

# Searching for Emotions

Brussels Painter Maximiliaan de Hase (1713–1780), Brussels Tapestry Producer Daniel Leyniers (1705–1770) and the Early Loss of Children\*

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On 14 August 1760 in the Church of Our Lady of Finistère in the *Lange Nieuwstraat* in Brussels, mourners took leave of Maria Catharina de Hase. This baby girl, aged ten months, had died the day before. She was the daughter of history painter Maximiliaan de Hase (1713–1780) and Catharina Theresia T'Serstevens (1726–1795). Maria Catharina was not the first daughter that De Hase and T'Serstevens lost that year. Between August 1759 and August 1760 the De Hase family took leave of three of its children. On 16 August 1759, five-year-old Paulina was buried, and on 29 June 1760, four-year-old Cecilia was carried to her grave (Appendix I).<sup>1</sup>

The De Hase family was hit hard, but they were not the only family that had to face this ruthless reality. The battle against diseases and death, that beckoned every day, started at birth. Historical demographic research shows that, in the eighteenth century in the Southern Low Countries, one out of every five infants did not make it to their first birthday. Furthermore, only half of the survivors reached the age of ten.<sup>2</sup> In other words, early modern parents were repeatedly confronted with the loss of a child during their lives.

The relationship between parent and child is one of the most discussed subjects in social historiography. Since Phillipe Ariès suggested in 1960 that early modern parents did not invest in emotional ties with their children, a considerable number of academics have thought about the relationship between early modern parents and their children, and whether or not it was a loving one.<sup>3</sup> In this debate, scant attention has been paid to the Southern Low Countries. On the basis of two exceptional notebooks from eighteenth-century Brussels, we will attempt to reach the emotions that two art producers felt

– or did not feel – for their families. One *Memorie boeck* was recorded by Maximiliaan de Hase; the other *Memorie* was compiled by Brussels tapestry producer Daniel Leyniers (1705–1770). Both of them lost nearly half of their children at an extremely young age and kept memorial books during that time.<sup>4</sup> In these notebooks, De Hase and Leyniers wrote about current matters in chronological order. The books were intended as aids to their memory.<sup>5</sup> Memorial or memorandum books were books in which merchants noted their daily trade activities,<sup>6</sup> yet some memorial books, like the ones kept by Leyniers and De Hase, also allow insight into whether their economic performance suffered from joyful or difficult circumstances within the family. With the family as the basic operating unit supporting early modern businesses,<sup>7</sup> this is an important issue to raise. By laying several other documents alongside the information from memorial books, an accurate impression can be formed about the usefulness of memorial books for research into emotions experienced within eighteenth-century family life.

## Joy, Grief and Paintings: Dropping in on the De Hase Family in the Lange Nieuwstraat

Maximiliaan de Hase was a successful history painter and tapestry designer in Brussels between 1744 and his death in 1781. He was born in Brussels in 1713 as an offspring of an important family of artists, the Van Orleys. Like most eighteenth-century Flemish painters, De Hase passed into oblivion. A forthcoming study of eighteenth-century Brussels painting and

tapestry design, however, will certainly change this.<sup>8</sup> It will obviously include Maximiliaan de Hase's exceptional memorial book, which records all his works from 1744 to four months before his death in 1780.

De Hase started his career in 1726, at the age of thirteen, as an apprentice to painter Philippe de Hondt (1683–1741), who taught him the art of drawing.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Maximiliaan de Hase was probably given training in painting with one of the most successful painters and tapestry designers in Brussels and the Southern Low Countries at the time: his uncle Jan van Orley (1665–1752).<sup>10</sup> When Jan van Orley died childless in 1735, Maximiliaan de Hase, the son of Jan's sister Catharina van Orley, inherited art and money from his uncle. It was thanks to that inheritance that De Hase could travel to Rome in 1735. De Hase stayed in Rome until the winter of 1743. On 1 January 1744, he surfaced once again in Brussels, when he took the oath as master painter.<sup>11</sup> Possibly De Hase went back to Rome after that. In the autumn of 1746 he returned permanently to Brussels, ready to build a career as an independent master based on his unique training in Brussels and his Italian experience.<sup>12</sup>

It was not much later that De Hase started a family. On 16 December 1747 he married Catharina Theresia T'Serstevens, daughter to an exceptionally well-to-do Brussels family.<sup>13</sup> She was born on 1 April 1726, a daughter to Jan T'Serstevens and Pieterella Rosa T'Seraerts, both members of one of the seven Brussels *geslachten*, a group of patrician families that had enjoyed privileges since before the fourteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Together with his bride, who was thirteen years his junior, De Hase moved into a house in the *Lange Nieuwstraat* in Brussels. This street had tremendous appeal to the Brussels socio-economic elite of the day.<sup>15</sup> It was not long before things became more lively in the De Hase family. On 30 June 1749, the family's first daughter was born: Cecilia Johanna de Hase.<sup>16</sup> Many other children were soon to follow. All in all, Catharina Theresia T'Serstevens gave birth to eighteen children between 1749 and 1773 (Appendix I). Seventeen of the eighteen children were christened in the Church of Our Lady of Finistère. A stillborn child was buried immediately after birth on 14 January 1772.<sup>17</sup> Maximiliaan de Hase died on 24 May 1781, at the age of sixty-seven.<sup>18</sup>

On average the family De Hase numbered from eight to nine members between 1749 and 1781. This was much larger than the average family in Brabant. Paul Klep calculated that an average Brabant family living in urban surroundings in around 1755 numbered about four to five members.<sup>19</sup> That Catharina Theresia T'Serstevens endured eighteen births within less than a quarter of a century was therefore exceptional. According to historical demographers, a couple with twenty fertile years would only conceive between eight to ten children.<sup>20</sup> In a time span of twenty-four years, Catharina Theresia T'Serstevens was pregnant for no less than fourteen years (Table 1). Giving birth to children was not the only thing that was dangerous. Infant mortality was high: only ten of the eighteen children born to the De Hase family reached adulthood and survived their father. Five children died before their first birthday. Three others died between the ages of three and six (Appendix I). Five of them died while their mother was pregnant with one of their brothers or sisters.

