

Fond Fathers, Devoted Daughters? Family Sentiment in Seventeenth-Century France

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This article argues that we should study the history of family sentiment through a method of close reading that attends sharply to the particularities of cultural context. As a demonstration it takes the "difficult" case of the relationships between fathers and daughters in early modern France. Careful analysis, albeit from a slim array of documents allows us to contend that from the middle of the seventeenth century, among men and women of affluent, but not courtly elites, new habits of experiencing and expressing feelings were emerging within the family. This new style of sentiment drew upon parallel developments in the rhetoric of emotion in the spheres of religion and secular literature.

Cet article soutient que nous devrions étudier l'histoire du sentiment familial selon une méthode de lecture attentive qui s'applique en profondeur aux particularités du contexte culturel. A preuve ce cas « difficile » des relations entre pères et filles au début de la France moderne. Une analyse soignée, mais d'une documentation limitée, nous permet d'affirmer qu'à partir du milieu du XVII^e s., de nouvelles habitudes d'expériences et d'expressions des sentiments entre hommes et femmes des élites nobles ou bourgeoises, à l'exclusion de celles de la cour, commençaient à se manifester dans la famille. Ce changement de mentalités entraîna des développements parallèles dans l'expression des sentiments, dans les domaines de la religion et de la littérature profane.

Here and there in seventeenth-century France, men and women groped toward a new way of experiencing affection within the family. Language and behaviour interacted, we suggest, to move at least some seventeenth-century people, principally among the less courtly nobility and the affluent bourgeoisie, to leave marks of family feeling different from those attested to in the documents of earlier times. Becoming more visible from mid-century, this new dimension of familial sentiment, which touched both the consciousness of feeling and its expression, contributed to the gradual evolution of cultural norms which, clearly by the next century, enshrined warmth and caring in the pantheon of domestic virtues. This development in the *mentalité* of the family drew on and reinforced parallel innovations in the conception and vocabulary of love in literature, both sacred and secular. Shifts in the meaning of words like *sentiment* and *tendresse* and their appearance in new contexts provided a fresh means to communicate emotions and directed attention toward changed forms of love. This essay has not the space to explore all the paths into the history of language and culture which these hypotheses open; here must suffice, as a beginning, a brief survey of writing on early modern French family sentiment, a look at contemporary images of love in other contexts, and then, more extensively, a case study of one particular, especially elusive kind of family relationship, that of fathers and daughters. Even this bond, probably the weakest within the seventeenth-century nuclear family, showed early signs of a future when domestic life would pivot on affection.

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In order to understand attachments specifically between fathers and daughters, we must create a context in a general picture of family sentiment in the period. Prompted by Ariès's posing of the question, "when did parents begin to love their children as children?," some historians have investigated and concluded that familial affection was a recent invention, that pre-modern domesticity was stress-ridden, harsh, and emotionally indifferent, and that "traditional" cultural norms expected little else.¹ Scholars who focus primarily on the early modern rather than later periods, however, have turned up some variety of evidence which argues for significant caring attitudes within the family well before the eighteenth century.²

As these latter historians point out, the early modern French themselves had conceptions of parental and filial emotions. Montaigne, as ever undaunted by the hobgoblin of consistency, mirrored many of his age's seemingly irreconcilable notions about love between parents and children. On the one hand, he held that parental affection was natural, a human law second only to that of self-preservation.³ On the other, he groused against the tedious, if fickle, infatuation of adults with their, especially infant, offspring. True fatherly affection, he maintained, grew from the seed of human instinct when nurtured not by babyish charm, but by the child's diligent practice of virtue and obedience.⁴ Likewise, parents best expressed their feelings not through indulgent coddling or imprudent declaration, but through earnest, reasonable cultivation of their children's interests in the face, often, of what appeared to be countless obstacles.⁵ In particular, natural affection, a labile emotion, too easily subverted the steadiness and firmness requisite to good parenting.⁶ Yet, Montaigne acknowledged, all this repression of loving word and act had its costs. Thus, he cited the pain of the bereaved Maréchal de Monluc, who,⁷

sur cette humeur d'une gravité et grimace paternelle, avoi[t] perdu la commodité de gouster et bien connoistre son fils, et aussi de luy declarer l'extreme amitié qu'il luy portoit.

In the same vein, Montaigne criticized the custom of insisting children address their fathers by formal titles — the familial appellation "Père" was good enough for God.⁸ And he warned that parents who bred their children only to fear and not to love them might reap only ridicule in old age.⁹ Filial love, less strongly rooted in nature, according to Montaigne, had even more than parental affection to be earned.¹⁰ So, taken together, his somewhat

1. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood. A Social History of Family Life*, trans. R. Baldick (New York, 1965); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975); Lloyd de Mause, "The Evolution of Childhood," in L. de Mause, ed., *History of Childhood* (New York, 1974), pp. 1-73; Elisabeth Badinter, *Mother Love, Myth and Reality* (New York, 1981).

2. David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History. The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France* (New York, 1970); Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times, Kinship, Household and Sexuality*, trans. R. Southern (Cambridge, 1979); René Pillorget, *La tige et le rameau. Familles anglaise et française. XVI-XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1979); Elizabeth W. Marvick, "Nature vs. Nurture: Patterns and Trends in Seventeenth-Century French Child-Rearing," in L. de Mause, ed., *History of Childhood*, pp. 259-301; Natalie Z. Davis, "Ghosts, Kin and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France," *Daedalus*, (Spring, 1977), pp. 87-114. Also influential is Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York, 1977).

3. Michel de Montaigne, *Les essais*, ed. Pierre Villey (Paris, 1965), II: 8, p. 386.

4. *Ibid.*, II: 8, p. 387. See also Ariès, *Centuries*, pp. 130-32.

5. *Ibid.*, II: 8, p. 386.

6. *Ibid.*, I: 26, p. 153; II: 8, p. 398.

7. *Ibid.*, II: 8, p. 395.

8. *Ibid.*, II: 8, p. 392.

9. *Ibid.*, II: 8, p. 392-93.

10. *Ibid.*, II: 8, p. 386.

contradictory counsels would have left families in a quandary over the right measure and form of love to pursue.

Other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French writing about family relations — memoirs, letters, moral treatises — echoed many of the themes from the *Essays*, especially the perception of tension between authority and affection. Although much literature of the period, characterizing parenthood as riddled with stress and rewarded with ingratitude, sought to reinforce the bastion of paternal authority against filial subversion, affection too had its defenders.¹¹ Certainly, some fathers and mothers felt and expressed warmth toward at least some of their children, and some children reciprocated.¹² Yet, while Christianity obliged everyone to love his neighbour, social norms prescribed no more specific parental love for offspring.¹³ Thus, mothers and fathers bestowed special affection on individual youngsters, who attracted their parents' good will through beauty, temperament, or conduct; as children differed from one another, no one expected to love them equally.¹⁴ Like Montaigne, the moral literature took parental affection as natural and, thus, like many human impulses, suspect.¹⁵ Such feelings, many moralists felt, threatened both divine and social order by encouraging people to place ephemeral, personal considerations before family stability and eternal salvation. Parental familiarity, born of fondness, promoted filial disrespect. Favouritism bred envy and disharmony. Moral writers indeed feared the effects of all strong, spontaneous emotions — labelled by them *passions* — negative as well as positive. Resentment, anger, hatred within the family, figured more prominently in early modern confessors' manuals than did love.¹⁶ And, as classical sensibility touted duty, responsibility, and restraint as the keystones of proper conduct among family members, the neglect and indifference toward children which many adults manifested posed less of a problem than too much love. But, especially as the seventeenth century progressed, voices now and again spoke of affection as a legitimate and enriching dimension of family life. Thus, in 1666 the Capuchin, Yves de Paris, wrote in a critique of hired wet-nurses,¹⁷

Au moins si la mère ne nourrit pas son enfant, qu'il soit ordinairement auprès d'elle, pour le voir, pour le caresser, en avoir le soin et tenir en exercice l'amour naturel que l'absence ou des pratiques moins familières pourraient éteindre ou affaiblir.

