to his children, one of whom became Louis-Philippe, king of France from 1830 to 1848.[1] One

result of her experience as tutor to the royal children was the production of a number of volumes, most significantly *Adèle et Théodore*, which defines her educational program. Published in France in 1782 and translated almost immediately into English as *Adelaide and Theodore*, the novel is the account of the twelve-year period devoted to the education of the children of the Baron and Baroness d'Almane.[2] Although some letters focus on the peculiarly masculine elements of the education of Theodore and others are devoted to the education of a prince, most of the letters between Mme. d'Almane, her adopted daughter Mme. d'Ostalis, and their friend the Viscountess de Limours are devoted to the education of Adelaide. While some letters detail the intrigues and corruptions of the social world Adelaide and Theodore will eventually enter, the emphasis is on a plan of physical and intellectual instruction, reading, and moral tutelage that leads, if not to perfection, then to something so like it that it can bear no other name. The structure of the courtship plot brings closure to this educational program: the marriages of Adelaide and Theodore, to Charles de Valmont and Constantia de Limours, are designed by their parents early in the novel, though not revealed to the children themselves until much later.

Attention to both *Adelaide and Theodore* and *Emma* reveals that Austen read Madame de Genlis's novel carefully, adapting and transforming incidents, plot structures, and thematic concerns. A wide variety of *Emma*'s elements—the emphasis on matchmaking, the consideration of the connection between the imagination and love, Emma's adoption of Harriet and her plans for reading, the misunderstanding of Mr. Elton's admiration of the portrait's creator rather than its subject, Harriet's box of "precious treasures," even such details as Mr. Knightley's and Frank Churchill's ages, the living arrangements of Mr. Knightley and Emma after marriage, or the children's games played by adults under Frank Churchill's disruptive influence—all find their source in Mme. de Genlis's novel. It would seem that Emma is a re-writing of *Adelaide and Theodore*.

Yet despite these extraordinary resemblances, the pattern of Jane Austen's transformations of Mme. de Genlis suggests a fascinating and quite independent experiment. In *Adelaide and*

Theodore Mme. de Genlis argues for the repression of imagination and the emphasis of reason in order to prepare women for their dependent role as wives; somewhat paradoxically, for Mme. de Genlis this virtuous acceptance of their subordinate position can be exploited to achieve partnership and power in marriage. Women's business is motherhood and pedagogy, the "theatre of education" an arena of total control.

In *Emma*, Jane Austen portrays the dangerous delights of exerting control over others under the guise of education. While for Mme. de Genlis that control is invigorating and essential to the reproduction of virtue, for Austen that control is finally impossible as well as morally problematic. Within these works, sharply different attitudes toward romance and reading are explored. Romance for Mme. de Genlis becomes a danger for her characters (and presumably for readers she would instruct), but, oddly, also one of her persuasive strategies. For Emma, however, the seductions of romance are not nearly as dangerous as their "cure": the possibilities of control that the educational strategies of Mme. de Genlis promise. More significantly, Austen's revelation of Emma as a reader of *Adelaide and Theodore*, eager throughout the novel to take on the roles not merely of Mme. d'Ostalis but of Adelaide, the Baroness, and even the Viscountess de Limours, suggests surprising entanglements among romance, education, and power.

Although the form Mme. de Genlis chooses for her "Letters on Education" is that of a novel, she conscientiously casts this novel as an anti-romance. Genlis's sensibility shares with that of English feminist writers like Mary Wollstonecraft a commitment to the ideal of the rational woman. Her intention is to demote and control the passions, and the course of reading she designs carefully guards Adelaide and Theodore from too early an acquaintance with romance. Rather than reading fairy tales or fables or *Arabian Nights*, which "give them only false notions, stop the course of their reasoning, and inspire them with a dislike for instructive reading," the children's books they read are written by Mme. d'Almane (and published by Mme. de Genlis as *Tales of the Castle*), true stories describing "the charms and simplicities of Nature" (1.63). The plays Adelaide and Theodore are given to per-

form (available in Mme. de Genlis's *Theatre of Education*) carefully resist romantic temptation for these young actors by containing exclusively male or female roles (1.146). Even supposedly moral romances like *The Princess of Cleves* are dangerous since they present love as "totally independent of our will; that it is useless to oppose it in its progress; and that virtue is only a torment to us" (1.213). These books—Richardson's novels only excepted—are "calculated to corrupt the heart, as well as mislead the judgment" (1.217). The Baroness argues that romances should be read at the age of thirteen under the care of the mother in order to "see the faults and inconsistencies as well as the improbability of the greatest part of these books, even of those we reckon the best. After this time she will never see me read them; . . . and she will never hear me speak of them without contempt" (1.217).

