

“Always toward absent lovers, love's tide stronger flows:”

Spiritual lovesickness in the letters of Anne-Marie Martinozzi

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Abstract

In February 1654 Anne-Marie Martinozzi, a niece of Cardinal Mazarin, married Armand de Bourbon, prince de Conti. The newly-weds went on to experience almost concurrent pious conversions that would transform their social behaviour for the remainder of their lives. Shortly afterwards, Armand was posted to Northern Italy as commander of the French army, necessitating a six-month estrangement of the couple between May and October 1657. This article explores a corpus of “love letters” penned by the princess during this separation. It argues that Anne-Marie not only claimed to be suffering from “melancholy” as a result of her separation from her lover and spouse, but that she also constructed an image of herself as *spiritually* lovesick on account of her deprivation from her mentor and confidant. In doing so, this article sheds light on the centrality of co-penitents to the direction of spiritual lives in the aftermath of a pious conversion.

Keywords: Chagrin, Conversion, Co-penitents, Love letters, Lovesickness, Melancholy, Spiritual Direction

On 8 May 1657, Anne-Marie Martinozzi (1637 – 1672) wrote to her husband Armand de Bourbon, prince de Conti (1629 – 1666) from their hôtel on the Quai de Conti in Paris to express the “extreme love” she felt for him and to articulate the “furious chagrin” she was suffering as a result of his absence.¹ This emotive letter was among the first of many exchanges over a six-month separation of the Italian princess from her husband in 1657. Born in Rome in 1637 to Geronimo Martinozzi, and Cardinal Mazarin’s sister Laura-Margherita Mazzarini, Anne-Marie came to France in September 1648.² She married the prince de Conti on 21 February 1654 and joined the ranks of the Bourbon-Condés comprised of the families of Armand’s two older siblings: Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon, duchesse de Longueville (1619 – 1679), and Louis II de

Bourbon, prince de Condé (1621 – 1686). Sometime after their marriage, Conti infected the seventeen-year old princess with syphilis and she endured several miscarriages.³

Shortly after their nuptials, the prince and princess both experienced transformative pious conversions which were at least partly inspired by Armand's newly devout older sister, who would later become an intimate friend and confidant of the princess. The Conti's conversions must also be located within their experience of the mid seventeenth-century French "rigorist turn:" a spiritual current characterised by the increasingly severe outlook of the Gallican church on the sacraments of confession and communion, and by the severity of French clergymen who sought to eradicate the moral laxity they associated with Jesuit spirituality. The Cistercian convent of Port-Royal, led by Mère Angélique Arnauld (1591 – 1661), is perhaps the most well-known expression of French rigorism, as the headquarters of the Jansenist movement and the centre of the associated theological controversies of the mid-seventeenth century.⁴ Along with Armand's sister, the Contis were among the illustrious patrons of Port-Royal. Their chosen spiritual directors were also rigorists and Port-Royal sympathisers. After converting, the prince took Bishop Nicolas Pavillon of Alet (1639 – 1677), as his confessor and the abbé Gabriel de Ciron of Toulouse (1619 – 1675) as his spiritual director; whilst the princess initiated correspondence with the abbé Guillaume Le Roy (1610 - 1684).⁵ During the early stages of her conversion, the princess also corresponded with her husband's confessor Ciron, before writing regularly to another rigorist cleric the abbé Pierre Tressan de La Vergne (b.1618) whom she retained as her spiritual director.⁶

It was in the immediate aftermath of these conversions that Armand was posted to Northern Italy as commander of the French army, necessitating a six-month estrangement of the new couple between May and October 1657. During this time, Anne-Marie penned 34 letters to

her husband not only discussing their estate affairs and charitable commitments, but also her emotional state. Many of these exchanges were punctuated with romantic outpourings. Such epistolary declarations of affection between early modern spouses are no longer surprising to historians. In recent decades, many scholars have rebutted the chronology of the (now dated) companionate marriage thesis which suggested that spouses in the pre-modern period were not bound by reciprocal love and friendship.⁷ Scholars such as Elizabeth S. Cohen have also caught glimpses of infatuated lovers in court cases where love-letters were often read aloud as evidence.⁸ There is also now a body of interdisciplinary scholarship on the early modern love letter which forms part of a growing literature on the history of romance and courtship.⁹