Did welcoming children into the family or losing them had an impact on De Hase's working rhythm? This question can be answered by linking the dates of birth and death of his children to his output as recorded in his *Memorie boeck*. It is important to bear in mind that Maximiliaan de Hase's business was ostensibly a one-man business. While he did have help every now and again from an apprentice, these apprentices focussed mainly on painting very simple assignments, for instance, the painting of a coat of arms. It transpires that the arrival of a new baby did not affect the painter's working rhythm. In his most successful years, (1760–1775), De Hase even met his clients' orders in the week and even a few days after the birth of a baby.

The deaths of his children also seem to have had little impact on his working rhythm. In 1752 and 1753, when De Hase lost two of his children, new entries in the memorial book fail to appear. However, in the early 1750s, at the beginning of his career, De Hase did not get many assignments. There is no obvious correlation between his production and the death of his children in this period. The image does, however, become much clearer from 1759–1760 when De Hase lost three children in a year. This period happens to be one of the

most productive periods in the career of the artist. On 13 August 1760 Maria Catharina de Hase died. The same day De Hase entered a contract for designing a series of tapestries with Cobenzl, minister plenipotentiary of the Austrian Netherlands in Brussels under Empress Maria Theresa.<sup>21</sup> It is of course quite possible that the contract was concluded during the day and that Maria Catharina died quickly and unexpectedly later that day. Whatever the case may be, the days that followed the funeral of Maria Catharina were not exactly quiet in terms of production. Five days after the burial, De Hase delivered two altarpieces. A third altarpiece followed on 26 August, and on 3 September he had completed a tapestry cartoon. The death of two infants in the summer of 1760 also seemed to have had little influence on De Hase's production schedule. After the death of three other children in 1765, 1767 and 1772 (Appendix I), De Hase remained particularly active in the weeks that followed the funerals. At that point in his career, De Hase was so wealthy that his income would have been able to withstand a dip.<sup>22</sup> It is also noteworthy that De Hase did not change his style during in this period. There is no indication whatsoever that he rendered his emotions in a darker or more turbulent and dramatic way or that he used his art as a means to express his feelings.

So, there is little evidence that the death or birth of the De Hase children brought changes to De Hase's productivity or output. Several influential historians, such as Philippe Ariès, Edward Shorter and Lawrence Stone, argued in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s that parents in early modern Europe hardly invested in affective ties with their children.<sup>23</sup> According to these authors, parents did this because they understood that their suffering would be unbearable if they allowed themselves to start loving their children. The chances an infant would die at an early age were very good, and only indifference could protect parents protect against virtually constant pain. This hypothesis, later called *The Black Legend* in the literature about parent-child relationships, found the support of anthropologists. In her book entitled *Death without Weeping: the Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (1994), anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes describes how Brazilian mothers living in extreme poverty defer their maternal ties with their children because of

high infant mortality. For a long time, mothers consider their children to be temporary visitors in the household.<sup>24</sup> It is, however, difficult to prove today that parents were not emotionally attached to their children, even before 1800.<sup>25</sup> Obviously it is easy to link the apparent indifference evidenced by De Hase's uninterrupted working rhythm with a strictly apathetic father. But should one even expect to be able to infer such private emotions from a memorial book? Studying the memorial book of tapestry producer and master dyer, Daniel Leyniers, with which other source material can be compared, can answer this question.

## Cherished Children, Colourful Threads and Tapestries: Dropping in on Daniel Leyniers

Daniel Leyniers produced tapestries and, from 1729 to his death in 1770, he was also the head of a factory specialising in the dyeing of wool for the tapestry industry. He used the services of painter Maximiliaan de Hase for several assignments between 1757 and 1765. De Hase's *Memorie boeck* shows that he did the retouching to some cartoons at the Leyniers manufactory, and he also designed a number of cartoons for Leyniers.

Daniel Leyniers was born in Brussels in 1705 and was a son of Urbanus Leyniers and Anna Maria Platteborse. At the turn of the century, Urbanus Leyniers was the most influential entrepreneur in the tapestry industry.<sup>26</sup> Since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Leyniers were active in the tapestry industry and were known for their dyeing: they produced the best coloured threads in Brussels.<sup>27</sup> Daniel Leyniers worked in the family business from an early age. He started his training as a tapestry weaver there as a seven-year-old. At the age of twelve, he also started as an apprentice dyer in his father's dyeing factory. Daniel Leyniers joined his father at the head of the family business one year before he was accepted as a master in the dyers' guild and in the tapestry makers' guild. Officially father and son Leyniers joined forces on 25 August 1729 to manage the factories together. The collaboration lasted until 31 December 1744, when Urbanus Leyniers withdrew from the family business at the age

of seventy. During his career, Daniel Leyniers was dean of the dyers' guild at various points in time, and he held several positions in the tapestry makers' guild. He was also included as master in the guild of *meerseniers* and held the position of head dean in the cloth guild. Leyniers also held several religious positions in the service of the community, such as the positions of churchwarden of the Church of Saint Catherine and chapel master of the tapestry makers' guild.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Maximiliaan de Hase, Daniel Leyniers was not forgotten after his death. Daniel Leyniers is known today as a keen genealogist. Many genealogical manuscripts have been kept, spread across numerous private and public collections, that the tapestry producer compiled.<sup>29</sup> Daniel Leyniers aspired to attaining a noble title and invested a great deal of time, energy and money in reaching that objective. In order to become a noble, he first had to make clear his noble origins. For this reason, Leyniers carried out an intensive genealogical study. The results of his research, written out in several volumes, constitute today direct access to the family history of a number of prosperous families in sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Brussels. His research led to inclusion in the house of Coudenberg one year before his death in 1769. Daniel Leyniers was very well aware that his intensive work and manuscripts would be useful later. For this reason, he tracked down his descendants to assign to them the responsibility of taking care of the documents, and to spread them if necessary to be kept among various family members. He had, after all, compiled these documents '[met] noch all veele moeijte ende onkosten'.<sup>30</sup> The documents of Leyniers are not only of interest to genealogists, they also contain a wealth of information for economic, social and art history research.<sup>31</sup>

Central to our purposes here is Daniel Leyniers' memorial book that was hardly used for historical research because for a long time it was part of a private collection.<sup>32</sup> In this volume, Daniel Leyniers describes important incidents in his life that took place between 1725 and 1745. The memorial book comprises two parts. In the first part, the tapestry producer mainly describes incidents related to his activities in the tapestry makers' and dyers' guilds. The second part is more personal. In this part, Daniel Leyniers

details significant incidents in his factory and incidents in the city of Brussels that caught his attention, like murders, Joyous Entries, processions and strange weather conditions. It is in this section that Daniel Leyniers occasionally mentions incidents from his family life.