This summary of the evidence from the seventeenth century of family feeling turns up a bundle of apparently incompatible statements rather difficult to reconcile. French culture regarded the inclination of parents to love their children as natural, but not necessarily beneficial. Norms did not expect families to be warm and, indeed, held affection liable to hinder the right exercise of paternal authority. Some fathers and mothers singled out particular youngsters for special favour, but many others expressed at best perfunctory interest. And some children suffered what looks to the twentieth-century eye like concerted abuse rooted not only in parent's negligence or pathology, but also in their pursuit of legitimate social and political goals. Thus, forced marriages and coerced religious vocations can trouble modern scholars. This tangle of attitudes and ideas has led historians into incon-

11. Hunt, *Parents and Children*.

12. Marvick, "Nature vs. Nurture," pp. 288-89.

13. Flandrin, *Families*, pp. 137-40.

14. Marvick, "Nature vs. Nurture," p. 289, and see below, pp. 25-26.

15. Flandrin, *Families*, pp. 145-56; D.R. *Instruction chrétienne pour l'éducation des filles* (Paris, 1687), pp. 73-77, 82.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Quoted in Henri Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux à la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours* (1927; reprint Paris, 1968), I, p. 473; D.R., *Instruction chrétienne*, p. 75.

clusive discussions of whether or not early modern parents loved their children. A shift in perspective, much like that advocated by Lucien Febvre, helps resolve the difficulty. As he argued in books on Rabelais and Marguerite de Navarre, when early modern ideas and practices do not meet our expectations about human behaviour, they are likely to make more sense when interpreted together in their own cultural context.¹⁸

Indeed, in describing and analyzing mentalities from the past, too many historians persist in lodging their understanding carelessly in the concepts and priorities of the present. Scholars have been inclined to read into the evidence their assumptions about how they and their contemporaries would feel in a particular situation. It is the historians' version of what anthropologists call ethnocentrism. Such reasoning assumes a single, global human psychology and, usually, it adopts Western, twentieth-century conceptualizations of those universal responses. And modern social and ethical norms frequently stow away in the same explorers' ships. Cross-cultural research, however, indicates the imprudence of that kind of presupposition. Many studies in literary criticism and cultural anthropology have shown how every culture creates characteristic forms which shape the action and expression of the people who belong to it. To read text or behaviour, therefore, one needs to recognize the forms which give it meaning.

Specifically in the domain of the history of the family, Jean-Louis Flandrin warned nearly twenty years ago — and again quite recently — of the necessity of interpreting words and behaviour as the products of a very particular cultural context.¹⁹ This perspective has the effect of transposing the *question mal posée*, "did parents love their children?", into the more fruitful inquiry, "in a given place and time how did family members experience their feeling for one another?" And, as one abandons the teleology of modern intellectual preconceptions, it is possible to ask in a much more open frame how family sentiment evolved in a cultural setting through time. Clearly, there were large changes across centuries, but the process will remain poorly understood where the analysis remains on a very general plan. Too few historians of the family have pursued a culturally localized approach very thoroughly.²⁰ In particular, the technique of close reading with a keen eye to the power of context, which meets Flandrin's concerns, has the advantage that it may serve even where data are scarce. Thus, it is appropriate to the seventeenth-century French elites, who were changing their conception of sentiment in general, and, we suggest, of familial sentiment in particular. Something new on the historical scene may leave only traces at first, but still be all the more interesting and important to understand. Therefore, this essay proposes such a reading of one small group of sources from French fathers and daughters. Through this study we can follow individuals as they experience and express family feeling in new ways by selecting and adapting words and social forms at hand in their culture.

18. Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle. La religion de Rabelais* (Paris, 1942) and *Amour sacré, amour profane. Autour de l'Heptaméron* (Paris, 1944).

19. Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Sentiments et civilisation" in *Le sexe et l'Occident. Evolution des attitudes et des comportements* (Paris, 1981), p. 21. He reiterated the point in his recent survey of the "state of the question," "Histoire de la famille et histoire des mentalités," *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* of the Canadian Historical Association, Vancouver, 1983, pp. 141-43.

20. Besides Flandrin himself, Natalie Z. Davis, "Ghosts, Kin and Progeny", pp. 87-114, Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament. Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience and Self in Early America* (New York, 1977), and Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, (New York, 1980) use elements of this approach. Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children. Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1984) resoundingly omits it. A recent theoretical essay bearing on this problem is Peter N. Stearns with Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards", *American Historical Review*, XC (1985), pp. 813-36.

The contention that in the later seventeenth century, out of a bundle of conflicting attitudes and prescriptions, sentiment within the family was evolving toward a new legitimacy and cultural force gains credibility through comparison with developments in concepts of love in other domains, both religious and secular. In the spiritual realm, for instance, the rise of the cult of the Sacred Heart, with its emphasis — notable in the work of Jean Eudes — on Jesus as a Man-God with an emotional interior, suggested a differently conceived interest in feelings parallel to that emerging inside families.²¹ The emblem of the heart, with its long and complex iconographical history, in this context appeared newly to highlight the human as well as the divine dimension of Christ's love. Nonetheless, the most striking manifestation of such changes concerned romantic love and courtship as depicted in prose literature, especially novels, letters, and memoirs. Art and society interacted, however, and legal records of clandestine marriages, for example, testify to the practical consequences of some of the new notions of love being sounded in imaginative writing.²²

The predominant intellectual tradition inherited by the seventeenth century conceptualized love dichotomously as either sacred or profane; a third, new image of moralized romantic love was, however, emerging. Sacred love was love of God and of one's fellow man in Christ's image; it was the highest human emotional aspiration. Its opposite, profane love — a powerful, irrational attraction to earthly treasures, including especially sexual gratification — distracted its victims from seeking their true happiness in eternity; it was the root of sin. Yet the two loves co-existed and persisted in shaping human society.²³ To the early modern mind, profane or romantic love was, like parental affection, natural, but full of danger to divine and social harmony and order. Many writers saw such this-worldly attachments, along with commonly associated obsessions like jealousy and melancholy, as passion in need of tight control.²⁴ Moral restraint of deed and thought were not enough; language, too, required a close rein.²⁵ However, in novels and, later, memoirs, there developed a new concept in which love between men and women was possible without the old stigma.²⁶ Not all romantic love was virtuous, but neither had it to be vicious. It acquired legitimacy as a goal of human enterprise and could justify the breach of other social norms, as, for example, parental choice of spouses for their children; this class of values provided a theme for many novels.²⁷ Indeed, the making of marriages was a context in which evolving ideas about sentiment, romantic and familial, intersected.

21. Brémond, *Histoire littéraire*, III, pt 2, p. 298-328. Another interesting direction for research is familial metaphors in religious rhetoric; see, for example, Jeanne Françoise Fréymot de Chantal, *Her Exhortations, Conferencés and Instructions* (Westminster, Md, 1947), p. 430.

22. On evolution of the place of love in making marriages, see Hunt, *Parents and Children*, pp. 64-67; Flandrin, *Families*, pp. 61-66; Pillorget, *La tige et le rameau*, pp. 49-55; also note 42 below.

23. The problem of the coexistence of these two, sharply contradictory motivations in one culture and even in the work of a single sixteenth-century author, Marguerite de Navarre, gave focus and title to Febvre's book.

24. Louise K. Horowitz, *Love and Language. A Study of the Classical French Moralists Writers* (Columbus, 1977); these concerns were central to many of the authors discussed. For example, see the treatment of Madame de Lafayette, pp. 56-60.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41, regarding La Rochefoucauld, and pp. 119-20, regarding Esprit.

26. Marie-Thérèse Hipp, *Mythes et réalités. Enquête sur le roman et les mémoires, 1660-1700* (Paris, 1976), pp. 98-107; Maurice Magendie, *Le roman français au XVII^e siècle de l'Astrée au Grand Cyrus* (Geneva, 1978; orig. 1932), pp. 300-2; Raymonde Robert, *Le conte de fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVII^e à la fin du XVIII^e siècle* (Nancy, 1982), pp. 136-37.

27. Magendie, *Roman français*, pp. 371-73; Gustave Reynier, *Le roman sentimental avant l'Astrée* (Paris, 1908), pp. 288-300; English Showalter, Jr, *The Evolution of the French Novel, 1641-1782* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 235-46.

The analysis of *amour* and its psychological ramifications gained sophistication in the second half of the century, as writers became increasingly interested in the interior self and in authenticity of emotion.²⁸ Yet the novelty of the enterprise caused them to confront a problem in the poverty of vocabulary available to characterize the feelings they now wanted to explore. The categorical and distancing habits which had shaped the expression of emotion to suit the old morality and good manners — as, for example, the canons of *préciosité* — no longer sufficed for those seeking to convey a fuller and richer understanding of sentiment. Romantic and familial affection shared this difficulty with words.²⁹ Nevertheless, amorous literature, with its longer pedigree, even though incompletely adequate to new purposes, was sometimes called upon, as we shall see, to supply vocabulary to the new familial speakers about love. Some situations in which family members found themselves bursting with need to declare their feelings resembled classic moments in the progress of a love affair as portrayed in novels or epistolary art. In particular, parents found in the theme of separation from or loss of the beloved (a favourite of baroque eros), an analogy too often fitting their own emotional experiences.

Now, keeping in mind this general argument for a parallel development of thinking about sentiment — not only familial, but also religious and romantic — let us turn to a case study of fathers' and daughters' feelings for each other. Paternal affection for daughters elicits special interest because rich emotion within that relationship contravened the expectations and prescriptions of seventeenth-century society.³⁰ We will examine first what convention dictated as the mutual responsibilities and proper conduct of these roles and next how actual behaviour sometimes overstepped the norms. Then, against this general backdrop, a close look at a few, unusually full accounts of paternal sentiment will, we hope, demonstrate how, in their own cultural context, some seventeenth-century families experimented with ways to experience and express emotion.