Using the letter as a source for the history of emotions remains unproblematic, however, and some scholars have been sceptical about the possibility of recapturing individual subjective feelings from them. In her work on the love letter, Fay Bound Alberti has argued that letter-writing actively “shaped” emotional experiences and was part of a process of “literary construction” based on letter-writing manuals and other standard topoi.¹⁰ Her suggestion is that historians ought not to use letters simply as windows onto inner experiences and emotions, but rather as clues as to how emotions were produced and articulated.¹¹ In response to this approach, my objective is to be attentive to the ways in which Anne-Marie Martinozzi’s letter writing helped her to frame her own sentiments. Without denying the existence of emotions beyond their expression, I propose that the princess’s epistolary yearning for her absent spouse made use of a “spiritually loaded” vocabulary in order to convey her agony – which, in turn, continued to shape her emotional experiences.¹² Contextualising the language of Anne-Marie Martinozzi’s love-letters and probing the circumstances of their production will therefore be crucial for recovering the particularities of her affective life in 1657.

[Figure 1 Letter of Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 8 May 1657
Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France]

This article argues that after the departure of her husband, the princesse de Conti understood herself to be suffering from increased despondency resulting in a melancholy which affected her daily life and physical health. It proposes that her melancholy was presented as, above all, a “spiritual lovesickness,” which she perceived to be caused by the prolonged absence of her spiritual confidant and co-penitent, Armand, in the aftermath of their conversions to an austere neo-Augustinian strand of Catholicism. Here, I am using the term “co-penitent” to denote two or more persons who shared spiritual experiences or whose devotional lives were being directed by the same confessor.

The first part of the article will situate Anne-Marie’s epistolary accounts of her emotional and physical health within the broader historical context of the early modern melancholy “epidemic.” It will seek to uphold the recent scholarly challenge to the conflation between female melancholy and biological disorders such as uterine fury, by suggesting that Anne-Marie appropriated a very current and elite discourse in order to contemplate her emotional state and to display her affections for the absent prince. The second part of the article will go on to locate the princess’s *melancholia* more directly within contemporary spiritual and moral understandings of the disease. It will show that the princess interpreted her despair as symptomatic of her estrangement from her co-penitent, Armand, with whom she longed to share her spiritual anguish. This part of the article contends that Anne-Marie drew upon a tradition of mystical suffering in order to convey the spiritual dimension to her pain. In the course of this discussion, the article will hope to demonstrate that a reading of this “spiritual lovesickness” in Martinozzi’s correspondence points to the need for a retelling of the history of early modern spiritual direction

which foregrounds the emotional and spiritual comfort sought outside of the confessor-penitent relationship.

A “Cruel Absence”:¹³ The marriage and separation of the prince and princesse de Conti

The marriage of the prince and princesse de Conti in February 1654 cemented Armand’s reconciliation with Cardinal Mazarin after the failure of the noble Fronde in which Conti and the rest of the Bourbon-Condé family had been insurgents.¹⁴ Giving the hand of his niece in marriage was not the only means of diplomatic appeasement at Mazarin’s disposal: Conti also reassumed the position of governor of Champagne and Brie, subsequently becoming governor of Guyenne between 1658 and 1660, before taking Languedoc until his death in 1666. In the more immediate term, Conti was named Viceroy of Catalonia and was posted there in May 1654 as commander of the French army during this phase of the Franco-Spanish War (1635 – 1659).¹⁵

Surviving letters betray the princesse de Conti’s angst after Armand’s first departure so early in the marriage. On 14 June 1654 she told him she loved him with all her heart and asked him to love her always.¹⁶ On 11 August, she begged him to safeguard himself for the love of his poor wife.¹⁷ “I love you” was an expression which was quite commonly used as a term of affection between friends, but which was also associated with romantic love.¹⁸ Anne-Marie’s letters tended to progressively take on this amorous language. She began to address her husband using more familiar terms such as “my dear child” and “my love:” perhaps indicative of a transition from formulaic declarations of love which typified early exchanges, to more personal articulations of affection. The progress of the Franco-Spanish War necessitated Armand’s second departure from France in May 1657, this time for Northern Italy which was still in the hands of

Philip IV of Spain. This prompted a further flurry of epistolary romance from Anne-Marie beginning on 7 May, which is the focus of this article.

