This will be an attempt to show that Madame de Chartres’ influence on her daughter is not helpful, and possibly misleading and harmful. It will consider if the mother is correct in claiming she understands herself, her daughter, and their world and if she is consistent in her ideas and actions. She has received much critical attention, but more needs to be given to her contribution, to all the details and the sequence of what she says and does, and to the effects of this on the daughter. At times she is viewed as if Lafayette portrayed her without irony and simply endorsed her views and claims. A close reading will try to show that she misunderstands sexual passion and the degree to which she can control it. Her misunderstandings are best read against a not uncommon understanding of two seventeenth-century views of passion. Of these views, one sees passion as capable of being controlled by the human will and dominated by rational self-control; the second sees passion as beyond the control of human reason and will and

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1 To keep this to a reasonable limit, it is hoped the reader will know well the story and relevant scholarship; I would be happy to send a fuller version to anyone interested: gskjp@att.net. I would like to thank Editor Rainer Zaiser, who has been very helpful, and Georgette S. Kagan.

2 This is not an attempt to portray the mother as only making mistakes or as alone responsible for the daughter’s problems. Nor is it an attempt to determine whether the mother’s educational plan is “Christian” or not, nor whether her ideas are repressive. See Campbell (pp. 295-297, 300-301, 305) for his attempts to group the various critics.

3 All references to the Princesse de Clèves are to the text of A. Adam.

4 See, for example, Shaw (pp. 223, 226-230) for evidence for these views of the passions. See Doubrovsky for Corneille’s heroes (pp. 37, 38, 40), and for the difference between their attitudes and those of the mother (p. 40), as well as for the failure of the mother to understand how far passion can be controlled (p. 41). See also Goode (pp. 398-399), Mesnard (pp. 66-68), and Francillon (pp. 142-143).

5 The first type is found in some of Corneille’s protagonists and in Descartes’ analysis of the emotions, the second in Pascal, La Rochefoucauld and Racine.
as dangerous because it escapes one’s rational self-control and self-understanding. Her view resembles the first of these, but her educational plan, her interventions to help, and her establishment of her daughter in the “wrong” marriage show that she is not in sufficient control of herself nor her daughter, not sufficiently knowledgeable about virtue or marriage, and not sufficiently knowledgeable about how the Court functions, creating an impossible situation for the daughter. It will also be shown how Lafayette gives indirect indications that this is what is happening. The whole is complicated by the mother’s sudden, unexpected “death” at a crucial point, but Lafayette probably has her die thusly to emphasize the problems in the mother’s approach throughout.

One element of her novel educational plan (p. 41) intended to help the daughter in such a dangerous environment is that unlike other mothers she thinks it possible to explicitly talk to her daughter about what is “agréable” in “galanteries,” i.e., about sexual pleasure, even though this is her daughter and they are removed in age and sexual experience. She wants to inculcate and strengthen virtue, but does not explain why others did not act thusly. One expects her to have a comprehensive understanding of passion and “galanteries” to assure her method would not cause difficulties not faced by other daughters, but it is immediately clear that she does not have this understanding, since she never (pp. 41-42) understands the significance of the fact that her daughter’s striking appearance (being, unusually, blonde) and great beauty have irrational effects and create erotic feelings whose consequences may be significant. An example of this (p. 41) occurs when

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6 As stated, many critics want to defend or criticize a view of the mother as having a consistent viewpoint, which they deem “good” or “bad”, but without having analyzed her words and actions in sufficient detail and without having paid sufficient attention to the sequence of events, as well as without a sufficient allowance for irony on Lafayette’s part. See, for example, Leiner (pp. 141-147) whose concern is to show that the mother is a sincere Christian who has given her daughter a Christian understanding of virtue and duty and who has been consistent from her first words to her last. So too Henry (pp.159-160) seems to take the narrator’s descriptions of the mother as being without irony. As for Forestier’s ideas about the mother as a social and moral guide for her daughter, the object of this paper would be to show that the mother fails both as a social and as a moral guide, and that the failures are similar in nature.

7 Many critics (for example, Kamuf, p. 209, Sweetser, p. 210, Francillon, p. 142) have noted how much the mother’s plan departs from contemporary standards, as aristocratic mothers usually left their daughters’ education to governesses or placed them in convents. Some critics also find it striking that the mother does not avoid any discussion of sexual pleasure (for example, Henry, p. 158, Malandain, p. 71).
the Vidame de Chartres, a relative, meets her before she goes to Court. He is
struck by her beauty, but this is innocent since he is not a potential lover,
but the mother seems unaware of the significance of the impression made
on him. A less innocent example is at the jeweler's, where the power of her
beauty and appearance are significant. We have a surprising yet unex-
plained break with the expected way of introducing a daughter into society,
because a young, beautiful, unmarried woman is allowed to appear in
public without a mother, without an official introduction. The jeweler, con-
fused, cannot tell if she is married, but decides to address her as "Madame"
to be polite. He has no erotic interest in her (his mistake is due to the
confusing circumstances) but his mistake contributes to the serious con-
sequences of Clèves' confusion, which is of a different order. When he sees
her he is astonished at her beauty, and because of his erotic interest, the
jeweler's mistaken identification adds to his confusion. Clèves' passion
makes him want to know who this beautiful, unknown woman is, and so he
urgently wishes to determine if the jeweler is correct, or if he is correct in
viewing her marital status and all else about her as unclear. Madame de
Chartres has created an exceptional circumstance that complicates her
daughter's entry into society and her marriage prospects. Leaving aside the
propriety of a daughter's appearance without introduction, the mother does
not understand love since she does not realize that passion contains
irrational, uncontrollable elements, such as the power of beauty to provoke
passion in others, and this oversight directly affects her daughter. If one
considers the propriety of a daughter's appearance in this way, the mother
appears a less reliable guide than she thinks, having poorly managed this
first appearance in society. Support for this comes when Clèves (pp. 42-43)
goes to Court to ask who this new person is, and all think it is impossible for
such a person to be there without their knowing, i.e., without a formal