The conventions of early modern French society parcelled out the labour or child-rearing by gender. The division separated the work of mothers and fathers in two ways. On the one hand, as soon as children acquired a social gender, that is, at about seven years of age, fathers assumed responsibility for the education of sons and mothers saw to daughters.³¹ On the other hand, a second dichotomy, which sliced across the first, assigned to mothers nurture and the care of the body and to fathers ultimate authority in the family and legal guardianship of its members.³² This scheme expected from fathers little interest in or contact with their female offspring. The duties of the *pater familias* toward his daughters demanded much greater sensitivity about people outside his household than about those who dwelt within. Defence of a girl's reputation, choice of her husband, negotiation of a marriage settlement or a convent dowry: none of these tasks obliged a father to know

28. Hipp, *Mythes et réalités*, pp. 390-91; Raymond Lebègue, "La sensibilité dans les lettres d'amour au XVII^e siècle," p. 79; Roger Duchêne, *Réalité vécue et art épistolaire. Madame de Sévigné et la lettre d'amour* (Paris, 1970), esp. pp. 264-68. On the limited emotional repertoire of novels earlier in the century, see Reynier, *Roman sentimental*, p. 405, and Magendie, *Roman français*, p. 318.

29. Hipp, *Mythes et réalités*, pp. 98, 464-65; Duchêne, *Réalité vécue*, pp. 268-78.

30. In a comment on a conference presentation of an earlier version of this paper, Flandrin remarked also that we do not assign a biological basis to such paternal, as compared to maternal, feelings for offspring.

31. Jean Bouchet, *Epistres morales et familiares du traverseur* (Poitiers, 1545), f. 24; Pierre Fortin de la Hogue, *Testament, ou conseils fidelles d'un bon pere à ses enfans*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1648), p. 406; Hunt, *Parents and Children*, pp. 180-86.

32. Flandrin, *Families*, pp. 118-22, 130-31; Bibliothèque Nationale (hereafter BN), Collection Morel de Thoisy, vol. 318, f. 58; Jules Houdoy, *L'instruction gratuite et obligatoire depuis le XVI^e siècle* (Lille, 1873), p. 9.

much about the character or personal inclinations of his daughter.³³ To him she was, more than an individual human soul, an asset or a liability to be wielded deftly to preserve or even enhance the family's honour and fortune. The rest of the bringing up of girls a man could legitimately leave to his wife or other women.³⁴

Custom and law thus set the limited role of fathers in the rearing of their daughters. The actual behaviour of many early modern fathers presumably conformed to this minimal ideal. Some, however, showed greater interest. An absent father, for example, sometimes sought by correspondence to keep regular track of his daughter's progress. In 1587 Phillippe du Plessis de Mornay chided his wife, "mais tu ne me mande rien de ta fille et te semble que j'en soy moins soigneux que d'un filz"; in succeeding letters, he asked specifically for news of "la petite".³⁵ An interesting minority of fathers, however — most, though not all, nobles or prosperous burghers — troubled themselves further. They made gifts, satisfied special material needs, administered discipline, taught, or even just played with their girls. Thus, in early modern society prevailing cultural attitudes did not expect men to concern themselves with female upbringing, but in some circles at least tolerated their doing so.

Although discipline would seem to have been a natural application of paternal authority, men usually left to women the correction, at least of young girls. Nonetheless, pedagogues' recommendations on female discipline sometimes addressed parents of both sexes.³⁶ As father and philosopher, Montaigne interested himself in the correction of girls; even though they were born to more restricted freedom than boys, he preached gentleness as the route to honourable character for all children. Yet he left it to his wife to carry out this programme with his only surviving offspring, Leonor.³⁷ Perhaps paternal punishment was so taken for granted as to pass unmentioned. On the other hand, the hagiography of the nun, Agnès Galand, commended her father, a cutler, for his exceptional care and scrupulousness when he beat his favourite for falling asleep in church.³⁸ Probably, the conventional lack of paternal involvement with girls often extended to routine discipline as well.

In matters touching a father's duty to establish his daughter in adult life, however, men were swift to impose their will. Memoirs and court records documented many instances of young women separated from friends, locked up, and beaten by fathers intent on forcing

33. Justin de Pas, "Mœurs rustiques aux XV^e, XVI^e, et XVII^e siècles dans les bailliages de St-Omer et Aire, d'après les lettres de rémission de souverains", *Mémoires de la société des antiquaires de la Morinie*, XXXV (1931), p. 347; François Lebrun, *La vie conjugale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1975), pp. 33-34.

34. Elisabeth Stopp, *Madame de Chantal. Portrait of a Saint* (London, 1962), p. 18; D.R., *Instruction chretienne*, p. 166; Giovanni Michele Bruto, *La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente (L'institution d'une fille de noble maison)* (Antwerp, 1555), f. 9.

35. Charlotte Arbaleste de Mornay, *Mémoires*, ed. de Witt (Paris, 1868-69), II, p. 132, 134-35. For another example, Jacqueline Arnauld, *Lettres de la reverende Mere Marie Angelique Arnauld* (Utrecht, 1742-44), III, p. 392.

36. Bouchet, *Epistres*, f. 24-5v; Bruto, *Institutione*, f. 19v.; *Instruction sur le mariage par dialogue d'une mère à sa fille* (Lyon, 1683), pp. 302-10; H.C. Barnard, *Fénelon on Education* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 19-20.

37. Montaigne, *Essais*, II: 8, p. 389.

38. Charles de Lantages, *La vie de la venerable Mere Agnez de Jesus, religieuse de l'Ordre de S. Dominique* (Le Puy, 1665), pp. 14-15. More arbitrary beatings may have been common, but are not documented.

their daughters to relinquish unacceptable suitors or to marry the parental nominee.³⁹ In a tawdry parody of the practice of fatherly authority, a besotted carpenter of Douai promised a sound thrashing to his high-minded daughter, just returned from a convent boarding school, if she refused to co-operate with her step-mother, a tavern-keeper eager to peddle the teenager's charms to her clientele.⁴⁰ And the state, through the elaboration of legislation to control elopements and clandestine marriages, supported paternal rights to secure filial submission.⁴¹ But there was another side to the story. Novels, too, often presented plots centred on the exercise — and abuse — of fatherly authority.⁴² For example, in the 1560s Belleforest's collection of *Histoires tragiques* condemned rebellious daughters in the name of law and morality. By the end of the century, however, novels tended "à defendre contre les tyrannies domestiques les droits du coeur et la liberté individuelle."⁴³ Thus, early modern fathers played the role of authority figures more actively as their daughters approached adulthood and prepared to enter a more public arena. While parents legitimately wielded many weapons, including physical force, to win their way, concern was growing to limit damage to not only children's bodies, but also their feelings.

As educators, rather than disciplinarians, fathers entered more definitively into the mother's province. Intervention in the education of daughters followed sometimes from a lack of sons in whom a man could invest his attention; at other times a trespass onto maternal turf proceeded from divergent parental aspirations about a girl's future. Thus, one parent might promote a gay, sociable childhood culminating in a glittering nuptial alliance, while the other favoured a pious, sheltered upbringing in preparation for the holy austerities of a conventual retreat. On the one hand, the fathers of Elizabeth Lambert and of the future Madame Guyon sent those girls off as monastic boarders to afford them a more religiously and morally demanding education than their worldly or neglectful mothers were dispensing at home.⁴⁴ On the other, the Baron de Souhé tried to moderate the religious mortifications which his child Marguerite sought to practice.⁴⁵ A few men themselves undertook even to teach. Anne LeFevre, later Madame Dacier, began her extensive classical studies through eavesdropping while her father, a prominent scholar of Greek, instructed her brother. After Anne one day volunteered the correct answer to a question which stumped the boy, her father invited her to join the lessons, where she soon outstripped her sibling.⁴⁶ Of more modest pedagogical pretensions, a grain merchant from Tours chose himself to tutor his girl in the rudiments of the Christian faith rather than abandon so crucial a task to another.⁴⁷

39. Catherine Meurdrac de la Guette, *Mémoires*, ed. C. Moreau (Paris, 1856), pp. 17-33; Pierre de Combes, *Recueil tiré des procédures criminelles faites par plusieurs officiaux et autres juges du royaume* (Paris, 1700), pp. 26, 181; BN Thoisy, vol. 189, f. 501; Archives Nationales, Z¹⁰ 121, 4 nov, 1625.

40. Clément-Hémery, *Histoire des fêtes civiles et religieuses, usages anciens du département du Nord*, 2d ed. (Cambrai, 1836), I, p. 416. See also BN Thoisy, vol. 189, f. 125.

41. Jacques Ghestin, "L'Action des parlements contre les 'mésalliances' aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 4th ser., 34^e année (1956), pp. 74-110, 196-224.

42. Reynier, *Roman sentimental*, pp. 288-95; Showalter, *Evolution*, pp. 235-46.

43. Reynier, *Roman sentimental*, p. 292.

44. Paul Bois, *La vie des premières religieuses capucines du monastere de Marseille* (Marseille, 1754), p. 363; Jeanne Marie Bouvières de la Mothe Guyon, *La vie de Madame J.M.B. de la Mothe Guion, écrite par elle-même* (Cologne, 1720), I, pp. 11, 18.