During this second period of separation, her letters begin to show signs that pining for the absent prince was having some detrimental effects on her personal emotional state and her physical health. In a letter dated 20 June 1657, she told the prince that she was carrying a portrait of him with her, whilst she travelled from Gisors to stay at Forges-les-Eaux for a month. She wrote of this portrait:

I love it so much and when I want to delight myself a little, I look a little at this poor child whom I love with a great tenderness. My dear husband, I have never loved you so much. I feel a tenderness in the bottom of my heart for you, greater it seems to me than I have ever felt. I would really like to see you and when I look at how far from me this is [it] gives me a profound melancholy.¹⁹

The princesse de Conti represented her emotions in a similar way in many of her letters, using terms such as “chagrin” and “chagrine” which also signified melancholy or bad (dark) humour.²⁰ In this particular exchange, Anne-Marie more explicitly framed her feelings using the very current discourse of the “melancholy epidemic” which was endemic across sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe.²¹

Treatises were written by observers of the outbreak across Europe. These commentators drew upon classical teachings about the condition and most understood it to be related to an excess of the noxious humour black bile.²² Black bile was one of the four bodily humours which were thought to comprise the human body according to the Hippocratic and Galenic medical traditions (in addition to blood, phlegm, and yellow bile). The sensing of an emotion could create

a rush in one of the four humours. In sadness, for instance, black bile was produced by the spleen which cooled and dried the blood surrounding the heart, causing black bile to spread through the body.²³ The diagnosis and treatment of melancholy in our period was also substantially based on Arabic and Islamic medical traditions, and remedies included emetics and other purges such as laxatives, diuretics and bleedings.²⁴

Whether or not Anne-Marie Martinozzi was experiencing the physiological symptoms associated with a humoural imbalance is not always clear from her letters. In some instances, it seems that the clinical symptoms she was exhibiting were being treated as signs of other maladies. For example, in July 1657, she described taking donkey's milk: a remedy for many ailments including gynaecological problems.²⁵ This was perhaps intended to allay her symptoms of miscarriage. It is curious, however, that in the letter in which Anne-Marie declared herself melancholic, she planned to visit Forges-les-Eaux: the thermal waters which had become popular with the elite during the reign of Louis XIII for their health benefits. Just over 100 kilometres north of Paris, Forges-les-Eaux was specifically recommended to those diagnosed with melancholy up to the nineteenth century as the thermal waters were thought to balance the humours.²⁶ She continued to take the waters at Forges for several weeks and frequently alluded to the treatments she had undergone with reference to her emotional state. On 15 May, for example, she described having been bled ("saignée") twice, and feeling simultaneously chagrined and weak.²⁷ On 18 July, she also displayed a lack of concentration and an indifference towards her social duties.²⁸

Women were thought to be particularly susceptible to melancholic disorders. One gendered strand of the disease was known as lovesickness, or erotic melancholy. Lovesickness was associated with humoural imbalance but was also treated variously as an illness contracted when

gazing upon a lover, when separated from a loved one, or when sexually frustrated.²⁹ Like melancholy, this particular malady intrigued early modern commentators. The seventeenth-century Oxford scholar Robert Burton (1577 – 1640) devoted part of his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) to the subject, whilst the French physician Jacques Ferrand (b.1575) wrote an entire treatise on erotic melancholy. His *Traicté de l'essence et guérison de l'amour ou de la mélancholie érotique* of 1610 was based substantially on the translations by the Persian physician Ibn Sina (c.980 – 1037), known as Avicenna.³⁰ Ferrand's treatise was translated into English in 1640 and Burton was known to be among his readership.³¹ According to Ferrand, among the external causes of erotic melancholy were the five natural senses and included the sight of love letters "crammed with enticing words." "Proneness in bodily disposition" to the disease constituted the main internal cause.³² Crucially for our purposes here, the unmistakable signs of melancholy took hold when lovers were apart and unable to share their passions. This induced various physical symptoms including a pale complexion, slow fever, heart palpitations, grief, tears, fainting, insomnia and headaches.³³