The quixotic problem of confusing romance and life is explored in *Adelaide and Theodore*, as in *Emma*, in two areas. The Viscountess de Limours, a most attractive but most undisciplined woman, reads those around her almost as if they were characters in a novel, measuring them against the standards of romance, and responding to them accordingly. She looks to life to replicate the designs of fiction. Additionally, as the Baroness d'Almane argues, the undisciplined reading of romance causes a young woman to see "herself [as] the Princess of Cleves" (1.213), to wait to make a figure in her own romance. Genlis shows the consequences of such expectations in the unhappiness of the Limours marriage, the instability of the Viscountess's feelings and temper, and the miseducation of her elder daughter Flora who, after a life of coquetry, suffers a death that seems directly related to her corrupted mind and sexual dissipations.

Indeed, Genlis argues that love is merely a function of the imagination: "the idea we form to ourselves of this passion gives it the power and influence it has over us" (3.25). Love lasts, Adelaide learns from her mother, between one year and three, an estimate certainly verified by the histories of all the marriages depicted. "But, if you behave well, he will never feel a passion for any other, and you will be the object of his tenderest affection" (3.259).

Given the dangers of romance and the passion it generates

and feeds, the novel presents matchmaking as the reasonable guarantee of a suitable marriage—as long as parents choose wisely. While Mme. de Limours makes matches and inflames the imagination of her daughter Constantia with the idea of Theodore before she has even reached puberty, the Baron and Baroness d'Almane arrange marriages to bond families and ensure virtuous and worthy partners for children too young to make such decisions for themselves. Matchmaking here is an anti-romantic activity. Adelaide too is as anxious as her mother could wish to display such a rational approach: "I should like better to marry an amiable man of thirty-seven, than a young man of three-and-twenty" (3.172), she tells her mother. Choosing M. de Retel, that amiable man of thirty-seven, would ensure her of a husband with "experience and consideration" and simultaneously show her good sense so that "I should deserve his affection and the esteem of the Public" (3.171). The young man of twenty-three is, she supposes, only a random example. In order to ensure that she does not become attached to the only young man of twenty-three she knows, Charles de Valmont, she gives up the box of precious stones and pebbles he has given her (3.180). Indeed, Adelaide cedes all power of choice to her mother.

And yet, even as *Adelaide and Theodore* decries romance as dangerous, it somehow creates and satisfies the desire for it. The courtship mode, after all, defines and encloses this text, and, if Jane Austen is any example, readers are certainly attentive to its elements. Charles "contemplate[s] . . . with a rapture" (2.126) a portrait of Flora drawn by Mme. d'Ostalis, leading all to suspect him of loving the corrupt Flora when actually it is Mme. d'Ostalis, the perfect forerunner to Adelaide, who is the object of his youthful affections. Charles's attentions to the child Ermine delicately "flatter" her adopted mother and governess, Adelaide (3.94). His interest in Adelaide dates from the day she swoons to see her mother bleed (2.282-83), defining her attractions as a figure of the kind of sensibility Mme. d'Almane works to moderate. Finally, we're assured that Charles's love for Adelaide is much deeper than Theodore's for Constantia. "He is truly inamoured, and for life" (3.254). The woman with the superior virtues is rewarded by the deepest love, after all.

Although Jane Austen's playful ironies often undercut Mme. de Genlis's rational sensibility, *Emma*'s consideration of the relationships between reason and the imagination (or passion) owes much to *Adelaide and Theodore*. Emma, as she recognizes herself, is "an imaginist" (335), like Miss Bates, "tak[ing] up a notion, and run[ning] away with it" (176). But imagination here is dangerous as Emma sees both more and less than what is before her. Emma has, of course, been affected by her novel reading. The fictions she creates for Harriet Smith and Jane Fairfax are structured by the devices of romance: orphans who shine in their surroundings through their unusual beauty and merit, natural daughters who will be owned at (or before) marriage, maidens rescued from gypsies or from the forces of nature with love as the result, all hastening to perfect felicity. Even Emma's language, as reflected in the indirect speech of the narrative, reveals the power of her reading to shape her judgment as she invents a narrative for Jane Fairfax, the sibilance of which suggests its excess: "If it were love, it might be simple, single, successless love on her side alone. She might have been unconsciously sucking in the sad poison, while a sharer of his conversation with her friend" (168). Emma's monstrous double, Mrs. Elton, herself views Jane Fairfax in literary terms as she cites "'those charming lines of the poet'" Thomas Gray (282). Although Harriet has read both *The Children of the Abbey* and *The Romance of the Forest* before she arrives at Hartfield, Emma's influence has helped naturalize the conventions of romance so that if "'the natural daughter of nobody knows whom'" (61) should marry Mr. Knightley, "'it will not be any thing so very wonderful'" (411). And of course Emma herself, as Highbury's heroine, has always considered the dashing Frank Churchill as peculiarly her property: "She could not but suppose it to be a match that every body who knew them must think of" (119).