8 Lafayette's contemporary Valincourt (p. 93) thought the daughter's appearance
alone at the jeweler's surprising and perhaps objectionable, and reported that
different contemporary women found it inappropriate. Sarlet (p. 190) also thinks
that the daughter's extraordinary beauty must be taken into account. Biet's very
useful article, about the consolidation of power over marriage into the hands of
fathers and the king, has many observations supporting the claim that the mother
mismanages the marriage and does not understand how the Court works. He (pp.
44-45) agrees that the mother allowing the daughter to appear without an escort
at the jeweler's is a source of great confusion to Clèves, who thinks that she is a
"fille" but sees no "mère," and notes that by allowing Clèves to develop a
"passion" for the daughter, she has in effect disqualified him as a "mari" for her
daughter (as the best marriages were thought to have to exclude "passion") and
also set up part of Clèves' dilemma of being both an "amant" and a "mari" without
being able to be either.
introduction; when they meet her, virtually every person comments on her exceptional beauty, another reminder of this significant element.

The mother tells her, once introduced at Court (pp. 44-45), that she wants her to tell her (not as a “mère” but as an “amie”) all the “galanteries” spoken to her so as to guide her in the areas where the young are “souvent embarrassés”. These uncomfortable situations, where the young are “embarrassés” because of spoken “galanteries” which one would not tell a “mère” but only an “amie,” must be erotic in nature, so the mother thinks the sexual attentions paid to her young, beautiful daughter can be treated as if they were not sexual, or as if their being sexual was so inconsequential they could be shared with a mother. This suggests that she should not feel shame speaking about these things to her mother or that any shame should be controlled, but it ignores the fact that a daughter has a sexual nature which would view these experiences differently than a mother. She earlier claimed (p. 41) that she could openly discuss with her what was “agréable” in “galanteries”, but she nowhere explains why she thinks her daughter can talk to her about these things, or why any mother and daughter could talk openly about sexual passion.

A more significant indication of her limitations is her attempt to arrange her daughter’s marriage (pp. 45-49). The more she tries to manipulate the

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Many critics have addressed the question of whether the mother understands the Court, and whether she arranges an appropriate or inappropriate marriage, but, as mentioned, without sufficient attention to detail, to sequence, and to the use of irony (for example, Forestier, p. 69). Sweetser (pp. 212-215) mistakenly thinks the daughter twice freely rejected Clèves, but there is some question about the propriety of Clèves speaking to her alone and about marriage and his feelings, and (p. 49) her “reconnaissance” for Clèves was ambiguous, as he misunderstood her to be telling him what he wanted to hear, which she was not. Sweetser also claims the mother had a “fond hope” that the daughter’s emotions toward Clèves would change but these “fond hopes” are nowhere explicitly stated, and Sweetser omits too much of the context and gives too little consideration to the specific actions of the mother as well as to their results. Henry (pp. 158-160) thinks the mother has not arranged the “wrong” marriage, but he cites no evidence in the text (only the writings of François de Sales). Hirsch (pp. 74-76) cites textual evidence neither for the mother’s alleged “ambivalence” nor for the assumption that love would grow in the daughter in time. Haase-Dubosc’s (pp. 445-450) claims for what the mother wants seem too banal to fit the pretensions of the mother, whose alleged “connaissance parfaite des rouages politiques de la cour” seems patently incapable of proof. Todd (pp. 229-230) agrees the mother makes a mistake, but he does not see this as the result of the mother’s actions and misunderstanding. Biet’s analysis (pp. 38-43) of 16th-century marriage conventions helps us understand both the mistakes Clèves, the cadet in his family, makes and the opposition of Nevers,
people and forces at Court, the more ignorant and powerless she appears. Her inability to understand what is happening and why hurts her pride so much\(^\text{10}\) she creates a situation where everyone is afraid to marry her daughter. Having created this impasse, she chooses as her way out a course which both contradicts the heart of her instruction to her daughter and forces her to abandon what the mother insisted was the only safeguard for the “bonheur” of a virtuous woman; and she is completely silent on, if not oblivious to, the role she herself had in creating this situation\(^\text{11}\). Her failure to understand the Court, together with her educational plan (p. 41) hurt the daughter. To persuade her to enter the only marriage that can keep her virtue and happiness safe, she constructed an outline of moral “negatives” and “positives.” However hard it may be, she can only protect her virtue and happiness by marrying someone she loves and by whom she will be loved.\(^\text{12}\) But ironically, it is the mother’s weaknesses, not the daughter’s, which will undermine this idealized, “safe”, marriage and land the daughter in the “wrong” marriage. The mother, “extrêmement glorieuse” (p. 41)\(^\text{13}\), feels grievously slighted by the rejections her daughter receives (p. 46), yet her ignorance of the Court led her to make choices which inevitably led to rejection. Her pride and ambition created situations in conflict with what she described as best for her daughter’s virtue and happiness, yet she does not realize there is a conflict and she created it. Though Clèves knows nothing of her advice, he (pp. 49-51) seems to remind the reader of the mother’s ideas. He is clear he fears that in the marriage there will be no