Melancholy was seen as morally dangerous and, moreover, as a mental illness which, if left untreated, could lead to insanity.³⁴ Yet there were also vogues for the condition among the European elite. Roy Strong has shown that patrons would often commission portraits which depicted them as "melancholic."³⁵ Michael Macdonald's study of the seventeenth-century patients of physician Richard Napier revealed that those diagnosed with melancholy tended to be from the higher social orders.³⁶ The work of Marion A. Wells has also demonstrated how love melancholy was also an important "poetic concept" as well as a medical one, and male lovers fashioned themselves as lovesick as a means of displaying affections.³⁷ When occurring in women, however, lovesickness was commonly explained as a biological syndrome originating in

the womb and made comparable to the disorders of green sickness and uterine fury.³⁸

Greensickness, known variously as “white fever” and the “disease of virgins” was thought to be the result of a lack of intercourse and could be remedied by marriage; uterine fury was a sign that the sickness had degenerated into hysteria.³⁹ Jacques Ferrand recognised the varying degrees of erotic melancholy and how it could be distinguished from passionate love, but he too saw uterine fury as a kind of love melancholy.⁴⁰

Anne-Marie’s infatuation with, and desire for, her absent spouse certainly conformed to a model of female erotic melancholy, or lovesickness. Female lovesickness was a familiar trope in epistolary manuals, where women were often construed as romantic “victims.”⁴¹ Yet to interpret the princess’s malaise as the symptoms of an unruly uterus would be a misreading of her correspondence. Literary scholar Lesel Dawson has been among those to criticise the fallacy that female lovesickness was only ever conceived of as a purely physiological disorder and argues convincingly that “for high-ranking women, melancholy provided a compelling discourse of interiority, through which they could express feelings of lovesickness, loneliness or alienation.”⁴² Elena Carrera has similarly noted that for *canionero* (“songbook”) poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, lovesickness was not always presented as a shameful disease, but a way of intensifying experiences of love and desire.⁴³

As we have already seen, Anne-Marie Martinozzi’s epistolary declarations of love during 1657 were inflected with introspective disquietude, betraying the psychological torment she sustained. She reflected on her love for Armand by carrying his portrait with her and felt disinterested in her routine social activities. In her letters, she cast her *melancholia* not purely within a pathological or medical context, but accordingly within a contemplative, intellectual one using appropriate “elite cultural codes.”⁴⁴ In this way, appropriating the language of melancholy

provided a framework for the princess to make sense of her feelings, and a means of articulating her emotions during this privation from her husband.⁴⁵ The next part of this article will situate Anne-Marie's emotional outpourings more closely within the circumstances surrounding her conversion, in order to probe the spiritual dimension to this lovesickness.

Spiritual Lovesickness in the Aftermath of Conversion

In 1657, Anne-Marie's letters to her husband not only abound in declarations of marital love. That year, her correspondence also reflected the progress of the pious conversions that she and her husband both underwent during his return to France between autumn 1655 and May 1657. Her letters are markedly different in tone and content to those exchanged during his first departure for Catalonia in 1654, as she began to re-imagine their marital union as bound by a new fear of God. In a letter of 11 May 1657, for instance, she wrote that that they must love Our Lord above all else and pray that he might give them the grace to love each other.⁴⁶ On 2 June from Forges-les-Eaux, she invited her husband to pray to God asking that He could give them the grace to live as a "Christian husband and wife" must.⁴⁷