But Stuart Tave is helpful here: "To say, then, of Emma that she has too much imagination is to say that she has too little imagination" (216). For in her attempts to make her reality fit the patterns of romance, to match Mr. Elton with Harriet Smith, or Frank Churchill with herself or with Harriet, Emma misses the real love stories in front of her: Robert Martin's abiding love for

Harriet Smith, Jane Fairfax's secret romance with Frank Churchill, and her own love for Mr. Knightley. The clues for all these are there, but she's reading a different text. Perhaps most amusing, and most endearing, is Emma's blindness to her own romance. Her assumption that she is at least somewhat in love with Frank Churchill leads her to the conclusion she expects: "'Ah! there I am—thinking of him directly. Always the first person to be thought of! How I catch myself out!'" (279). Mr. Knightley, of course, has occupied an entire two paragraphs of thought before the idea of Frank Churchill occurred. And when Harriet surrenders the leadless pencil she secreted from Mr. Elton, Emma remembers the conversation only in terms of where Mr. Knightley was standing (340).

Just as she has too little imagination, she seems in some ways not to have profited even by her reading of novels—or at least of *Adelaide and Theodore.* Has she had the discipline to read it to the end? She ignores the parallels between Charles's behavior and Mr. Elton's, reading Mr. Elton's "continual raptures" over the portrait (47) and his admiration for her improvements to Harriet as certain evidence of his romantic interest in Miss Smith. Indeed, her matchmaking is more like that of the Viscountess de Limours, leading to an inflammation of the imagination, than the reasoned project the Baroness recommends.

But Austen also has her joke at the expense of Mme. de Genlis's claims for the triumph of rationality in her heroine. Adelaide's surrender of the pebbles Charles gave her is, of course, parodied by Harriet's surrender of her "*Most precious treasures,*" a tired piece of court plaister and the end of an old pencil, destroyed in Emma's presence "'that you may see how rational I am grown'" (338). Adelaide's claim that "I should like better to marry an amiable man of thirty-seven, than a young man of three-and-twenty" (3.172) finds its fulfillment—its romantic fulfillment—in Emma: our heroine does marry the thirty-seven-year-old hero, finally recognizing that the young man of three-and-twenty is, as Mr. Knightley argues, "'amiable only in French not in English . . . [with] no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him'" (149). Emma marries the truly amiable hero in a marriage so rational that Mrs. Weston regrets

that she hadn't planned it: "it was in every respect so proper, suitable, and unexceptionable a connexion, and in one respect, one point of the highest importance, so peculiarly eligible, so singularly fortunate, that now it seemed as if Emma could not safely have attached herself to any other creature, and that she had herself been the stupidest of beings in not having thought of it, and wished it long ago" (467). And yet that rational suitability, even as undercut by Austen's gentle irony at Mrs. Weston's expense, doesn't mask the passion that Emma discovers as "with the speed of an arrow [she realizes] that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!" (408).

While the courtship plot encloses the educational narrative, the real focus of *Adelaide and Theodore* is, as its subtitle suggests, education. Indeed, the courtship narrative offers no real suspense. We know whom Adelaide and Theodore will marry even before they do; and because of the extremity of Genlis's portrait of parental power and benevolence, the question of whether their own desires might point them in a different direction isn't really raised. The novel's central question involves the education of the children, and particularly of Adelaide: By what means will the Baroness d'Almane bring Adelaide to perfection?