Valentinois and Henri II as the predictable maneuverings for a marriage of such importance. Goode (pp. 398-410) recognizes the mother is the main cause of the daughter’s unhappiness because she forgets her own teaching; Campbell (pp. 299-300) thinks that the mother has a seriously flawed “battle plan.”

\(^{10}\) P. 46 “[… ] le dépit qu’elle eut lui fit penser à trouver un parti pour sa fille qui la mit au-dessus de ceux qui se croyaient au-dessus d’elle.”

\(^{11}\) The mother’s inability to comprehend the Court is illuminated (p. 48) by the Reine-Dauphine’s explanation to the daughter of the failure of her own efforts to help the daughter’s marriage plans. She explains how, in the past, she had been opposed by the Queen and Valentinois simply because of her mother’s prior relations to these women, which shows the daughter that at Court, it is often a question of families, of “maisons,” whereas Mme de Chartres acts as if she operated in a vacuum, as if her membership in a particular family was not an essential part of the way in which she and her daughter are understood.

\(^{12}\) (“[… ] combien il était difficile de conserver cette vertu que par […] un grand soin de s’attacher à ce qui seul peut faire le bonheur d’une femme, qui est d’aider son mari et d’en être aimée” p. 41).

\(^{13}\) Many critics have commented on this aspect of the mother’s character. See, for example, Kuizenga (pp. 78-80), Goode (p. 80), and Francillon (pp. 144-145).
“passion”, and tells the daughter this; she tells the mother, and confirms that Clèves is correct that she has no “inclination” for him; yet the mother agrees to the match. To emphasize her abandonment and contradiction of her earlier ideas to save her own (and her daughter’s) dignity, Lafayette has her dismiss her daughter’s lack of enthusiasm for Clèves with words\textsuperscript{14} which recall her earlier statement\textsuperscript{15} of what was essential for a safe marriage\textsuperscript{16}. Without acknowledging it, she has created an impasse which can only be resolved by the extraordinary accident of Nevers’ sudden death freeing Clèves to propose to the daughter, coupled with the mother’s violation of her own principles in choosing ambition and worldly success over safeguarding her daughter’s “vertu” and “bonheur”.

After arranging the (wrong) marriage she (pp. 50f.) gives further evidence she created a situation she can neither understand nor manage. Clèves makes clear the daughter still has no “passion” for him and does not even understand what he is talking about. The daughter pities Guise and talks to her about this “galanterie”, but only because she is indifferent to him. She sees her daughter is not moved by Clèves and tries to correct this. In an echo (p. 51) of her earlier words we see her try to compensate for the central problem in this marriage by trying to unite her daughter to the

\textsuperscript{14} (“[…] elle [that is, Mme de Chartres] ne craignit point de donner à sa fille un mari qu’elle ne pût aimer […]” p. 50).

\textsuperscript{15} (“[…] un grand soin […] ce qui seul peut faire le bonheur […] d’aimer son mari et en être aimée”, p. 41).

\textsuperscript{16} Kamuf (p. 213) thinks that this sentence (p. 50) “[…] elle ne craignit […]”) can mean either that the mother feared her daughter might not love Clèves or might love him. But it is difficult to see what this second reading would mean. Why would the mother have to comment on the fact that she was giving her daughter to someone her daughter could love? Clèves mistook the daughter’s “reconnaissance” for more than it was, then the mother told the daughter she would experience “joie” if the daughter accepted Clèves. Duchêne (pp. 41-46), as well as in the discussion following Biet’s presentation (pp. 50-53), thinks that the mother does not contradict her earlier views, but his reasoning, including his idea about Clèves’ inability to arouse sexual pleasure (p. 45), is not supported by evidence in the text. Biet (p. 50) agrees that the mother’s expression (“[…] elle ne craignit […]”) is potentially difficult, but he thinks that this is so because it depends on how the mother uses the word “aimer”. He thinks that since “tranquillité” is so important to her, and because “tranquillité” comes through “amicitia” and “amour-estime” the mother has misled her daughter, as her daughter assumes that Clèves is a normal “mari,” i.e., that he is not moved by passion. Henry (p. 114) and Niderst (p. 9) see the mother as contradicting herself here and creating serious problems for her daughter.
husband for whom she feels no passion\textsuperscript{17}, but the words now are used in a context where compromise is inevitable because of her incompetence and self-interest, further emphasized when she stresses what the daughter owes ("devoir") to Clèves because of his "inclination" and "passion" for her when no one dared approach her. She has now moved her daughter far from her original ideals toward a worldly compromise because of her misunderstanding of Court realities and because of the difficult, confused situation her own ambition created. Now it is no longer "aimer et en être aimée" as the "seul" protection of "vertu" and "bonheur", but a question of what is owed ("devait") to the only alternative to the shameful possibility of no marriage at all. The rejections caused by her ineptitude and over-sensitivity made her feel "dépit" and led her to want to feel superior to all who rejected the match with her daughter. Now she is happy to have anyone, and "vertu" has had to cede to self-interest.