This view of their marriage may have reflected changing perspectives on the sacrament itself. In France, whilst marriage was still largely seen as a remedy only for those people who could not resist the temptations of the flesh, there were some positive reassessments of the sacrament emerging in the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ Clerics such as François de Sales, Jean-Pierre Camus, Jean Cordier and Claude Maillard were among those to present it as an opportunity for "mutual sanctification."⁴⁹ This gradual reconfiguring of their affections continues to reappear in Anne-Marie's correspondence, as she aspired almost to a kind of Neoplatonic love of two souls

uniting to achieve spiritual transcendence.⁵⁰ On 2 September, she sent a lock of her hair as a token to reinforce this.⁵¹ The princess also interpreted her coerced separation from her husband as a penitential punishment for the sins of their past lives; they were to offer their suffering to God for the expiation of sin.⁵²

With these letters in mind then, we might begin to understand the melancholy that Anne-Marie expressly identified in herself in June 1657, and which she continued to exhibit throughout the summer, as a product of her conversion. The prognosis in cases such as this where troubled consciences resulted in melancholic disease was usually “religious melancholy.” Early modern commentators on religious melancholy drew upon classical and patristic theories of *acedia*: a type of spiritual affliction causing restlessness or weariness.⁵³ As Angus Gowland’s seminal article on the early modern outbreak revealed, melancholy “carried spiritual and ethical as well as medical significance.”⁵⁴ Jeremy Schmidt has also observed how, for English Protestants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, melancholy was very much a “disease of the soul.”⁵⁵ Calvinists, in particular, saw the experience of despair and sorrow as a marker of devotional progress.⁵⁶

Importantly, the Augustinian theology underpinning rigorism meant that penitents such as the prince and princesse de Conti had a belief in the doctrine of predestination in common with Calvinists; and it was the anxiety provoked by the prospect of damnation which often led to diagnoses of melancholy.⁵⁷ The Counter-Reformation emphasis on penitence and contrition meant that guilt, fear and cognate emotions were also central to Catholic spiritual experiences. The “chagrin” that Anne-Marie regularly described feeling in her letters of 1657 was therefore part of a spiritual vocabulary as well as a romantic one, and must be charted against the severe demands that rigorist casuistry placed on the conscience of a newly converted penitent.

Perhaps more relevant to Anne-Marie's epistolary testimonies to her despair was the language of spiritual suffering. By the seventeenth century, suffering had long been part of the Christian tradition, but its meanings changed over time: whilst early Christian martyrs were apparently impervious to pain, female mystics embraced it to enhance their spiritual experiences.⁵⁸ Indeed, this was a dominant theme in mystical texts from across the late medieval and early modern period and is a formulation which scholars have identified in the writings of authors such as Catherine of Siena (1347 – 1380) and Teresa of Ávila (1515 – 1582), among others.⁵⁹ Both physical pain and mental trauma were central to the religious experiences of mystics. As Caroline Walker Bynum illuminated several years ago, this often took the form of self-inflicted suffering as female mystics sought to identify with Christ's suffering on the cross.⁶⁰

Many women aspired to achieve the ecstasy that female mystics felt in their communion with God. Gabriella Zarri's important work on sixteenth-century Italy demonstrated how female "Living Saints" used hagiographic stereotypes as well as specific saintly models as "reference points" for their own pious lives.⁶¹ Women sought to reflect on their own experiences in the light of archetypes such as Saint Catherine, or the Magdalene herself. Following these models, "the religious mutation of a female heart was hardly conceivable without this tumultuous unfolding of tension, attention, passions and emotions."⁶² Such affective displays of piety were celebrated by contemporaries and offered women liberating avenues of religious expression.⁶³

We know from other sources that Anne-Marie Martinozzi similarly identified with the sanctity of pious exemplars. She owned the relics of the sixth-century virgin-martyr Faustina and also made allusions in her letters to the penitent prostitute Saint Thais of Alexandria who died after three years of enclosure in an anchoritic cell.⁶⁴ It was, of course, anchoritism which inspired

the asceticism of many early modern mystics such as Saint Teresa.⁶⁵ From her letters, it seems that the princess may well have been drawing upon these traditions to convey her own agony:

I am furiously bored of being separated from you. I cannot wait to see you I believe that I would die of joy when we will be together once, we must not separate again. My dear child it is the only consolation that we have in the world we must never separate and that the friendship which is between us would serve the only thing for which we are in the world, which is our salvation.⁶⁶

Mystics were known to suffer from their “estrangement from God” and “divine rejection” during contemplation which prompted a spiritual longing for God.⁶⁷ As this extract demonstrates, in the princess’s case it was her distance from Armand rather than God which was at the heart of her suffering. That she might “die of joy” when reunited with her husband seems reminiscent of the mystical rapture and ecstasy experienced when in communion with God.