Five days after becoming his father's business partner, Daniel Leyniers started another alliance. On 30 August 1729, an extremely hot summer's day, Daniel Leyniers married Anna Catharina van Schoonendonck in the Church of the Rich Claires. The ceremony took place at 5 in the morning.<sup>33</sup> Anna Catharina Brigitta van Schoonendonck was the only daughter of master brewer Jan Baptist Benoît van Schoonendonck, who was head of the 'In the Roode Poorte' brewery. Anna Catharina's mother, Catharina Brigitta Usselinck, was also from an important family of brewers from Brussels.<sup>34</sup> In the memorial book Daniel Leyniers describes the marriage as follows:

'Den 30 aug. 1729 wesende Deynsdagh s'morghens ten 5 uren soo heeft den Eerw. Heer Egidius Neodaels als Pastoir der Parochiaele kercke van St. Guerix in de kerke des cloosters van de Rijke Clarissen genoempt urbanisten mij versaemt in den houwelijcken staet met Anna Cath. Brigitta Van Schoonendonck waer over getuyghen geweest zijn Petrus Joan. Bauwens, haeren halfswaeger ende mijnen vader urbanus Leijniers als oock haere Moeder Jouffr. Cath. Brigitta Usselinck Wed[uwe] J. Bapt. Bened. Van Schoonendonck. Het was zeer schoon weder maer groote hitte ende naer de Misse zijn wij naer Laken gegaen ten 7 uren'.<sup>35</sup>

Van Schoonendonck and Leyniers' first child was born the following year. On 11 October 1730 Urbanus Leyniers Jr was born. After Urbanus, another nine pregnancies followed for the Leyniers family. In total, ten children were born: eight boys and two girls (Appendix II). Four boys died before they turned ten. The other six children reached adulthood. None of the births and only one death was mentioned in the memorial book. The death of Daniel Leyniers Jr, aged seventeen months, was mentioned briefly in a note about a religious procession for the archduchess, Maria Elisabeth.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes children died at the beginning of periods

of silence in the memorial book, but just as often deaths were not mentioned in periods when Leyniers writes virtually every day. For instance, Leyniers does not mention the death of his seven-year-old son Johannes Petrus on 25 July 1739, yet two days later he describes the hiring of tapestries to Mariemont Castle, and four days later the departure of his nephew to Antwerp where he was later to become bishop.<sup>37</sup> A month later, at the end of August 1739, Leyniers interrupted his daily activities and headed to a retreat in Aix-la-Chapelle for three weeks “uijt reden van Onpasselijckheijt”, where he bathed in the healing waters and drank from them. It is unclear what the reason was for Leyniers’ need to rejuvenate himself.<sup>38</sup> The death of his beloved son Johannes Petrus may have played a role, but Leyniers may well have fallen ill for some other reason. Health issues were by no means the only reasons to visit these spa towns.<sup>39</sup> It suited the high society profile that Leyniers was keen to assume.

Despite this, Daniel Leyniers kept a meticulous record of information about the births and deaths of his children. As a genealogist with noble aspirations, he knew how valuable this information was. In the genealogies that he compiled, he records accurately when a child died, with its exact age and the churchyard where it was buried. For instance, Daniel Leyniers writes:

‘Anno 1739 den 25 july naernoon ten 5 uren soo is gestorven wesen saterdag Petrus Joannis Leyniers out sijnde 7 jaeren 18 daghen sone van mij voorschreven Daniel Leyniers, leyt begraven inde Parochiaele Kercke van St Catherine in St. Jans Beuck bij ‘t wijwater vat onder den sercksteen van sijnen grootvader Urbanus Leyniers alwaer sijne Broeders oock begraven zijn’.<sup>40</sup>

Sometimes Daniel Leyniers writes about the circumstances in which his children died: for instance, Ludovicus died of fever, Daniel within thirty-six hours from an extremely high temperature and Benedictus died very suddenly. Daniel Leyniers kept a very accurate account of when his children were born and died, yet he did not find it important or appropriate to mention it in his memorial book. Nevertheless, he did mention the death of other family members, for instance, his mother Anne Marie Platteborse<sup>41</sup>

and his niece Catharina van der Elst.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, in another document entitled *Doodt boeck voor de overledenen van Kennis (1722–1749)*, Leyniers kept extremely meticulous records of when family members and friends died, often with additional information about their professions, the cause of death and sometimes their address.<sup>43</sup> However detailed and accurate the source may be, Daniel Leyniers never mentions the death of his own children in this *Doodt boeck*.

Yet we are not left in the dark about Daniel Leyniers’ children. For example, in the memorial book Leyniers mentions that Urbanus Leyniers Jr goes to school for the first time on 8 May 1734 at the age of three and a half.<sup>44</sup> Leyniers describes his children’s Communion,<sup>45</sup> he reports how they featured in processions dressed as angels,<sup>46</sup> and he involved them in the building of a new home for the family in the Vicketstraat in 1743. On 9 July 1743 at eleven o’clock his eldest son, Urbanus, laid the first stone on the right-hand side of the new building. His eldest daughter, Maria Elisabeth, also laid a stone on the left-hand side of the house.<sup>47</sup> Three months later Leyniers’ three oldest children, Urbanus, Maria Elisabeth and Joannes Baptist Benedictus, each drove a wooden nail into the truss of the new building. Their names were engraved on the nails that were driven into truss in the middle of the house.<sup>48</sup> As a passionate genealogist, he also wrote short biographies about his surviving sons in his genealogical works and, as a proud father, he listed all the achievements from the lives of his sons.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the fact that Daniel Leyniers did not mention their births or deaths in his memorial book did not in any way mean that he had a cool relationship with his children.