After the marriage (pp. 51ff.), he is still not "heureux", still not loved but not yet jealous. When Nemours returns, she sees him at the "bal" and they are surprised at each other's beauty. Now (p. 54) she tells her first "lie", denying to the King she knows who Nemours is. Since Guise loves her he is sensitive enough to see at the "bal" that Nemours will love her and she him. When she reports back, the mother realizes (p. 54) what Guise saw, i.e., that a passionate attachment is developing. Here is the first serious problem created by the mother having married her to someone she does not love, but she comments neither on her part in creating this dangerous situation (the opposite of what she claimed was best) nor on any changes she might make to help her daughter. She seems not to take into account her recognition that the daughter's psychological situation has substantially changed because of her passion. It is right after the mother's errors have led to the "wrong" marriage that the daughter resorts to lying for the first but not the last time, an indication she is already in over her head and not fully aware of all that is happening. The mother's education has been no help in preparing her to understand or react to such a situation.

The mother gives more guidance in her response to the request for an explanation of Henri II's and Valentinois' passion. She does not state her purpose, so it is essential to note what the daughter asks, whether or not, and how, the mother responds, whether she takes into account the

\begin{quote}
"[...] cela [meaning the fact that "Clèves ne l'avait touchée, non plus que les autres"] fut cause qu'elle [that is, Mme de Chartres] prit de grands soins de l'attacher à son mari et de lui faire comprendre ce qu'elle devait à l'inclination qu'il avait eue pour elle avant que de la connaître et à la passion qu'il lui avait témoignée en la préférant à tous les autres partis dans un temps où personne n'osait plus penser à elle [...]."
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17}
daughter’s new situation (perhaps prompting the question), and whether and how what she says affects the daughter. She emphasizes the distinction (which she claims to be especially competent to make) between appearance and reality and the dangers of judging by appearances at Court, but her response raises questions about how well her education works and whether she understands what she claims; it also includes an explanation of why she had trouble arranging the marriage, though she seems unaware of the importance of what she says. When she and Nemours saw each other (p. 55) for the wedding preparations (of Claude de France), his “inclination” became “violente”, and he in turn made a “grande impression”. Valentinois was at the various gatherings, which caused the daughter to be impressed and surprised by the “vivacité” and “soin” shown by Henri II to her and by the duration of his passion, which prompted her question to her mother. She responds (pp. 55-60) with her story of the history of the passion between Valentinois and Henri II, including the rivalries and cabals at Court, and how Valentinois’ relation to him made her master of the Court, even noting how the Guise used the Vidame to oppose Valentinois so as not to expose themselves. The mother finds it “presque incroyable” that she got Henri II to punish someone who warned him about her infidelity by getting him to dishonor this informer, then to give the informer’s honors to Brissac, and then to promote Brissac. She provides information about the Vidame’s opposition to Brissac (i.e., his opposition to Valentinois) so her narration partly explains the opposition of Valentinois to the Vidame and his “maison”, including the mother and daughter, and thereby explains some of the difficulties in arranging the marriage.

If the mother’s narration is to help her daughter, she will have to take into account that she is no longer a complete stranger to love and the Court. When she asks about this passion, she is already sexually experienced, passion has already developed between her and Nemours, Guise and the mother have both recognized this, and the daughter because of her passion has already lied to the King. Her questions about love are not disinterested; she may be seeking information about passion to help understand her own situation. This is the first time we see her education used in response to her daughter explicitly asking about passion. The daughter has an “extrême étonnement” at Henri II’s passion and “soin”, and at the duration of his “attachement” to a grandmother who has and has had many affairs, and she seems to be concerned about how passion, under unusual circumstances,

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 Critics underestimate the significance of this narration. Forestier (p. 69) thinks that it need not be narrated by the mother but could be spoken by anyone else. Sweetser (pp. 213-214) thinks that its purpose is to criticize the nature of erotic love as well as the King and Valentinois. See, as well, Stone (p. 252).
can last so long, a question which may apply to her. The mother, though no purpose is stated, does not directly answer her question but moralizes her narration. The daughter cannot see how his passion could have lasted so long and in spite of her age and affairs, but the mother does not address these elements, but says rather, “yes, it is true, it is not the worth nor the fidelity of Mme de Valentinois which has created the passion of the King nor which has preserved it, and it is also for this reason that it is not excusable.”