Crucially then, Anne-Marie’s spiritual suffering was exacerbated by the absence of her co-penitent, Armand. We know that it was the prince’s conversion and subsequent reputation for being devout which initially compelled Anne-Marie to convert. Her nineteenth-century biographer Édouard de Barthélemy even went as far as suggesting that she only ever converted out of love for her husband, citing the memoirs of Anne-Marie Louise d’Orléans, mademoiselle de Montpensier (1627 – 1693), who claimed that the princesse de Conti was “not a *dévote*.”⁶⁸ This is true up to a point. Anne-Marie would not gain her own spiritual confidence until the early 1660s, when she regularly engaged independently in devotional activities, often accompanied by her pious sister-in-law. Until this time, we know from Armand’s own letters to his spiritual

director Ciron, that he remained something of a spiritual mentor to the princess. This made his departure during the formative stages of her conversion all the more unbearable.

After already describing herself as chagrined and melancholic in the first month of their parting, Anne-Marie's letters gradually betray signs of an intensifying sense of dejection which she felt could only be alleviated by the return of her co-penitent. On 6 August she believed she would "die of sorrow" if they were not soon reunited and claimed she could no longer live without the prince. She invited the prince to pray for his "wicked" spouse and hoped that his "company" and his "example" would improve her.⁶⁹ Longing for a religious friend in this way was not uncommon in correspondence between enclosed nuns in this period, and was often seen as both a cause and effect of melancholy in the female religious.⁷⁰ Anne-Marie fantasised about the return of her spiritual mentor and longed for the time when they could be reunited and devote their lives to God. It is increasingly clear from her letters that she sought to express her desire for Armand in spiritual terms: something which we might interpret as her "spiritual lovesickness."

Spiritual directors were the usual sources of solace during such periods of spiritual despair. As Adelisa Malena has shown, the "reports of conscience" which penitents were advised to write for their spiritual directors was an integral part of post-Tridentine confession and the direction of conscience.⁷¹ Penitents also corresponded with their confessors about such matters. The most recent historiography on early modern spiritual direction has revealed the close friendships that could develop between male confessors and their female penitents.⁷² This marks a significant methodological departure from earlier approaches which presented confessor-penitent relationships as a mechanism for Church control and gender subordination.⁷³ Jodi Bilinkoff's unveiling of countless pairs of "soul mates" across early modern Europe is perhaps one of the most important contributions to this field to date.⁷⁴ Bilinkoff examined the hagiographical *vitae*

or “lives” which confessors wrote in celebration of their most devout penitents. She revealed that both parties often understood their bonds as divinely inspired and described them using romantic tropes such as “love at first sight” as well as the imagery of marital union.⁷⁵

Anne-Marie Martinozzi did turn to the male clerics she had selected to direct her conscience for comfort, which upholds this historiographical shift. On one occasion in a letter to the abbé de La Vergne dated 27 February, for instance, she lamented the distance between them and assured him of the need which her soul had for his. Her closeness to La Vergne became clearer over time as she began to call him her “dear father” and close her letters with the more affectionate salutation: “Yours in the love of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ It is clear that Anne-Marie’s bond with her husband was strengthened by their shared experience of conversion, however, and as aristocrats they faced the same challenges to spiritual perfection as one another, which were arguably not felt by male clerics. The Conti’s relationship need not be interpreted as antagonistic to those with their spiritual directors, nevertheless. This was a complementary, not competing source of aid that the princess sought. Armand’s own letters to his director Ciron demonstrate how he too envisioned their marriage as fundamentally based upon mutual spiritual intimacy and responsibility. He openly and frankly disclosed information about their spiritual progress with the abbé: itself suggestive of a more collective approach to spiritual direction.⁷⁷