45. Jean Marie de Vernon, *La vie de la venerable Mere Marguerite de S. Xavier, religieuse ursuline du monastere de Dijon* (Paris, 1665), p. 41.

46. Enrica Malcovati, *Madame Dacier, una gentildonna filologa del Gran Secolo* (Florence, 1952), pp. 9-10. Another example, Blaise Pascal, *Oeuvres*, ed. L. Brunschvicg and P. Boutroux (Paris, 1908; reprint Vaduz, 1965), I, p. 31.

47. Claude Martin, *La vie de la venerable Mere Marie de l'Incarnation, premiere superieure des Ursulines de la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1677), p. 291.

The relations between fathers and daughters did not always rest exclusively on punishment or earnest instruction. Pleasure, too, characterized family dealings, as in the giving of gifts and the indulging of whims. Thus, to celebrate a holiday or mark a homecoming, fathers might buy ribbons, alphabets, candy, or pinwheels for their children.⁴⁸ One man hired a master to gratify his adolescent daughter's wish to learn fencing.⁴⁹ Others enjoyed their youngsters' company. Parents, taking a walk in the village or the woods, would have the baby bundled and carried along by a servant.⁵⁰ Older daughters accompanied their fathers as they journeyed on business from town to country or beyond.⁵¹ Even fathers as august as King Henri II himself delighted in holding a daughter on their laps, chatting and teasing. In two instances of fathers playing in this way with five- and six-year-olds, the joke turned on which young gentleman would be the girl's suitor or "serviteur".⁵² Note that even fathers who overstepped convention with their friendly attention to young daughters spoke of them as future commodities for the marriage market. This conjunction of fondness with the subjection of the beloved to such socially defined obligations was consistent with the early modern construction of family life, as we shall see below.

Such gay intimacy, indulgent gift-giving, and like expressions of informal paternal interest in daughters was enough to prompt the warnings of moralists. Father as playmate and companion struck such writers as incompatible with father as patriarch. An edifying treatise of 1683, for example, *Instruction sur le mariage*, quoting Ecclesiasticus 7, asserted that a man who too often showed his daughter a cheerful countenance lost control of her.⁵³ And without parental authority the whole society risked tottering. In sum, the seventeenth-century French allowed some variety in fatherly conduct toward daughters, but were quick to discourage any behaviour which appeared to threaten the stability of the social order.

Against this background of norms and practice, we may now examine the handful of examples of fathers and daughters talking about their feelings for one another. To understand these accounts in their cultural context, as we have prescribed, we must keep in mind at least two layers of questions. First, what were the intentions and expectations of the writers? What form of vocabulary did they choose to address what sort of audience? Did what they were saying seem to them unusual for their time, as it does to readers three hundred years later? Second, as historians of the family and especially of its emotional economy, how do we understand and use these documents? What kinds of interpretive apparatus may we legitimately apply to make these few instances yield as much as possible? Can we extract from these few, quite full testimonies patterns which we can discern, though more fragmentarily, in other sources? In hopes of answering these questions in a fashion which demonstrates the rich harvest of this approach, we turn now to analyzing the texts themselves.

48. Louis Guibert, *Nouveau recueil de registres domestiques limousins et marchois (de 1384 à nos jours)* (Paris and Limoges, 1895), pp. 428, 461; Mornay, *Mémoires*, p. 255; BN Thoisy, vol. 189, f. 488v.

49. La Guette, *Mémoires*, pp. 8-9.

50. BN Thoisy, vol. 189, f. 488v; Marie de l'Incarnation Guyard, "Le récit de la vie, des vertus, et de la mort de la Mere Marie de Saint Joseph" in *Lettres de la venerable Mere Marie de l'Incarnation* (Paris, 1677), p. 465.

51. J. Roland-Gosselin, *Le Carmel de Beaune, 1619-1660* (Rabat, 1969), pp. 47, 61; Jean Maillefer, *Mémoires de Jean Maillefer, marchand bourgeois de Reims (1611-1684)*, ed. H. Jardt (Paris and Reims, 1890), pp. 135-36, 141-42, 146.

52. Guyard, "Le récit," pp. 465-66; Marguerite de Valois, *Mémoires et autres écrits*, ed. Y. Cazaux ([Paris], 1971), pp. 37-38.

53. *Instruction sur le mariage*, p. 284. See also Barnard, *Fénelon*, p. 19.

In April, 1666 Jean Maillefer, a widowed merchant and bourgeois of the city of Reims, wrote a letter to his eldest daughter, Anne. Then ten and a half years old, she had recently gone as a boarding pupil to a local convent, probably to prepare for her first communion. By the latter half of the seventeenth century many prosperous parents considered such a year or two with the nuns as a proper "finishing" for a daughter's education. Furthermore, moralists recommended the custodial services of a convent to widowers saddled with immature girls.⁵⁴ In a copy of the letter published in his memoirs, the father wrote,⁵⁵

Ma très chère fille,

A pæine avés vous esté sortie du logis que je n'avois plus de coeure. Je le cherche par tout, dans mes magasins, dans mes bastimens, dans ma caisse mesme. J'ay ouvert vostre cabinet, croyant que me l'aúriés caché avecq vos raretés, mais inutilement. Je ne l'é pas trouvée, nos servantes m'ont dit: 'Nous alons balayer par tout et s'y nous le trouvons, nous vous le rendrons.' Je leur ay dit que elles estoient des canailles, que mon coeure ne se trouveroit jamais avecq des vilanies et des ordures, que il les avoit tousjours eue et les avoit encore présentement en horreur et que il les fuyoit come la peste. Il est vray que il ayme les compagnies mais ce sont celles des personnes spirituelles et honnestes, les jardins, les parteres et les fleures, les allées de charmes, la promenade, les livres, mais faut que il en face le chois.

Je ne suis pas alée le chercher au bal sachant bien que je ne l'y recontrerois pas, enfin après mestre bien penné dans ceste recherche, j'en ay treuvé la moitié toute destrempee de souspirs et de larmes sur le tombeau de vostre mère, qui sembloit y estre plus unie que attachée; je ne peux le reprendre, c'est en vain que je cherche l'aútre moitié. Il faut que vous me l'ayés pris, grande laronnesse des coeures, vous debvriés espargnier celuy d'un père, vous en serés touchée et vous avés assés de naturel pour me le vouloir rendre et je croy assés que il ne voudra pas revenir, car mon petit doigt m'a dit que il se plait fort dans le couvent. Enfin, ma fille, vous avés un père qui n'a plus de coeure, et, comme c'est vous qui le possédés, faut que je vous nomme maintenant.

Mon chère coeure

Maillefer began in 1667 the memoirs in which the letter of the preceding year is preserved. Describing himself as ill and fearful of permanent debility, he opened with a comment addressed "Au Publicque", which set the tone for much of what followed, "j'ay esté beaucoup consolé que Dieu m'ayt donné huit fils, sans compter les filles, lesquels, sy ils m'obeissent, seront vos serviteurs."⁵⁶ Here was the patriarch, who, thinking himself near death, offered as his principal achievement a numerous progeny, especially sons. If they obeyed their father, he assured his readers, the children would prove good Christians and useful members of society. The priority given to sons was characteristic of the age, but perhaps startling to note in the same man whose daughter stole his heart.

The particular point in Maillefer's memoirs at which the letter appears tells us little about its meaning. Its date and position in the text suggest that it was copied on a loose leaf and stuck into the manuscript.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the tone of the letter fits well with the book as a whole, which suggests a man emotionally quite open and interested in his fellow

54. Elizabeth S. Cohen, "The Socialization of Girls and Young Women in Early Modern France (1560-1700)" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978), pp. 447-71. See also n. 34 above.

55. Maillefer, *Mémoires*, pp. 165-66.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 1; see also p. 148. For others "consoled" by children: Pascal, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 147-48; Vernon, *Vie de Marguerite de S. Xavier*, p. 49.

57. In the memoirs, as published in 1890, the letter appears amidst entries — chronologically somewhat scrambled — for February, 1673. Except for a reference to the death of the prioress of the convent where Anne had boarded, the immediate context for the inclusion of the letter in this spot is obscure. I have not been able to seek out the original manuscript.

human beings. In particular, for a father who, when proclaiming his offspring his chief consolation, shunted his daughters into a textual aside, he showed surprising attention to and sympathy with the women in his life. For example, the memoirs retold at length his courtship of two wives and poignantly lamented their deaths.⁵⁸ Oddly, given Maillefer's introductory remarks, he scarcely mentioned in the early parts of his account the births or doings of his eleven children, only one of whom appears to have died young.⁵⁹ From 1668, however, when the merchant in mended health continued his autobiography as a journal, the offspring, including two daughters, appeared often. Yet, as Maillefer's account passed from memoir to journal, the language of feeling became less frequent and less rich. In sum, the writer of the letter, on the one hand, espoused quite conventional notions about his responsibilities and privileges as a father, and, on the other, cared about his wives and daughters, deriving from them much of his sense of well-being.