But she had not asked a question such as: how can this passion last even though not “excusable”? She had noted Valentinois’ infidelity and age, but she is really interested in his persistence in the face of such hindrances. She either is unable to explain why his passion lasts or thinks it is better not to tell her why, but instead describes how it is morally undeserved and undesirable even though it lasts. Valentinois has no “beauté”, etc., and has used her “pouvoir” for things which are not “honnêtes.” Yet, as the daughter’s puzzlement insists, Henri II’s passion persisted. His attachment was not explained by the mother’s initial account of men’s “peu de sincérité”, etc., and the resulting “malheurs”, so since she was the most important source of information on love and passion, it is the inability of her explanations to account for the strength and the duration of his passion which causes the daughter’s “extrême étonnement”. Henri II’s passion either contradicts the mother’s ideas or lies outside their range. We saw (pp. 54-55) how Nemours and she were becoming more and more attached; now suddenly her attention turns to a couple where the man is faithful and the woman notoriously not so. The daughter may see in this couple a reverse image of herself (the faithful one) and Nemours (the notoriously unfaithful one) and so look at it as perhaps providing some clue

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19 (“Mme de Clèves […] regardait avec un extrême étonnement l’attachement que le roi avait pour cette duchesse, qui était grande-mère et qui venait de marier sa petite-fille. Elle en parlait souvent à Mme de Chartres: “Est-il possible […] qu’il y ait si longtemps que le roi en soit amoureux? Comment s’est-il pu attacher à une personne qui était beaucoup plus âgée que lui, qui avait été maîtresse de son père et qui l’est encore de beaucoup d’autres […]? Il est vrai, répondit-elle, que ce n’est ni le mérite ni la fidélité de Mme de Valentinois qui a fait naître la passion du roi, ni qui l’a conservée, et c’est aussi en quoi il n’est pas excusable; car si cette femme avait eu de la jeunesse et de la beauté jointes à sa naissance, qu’elle eût eu le mérite de n’avoir jamais rien aimé, qu’elle eût aimé le roi avec une fidélité exacte, qu’elle eût aimé par rapport à sa seule personne sans intérêt de grandeur ni de fortune et sans se servir de son pouvoir que pour des choses honnêtes ou agréableables au roi même, il faut avouer qu’on aurait eu de la peine à s’empêcher de louer ce prince du grand attachement qu’il a pour elle.”

20 Lyons (1982, pp. 392-94) also notes the failure of the mother’s initial instruction to account for what the daughter remarks.
as to the duration of their passion. As the mother would not want her to have a passionate relationship with Nemours, yet has seen just this begin, it is reasonable to think she tells this story in this way to control or neutralize this passion. She seems to believe that simply by having her perceive Valentinois’ “bad” motives she would be able and willing to abandon her passion, which implies she thinks that her education has been such that simply a demonstration of “base” motives would change the daughter’s behavior. There is no sign of anything like this earlier and there will not be any such thing later. Here too she mentions the use the Guise made of the Vidame against Valentinois, but though this points to one of the Court conflicts hindering her marriage plans, she nowhere comments on this and does not understand how Valentinois might still be working against the Vidame and his family (i.e., her and her daughter) on the occasion of the marriage, though the narrator makes clear she does. Thus her statement, “if you judge by appearances etc.”, and its implicit claim, she is not as limited in this respect as others, are belied by her earlier actions in her failed attempt to arrange the marriage. She (as everyone) judges by appearances, but her claim implies she knows how not to fall into the usual traps, and so can guide her daughter, which here means not being taken in by the appearance of friendship (a temporary political expedient) between the Queen and the Connétable, not being taken in by the appearance of true (really morally suspect) passion between Valentinois and Henri II. This claim about being able to distinguish appearance from reality recalls her earlier claim, her ability to educate her daughter in the ways of passion. Again she exaggerates her abilities and self-knowledge, and understands neither her particular limitations nor the limitations inherent in the human condition.

Her narration (p. 60) should produce effects consistent with her goals for the daughter, but they produce the opposite. Nemours’ passion is quite “violente”, and though he tells no one, Guise and the daughter see it. She decides she will not speak to her mother about these “sentiments”, but she did not not speak from a “dessein” (p. 61) to “cacher”\(^2\) (cf. p. 63, her lie about the “bal”), she simply did not speak. The mother sees what is happening, including her “penchant” for him, her “péril”, etc., and all her worst fears were confirmed by the “bal”, but if the daughter has developed or had reinforced a need to conceal her feelings because of something in the mother’s narration, it is unclear why she would have desired this, as she