The spiritual anguish that Armand’s departure caused Anne-Marie tells us that she considered her husband’s presence to be essential to her devotional progress. When the princess learned that she and her husband were to be reunited in Paris in November 1657, she expressed her joy in a letter of 15 October – the penultimate letter in this collection. In this letter she celebrated the end of “six months of sorrow, chagrin and unbearable absence.” The letter offers a

final testimony as to how only Armand's return could remedy the suffering the princess had been enduring:

I will pour out my heart, I will say to my dear husband all that he has made me suffer; how cruel it is to be separated from the one you love with a tenderness so great as that which I have for him. When I see you, I will tell you a thousand things which sadden me and which give me such an aversion for the world [...] when I will have my dear husband to unload my heart to, nothing will cause me any more pain. We console ourselves comfortably of all the misfortunes which could happen to us.⁷⁸

Again here, the princess presented herself as more than just a romantic martyr. Her letters gave her suffering a very clear spiritual resonance which can only be understood in relation to her recent conversion and the emotional torment it seems to have unearthed. More significantly, the letter reinforces what we have already observed about the association she made between her suffering and a prolonged deprivation from her main source of spiritual comfort.

Co-penitents and the History of Spiritual Direction

This article has revealed Anne-Marie Martinozzi's separation from her husband, whom she saw as a model penitent, obstructed the spiritual reassurance that she sought after her conversion. This resulted in sentiments and symptoms which rendered her melancholic. By charting her correspondence across a six-month period in 1657, this article has argued that after making a self-diagnosis of melancholia, the princesse de Conti increasingly framed her emotions in this way, upholding what other historians have already observed about how language actively shapes

emotional experiences. Whilst the princess never used the expression “*mélancholie érotique*” directly to describe her feelings, in this article I have suggested she also drew upon the traditions of mystical suffering and longing to express a kind of “spiritual lovesickness” from her absent spouse. Even if this induced physical symptoms which were treated by bleeding and remedies such as donkey’s milk, Anne-Marie Martinozzi’s suffering was not just a consequence of a biological or pathological disease. Just as scholars such as Lesel Dawson and Elena Carrera have found, lovesickness offered a language of self-fashioning to intensify desires and prove feelings of love. In this case, Anne-Marie’s lovesickness communicated her need for a spiritual friend.

Anne-Marie’s letters were more than simply displays of romantic affection then; they offer us a unique perspective on the kinds of roles companions may have fulfilled in the aftermath of a pious conversion. The spiritual bond which had existed between the newly married, 20-year old princess and her husband in the two years after they converted presents some convincing evidence for the devout bonds that could exist between lay women and men. Just as Frances Harris’ exploration of the six-year “holy friendship” of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin in seventeenth-century England showed, male-female spiritual friendships often permitted penitents to attain the spiritual experiences they longed for.⁷⁹

Anne-Marie Marinozzi’s love letters thus illustrate a missing component from the history of spiritual direction. Even with a welcome shift in the historiography which has moved beyond debates over gender subordination in confessor-penitent ties, spiritual direction continues to be studied largely through the lens of confessor-penitent ties alone. With this in mind, this article has called for a new approach to early modern spiritual direction which is more attentive to its collective and informal dimensions. By extending the focus beyond confessor-penitent

relationships, historians might recover the essential role played by co-penitents: in this case, an elusive husband and a melancholic wife.

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Notes

¹ Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fonds Françaises MS. FR, 24982, ff. 70-71, folio 70, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 8 May 1657, Paris: « mon cher enfan jay recue avec beaucoup de joye une de vos lettres c'est la seule que je suis capable d'avoir quand je ne voix pas mon cher mari qui fait tout le bonheur de ma vie. Jay un *furieux chagrin* d'estre separee de luy je croiy quil en a aussy de ne poin voir sa pauvre femme. Elle vous ayme avec un *amour extreme* et il ne peut estre egale que par celuy que je scay que vous avez pour moy. » Modernised versions of this letter and others in the collection were published by Édouard de Barthélemy, in *Une nièce de Mazarin: La princesse de Conti d'après sa correspondance inédite* (Paris, 1875); for this letter, see 86-88.