The warm bond that Daniel Leyniers had with his children is also apparent in another document. On the occasion of the Leyniers’ golden wedding anniversary, celebrated on 30 August 1754, Carolus de Vos, a printer on the *Kolenmarkt*, published a collection of poems (fig. 1). The couple’s children took the initiative for the collection and employees of the pair helped them with it. The printed collection of poems was part of the celebrations for their wedding anniversary. Three times the poems mention that the couple actual had ten children, but that four small boys died prematurely. A fragment from a poem by the six children is exemplary.<sup>50</sup>



Fig. 1. Illustration on top of the poem celebrating Leyniers' golden wedding anniversary. Brussels, Stadsarchief, Historisch archief, 3378.

'Tien kinderen zyn uyt hun Echte bed  
verworven,  
Ses leven daer nogh van, Vier zijn jongh  
afgestorven:  
Vier soonen, Dochters Twee zyn in het  
leven nogh  
Sy all hun Ouders Aert ontsongen met  
het sogh  
Vier Soonen, door de doodt, sij vroegh  
hebben verloren'.

The children's poem goes on to tell how well mother Anna Catharina Van Schoonendonck cared for her children. About the eldest son Urbanus Jr they wrote: 'Hoe wirdt dat kind bemindt!'. Their mother sat the whole day besides the cot of little Urbanus and played with him, kissed him if he cried or comforted him with a song. She prayed for her children and made sure that they were brought up properly from an early age, which is why she sent them from home to convents, schools and religious teachers.<sup>51</sup> Daniel Leyniers is described in the poem as a good father and businessman. One particularly important example of Leyniers' workmanship was the canopy of state that he wove for the King of Portugal's throne.<sup>52</sup> The collection includes another poem written by one of Daniel Leyniers' employees, which reiterates that there were originally ten children in the family and how happy the parents were that six of them survived.

In other words, the four children they lost were anything but forgotten. They were part of

their parents' achievements and were mentioned during celebrations. Yet there was no place for them in Daniel Leyniers' memorial book, just like there is no reference to be found about family life in Maximiliaan De Hase's memorial book. To explain this, we must turn to theoretical literature on parent-child relationships.

## Looking for Emotions in Memorial Books

As previously noted, the first historians that went looking for loving relationships between parents and children were sceptical. The supporters of *The Black Legend* were struck by an absence of loving testimonies in the source material. Later Pollock reacted to this hypothesis by presenting parental love as something that is timeless. Both before and since the eighteenth century, parents have been fond of their children. Pollock gathered countless examples from English language journals. Later on in the historiography on parent-child relationships, Pollock's theory became known as *The White Legend*. A countermovement of historians following in Pollock's wake started to search for testimonies about parent-child relationships in journals and letters.<sup>53</sup>

In the meantime, several historians started to refine Pollock's vision. These historians shifted emphasis to the fact that feelings of grief and love are historical constructs that have changed

over the centuries, both in their content and in their expression.<sup>54</sup> Expressing emotions in early modern times was obviously not done in the same way and in the same documents as it is today. If one is searching for testimonies of parent-child relationships, one should be very aware of the properties of the source one uses. Historians such as Rudolf Dekker (2000) and Robert Woods (2006) have already noted that ego-documents, at least before the late eighteenth century, are not rewarding sources for studying the emotional world of research subjects.<sup>55</sup> This view is supported by Isabelle Luciani's research on sixty *mémoires* compiled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Provence (2011). Only twenty *mémoires* mention the early loss of children. In most cases, the passages are mere factual accounts of what happened; only two passages reflect emotions.<sup>56</sup>

Extremely emotional passages only appear in ego-documents after the late eighteenth century, when auto-biographers started to express their emotions more openly. However, this silence does not necessarily imply a lack of love on the part of parents for their children. We have noted that Daniel Leyniers calculated precisely how old his children were when they died. Rudolf Dekker (2000) also remarked on this for other early modern parents. This can certainly be taken as a sign of affection.<sup>57</sup> Until the late eighteenth century, ego-documents were more factual than emotional. They often discussed the author's profession or their political career. Only at the end of the eighteenth century did journals or autobiographies evolve into a means to express feelings and this was under the influence of Romanticism in literature, which ensured that authors became familiar with an entirely new vocabulary with which they could express their emotions. In other words, it is not unusual that De Hase and Leyniers should leave what at first glance seems to be such a cold impression.<sup>58</sup>

New attention for the kind of source material in which grief is expressed has led historians to emphasise that the expression of grief and love are culture-bound. Early modern experiences of mourning were strongly inspired by a stoic Christian attitude. People believed that children who died prematurely were chosen by God. Grieving too deeply over the death of your child would give the impression that you nurtured a love for a human being that

was greater than your love for God himself.<sup>59</sup> It was appropriate to resist the urge to entrust your feelings to paper. One was expected to control one's grief.<sup>60</sup> The best way to seek comfort was to read the Bible, as is shown by Stephanie S. Dickey's research (1995) on images of grieving men and women in seventeenth-century portraits, in which handkerchiefs and the Bible were symbols for controlled grief.<sup>61</sup> Dealing with grief in a controlled fashion was expected to extend to one's work life too. The cool impression emanating from the memorial books does not, therefore, imply that the parents were insensitive to the death of their children. Rather, they conformed to the prevailing conventions surrounding mourning. Commemorating loved ones was strictly controlled and only possible in a limited number of ways in early modern Europe.