\(^2\) Hirsch’s claims (pp. 75-76) about the sincerity and complete honesty between the mother and the daughter seem clearly undermined by the daughter’s evident concealment (p. 61).
would have needed her daughter to say more, not conceal more. Perhaps the lesson the daughter learns is that it is better to hide anything associated with passion because it might seem immoral. This reinforces the notion that her sexual passion is not something she can talk to her mother about, and so the mother would be wrong to think that in matters of passion a mother could behave with a daughter as a friend or an equal, as someone who might have the same sexual object as her daughter. She also engages in concealment when we learn of her developing passion for Nemours, how she reacts to it, and how she explains it to herself and others. Condé relates (pp. 62 ff.) to the group the views of the absent Nemours on whether it is better for one's beloved to go to the “bal” of an “amant”, and his opinion that the worst fate for a lover is for his beloved to be present when he cannot be. She pretends not to hear this, but well understands how his views about the “bal” and the “amant” apply to her and him, and also knows that he will be abroad. Upon hearing Nemours’ sentiments, she had a “grande envie” (p. 63) not to attend herself; she entered “aisément” into the idea that it is not good to go to the “bal” of an “amant” (as she would do in going to Saint-André’s “bal”), and she found it “bien aise” to have a “raison de sévérité” for doing what was a “faveur” for Nemours. She easily slips into self-deception, without intentionally, consciously being hypocritical; her “envie” moves her to substitute a virtuous reason for her real one, which is to please her beloved. A “raison de sévérité” alleged by a married woman to not go to the home of a lover wanting to please her would be respectable moral grounds for a refusal, but here this is a way to hide her non-moral reason for doing a “faveur” to one who loves her, a married woman; and the main victims of this deception are her mother and herself. And she does this after they joked about Nemours’ many mistresses, which she might have taken as a warning about his faithless nature and possible infidelity. This suggests her need for self-deception is such, it causes her to ignore what could directly, adversely affect her emotional well-being, and shows how little impact the mother’s instruction had. The mother’s education has not helped her to understand or handle this difficult situation which the mother created by her violation of her own principles and her inept attempt to manipulate the Court. It is also likely that her emphasis on the immorality of Valentinois’ passion lingers in the daughter’s mind, so that she thinks of her own passion in this way, leading her to feel she needs to find for her feelings a morally acceptable reason (a “raison de sévérité”), even if untrue,

22 Compare, as an ironical counterpoint, the relationship of Valentinois to both François I and to Henri II.

23 “Mme de Clèves ne faisait pas semblant d'entendre ce que disait le Prince de Condé mais elle l'écoutait avec attention.”
John Phillips

so as to conceal from herself (and her mother) that she is really doing a lover a “faveur”. At best the mother has not helped, at worst she has forced her daughter into deceiving others and herself.

She tells her mother the prepared “moral” reasons for her “immoral” wishes and that she does not want to go to the “bal” because Saint-André would want it understood she had had a part in his “divertissement”, and so she would be “embarrassée.” The mother used “embarrassés” (p. 45) to persuade her to talk about the “galanterie” spoken to her, so as to guide her in situations where the young are “embarrassé”. In any such situation “embarrassé” might have been used, and so would not depend on a previous use of the word, but her usage here may make the mother more inclined to accept the daughter’s deceptive plan of action, as it would echoing a word and a notion important to the mother, and thus may be an attempt by the daughter to mislead the mother. The daughter (p. 63) is glad to miss the “bal” and when Nemours returns he learns the daughter was not there. At the Reine-Dauphine’s she appears “négligée”, like one who had been sick (fitting the mother’s excuse, invented to help the daughter), but when the Reine-Dauphine notes that her “visage” contradicts her “habillement”, it is clear that she has seen through the mother’s deception. The Reine-Dauphine then speculates that because Condé told the daughter Nemours’ opinion about “bals”, she did not go so as not to appear to be doing Saint-André a “faveur”. This was the false “raison de sévérité” given by the daughter and accepted by the mother. The use of the word “faveur” is significant as (p. 63) this was used for what the daughter wished to give to Nemours. The Reine-Dauphine quickly saw through the mother’s lie about sickness, again showing that she was not as clever as she claimed in matters involving appearance and reality in the area of love and at Court²⁴. Sickness was undoubtedly a common excuse, but the mother has no special facility here, and either does not know it is a common excuse and so easily suspected, or does not anticipate needing another explanation if it does not work.

The Reine-Dauphine also inadvertently made known to Nemours that the daughter did not attend because of him. The remarks cause (p. 64) her to “rougit” because they were so close to the truth and made in front of him. Suddenly the mother sees why she did not want to attend the “bal”, but to lessen the danger of exposing her feelings for Nemours to everyone, especially him, she reinforces the lie about the sickness. The new lie is convincing but creates complications, as he is “bien fâché” to think that the

²⁴ Forestier (p. 70, n. 8) thinks little of the perspicacity here evidenced by the Reine-Dauphine, but he underestimates the complexity of the situation, and misunderstands that the emphasis here is not on her but on the daughter, the mother and Nemours.
daughter missed the “bal” only because ill, yet he had seen her “rougeur”, so he was not sure what her real feelings were. She in turn has mixed feelings: she was “fâchée” to think he might suspect it was for his sake she had not attended, but then she felt “chagrin” because the mother’s lie might have convinced him she did not miss the “bal” as a “faveur” for him. As her situation becomes more complex and intractable, the mother is less able to help. She has no understanding of how complicated her own situation is, and the mother shows no better understanding, and is more and more removed from being able to control it. The mother seems less to have a plan than to be making *ad hoc* decisions. And, strangely, she is so convinced by the daughter’s story about Saint-André, she forgot all about the real danger, already acknowledged, Nemours and the growing passion between him and the daughter.