The later relationship of Jean Maillefer and Anne, as it emerges from the journal, helps us read the letter. Furthermore, the pattern of dealings between the man and the girl mirrors one glimpsed in other seventeenth-century lives. Not coincidentally was Jean a widower and Anne his elder daughter. Anne, after her return from the convent, seems to have taken on the role of housekeeper and companion to her father. Thus, she, sometimes along with other siblings, accompanied Jean on a local pilgrimage to some Roman ruins, or, often, to the family farm, where she assisted with such tasks as gathering and drying plums.⁶⁰ Together the father and daughter attended weddings and Jean twice selected Anne to stand with him as god-parents to children of family servants.⁶¹ Thus, Anne had not only stolen her father's heart, but also assumed the post of surrogate wife.

Daughters offered some seventeenth-century widowers a convenient and comfortable substitute for the wives they had lost. Motherless girls as young as twelve or thirteen not uncommonly took on the running of their fathers' households.⁶² Anne Maillefer was not alone in providing both emotional and practical services. The double duty often fell to the oldest girl remaining at home, but the roles might be divided. In a version of the folkloric favoritism typified by Cinderella, Etienne Boussard, bourgeois of Montargis, for example, initially gave his indulgent love to his elder daughter and the drudgery to the younger. When the first girl married, however, the second "prit sa place dans l'affection de son père."⁶³

Such role-playing was only one indication of paternal reliance on daughters. When a nearly adult daughter asserted her will to shape her own future, the depth of paternal dependence often came to the fore. Such conflicts sometimes troubled fathers' affections acutely, particularly when the girl, choosing to honour divine over earthly paternity, entered

58. Maillefer, *Mémoires*, pp. 33-37, 39, 47-51, 82-84, 153. He also incorporated in his autobiography a colourful portrait of his mother, whom he deeply respected: pp. 33-34, 37, 39, 122-23.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 330-31. The number discounts three stillbirths: p. 39.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 158-59, 164, 171.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36, 141-42, 146.

62. Thomas Fortin, *La vie de damoiselle Elizabeth Ranquet* (Paris, 1655), p. 18; Vernon, *Vie de Marguerite de S. Xavier*, pp. 17-19; Jacqueline Bouette de Blémur, *Eloges de plusieurs personnes illustres en piété de l'ordre de St. Benoist decedées en ces derniers siècles* (Paris, 1679), I, p. 346; Etienne Catta, *La vie d'un monastère sous l'Ancien Régime. La Visitation Sainte Marie de Nantes (1630-1792)* (Paris, 1954), pp. 131-32.

63. Bouette de Blémur, *Eloges*, I, p. 346. The creation of surrogate wives and, in particular, the passage of several daughters through the role in sequence suggests interesting analogies with recent psychological discussion of incest. Nonetheless, since the argument of this paper challenges the power of loose cross-cultural comparisons, insensitive to cultural specificity, we have resisted the temptation to pursue such lines of thought. It is particularly important to remember how differently such situations were experienced in a culture not shaped by Freud.

religion. Conceiving the issue in just those terms, Angelique Arnauld wrote of her adolescent vocation that she was led to "think seriously of satisfying God rather than my father."⁶⁴ In response to similar aspirations of other young women, the Baron de Souhé was not the only fond father who campaigned long to keep his daughter in the world.⁶⁵ Indeed, parents who objected to children taking the veil constituted a literary type almost as common as that of those who forced unwilling vocations.⁶⁶ Fathers had various reasons to disapprove; they were probably more likely to regret the lost opportunity to advance the family through a good marriage than the breaking of affectionate contact with a loved one. Yet the second concern was real, as the tightening of monastic discipline under the aegis of the Counter-Reformation meant that becoming a nun often demanded quite a sharp rupture of family ties. Thus, parental opposition proved that, just as the moralists had warned, this-worldly affection obstructed other-worldly devotion.

While fondness sometimes led fathers to oppose the definitive break with earthly family marked by the veil, paternal affection appears not to have delayed marriages. Favoured children often wed promptly. Thus, Jean Maillefer married Anne off to a neighbour at the age of seventeen.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, marriage, locally at least, did not necessarily interrupt contact. Jean thereafter mentioned Anne less frequently, but he continued to visit her and occasionally took her and her children to the country.⁶⁸ Another affectionate father, the Parisian Pierre Ranquet, allowed his Elizabeth to marry, but protested and wept when she soon decided to move to the country to protect her husband's fragile health.⁶⁹

Now it is time to return to the letter of 1666. We have learned that the writer was an emotional fellow, grieving — then, as for the rest of his life — over the death of his second wife and facing another painful separation, that from his ten-year-old daughter. In sending her to the convent boarding school, Maillefer bowed to conventions about the proper pacing of a female education and to moralists' recommendations about the management of motherless girls. Yet the letter bespoke a high psychological price for conformity. And Maillefer's subsequent reliance on Anne as housekeeper and companion suggests some emotional continuity between the letter and later dealings between them. How then can we read the letter in order more precisely to characterize the nature of the merchant's paternal fondness?

The internal analysis of the letter is complicated by its rarity. Seventeenth-century letters from fathers to daughters are scarce, and those that have survived tend to didacticism and moralizing. For example, Etienne Bernard, a royal official based in Burgundy, instructed his oldest daughter, then charged with overseeing the household, in practical matters regarding paying expenses, managing the younger children, and treating poor re-

64. Quoted in Marvick, "Nature vs. Nurture," p. 287.

65. Vernon, *Vie de Marguerite de S. Xavier*, pp. 22-28, 48-50.

66. Bouette de Blémur, *Eloges*, II, pp. 306-8; Bois, *Vie des capucines*, pp. 97-99; Pascal, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 152-56; Charles Louis Hugo, *La vie de la rev. Mere Marie Therese Erard, superieure du monastere de Notre-Dame du Refuge de Nancy* (Nancy, 1704), pp. 3-13. On literary treatments of forced vocations, see Reynier, *Roman sentimental*, pp. 296-98, and Magendie, *Roman français*, p. 384.

67. Maillefer, *Mémoires*, pp. 164, 171. Another example: Guyon, *Vie*, I, pp. 49-52.

68. Maillefer, *Mémoires*, pp. 194, 200, 213, 216. He also visited his other daughter, the nun: pp. 182, 196, 209, 213. Other examples of fathers who maintained close touch after a daughter married: Guyon, *Vie*, I, pp. 53-54, 65; Maillefer, *Mémoires*, pp. 122-23, regarding his grandfather and mother; Henri Drouot, "Un père de famille sous Henri IV: Lettres domestiques d'Etienne Bernard (1598-1606)", *Annales de Bourgogne*, XXIV (1952), p. 172.

69. Fortin, *Vie de Elizabeth Ranquet*, pp. 25-27.

lations charitably.⁷⁰ Also early in the century, Nicolas Pasquier wrote in the form of letters to his daughters two very abstract disquisitions on female virtue and good conduct.⁷¹ Neither of these men took the occasion to express much in the way of sentiment. Thus, Maillefer's flamboyantly emotional epistle, while it alluded to edifying conduct, transcended the earnest conventionality of much fatherly correspondence. Perhaps Maillefer's document may be more fruitfully read as a love letter.

As a love letter Maillefer's was unusual in being addressed inside the biological family and to a girl of a mere ten years, even if she had, by emotional transference, in some part replaced his wife. Nevertheless, the text included elements which linked it closely to the seventeenth-century tradition of epistolary art and of amorous writing more generally. Knowing little of the education or literary taste of this provincial merchant, we cannot trace directly the sources of his chosen themes or language.⁷² Nevertheless, to express his feelings for his daughter at a particular moment in their relationship and to court her attention and affection, he put to use some conventions readily recognizable from romantic literature. For Jean the experience of Anne's departure may have brought to mind the frequent literary treatments of the theme of separation from and loss of the beloved. Indeed, absence figured in early modern novels and poetry, as well as in letters, as a classic hardship for lovers. Yet, finding himself bereft, in his letter Maillefer struck first not a tragic, but a playful tone, seeking perhaps consolation in laughter for himself and his child. The almost comical domesticity of the initial images contrasted with the somberness of the theme. Love poetry rarely sank to such mundane details in its thirst for metaphor. Nonetheless, Maillefer's elaborate use of figures of speech shared the habit of distancing emotion through clever manipulation of language which characterized the *préciosité* of earlier decades. As he coquettishly chided his daughter as a "thief of hearts," Maillefer sounded like a rather unoriginal lover pleading with his beloved.

Specifically in the elaboration in the letter of the figure of the heart, Jean Maillefer played on several themes recurrent in seventeenth-century treatments of sentiment. Flandrin has suggested that the sixteenth-century did not too readily use the heart to signify the bodily seat of profane love, but certainly late in that century and in the following, the image became a familiar one.⁷³ Interestingly, the heart by then also figured frequently in affectionate family discourse.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the extended manipulation of the metaphor which Maillefer adopted to shape his letter belonged to the tradition of amorous artifice. In general literary usage, the heart stood metonymically for the core of the person and, in particular, for his feelings, including love. Thus Maillefer was himself the heart which he depicted arrayed in a variety of settings. Yet, at the same time as the heart symbolized the man, Maillefer, like other writers, also portrayed it as detached, leaving its owner empty and incomplete, while it went off on metaphoric adventures of its own.⁷⁵ So, the merchant first characterized

70. Drouot, "Père de famille," pp. 166-69.

71. Etienne Pasquier, *Oeuvres*, II, *Lettres, œuvres meslées, lettres de Nicolas Pasquier, fils d'Estienne* (Amsterdam, 1723), pp. 1151-66.