In addition to this, there was a persistent taboo surrounding pregnancy and giving birth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its origin was the fact that a pregnancy or delivery could suddenly end badly. The taboo disappeared only once the mother and child were cared for after the delivery and it had become apparent that everything had gone well.<sup>62</sup> An indication of the silence surrounding delivery and pregnancy is the fact that hardly any paintings have survived portraying pregnant women.<sup>63</sup> Depictions of delivery rooms in paintings are also not abundant.<sup>64</sup> In other words, the expression of joy regarding birth was also very culture-bound and regulated.

One way was to write poetry, in the Protestant areas at any rate. Historians Rudolf Dekker (2000), Claudia Jarzebowski (2010) and Robert Woods (2006) analyzed poems written on the occasion of death, for instance, for funerals, but also in letters that were later sent to the family as a way of comforting them.<sup>65</sup> Occasional poetry seemed to constitute a much more appropriate way to express grief before 1800. This kind of poetry was written by family, friends of the parents or the parents of the children who had passed away. Sometimes it was recited during the burial. This kind of poetry was seen as a fitting way to express grief in the Northern Low Countries.<sup>66</sup> Having said that, this custom has hardly been researched for the non-Protestant areas, such as the Southern Low Countries, for instance, and the extent to which occasional poems were also a customary



Fig. 2. Zeger Jacob Van Helmont, *The Family of Daniel Sirejacobs*, 1704, canvas 146 x 195.5 cm. Brussels, Broodhuis, inv. K 1966/2.

form for mourning in Brussels remains unclear. The personal nature of these poems can be problematic for their preservation, but perhaps there are still some examples to be found in the wealth of private archives. Researching the extent to which this practice also took place in the Southern Low Countries is important for a better understanding of eighteenth-century experiences of mourning in Brussels. Robert Woods (2006) pointed out significant geographical differences between France and England in terms of how people experienced mourning that could be traced back to very different demographic situations.<sup>67</sup> Investigating this for the Southern Low Countries obviously lies beyond the scope of this study.

Alongside poems, it is mainly paintings that are a useful visual source for mourning experiences within the early modern family. Art historians had already noted that, contrary to the cool parent-child relationship found in written sources, a great deal of family warmth could be observed in early modern family

portraits.<sup>68</sup> The mere existence of portraits that immortalised infants on their deathbed points to the affection that parents felt for their offspring.<sup>69</sup> Children who had passed away were also portrayed as angels in heaven in family portraits.<sup>70</sup> The commemoration of deceased children was therefore so important that they were included as part of the family in these portraits.<sup>71</sup> Contrary to the uncertain custom of writing mourning poems in the Southern Low Countries, it is clear that this form of commemoration was indeed known in eighteenth-century Brussels. Today, a portrait of the family of Daniel Sirejacobs (1642–1707), who was mayor of the nations from 1703 to 1706, is kept in the King's House Museum (Broodhuis) in Brussels. The Sirejacobs were a well-to-do family who had their portrait painted by Jacob van Helmont (1683–1726) in 1704 (1704, Brussels, Broodhuis, fig. 2).<sup>72</sup> The portrait shows the family Sirejacobs with the sixty-one-year-old father, Daniel Sirejacobs, and mother Elisabeth de Beer seated in a



room with gold leather wallpaper with their eight offspring around them. At that point, their eldest son is thirty-nine years old, the family's youngest daughter, Barbara Sirejacobs, is seventeen. In the background to the family portrait, there is a painting that depicts ten angel heads, arranged around a chalice, in clouds close to the sun. Underneath a maxim is emblazoned 'solo deo gloria', i.e., 'Glory to God alone'. These are the deceased children of the Sirejacobs family. Of the eighteen children that the family had according to the painting, we found fifteen in the parish records. Maarten Sirejacobs (°1664), Anna Sirejacobs (°1667), Daniël Sirejacobs (°1671), Stephanus Sirejacobs (°1674), Jan Baptist Sirejacobs (1677°), Maria Anne Sirejacobs (°1678) and Barbara Sirejacobs (°1686) are the children who were alive at the time of the portrait. The children's heads depicted as angels refer to Johanna (°1670), Catharina (°1672), Theresia (°1675), Barbara (°1680), Johanna Maria (°1682), Petrus (°1684), Johanna Maria (°1685) and three other children who we could not find in the parish records, which were patchy for the parish of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula, particularly as far as burial records were concerned.<sup>73</sup> Just like the poems for the Leyniers' wedding anniversary, so the deceased Sirejacobs children were such an integral part the family that they could not be excluded from a family portrait.

## Conclusion

Historians have long since ceased to believe in the cool parent-child relationships that the first childhood historians described. Experiences of mourning as well as the emotions surrounding

the arrival of a child in the eighteenth century were fundamentally different to those of today, but this does not mean that they were dealt with insensitively. Mortality was high in early modern Brussels. It seems that memorial books were not the appropriate place to write about grief.<sup>74</sup> De Hase's memorial book, that leaves a more factual impression than the memorial book of Daniel Leyniers, gives a cold impression of the parent-child relationship. A somewhat more loving family life emerges from Daniel Leyniers' memorial book, yet births and deaths are hardly recorded. By opposing Daniel Leyniers' memorial book with other sources, a much warmer image is sketched of the loving ties between the members of the Leyniers family. It seems that memorial books per se cannot be regarded as a suitable window through which to access to the emotions surrounding family life. Reaching the emotional world of the family can, however, be achieved by juxtaposing many different kinds of sources. This only works for exceptionally well-documented families, like Daniel Leyniers' family. There is little reason to suppose that De Hase and Leyniers did not consider their children to be important, even if the fact that their working rhythm seems to have hardly been disrupted by the death or the birth of their children may point in that direction. The cold-blooded impression that their memorial books give are a clear indication that early modern experiences of mourning differed fundamentally to our contemporary ones. Expressions of these emotions were probably voiced in sources other than ego-documents like poems and paintings. However, there is scant research in this respect for the Southern Low Countries upon which one can fall back.