The mother decides (pp. 65ff.), instead of making passion seem immoral, to directly criticize Nemours, but she does not want her to recognize she knows her “sentiments” for him, as this would make her less trustworthy (“suspecte”) in the areas where she wanted to be of influence. She plans to describe him so that, mixing up the “bien” with “beaucoup de louanges empoisonnés”, she will eliminate her daughter’s desire. She says his “sagesse” is such, he seems incapable of becoming “amoureux” and only acts for his own “plaisir”, and so never forms an “attachement sérieux”, but he is not incapable of a “grande passion”, as he currently has just such a passion for the Reine-Dauphine. Her advice is to avoid talking to him, since, because of her friendship for the Reine-Dauphine, people will think she is her “confidente”. She knows the daughter does not want such a “réputation désagréable” and so will visit the Reine-Dauphine less often so as not to be “mêlée” in such “aventures de galanterie”. Though the mother does not state her purpose here, one must recall what she now knows of the daughter’s situation. She has recognized that she is experiencing passion for him, had already not been completely honest, had hidden her feelings from her mother, and had misled her about Saint-André’s “bal” (and the mother, as a prophylactic against passion, to no avail told her a moralized narration of Valentinois’ passion). Now she seems not to understand how her lie about the Reine-Dauphine and Nemours, given the state of the daughter’s passion, will make the daughter jealous, nor how jealousy affects people. It seems a dubious educational plan that leads her to induce jealousy between the daughter and her best friend as a means of extinguishing passion.

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25 Haig (p. 116) also sees the development of jealous love here. He thinks that the development of passion in the daughter leads her to deception, etc., and the unconscious assimilation of the other habits of the Court.
The daughter's reaction reveals the inadequacy of her new tactic. She (p. 65) knew nothing about the Reine-Dauphine and Nemours (as there was virtually nothing to know) so she is “surprise” to find herself “trompée”. Hearing her mother her “visage” changed, which the mother noted, but before she could say more, the daughter retired and experienced an inexpressible “douleur”. She now understood she had not realized her own “intérêt” in him because she dared not acknowledge it, and the “sentiments” felt so powerfully for him were those Clèves had spoken of as wanting for himself, “sentiments” she then could not even comprehend. It was “honteux” to have such feelings for one not her “mari”, and she saw herself as compromised in her marriage, if not fully an adulteress. She was humiliated by the “crainte” that he had used her as a “prétexe” for his relations with the Reine-Dauphine. She decides she will tell her mother the things not spoken before, but, next day, the mother is ill and they do not speak. We never see if a mother and daughter can in fact openly talk about these things. Her mother's instruction caused a crisis, but it is not clear this particular crisis was the mother's goal, nor how it would further her purposes. And of course the mother could not know that she would fall ill. The mother's guidance has not led to the avoidance of dangerous passion, but has forced her into such a passion, nor is it clear how the daughter could extricate herself by way of her mother's instruction. She wanted her daughter to speak to her, and this has been brought about. Is the reader to believe that the mother would have been able to achieve her goal if this conversation had taken place?

Her fever worsened and they were unable to speak. Left to her own devices, the daughter returns (p. 66) to Court, with new knowledge of the extent of her passion, her “adultery”, and her betrayal. She hears with “honte” all the Reine-Dauphine says, since before having been “détrompée”, she would have seen Nemours' changes as signs of his passion, but now believes she is being lied to by the Reine-Dauphine. She is bitter toward her for pretending to not know the cause of Nemours’ changes when she knew that it was she who had caused these changes. The lies have produced an excruciating situation: she sees as a deceiver and betrayer her friend, who has done no such things, and she sees the person she loves, by whom she thought she was loved, as not loving her but deceiving her and using her as a cover. She decides to speak directly to the Reine-Dauphine, who accuses the daughter of being “injuste” since she never had “rien de caché” from her, and admits that before he went to Bruxelles he had let her know that he “ne la haissait pas”, but that he seemed to have forgotten all that. She thinks that she has a way to find out the whole story, which she will then share with the daughter, who, persuaded by this and despite herself, finds
herself in an “état plus calme, plus doux”. The ineffectiveness of the mother's plan is clear: the daughter acts on her “explanation” and immediately finds out it is false. She lied but is in no position to control the effects of the lie and of course did not know that she would be ill. She did not think her daughter would see through her lie nor that this would have a significant effect. She does not say if she realizes her mother deceived her, but she believes the Reine-Dauphine's account and that she really is her friend. And the “état plus calme, plus doux” mentioned as her condition after their talk is due to the fact this imaginary erotic “rival” invented by her mother turns out to not be a threat, further proof of the advanced state of her passion. Since the lie (which had to be accepted as true to be effective) told to “protect” the daughter was so false, it was not hard for her to get to the truth. Or did the mother assume she would simply believe the story and not talk to her best friend? This would be a significant misunderstanding of her daughter's character and of the advanced degree of her passion. The mother's condition worsened, so no discussion ensued. The daughter stayed with her, as did Clèves, and so Nemours had an opportunity to see her by coming to pay his respects when Clèves was away. His “intérêt” in her “affliction,” and his “air si doux et si soumis” persuaded her he was still “amoureux”. Here the mother’s inability to speak gave her the opportunity to see that the second part in her story, concerning Nemours, was a lie, just as on the first occasion she saw the story about the Reine-Dauphine was a lie. Her lies were too easily seen through and unlikely to have had any effect she might have desired, which is confirmed by the daughter's immediate attempt to test these stories and by her reaction of relief when they are disproved.