72. Maillefer, *Mémoires*, pp. vii-viii. The editor asserts that he read both sacred and secular literature and, interestingly, was particularly fond of Montaigne.

73. Flandrin, "Sentiments," pp. 37-38. In the same collection, "L'amour et les amours au XVI^e siècle," pp. 45-59, argues in the same direction. See also Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Les thèmes amoureux dans la poésie française, 1570-1600* ([Paris], 1975), pp. 327-36.

74. Pascal, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 348; Pasquier, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 673; Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, (New York, 1980), pp. 230-31.

75. Mathieu-Castellani, *Thèmes amoureux*, pp. 327-29. Lisa Efimov-Schneider has been helpful in developing this analysis.

his disembodied heart as a treasure, vulnerable to theft or loss; in that guise it might fetch up incongruously amidst the dirt swept up by a servant. Next, the heart became an independent actor and shouldered the role of moral paragon, eschewing vice and dangerous entertainments and seeking out only honest companions and pleasant surroundings. Then the tone of the letter suddenly darkened, as the heart was discovered lying on a tomb, torn apart, the one half anguished, drawn toward death and the next world, the other half content among the living. Here the romantic domain opened into the religious, as the problem of the relationship of this-worldly and other-worldly love surfaced again. Where girls' monastic vocations pitted father against God in competition for love, in Maillefer's letter the dead wife and the living daughter vied for his heart. Here in metaphor, as surely in real life, the suffering husband and father worked to reconcile complex claims on his love.

To summarize, we may best understand Maillefer's letter as an experiment in expanding the boundaries of form and language for the expression of familial sentiment beyond the limits set by the prescriptive literature. In many respects a man of conventional ideas on religion and social obligation, Maillefer does not appear intimidated by any association, so central to the tradition of moral literature, of paternal affection with filial disrespect or of familial sentiment with negligence in loving God. Certainly, his expression of feelings betrayed a conception of affection different from that which underlay the injunctions against "coddling". Perhaps Maillefer was an imprudently indulgent parent, although clearly he would have denied such a characterization of himself. That, however, is not the point. Rather, his letter to his daughter represented his attempt to describe an experience of affection of a sort for which his culture offered few specific models and little vocabulary. Therefore, we argue, he adapted, especially from romantic literature, the ideas and words he wanted. If the result was somewhat clumsy and muddled in tone that may be all the more reason to honour the sincerity of the enterprise.

While few of Maillefer's contemporaries have provided much fare for comparison, the vast correspondence of Madame de Sévigné to her adult daughter shows several of the same connections between the expression of romantic and familial love.⁷⁶ The first of the letters to Madame de Grignan, famous for their effusive emotionality, dated from 1671, only a few years after Maillefer lost his heart. Although the gentlewoman far outdistanced the provincial merchant in her exploration of ways to express feeling fully and directly — and literary critics cite her work as innovative in its quest for such sentimental authenticity — she wrestled with the same problems as Anne's father. For Madame de Sévigné, too, the theme of separation from the beloved was central; and, to present it, she also at least once resorted to a kind of homely detail that was so strikingly used by Maillefer:⁷⁷

Toute votre chambre me tue, j'y ai fait mettre un paravent tout au milieu, pour rompre un peu la vue d'une fenêtre sur ce degré par où je vous vis monter dans le carrosse d'Hacqueville et par où je vous rappelai.

Also, like Maillefer, the lady confronted a language inadequate to express her feelings and had to seek in other realms to supply the lack. Consequently, she caught herself addressing to her daughter words borrowed from a prayer, and the scholar Roger Duchêne has noted several other phrases which seem to have been drawn from liturgy.⁷⁸ Much more

76. Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné, *Lettres*, ed. E. Gérard-Gailly (Paris, 1953-57). The present discussion of the Marquise's work is based largely on Duchêne, *Réalité vécue et art épistolaire, Madame de Sévigné et la lettre d'amour*, esp. chap. 5.

77. Quoted in Duchêne, *Réalité vécue*, p. 209.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

extensive was the influence of habits of romantic discourse, which, Duchêne argued, she learned not so much directly from literature as from lived experience in upperclass society.⁷⁹ Yet, whether from writing or from life, Madame de Sévigné selected from her cultural milieu elements usually associated with love between men and women and applied them to her maternal emotions. While the intensity of her familial sentiments was anomalous, her manoeuvres to cope with those powerful impulses reflected the characteristic preoccupations of her age. Rather than giving in to passion, Duchêne contended, she sought through her letter-writing to manipulate and restrain her feelings so as to offend neither religion nor good manners.⁸⁰ With time she succeeded in tempering both the anguish and the joy and in containing her *amour* under the modifier *maternel*. Notably, she regarded mother-love as less overwhelming, more socially acceptable than love, the unrestricted passion.⁸¹ Madame de Sévigné challenges the historian of sentiment with many complexities beyond our reach here. Nevertheless, parallels between her letters and Maillefer's do lend support to the hypothesis that family sentiment evolved through interaction with conceptions of love in other contexts.

While Jean Maillefer was more vivid in his expression of his feelings for his daughter than most of his contemporaries, other seventeenth-century fathers did display similar sentiments. And their accounts highlight the new uses of the vocabulary of affection. Henri de Campion, the commander of a regiment of the Duc de Longueville's infantry in mid-century, included his daughter in his largely military memoirs.⁸² Unlike Maillefer, Campion first spoke of his Louise-Anne at the time of her birth in 1649. In his memory the newborn was "si belle et si agréable, que dès le moment de sa naissance, je l'aimai avec une tendresse que je ne puis exprimer".⁸³ His language here is noteworthy. The word *tendresse*, in becoming in the seventeenth century a standard vehicle in the vocabulary of affection, underwent an expansion of meaning. According to historical dictionaries, its sixteenth-century usage, like that of the word *sentiment*, which itself experienced a parallel evolution, was linked closely to physical sensation. Thus, *tendresse* was used, for example, to characterize the delicateness, sensitivity, even irritability of small children.⁸⁴ As seventeenth-century people sought terms to express their sentimental concerns, they loaded old words with new emotional connotations, so that the tenderness of youngsters became tenderness for youngsters and, by extension, for others for whom feelings of gentleness and protectiveness were appropriate.⁸⁵ Thus, in a late-century legal dispute over a conventual dowry, the nuns of the Abbaye de la Virginité in the Vendômois were charged with exploiting the "tendresse" of a novice's father in order to secure more money.⁸⁶ In another setting, Gilberte Perier, née Pascal, in a biographical portrait of her sister Jacqueline, wrote that their father "l'aymoit avec une tendresse toute extraordinaire".⁸⁷ Yet Campion did not seem altogether comfortable with the word, even in its expanded meaning. Unlike

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-75.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 206-99, 214-16.

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.

82. Henri de Campion, *Mémoires* (Paris, 1807). Editorial deletions have reduced the private, non-military content of the work; consequently, the passages about his daughter may seem more atypical than perhaps they would have in the now lost original text: see Felix R. Freudmann, "Henri de Campion: Aspects of an Inner Conflict," *Romanic Review*, LXIX (1958), pp. 105-6.

83. Campion, *Mémoires*, p. 313.

84. Marguerite de Valois, *Mémoires*, p. 43.

85. Hipp, *Mythes et réalités*, pp. 98-99.

86. BN Thoisy, vol. 301, f. 139v.

87. Pascal, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 147-48.

Gilberte Perier, he could not qualify *tendresse* to his satisfaction; it is probably telling of the fluid state of both language and categories of experience that he had to resort to “que je ne puis exprimer” to describe the depth of his feeling.⁸⁸

Louise-Anne was Champion's first child, born a typical year and a half after his first marriage. His wife presented him with six others in fairly rapid succession, including a first son the following year.⁸⁹ Yet Champion did not trouble to mention these later births. And only the very last pages of the memoir reflect fondness for these other children. In contrast, despite his society's conventional preference for boys, Champion's attachment to his eldest daughter was from the first and always special.

Champion's attribution of amiability to his newborn daughter exemplified just such behaviour as provoked Montaigne to his grouchy castigation of coddling. Nor was Champion's a passing infatuation. Of Louise-Anne no longer a baby he wrote,⁹⁰

J'allai passer un jour avec ma femme et mes enfans, et je trouvai mon aimable fille si jolie, si spirituelle et si avancée, quoiqu'elle n'eût pas encore quatre ans, que ses raisonnemens passoient les miens.

Hagiographic tables of remarkable nuns and pious ladies sometimes projected about their subjects a similar odour of precocious charm and virtue. Some lines in the biography of Agnès Galand almost echo Champion's sentiments; at the same age of scarcely four years,⁹¹

la beauté de la nature et de la grace, que Dieu avoit pris plaisir de mettre en son Corps et en son Ame, la rendirent sy aymable, qu'elle estoit les delices de tout le monde. Son Pere ne se pouvoit lasser de la regarder, de l'admirer, de la caresser, et d'avoir toujours en la bouche le nom de sa petite Agnez.