At the root of Mme. de Genlis's plan is the absolute faith that "education can extirpate our vices [and] endue us with virtues" (1.73). Indeed, "nothing is more shocking than to spoil and corrupt a child born with natural good dispositions. . . . The bare idea makes one tremble" (3.6). Adelaide and Theodore's instruction in languages, history, geography, science, literature, art, and music is described in detail, with an eight-and-a-half-page summary of the "Course of Reading pursued by Adelaide, from the Age of six Years, to Twenty-two" appended to the end of the novel. A "course of experimental virtue" (1.249) ensures the children's moral development. Just as the d'Almane's country home in Languedoc is converted into a temple of instruction so that learning and life are inseparable, so the Baroness creates a system of moral and social tests for Adelaide and Theodore. In one such test, Adelaide is invited to share the secret of a supposed clandestine marriage between their English governess, Miss Bridget, and their Italian drawing-master, Dainville—a test that leads her to

discover the difficulties of self-command, the dangers of secrecy and curiosity, and the consequent violations of the duties of relationships. The constant surveillance which Adelaide and Theodore are subject to is necessitated, according to Genlis, by the need to root out vice, to strengthen the self so that it may deal with the dangers of the outside world.

Perfection, or something very near to it, *can* be achieved through education. "If you do not give your pupil strength of mind to conquer himself, every thing else you teach him will be useless" (1.74). This empire over the self is inculcated from an early age. Mme. d'Almane's response to the question of whether the eight-year-old Adelaide is not already perfect is to list her faults, most of which at this stage have only been repressed rather than "destroy[ed] entirely" (1.143). "[W]hen you have forced a mind, naturally imperious, to submission," the Baroness writes, "you must never leave her to herself a single moment; for if you once lose sight of her, you may be sure that she will make herself amends the very first opportunity, for the constraint you impose on her. The more submissive she is with you, the more untractable she will be with others" (1.144). Indeed, one of Adelaide's chief faults is a lack of respect for those she perceives as less powerful than her parents. When Adelaide makes the middle-aged Miss Bridget the butt of a joke, she is threatened with the loss of the affection of her governess and the loss of respect of her mother and all of those who know her (1.183). This fault is a common one. Mme. d'Almane warns Mme. d'Ostalis to "correct [her daughter's] frolicksomeness and spirit, which may so easily degenerate into downright malice" (2.107).

But perfection comes, if not so soon. Adelaide's faults and errors are those of childhood and youth. The closer we come to the end of the novel, the closer Adelaide is to perfection, able to be claimed as pupil, daughter, and friend. Late in the novel, Mme. de Limours, with what seems pardonable inquisitiveness, envy, or skepticism—or perhaps a combination of the three—asks Mme. d'Almane to "acknowledge what are Adelaide's secret faults" (237). The Baroness claims ignorance: "I must own, says she, I do not know she has any; but I should think she must have one at least, however trifling it may be" (1.237). Although, she acknowledges,

it is not possible to be "perfect," she argues that "it is a very different thing to commit a fault, and to have a fault. I protest to you, that Adelaide has not one single defect; that is to say, one bad custom that has taken root, . . . yet she is not perfect, since no mortal can be so" (1.238). While marriage is seen as an opportunity to continue education, it seems to be Charles who will receive most of the instruction: "What an interest have you," Mme. d'Almane counsels Adelaide, "in correcting all his defects, and in forming his temper and mind as much as possible!" (3.265). Adelaide, by contrast, should "be exactly that you are now" (3.266). But a high moral tone can be very fatiguing—even for a reader. Adelaide's very perfection makes her a rather uninteresting and certainly unbelievable character.

In *Emma*, the educational process and the courtship plot are inextricable. Emma discovers the solution to both with all her wonderful velocity of thought. The central question of the novel is Mr. Knightley's speculative "'I wonder what will become of her!'" (40). Although he, significantly, develops his question in terms of "'Emma in love'" (41), revealing his own unconscious desires, the answer comes in terms of the education that allows her to see the possibilities of romance. Moreover, such possibilities suggest a definition of education more allied with freedom than restraint. For Mr. Knightley and Emma, education is the process that allows one to recognize and enfranchise the emotional possibilities of the self, not, as Mme. de Genlis would argue, to repress them. How much closer and through what trials can the handsome, clever, and rich Emma Woodhouse be brought to perfection?

The most striking contrast between Emma's education and Adelaide's is the difference in system: while in *Adelaide and Theodore* "educational maneuvers are plotted by letter with the strategy of a chess game" (Moers 222), there is in Emma, of course, no regimen. Poor Miss Taylor's mild temper "had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint" so that Emma, though "highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, . . . [has been] directed chiefly by her own" (5). Emma's reading lists, "'very well chosen, and very neatly arranged'"—one of which Mr. Knightley has saved because "'it did her judgment so much credit'"—have had little

effect. As Mr. Knightley points out, "'She will never submit to any thing requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding'" (37). Emma is no prodigy: "steadiness had always been wanting" (44). And, indeed, the education Emma undergoes during the novel—her own course of experimental virtue—is similarly unplanned, directed only by her own ineffective attempts to project the destinies of others and by Frank Churchill's carelessly manipulative flatteries. The real dangers in Hartfield come from within.