Table 1:  
Pregnancies Catharina T'Serstevens (1748–1773)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1748												
1749												
1750												
1751												
1752												
1753												
1754												
1755												
1756												
1757												
1758												
1759												
1760												
1761												
1762												
1763												
1764												
1765												
1766												
1767												
1768												
1769												
1770												
1771												
1772												
1773												

## Appendix I – Survey of Maximiliaan de Hase’s children, including the dates of death of those children that died during the life of De Hase

Name	Baptism	Source	Death	Source
<i>Cecilia-Johanna</i>	30 June 1749	PR 440	2 May 1753	PR 456
Maximiliaan-Jan-Baptist-Fransiscus	10 October 1750	PR 440		
<i>Johannes-Dominicus</i>	22 December 1751	PR 440	1 May 1752	PR 456
Jan-Baptist-Dominicus	24 January 1753	PR 440		
<i>Paulina-Rosa-Josepha</i>	8 August 1754	PR 440	15 August 1759	PR 457
<i>Cecilia</i>	10 August 1755	PR 445	27 June 1760	PR 457
Hendrik-Maximiliaan	15 April 1757	PR 445		
Maximiliaan	21 June 1758	PR 445		
<i>Maria-Catharina</i>	18 October 1759	PR 445	13 August 1760	PR 457
Cornelia-Theresia	12 December 1760	PR 441		
Dominicus-Josephus	7 February 1762	PR 441		
Jozef-Frans	8 October 1763	PR 442		
<i>Cecilia</i>	18 August 1765	PR 442	7 September 1765	PR 457
<i>Frans-Jozef</i>	27 February 1767	PR 442	18 March 1767	PR 457
Karel-Leopold-Jozef	6 November 1768	PR 442		
Willem-Dominicus-Frans	4 July 1770	PR 442		
[ <i>Anonymous</i> ]	14 January 1772	PR 457	14 January 1772	PR 457
Frans	4 April 1773	PR 442		

## Appendix II – Daniel Leyniers’ children

Name	Baptism	Death
Urbanus	11 October 1730	16 September 1804
<i>Petrus-Johannes</i>	7 July 1732	25 June 1739
<i>Ludovicus</i>	19 October 1733	13 December 1734
<i>Dominicus-Benoît</i>	26 February 1735	19 July 1735
Maria-Elisabeth	7 August 1736	19 July 1776
Johannes-Baptist-Benoît	27 June 1738	26 April 1792
<i>Daniel</i>	15 May 1740	16 October 1741
Jacobus-Josephus-Xavier	12 April 1742	?
Ferdinand-Josephus	6 March 1744	16 June 1793
Anna-Maria	6 September 1746	24 March 1816

Source: Michel Vanwelkenhuyzen and Pierre De Tienne, 'Une famille de tapisseries bruxellois, les Leyniers (suite)', *L'intermédiaire des généalogistes / De middelbaar tussen de genealogische navorsers*, 44 (1989), pp. 78-84.

## NOTES

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1. Brussels, Stadsarchief [hereafter BSA], *Parochieregisters* [hereafter PR], 457 (16 August 1759; 29 June 1760; 14 August 1760).

2. Isabelle Devos, *Allemaal beestjes: mortaliteit en morbiditeit in Vlaanderen, 18de-20ste eeuw*, Ghent, 2006, p. 45.

3. For a concise survey, see Benjamin B. Roberts, 'History of Childhood – Europe', *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*, www.faqs.org/childhood/Gr-Im/History-of-Childhood.html (14 January 2014).

4. Daniel Leyniers' *Memorie* is at BSA, 3525. De Hase's *Memorie Boeck* will be published and analysed by Koenraad Brosens in a forthcoming monograph on De Hase and eighteenth-century Brussels painting. See also Koenraad Brosens and Katlijne Van der Stighelen, 'Paintings, prices and productivity: lessons learned from Maximiliaan de Hase's *Memorie boeck* (1744–80)', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 36 (2013), pp. 173–183 and Koenraad Brosens, 'The final convulsions of Brussels tapestry: the Legend of the Miraculous Host, 1769–1785', *The Burlington Magazine*, 155 (2013), pp. 82–87.

5. On the use of egodocuments as sources, see Rudolf Dekker and Arianne Baggerman, "'De gevaarlijkste van alle bronnen". Egodocumenten: nieuwe wegen en perspectieven', *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis*, 1 (2004), pp. 3–22 and Rudolf Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical writing in its social context since the middle ages*, Hilversum, 2002.

6. Egbert Buys, *Nieuw en volkomen woordenboek van konsten en wetenschappen: bevattende alle de takken der nuttige kennis. Alles verzameld uit de beste schryvers in alle talen, en met een ménigte van nieuwe artykelen vermeerderd*, vol. 7, Amsterdam, 1775, p. 249; Noël Chomel, *Algemeen huishoudelijk-, natuur-, zedekundig- en kunstwoordenboek*, vol. 4, Leeuwarden, 1778, p. 204.

7. Jan De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*, Cambridge, 2008.

8. See note 4.

9. Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief [hereafter BAR], *Ambachten en Gilden*, 819, fol. 40: 'Ontfanghen als leerjonghen Maxemiliaen De Haes leerende bij N. De Hondt schilder heeft maer half bock gelt betaelt'. See also A. Pinchart, 'La corporation des peintres de Bruxelles', *Messenger des Sciences Historiques ou Archives des Arts et de la Bibliographie de Belgique* (1878), p. 486.

10. Brosens and Van der Stighelen 2013 (see note 4), p. 175.

11. BAR, *Ambachten en Gilden*, 819, fol. 74. See also A. Pinchart, 'La corporation des peintres de Bruxelles', *Messenger des Sciences Historiques ou Archives des Arts et de la Bibliographie de Belgique* (1879), p. 460.

12. Brosens and Van der Stighelen 2013 (see note 4), pp. 174–175.

13. François De Cacamp, 'Oude geslachten tussen Zenne en Zoniën. 1. De Haese', *Brabantica*, 5 (1960), pp. 219–256

and Christophe de Fossa, *La famille t'Serstevens*, Brussels, 2013.