The parallel between this fragment of edifying spiritual literature and the soldier's largely worldly memoir is striking. But Louise-Anne, unlike the Dominican nun Agnès and her exemplary sort, never reached adulthood to fulfill childhood's promise and to justify the perpetuation of the memory of early gifts.

The emotional economy of the early modern family tolerated such unabashed paternal favouritism. Thus, in 1599 an advocate for one Guillaume Le Grand, “coustrier de son stil”, hoped to justify his client's treatment of his twenty-five-year-old daughter on the grounds that he “aymoit [cette fille] uniquement sur tous les aultres enfans.”⁹² Some fathers, including those who like Maillefer and Etienne Boussard were inclined to create surrogate wives, often lavished affection on the eldest daughter or at least on the senior of those at home. But other men singled out girls lower in the birth order. The beguiling Amaurie Trochet, last born of the captain of the guard of a Breton castle, was “cherie de tous, et nommément de son cher père, qui ne pouvoit rien refuser à ses demandes.”⁹³ The

88. See also Hipp, *Mythes et réalités*, pp. 464-65, on others' similar recourse to the phrase “je ne sais quoi”.

89. Champion, *Mémoires*, p. 361. On standard birth intervals, see Pierre Goubert, *Cent mille provinciaux au XVII^e siècle, Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730* (Paris, 1968), p. 56.

90. Champion, *Mémoires*, p. 338.

91. Lantages, *Vie de Agnez de Jesus*, p. 8.

92. Pas, “Moeurs rustiques,” p. 363. Interestingly, the rhetoric appears in a 1599 petition by the father who, severely frustrated in his efforts to control his daughter, had beaten her, perhaps hastening her death shortly thereafter; the girl had thwarted paternal authority in falling in love with a man of fifty-nine, wining and dining him at her father's expense and providing other “corporal solace.”

93. *La vie de Mere Marie de l'Incarnation, religieuse de la Congregation de Pau et premiere professe de Bretagne* (Rennes, 1644), p. 5.

poor cutler Galand, noted above for bothering to discipline his third child, Agnès, demonstrated his special affection also by sending her, alone of his seven offspring, to school.⁹⁴ By the end of the century, however, favouritism began to find critics who feared not injustice, but discord and abuses of indulgence.⁹⁵

Campion's daughter died of the measles shortly after that happy day in the country which he described. Typical of seventeenth-century fathers, he withheld his most extravagant expressions of feeling until after its object was gone.⁹⁶ For Maillefer the letter-writer the absence was temporary; Campion could look forward to a reunion only in eternity. His account of the death of Louise-Anne and of his reaction to it he orchestrated rather elaborately.⁹⁷ Creating contrast to heighten the emotional effect, he preceded his sad tale with the idyll quoted above. Then he foreshadowed the catastrophe with reports of his nightmares and portentous melancholy centred on the girl. When she sickened, he again shifted tone to describe simply and directly the progress of the disease, the death, and the funeral. Finally, he embarked on a complicated analysis and justification of his terrible grief. All joy had gone out of his life, he declared; never again did he expect to take pleasure in this world. His identification of himself with the girl was so close that he believed that "c'est lui voler son bien, que de prendre plaisir à quelque chose sans elle."⁹⁸ He sought to separate himself not only from life's pleasures, but also from its responsibilities. He tried to resign his military commission and abandoned interest in the advancement of his family and "maison". Despite belonging to a patrilineal society and having two sons, in his mourning Campion claimed that his principal motive for worldly ambition had been to advantage his beloved daughter. Thus Campion described his profound grief; he felt that he also needed to explain and excuse his feelings.

Campion's admission of such great pain at the loss of a favourite daughter was unusual for his time. It is especially striking in a man of his position and way of life.⁹⁹ Interestingly, he himself sensed the atypicality of his behaviour and wanted to defend it to readers of the memoir. His arguments reveal much of his notions of psychology and of the workings of love. First, he noted that his wife was "quasi aussi affligée que moi".¹⁰⁰ Thus, he could retain his claim to the special intensity of his affection and affliction and yet suggest that his reaction was not so unreasonable that others did not share it. Next, he undertook to answer the Stoic criticisms with which he believed his contemporaries and even his own intellectual heroes, Seneca and Montaigne, might tax him.¹⁰¹ They would charge him, he feared, with a "foiblesse" and lack of "constance", in the face of a misfortune "pas des plus facheux".¹⁰² In reply he asserted that events affected people according to their feelings ("sentimens"), which varied. Therefore, since the emotional cost ("prix") of experiences was not the same for everyone, one must not demand the same response

94. Lantages, *Vie de Agnez de Iesus*, p. 9.

95. D.R., *Instruction*, p. 85; Guyon, *Vie*, I, pp. 16-17; Ariès, *Centuries*, pp. 371-72.

96. DeMause, *History of Childhood*, p. 17, reflects as psychologist on this pattern. Perhaps the baroque literary commonplace of "lost love" offers a more interesting perspective.

97. Campion, *Mémoires*, pp. 338-43.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

99. On the disjunction of his profession and sensibility, see Freudmann, "Henri de Campion," pp. 106-7. See also Hipp, *Mythes et réalités*, pp. 263-73, esp. pp. 267-70, on his dealings with women which in some ways resemble those of Maillefer.

100. Campion, *Mémoires*, p. 340.

101. Freudmann, "Henri de Campion," p. 107.

102. Campion, *Mémoires*, p. 340.

from all: "L'on prend souvent l'insensibilité ou la dureté pour la constance, comme l'amour et l'amitié pour la foiblesse."¹⁰³ Campion acknowledged that he should behave in grief with stoic restraint, but he staunchly defended his rights to his feelings.¹⁰⁴

J'avoue que je jouerais le personnage d'une femme si j'importunois le monde de mes plaintes; mais cherir toujours ce que j'ai le plus aimé, y penser continuellement, en éprouvant le desir de m'y rejoindre, je crois que c'est le sentiment d'un homme qui sait aimer.

Here the military commander asserted his capacity to love, and to love a four-year-old girl, as an important dimension of his personal identity. His phrase "sait aimer" implies that to him loving was an acquired skill, one not mastered by everyone and worthy of admiration. Campion did still feel the need to explain why a child mattered so much to him. His justification rested on her many "perfections", unheard of in one so young and, if that was not enough, on the promise of her exquisite maturity. At that point the father resorted to a more conventional early modern idea that children merited attention not for their present selves, but for what they would become.¹⁰⁵

Though conventionally devout — Campion looked forward to rejoining his cherished daughter in the next life — he was much more concerned to respond to accusations that his grief was unphilosophical or perhaps even indecent. In his answer he asserted his right to experience the fulfillment in mourning, if not in joy, of the *tendresse* aroused first at his child's birth. He regarded his emotions as maybe uncommon, at least in their choice of object, but nonetheless legitimate and essential to him.

If Campion believed his deep grief to be unusual, he was not altogether alone. A few other fathers found in the illness and death of daughters occasion to show in language or behaviour care and affection. The Limousin gentleman, Alexis Chorillon, went on at uncharacteristic length — ten pages — in his family journal about the fever and ultimate demise in 1676 of his nineteen-year-old, "tres chère, bien aymée et tres aymable fille aînée".¹⁰⁶ Chorillon's language is not greatly revealing, but the time he spent beside the sickbed and the rare torrent of words he devoted to recording the events betoken his concern. When news of the illness reached him from the superior of the convent where the girl was a boarder, the man took horse the next day to ride forty miles to the city. There he passed two weeks, visiting his child, consulting with physicians, hoping in vain for her recovery. Afterwards, in sad detail he recounted the transport of her body back to the family's estate at Gueret and the funeral and entombment in the village church.

Less directly, evidence of similar situations came from close family members. Gilberte Perier reported her father's response when her thirteen-year-old sister, Jacqueline, contracted smallpox.¹⁰⁷ Etienne Pascal was then hiding to avoid arrest for his involvement in a protest about government bonds. Word of his beloved child's danger, however, thrust his own into insignificance, and he returned home to watch over her with his own eyes, day and night, until she recovered. The grave illness of Madame Guyon's only daughter ended less happily. In her autobiography the lady told how one night her husband arose at 2 a.m., left the bedroom, but returned precipitously "criant de toutes ses forces: Ma fille

103. Ibid., p. 341.

104. Ibid.

105. Catherine de Médicis, *Lettres*, ed. H. de la Ferrière (Paris, 1880), I, p. 10.

106. Louis Guibert, *Livres de raison, registres de famille, et journaux individuels limousins et marchois* (Paris and Limoges, 1888), pp. 359-68.