The issue of Emma's perfection is, of course, a thread that runs through the novel. Mr. Knightley, here occupying the mentor role to Emma's reluctant pupil, is "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (11). Emma's father must even be guarded from "such a circumstance as her not being thought perfect by every body" (11). Rather than being systematically repressed or destroyed, Emma's faults seem to loom larger as the novel progresses: her errors of imagination, her lapses of generosity to Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates increase under Frank Churchill's attentions. His flattering assurance that Miss Woodhouse "wherever she is, presides" (369) obscures from Emma the need for her own self-command. Indeed, her wit at Miss Bates's expense slips out: "Emma could not resist" (370). While Adelaide learns that secrecy and lack of self-command violate her duties to those superior to her and threaten her with a loss of public respect, Emma's attraction to secrecy and her lack of self-command lead to a violation of her duties to those socially inferior to her, to Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax in particular. The consequence is a loss of self-respect, the disapproval of Mr. Knightley, and a measure of fear and restraint generated in those around her. Her true education comes with "anger against herself, mortification, and deep concern" (375-76); what follows is the discovery of a generosity of feeling and spirit.

Jane Austen, indeed, laughs at the very notion of perfection for which Mme. de Genlis provides a model. "[P]ictures of perfection . . . make me sick & wicked," she writes to a niece (23-25 March 1817). Jan Fergus points out that "[h]owever comfortable the eighteenth-century reader may have been with the perfect

characters who became a convention of didacticism, Austen refuses to cater to this taste, or rather, she sees its dangers" (5). Marilyn Butler argues that Austen "sees perfectibility as a condition of human life, but not perfection" (260). Indeed, Mr. Weston's "very indifferent piece of wit" at Box Hill—"'What two letters . . . express perfection?'" with its answer "M. and A." (371)—only underscores the illusiveness, even the fraudulence, of such an ideal. As Mr. Knightley has it, "'Perfection should not have come quite so soon'" (371).

But while perfection in her heroine does not come, something else does, "something so like perfect happiness, that it could bear no other name" (432). Austen's faith in romance infuses and animates the education plot. Although Emma is neither perfect nor perfectly educated at her marriage, she is "faultless in spite of all her faults" (433). Love and generosity of spirit—both Mr. Knightley's and Emma's—explain that paradoxical formulation. Emma's education depends not on a conscious application of a rationally designed program but on the workings of time and fortune on the human heart: "'Nature gave you understanding:—Miss Taylor gave you principles. You must have done well'" (462). This is education of a more natural, more individually defined, more transcendent kind.

Most seductive for Emma—and for that reason most interesting to Austen—are not the possibilities of romance or the improvement education promises but the powers required to wield their structures and conventions. While Mme. de Genlis celebrates those powers in *Adelaide and Theodore*, Austen in *Emma* both celebrates and critiques them. At the center of *Adelaide and Theodore* is the figure of the mother, "the educating heroine" (Moers 214). The Baroness d'Almane writes the letters, stories, plays, and epistolary narratives of moral discourse; she plans and controls the environments for the intellectual and physical culture of her children; indeed she creates the very texts of their romance and education plots. Her influence is extended and replicated through the course of the educational and maternal relationships she establishes. While anxiously waiting for children of her own, she first educates Mme. d'Ostalis. The education of Adelaide is simultaneous with her advice to her friends on managing their

marriages and educating their daughters. In order to prepare Adelaide for the education of her own children, Mme. d'Almane locates an orphan for the fourteen-year-old Adelaide to adopt. Adelaide becomes Ermine's "mistress, her Governess, and her mother" (3.7), even as she still sits as pupil at the Baroness's feet. Schools are established by the characters to educate the deserving poor on principles derived from Mme. d'Almane's system. Finally, the copies of the novel itself, these *Letters on Education*, are presented to Adelaide and Theodore on their wedding day for their use, though Mme. d'Almane plans to live long enough to educate their children, too. Her work, her words define and construct almost all of the novel's significant characters as well as future generations of characters and, she seems to hope, readers. "Oh! How pleasing to the heart, and how flattering to one's vanity, is it to hear it said it is to *you* she owes these principles, those virtues, and this character" (1.305). Only thirty-six years later, Victor Frankenstein will articulate a similar paternal desire.