14. De Cacamp 1960 (see note 13) and de Fossa 2013 (see note 13).

15. Veerle De Laet, *Brussel binnenskamers: kunst- en luxebezit in het spanningsveld tussen hof en stad, 1600–1735*, Amsterdam, 2011, p. 87 and Claude Bruneel and Luc Delporte, 'Approche socio-professionnelle de la population bruxelloise en 1783', *Revue du Nord*, 79 (1997), pp. 493–494.

16. BSA, PR, 440 (30 June 1749).

17. BSA, PR, 457 (14 January 1772).

18. BSA, PR, 458 (24 May 1781).

19. Paul Klep, *Bevolking en arbeid in transformatie: een onderzoek naar de ontwikkelingen in Brabant, 1700–1900*, Nijmegen, 1981, p. 150.

20. Chris Vandenbroecke, 'Karakteristieken van het huwelijks- en voortplantingspatroon. Vlaanderen en Brabant 17de–19de eeuw', *Bevolking, voeding en levensstandaard in het verleden. Verzamelde studies van Prof. Chris Vandenbroecke*, Isabelle Devos en Thijs Lambrechts (eds.), Ghent, 2004, pp. 249–290.

21. On Count Cobenzl's support to Brussels painters and painting, see Catherine Phillips, 'Count Charles Cobenzl (1712–1770): promoting the arts and learning in the Austrian Netherlands', in Katlijne Van der Stighelen, Leen Kelchtermans and Koenraad Brosens (eds.), *Embracing Brussels. Art and Art Production in Brussels, 1600–1800*, Turnhout, 2013, pp. 119–135. On the support of his predecessor, Botta Adorno, see Koenraad Brosens, 'Botta Adorno, Empress Maria Theresa and Brussels Tapestry Production in the Mid-Eighteenth Century. Part I', *Textile History*, 45 (2014), pp. 216–133 and Koenraad Brosens, 'Botta Adorno, Empress Maria Theresa and Brussels Tapestry Production in the Mid-Eighteenth Century. Part II', *Textile History* [May 2015].

22. Brosens and Van der Stighelen 2013 (see note 4).

23. Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, 1960; Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family*, New York, 1975; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500–1800*, London, 1977.

24. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, Berkeley, 1992.

25. Claudia Jarzebowski, 'Loss and emotion in funeral works on children', *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*, Lynne Tatlock (ed.), Leiden, 2010, p. 186.

26. Koenraad Brosens, *A contextual study of Brussels tapestry, 1670–1770: the dye works and tapestry workshop of Urbanus Leyniers (1674–1747)*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 13, Brussels, 2004.

27. Michel Vanwelkenhuyzen and Pierre De Tienne, 'Une famille de tapisseries bruxelloises, les Leyniers', *L'intermédiaire des généalogistes/De middelaar tussen de genealogische navorsers*, 43 (1988), p. 332.