107. Pascal, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 147-48.

est morte".¹⁰⁸ The cause of this display of distress became evident as Madame Guyon concluded her eulogy to this offspring of dazzling virtue; she wrote, "Son père l'aimoit avec passion, et elle m'étoit tres chère". In the different wording which she chose to describe the feelings of herself and her husband lay a slight ambiguity about whether she wholly approved of such paternal devotion. The word passion in that age carried the idea of intensity, but also of loss of reason and control. This second connotation suggests that Monsieur Guyon's love somewhat discomfited his wife.¹⁰⁹

Daughters, too, corroborated the reality of fatherly affection. Their comments reflect some of the same themes discernible in their parents' accounts. At least two women recalled maternal rejection balanced by paternal favour. Yet both discovered that the enjoyment of a father's love did not ensure his consent to a daughter's plans for herself. The devotional writer, Antoinette Bourignon, remembered that her mother, "was not able to love me as she did the other children, but my father loved me more than all the others put together."¹¹⁰ But this paternal solicitude probably hindered rather than helped, when Antoinette decided to ally herself with strenuous religious reform. Similarly, Madame Guyon felt slighted by her mother, who ostentatiously preferred her son, but enjoyed the loving, if righteous concern of her father. In repeated incidents during her childhood, her father rescued the girl from the harm threatened by maternal neglect.¹¹¹ To protect her, the father dispatched her to a series of convent boarding schools. Nonetheless, when at the age of eleven she fancied taking the veil, the nuns discouraged her, not only because of her youth, but also "parce qu'elles craignoient beaucoup mon père, que l'on savoit m'aimer uniquement."¹¹² Here again surfaces the idea that a parent could be expected to resist the disappearance of a favourite behind a monastic wall. Later, when the girl reached the age of sixteen, without consulting her, her father decided to marry her off to advance the family. Madame Guyon's account of her confused wishes and erratic emotions at the time suggests that a caring, but not indulgent father might well have judged her too immature to make sensible decisions. Furthermore, social practice dictated his arranging of a suitable marriage. Nevertheless, the tale shows that a father's particular love need not move him to consider his daughter's private feelings when the family's collective strategy was at stake.¹¹³ Yet paternal affection of a sort real to those people, and specific in its form to that society, could and did sometimes coexist with the steady pursuit of familial interest. The twentieth-century presumption that arranged marriages must imply insensitive or heartless parents, a notion which has underpinned many historians' views, causes misreading of seventeenth-century experience.

Daughters' own feelings were, if anything, more elusive than their fathers'. As we have seen, young women acknowledged paternal affection. Yet, to express reciprocal emotions, daughters packaged their responses in a rhetoric so different from ours that we easily judge their claims of love so distorted or formal as to be untrue. A good example is the phrase, "l'amour et la crainte". These two ideas in formulaic association appeared often with reference to God. The good Christian father raised his offspring to love and fear

108. Guyon, *Vie*, I, pp. 183-84.

109. Examples of differing usage: D.R., *Instruction chrétienne*, p. 76; Pascal, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 229-30.

110. Quoted in Marvick, "Nature vs. Nurture," p. 289.

111. Guyon, *Vie*, I, pp. 17-18, 27, 29, 35, 37.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

113. The participants' free consent was required for a valid bond, but the child's agreement was expected except for special circumstances: Flandrin, *Families*, pp. 131-34.

God and to demonstrate these feelings by obedience to His will.¹¹⁴ By an analogy implicit in much early modern thinking and explicit, for example, in Madame Guyon's autobiography, the same motives manifested in the same behaviour were owed to earthly fathers as well. Thus, carrying the idiom from the divine realm to the temporal, Madame Guyon wrote of her father, "Je l'aimois beaucoup; mais en meme temps je le craignois si fort, que je ne lui parlois de rien."¹¹⁵ She resorted to this rhetoric to explain her reluctance to complain to her parent about the beatings and other mistreatment she was receiving in the convent to which he had sent her. Here, as elsewhere in her book, the lady protested love for her father.¹¹⁶ But, the twentieth-century observer might exclaim, was it really love when so tainted by fear that she could not even bring herself to seek protection from brutality? For Madame Guyon herself, however, the link of fear with love, because of the association of the formulaic pairing with a laudable stance toward God, may rather have accentuated the specialness of that affection. Compliance without complaint to the wishes of a virtuous authority was understood as the strongest outward sign of a dependent's love.

Obedience, then, was not only the principal duty of a daughter, according to seventeenth-century norms, but also the surest mark of her love. And early modern girls were certainly willing to manipulate the affection entangled with these conventions of conduct to suit their own purposes. In an extraordinarily artful letter of 1648, Jacqueline Pascal exploited these ideas to the fullest.¹¹⁷ She, like Marguerite de Souhé, mentioned above, and other strong-minded girls, wanted to enter a convent, risking paternal love to secure divine. Her fond father, Etienne, although himself converted to Jansenism, resisted Jacqueline's plans to become a nun at Port Royal. In explanation the biography by her sister Gilberte asserted, "l'affection si tendre qu'il avoit pour ma sœur l'attachoit si fort à elle qu'il ne pouvoit se resoudre de s'en separer pour jamais."¹¹⁸ A devoted daughter as well as a devout Christian, Jacqueline submitted to paternal will. She wished, however, to make at least a temporary retreat with the nuns and so wrote to solicit Etienne's permission.

Jacqueline's letter was a masterpiece of moral argument and psychological manipulation. She began by engaging her father's self-esteem with protestations of gratitude for all his goodness to her. She then slid very smoothly to reminders of her prompt submission, even when it interfered with "la chose du monde qui me touche le plus, et dont je souhaite l'accomplissement avec le plus d'ardeur"; she referred, of course, to her wish to take the veil.¹¹⁹ With this manoeuvre she both vaunted her own admirable compliance and reassured Etienne of his ultimate control over her. Of this her own virtue she wrote, "Je prie Dieu de vous l'imprimer aussi bien dans la pensée qu'il l'est dans mon coeur"; thus, seated in her heart, her obedience shared its source with her affections.¹²⁰ She also implied that so caring a parent, understanding how much this request meant to her, should be moved to consent. Then, changing tack, she argued that such a temporary retreat was but a small and common thing: it hardly merited bothering her father for permission. Yet she, scrupulously obedient and lovingly sensitive to his fears, preferred not to chance his displeasure. The letter continued with additional ploys intended to assuage his worries, activate his

114. Pasquier, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 1151; Maillefer, *Mémoires*, p. 148.

115. Guyon, *Vie*, I, p. 29; she used the phrase with reference to God, p. 22. See also Montaigne, *Essais*, II: 8, pp. 392-93.

116. Guyon, *Vie*, I, pp. 36-37.

117. Pascal, *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 343-48.

118. *Ibid.*, I, p. 154.

119. *Ibid.*, II, p. 343.

120. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

solicitude, and encourage constancy in his own religious convictions. Finally, in a concluding plea, Jacqueline assured Etienne that her submission came "par reconnaissance et par affection plustost que par le devoir."¹²¹ Her salutation, following shortly thereafter, reiterated a similar distinction:¹²²

je suis, plus veritablement par l'affection du coeur que par la necessité de la nature... Votre tres humble et tres obeissante fille et servante.

Thus, Jacqueline acknowledged that duty, based on "nature" or the structure of the family relationship, obliged her to comply with her father's wishes. Yet, she claimed, her obedience reflected not just that normative respect, but a more potent, more personal motive, the affection of the heart. Among members of the Pascal family, this emotion was specific and individual, not only an application of the universal Christian injunction to love one's neighbour.¹²³ Nevertheless, as in the example of Madame Guyon's father and her marriage, familial love coexisted with and, indeed, in this case expressed itself through conformity to the social conventions of the time. Jacqueline's devotion to her father led her to obey him, but she did not scruple at the same time to use that love and submission to try to bend him to her will.

To conclude, this exploration of a few documents hopes to encourage further close textual and behavioural analysis of the scraps of emotional evidence which have come down from pre-modern times. All of the men and women whose family feelings we have here examined in detail belonged to one or another of the elites of mid-seventeenth-century France; they took their livelihoods from the profitable exercise of landholding, government office, warfare, and commerce. Thus, their experiences cannot be taken simply to represent those of either the highest aristocracy or of the vast legions of ordinary peasants and cityfolk. Furthermore, each person studied was in some way atypical even of his or her own station. Against the broad silence in which most contemporary fathers and daughters left their mutual feelings, these few were unusual if only in their interest to record their such emotions. Nevertheless, even this slim documentary base, when carefully analyzed, will sustain a few judgments about the emergence of family sentiment. Certainly, pre-modern people of those epochs had feelings, probably often positive ones, about the members of their families. Yet their emotions, because experienced and expressed within their particular cultural idiom, frequently did not resemble our own. Specifically, the norms of seventeenth-century French elites did not expect or even desire the development of close attachments between fathers and daughters. Nonetheless, some parents and children did, more and more often from the middle of the century, express affection for one another. Such emotions, however, evolved only within the framework of ideas and social practices then current. These were, in their turn, subject to influence from changes elsewhere in the culture. Familial love emerged in parallel with a shifting understanding of divine love and sexual love and in that context must it be studied.

121. Ibid., p. 348.

122. Ibid.

123. Robert J. Nelson, *Pascal, Adversary and Advocate* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 50-101.