By the end (pp. 67-68) the daughter's situation is complex: passionately in love, she has experienced jealousy, knows she is loved passionately in return, feels “guilty”, “knows” that her mother has deceived her. The mother is about to die and they will have their last talk, though remarkably the daughter is given virtually no opportunity to speak. She says they have to leave each other, describes the daughter's great danger, and insists she will have to do whatever is necessary to preserve herself from the “malheurs” of a “galanterie”. She adds, if another reason besides the daughter's own “vertu, devoir” could bring her to do what the mother wants, she would say, to provide that reason, that if anything could “troubler” the “bonheur” she expects when dying, it would be to see the daughter “tomber” like other “femmes”; but, if this “malheur” must happen, she is happy to die rather than see it. The daughter cries, the mother is “touchée”. About to die, she leaves her daughter in that terrible situation she had
warned against (p. 41) and which her plan was designed to avoid\textsuperscript{26}, but this is harsh irony since it is the mother who has led her into this situation, yet who now condemns the daughter for it. She says nothing of her role in landing her in this situation, has singularly failed to exercise the “extrême défiance de soi-même” (p. 41) she had counseled her daughter to exercise, and is silent on the uselessness of her attempts to adapt her plan. She is cruel in insisting that she had a method to control passion and now the daughter must somehow make a better effort to use what the mother “taught” her. Yet the mother had no such method to “teach”. She increases the daughter’s guilt by using her death to increase the daughter’s pain, and expresses no confidence in her ability to succeed. It is ironic that this proponent of a new education, who prided herself on her ability to speak so freely about everything she crossed boundaries other mothers would not in speaking directly about sexual pleasure, who thought she could speak to her daughter not as a mother but as a friend, such a proponent deprives her of any opportunity to speak at the most crucial moment\textsuperscript{27}. It is possible to suggest Lafayette’s purpose in having the mother die when, where and how she does\textsuperscript{28}, as there is at least one parallel, the way Chabannes dies in the \textit{Princesse de Montpensier}.\textsuperscript{29} Instead of having him killed by Montpensier (the jealous husband who catches him with his wife in a compromising situation), Lafayette takes pains to have him killed by a Catholic mob after the Saint-Barthélemy. This death connects the end back to the beginning, where Chabannes, to general disbelief, voluntarily renounced his Protestantism to show his loyalty to Montpensier. Being killed as a Protestant by Catholic mob reinforces the notion that he was as mistaken in his understanding of how he could treat his religion as he was in his understanding of how he could treat his passion for the Princesse, namely, as purely and simply subject to his will. Mme de Chartres is not “ill”, Lafayette removes her here in this way: she has the mother die here to increase the sense of

\textsuperscript{26} Kaps (p. 17) cites the mother’s educational plan (p. 41) and then the very last line of the novel as support for her claim that the mother has accomplished her mission.

\textsuperscript{27} Todd (pp. 228-229) thinks that this deathbed scene, where the mother tells her daughter that she knows what the daughter will say and so the daughter need not say it, is proof that the mother and the daughter have avoided the usual misunderstandings of communication because they have avoided the deceitfulness of language, preferring, instead, the “gaze”.

\textsuperscript{28} Haig (p. 117) thinks it is a matter of coincidence that the daughter’s love for Nemours and the mother’s illness and death come together at this point, thereby causing the daughter’s guilt and remorse.

\textsuperscript{29} See Phillips.
pathos and to create a situation where Clèves will have to continue her role of councilor and guide, with all this entails. But her extended sickness, by postponing her conversation with the daughter, allows her to speak to the Reine-Dauphine and to Nemours and so disprove her mother’s lies. If she had not “died” she would have been forced to resolve the insoluble problems caused by her lies or be faced with the necessity of inventing more “explanations” for more and more complicated situations. Lafayette may have her die here to discredit her claims, and to show the limits of any “understanding” of the human condition which suggests passion can be controlled in the manner implicit in the mother’s plan. If the mother had the method she claimed, an essential component would have to have been knowing this method had to be passed on and when and how; since each person’s mortality is part of the human condition, knowledge of this eventuality must be a part of any understanding of the human condition, including human passion. She seems not to realize that she, as everyone, will die, and so any method essential to her daughter’s well-being had to be passed on before she died. It is as if she simply loses sight of her own mortality. Whatever the reason, she does not recognize the necessity to pass it on, and this omission, viewed as a failure to understand her own human mortality may be used by Lafayette to reinforce the idea that some things, such as passion, may be beyond the control of human reason, and the mother does not understand this. Even if she had a plan capable of protecting her daughter against passion, not understanding the necessity of having to pass it on to her daughter insures that it can be of no use (and diminishes the reasons for believing she had such a plan). And did Lafayette want us to think that if the mother had not died, her plan would have solved the daughter’s problems about her marriage and her passion for Nemours? This is what she thinks and what she wants her daughter to think, but what would this mean for the continuation of the story? Would it mean that, following her mother’s plan, she would have lived “happily ever after” with Clèves? To believe this, one would need to find a parallel in Lafayette’s work where passion (and one this advanced, already at the stage of jealousy) was controlled by one or several conversations that were part of a larger educational plan. One would have to believe that Lafayette is presenting the mother as capable of doing what she claims, namely, controlling passion (her daughter’s) by the plan described to us.

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