28. BSA, *Lignages et papiers de famille*, 2996, fol. 138 and Belgium, private collection, *Beschrijvinghe der familie Leyniers*, vol 1, fol. 1–52; see Brosens 2004 (see note 26), pp. 282–297.
29. For a survey, see Michel Vanwelkenhuyzen and Pierre De Tienne, 'Une famille de tapisseries bruxellois, les Leyniers (suite)', *L'intermédiaire des généalogistes/De middelaar tussen de genealogische navorsers*, 44 (1989), pp. 73–83 and Brosens 2004 (see note 26), pp. 18–20.
30. Brosens 2004 (see note 26), p. 297. This was not an unusual phenomenon. Artists such as Justus van Egmont (1601–1674) and David II Teniers (1610–1690) also tried to attain a noble title and thus showed an interest in their genealogy; Prisca Valkeneers, 'Van timmermanszoon tot schilder aan het hof. De adellijke ambitie van Justus van Egmont', *De Zeventiende Eeuw. Cultuur in de Nederlanden in interdisciplinair perspectief* 27, 2 (2011), pp. 270–299, esp. pp. 278–283. Likewise, a considerable number of Antwerp merchants were ennobled; Bert Timmermans, *Patronen van patronage in het zeventiende-eeuwse Antwerpen. Een elite als actor binnen de kunstwereld*, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 154.
31. Cfr Brosens 2004 (see note 26).
32. Lucien Crick, 'Le "memorie-boek" de Daniel Leyniers', *Le document*, 29 (1924), pp. 55–59; Lucien Crick, 'Uit het Memorie Boeck van Daniel Leyniers', *Maandelijks Tijdschrift van het nationale Hulpcomité*, 10–11 (1944), pp. 15–18; Lucien Crick, 'Het "Memorie Boeck" van Daniël Leyniers', *Brabantse folklore*, 20 (1940–1948), pp. 130–150.
33. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 247.
34. Vanwelkenhuyzen and De Tienne 1989 (see note 29), pp. 75–76.
35. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 247.
36. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 286.
37. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 269.
38. Brosens 2004 (see note 26), p. 296.
39. Ronny Gobyn (ed.), *Te kust en te kuur: badplaatsen en kuuroorden in België*, Brussels, 1987 and Sophie Verreyken, *Spa, café de l'Europe? Een studie over het imago van het Ardense kuuroord (1648–1672)*, unpublished master's thesis (supervised by Violet Soen), University of Leuven, 2013, pp. 44–45.
40. BSA, 2996, *Genealogie der familie Van der Meulen en Leyniers*, fol. 224; BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 90–93.
41. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 241: 'Den 20<sup>ste</sup> july 1726 wesende saterdagh s'morghens ten 6 uren is door den Eerw. Heere Pastoor van St Cath. Mijne Moeder Berecht geweest sijnde dit den avont van mijnen Patroon den Profeet Daniel in den cuyl der Leeuwen ende zij is opden 24 july ten 8 uren overleden sijnde eenen woensdagh'.
42. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 274 (6 January 1741).
43. Belgium, Private collection.
44. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 254.
45. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 260 and 290.
46. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 265 and 267.
47. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 292.
48. BSA, 3525, *Memorie van Daniel Leyniers*, fol. 293.
49. BSA, 2996, *Genealogie der familie Van der Meulen en Leyniers*, fol. 223–229.
50. BSA, 3347, *Gedichten ter ere van het vijfentwintigjarige huwelijk van Daniel Leyniers Anna Catharina Brigitta van Schoonendonck op 16 januari 1672*, fol. 8.
51. BSA, 3347, *Gedichten ter ere van het vijfentwintigjarige huwelijk van Daniel Leyniers Anna Catharina Brigitta van Schoonendonck op 16 januari 1672*, fol. 8–9.
52. BSA, 3347, *Gedichten ter ere van het vijfentwintigjarige huwelijk van Daniel Leyniers Anna Catharina Brigitta van Schoonendonck op 16 januari 1672*, fol. 8.
53. Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900*, Cambridge, 1983.
54. Cultural historian Jan Bleyen, for example, demonstrated that the mourning process has become a far more individualized process than it used to be; Jan Bleyen, *Doodgeboren. Een mondelinge geschiedenis van de rouw*, Antwerp, 2012.
55. Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, memory and Autobiography in Holland, From the Golden Age to Romanticism*, Hampshire – London, 2000, pp. 130–133 and Robert Woods, *Children Remembered: Responses to Untimely Death in the Past*, Liverpool, 2006.
56. Isabelle Luciani, 'De l'inventaire comptable à la souffrance intime: la perte de l'enfant dans les livres de raison provençaux à l'époque moderne (XVI/XVIIe siècle)', *La mort de l'enfant, Colloque international d'Aix-en-Provence (20–22 janvier 2010)*, Charles Zaremba (ed.), Aix-en-Provence, 2011, pp. 19–30. We like to thank Hannelore Magnus for this reference.
57. Dekker 2000 (see note 55), p. 132.
58. Dekker 2000 (see note 55), p. 130.
59. Dekker 2000 (see note 55), pp. 132–138.
60. Ariadne Schmidt examined the letters written by a widow living in seventeenth-century Leiden and found only limited emotions of grief and pain. The letters she received advised the widow how to act, that is, devout, acquiescent and firm. Grief had to be curbed as it was unhealthy. Ariadne Schmidt, *Overleven na de dood. Weduwen in Leiden in de Gouden Eeuw*, Leiden, 2001.
61. Stephanie Dickey, "'Met een wenende ziel... doch droge ogen', Women holding handkerchiefs in seventeenth-century Dutch portraits", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 46 (1995), pp. 333–367.
62. Natia Windmolders, "... want tot de Kraam hoort zo veel!" *Een iconografische studie van het kraamgebeuren in de 16de en de 17de-eeuwse schilderkunst van de beide Nederlanden*, unpublished master's thesis (supervised by Katlijne Van der Stighelen), University of Leuven, 1999, p. 85.
63. Jan Baptist Bedaux, 'Minnekoorts-, zwangerschaps- en doodsverschijnselen op 17e eeuwse schilderijen', *Antiek* 10/1 (1975), pp. 17–43; Dedalo Carasso and Annemarie de Wildt, *Een kind onder het hart. Zwangerschap en geboorte*

in de 17de en 18de eeuw, exh.cat., Amsterdams Historisch Museum, 1987.

64. Windmolders 1999 (see note 62), pp. 85ff.

65. Dekker 2000 (see note 55); Jarzebowski 2010 (see note 25); Woods 2006 (see note 55).

66. Dekker 2000 (see note 55), pp. 130–133; Irma Thoen, *Strategic Affection? Gift Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Holland*, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 122.

67. Woods 2006 (see note 55), p. 212.

68. Claudia Jarzebowski and Thomas Max Sagley (eds.), *Childhood and Emotion: Across Cultures 1450-1800*, New York, 2014, p. 3; Jan Baptist Bedaux and Rudi Ekkart (eds.), *Kinderen op hun mooist: het kinderportret in de Nederlanden, 1500–1700*, exh.cat., Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, Ghent – Amsterdam, 2000.

69. Jan Baptist Bedaux, 'Funeraire kinderportretten uit de 17de eeuw', *Naar het lijk. Het Nederlandse doodsportret 1500–heden*, Bert Sliggers (ed.), Haarlem, 1998, p. 107.

70. Bedaux 1998 (see note 69), pp 92–99; Bedaux and Ekkart 2000 (see note 68), p. 162, p. 221, p. 231, p. 275, p. 279 and p. 286.

71. Inspired by the Book of Job, early modern parents regarded all children, living and deceased, as a part of their family; Bedaux 1998 (see note 69), pp. 92–94.

72. For Van Helmont, see Brosens 2004 (see note 26), p. 105 and pp. 145–146 and Ebelte Hartkamp-Jonxis and Hillie Smit, *European Tapestries in the Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam, 2004, p. 422.

73. Martin and Anna were baptised in the church of *Sint Goriks* on 8 June 1664 and 7 May 1667 (BSA, PR, 255). All other children were baptised in the church of *Sint Goedele*: Elisabeth on 29 August 1668 (BSA, PR, 96), Johanna on 19 February 1670 (BSA, PR, 96), Daniel on 29 March 1671 (BSA, PR, 96), Catharina on 16 June 1672 (BSA, PR, 96), Stephanus on 26 February 1674 (BSA, PR, 97), Theresia on 4 October 1675 (BSA, PR, 97), Jan-Baptist on 5 March 1677 (BSA, PR, 97), Marie-Anne on 28 December 1678 (BSA, PR, 98), Barbara on 7 April 1680 (BSA, PR, 98), Johanna Maria on 24 January 1682 (BSA, PR, 98), Petrus on 23 January 1684 (BSA, PR, 98), Johanna Maria on 11 August 1685 (BSA, PR, 99), Barbara on 31 August 1686 (BSA, PR, 99). See also Brussels, Royal Library, *Handschriften*, II, 6603, fol. 66.

74. As is also shown by Luciani 2011 (see note 56).