The novel's solution presents a view of maternal power that does not end with the daughter's marriage. Adelaide and Theodore will reside after their marriages in apartments within the d'Almane home. When Charles unexpectedly inherits a large fortune, Adelaide offers to release him from his engagement if such an arrangement will no longer satisfy him: "Remember, Sir, that my mother when she made choice of you, had a right to expect never to be parted from her daughter" (3.255). Significantly, Charles immediately renews his oath "at the feet of Mme. d'Almaine" (3.258); indeed, the betrothal and wedding seem almost defined in terms of Charles's acquisition of Mme. d'Almane as a mother. Thus, the familial and communal properties of the marriages are underscored: Mme. d'Almane writes to Mme. d'Ostalis, "I see you returned to Paris; and your children and mine educated in the same principles, forming but one family, too numerous, too united not to constitute a felicity in themselves. Their virtues, their affection, and their behaviour making the happiness of our lives! Such delightful hopes cannot be chimerical: we have a right to expect what we have deserved to see realised" (3.274). Who within the system the novel sets up can argue with such reasoning?

Jane Austen opposes Mme. de Genlis's celebration of the power of the projector even while celebrating it, showing Emma delighting in her occupation of all the roles the novel has to offer. As Susan Morgan argues, "Emma's joy in being first is part of what makes her such an exhilarating character" (24). Emma sees herself, of course, as Mme. d'Ostalis, the first pupil of Mme. d'Almane, "as much distinguished for her reputation as for her person and charms" (1.45). But Emma also takes on other roles, and although in her mentoring of Harriet Smith she might *seem* to model Adelaide's adoption of Ermine, she approaches the relationship without Adelaide's sense of responsibility for simultaneous self-improvement. What Emma really desires is the role played by Mme. d'Almane, a role in which she can imagine and control the romantic and educational designs for all those around her: "*She* would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners. It would be an interesting, and certainly a very kind undertaking; highly becoming her own situation in life, her leisure, and powers" (23-24).

But where Genlis has perfect faith in her own system of education, arguing on its final page that "my Work is no romance" (3.283), Austen reveals a more comic skepticism. While Austen may certainly value, even share, Genlis's ideals of reason and virtue, she is suspicious of their efficacy. Certainly the power to control, to project complete and totalizing systems, might seem in the shadow of the French Revolution somewhat dangerous. Perhaps, too, Austen is less optimistic than Genlis about the perfection of parents as the designers either of their children's education or romance plots. As Moers has it, "so will it go in fiction as in life, those tight interlacings of women teaching women, their plans ever better, their results ever faulty" (216).

Emma's conclusion provides yet another comic undercutting of *Adelaide and Theodore*'s utopian fulfillment. In place of the Baroness d'Almane's extension of maternal authority even into her daughter's marriage, Mr. Woodhouse's benevolent but childish egocentrism demands a similar result: Mr. Knightley and Emma will begin their married life under Mr. Woodhouse's passive dominance. He is a parody of the tyrannical father, in Terry Castle's

phrase "the novel's most demanding baby" (xxv). In contrast to *Adelaide and Theodore*'s world, where the virtuous have a right to expect the fulfillment of their designs, *Emma*'s idealized community is defined not by the order of reason and virtue but by the bonds of love to which all efforts to control circumstances are surrendered—or, at least, mostly surrendered: "the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union" (484). While Mme. de Genlis's novel ends with a picture of perfection, Miss Austen's "perfect happiness" still leaves room for Mr. Knightley's opening speculation. We wonder what will become of Emma, what will become of them all.

NOTES

1. The change "from *Gouvernante* to *Gouverneur* is a change as momentous in French as it is in English, for *Governess* is in the nursery, and *Governor* rules the world. And the educating heroine, as the writings of Mme. de Genlis were among the earliest to show, stands for the heroinism of power" (Moers 214). See also Winegarten on Genlis's life and political accommodations and Trouille on Genlis's career, particularly on her response to Rousseau.

2. Mme. de Genlis's novel went through many French editions and was published in a number of other European countries. In England, the translation by "some Ladies . . . reduced from ease and opulence" (1.5) was first published in 1783, then again in 1784, 1788, and 1796. According to Grieder, it was also serialized in both *The Universal Magazine* and *The Lady's Magazine* (65).

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