² The infamous memoirs of her cousin Marie Mancini disclose the invitation that she and her mother Laura had received from Cardinal Mazarin to come to France and detail their arrival in Marseille. Sarah Nelson, ed. *Memoirs: Hortense Mancini and Marie Mancini*; edited and translated by Sarah Nelson (London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

³ Geoffrey Treasure, *Mazarin: The Crisis of Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: Routledge, 1997), 204.

⁴ I explore this in detail in *Female Piety and the Catholic Reformation in France* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014). My own study is indebted to the enormous literature on Jansenism and rigorism, including recent works such as: J-L. Quantin, *Le rigorisme chrétien* (Paris: les Éd. Du Cerf, 2001); D. Kostroun, *Feminism, Absolutism and Jansenism: Louis XIV and the Port-Royal Nuns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); A. Sedgwick, *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France: Voices from the Wilderness* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); A. Sedgwick, *The Travails of Conscience: The Arnauld Family and the Ancien Régime* (London: Harvard University Press, 1998); and W. Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000).

⁵ Ciron was canon of St Etienne of Toulouse and Chancelier of the University; see Christophe Blanquie, 'Les restitutions du Prince de Conti,' *Revue Historique*, 592, (Octobre-Décembre 1994): 269–295.

⁶ Anne-Marie's letters to these clerics survive. There are copies of her letters to the abbé Ciron and her correspondence with La Vergne survives in manuscript form. Both were also printed in extract in the nineteenth century by Anne-Marie's biographer Édouard de Barthélemy.

⁷ Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 260.

⁸ Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Between Oral and Written Culture: The Social Meaning of an Illustrated Love Letter' in *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500 – 1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, ed. Barbara B. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 181-202.

⁹ See, for example, Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (London: Duke University Press, 2005); Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650 – 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Sally Holloway, 'Romantic Love in Words and Objects during Courtship and Adultery c. 1730 – 1830,' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013); and Rebecca Earle, 'Letters and Love in Colonial Spanish America,' *The Americas*, 62, no. 1 (July, 2005): 17-46.

¹⁰ Fay Bound, 'Writing the Self? Love and the Letter in England c. 1660 – c.1760,' *Literature and History*, Third series, 11, no. 1 (Spring, 2002): 5.

¹¹ Bound, 'Writing the Self,' 13.

¹² Here I borrow a phrase from Angus Gowland who referred to melancholy as 'spiritually loaded;' *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174.

¹³ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, folio 23, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 1 October 1654, A La Fère. In this letter she refers to their separation as a "cruel absence."

¹⁴ Treasure, *Mazarin*, 226.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁶ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, folio 7, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 14 June 1654, De Rethel; the letter closed with « aime moy tousjours mon tres cher et soies persuade que je vous aime de tout mon cœur. »

¹⁷ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, folio 131, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 11 August 1654, Sedan: « ayez soin de vostre sante pour l'amour de vostre pauvre femme. »

¹⁸ *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, dédié au Roy*, ed. J. B. Coignard et J. B Coignard (2 volumes, Paris, 1694), vol. 1, 22.

¹⁹ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, folio 92 - 93, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 20 June 1657, a gisor. Barthélemy published a different version of this letter in which the princess described Armand as her "grande" (not "pauvre") enfant; see *Une niece de Mazarin*, 104-106.

²⁰ *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, vol. 1, 157.

²¹ This 'epidemic' has been discussed by Angus Gowland, 'The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy,' *Past and Present*, 191 (May, 2006): 77-120.

²² Angus Gowland, 'The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy,' *Past and Present*, 191 (May, 2006): 86.

²³ Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, 49.

²⁴ Roger Bartra, *Melancholy and Culture: Essays on the Disease of the Soul in Golden Age Spain; translated from Spanish by Christopher Follett* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 89.

²⁵ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 103-105, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 11 July 1657, A Forge; in this letter, she describes taking "laict dannesses" for eight days.

²⁶ Laurence Brockliss, 'Consultation by Letter in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris: The Medical Practice of Etienne-François Geoffroy,' in *French Medical Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ann La Berge and Mordechai Feingold (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 114.

²⁷ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, fo. 129, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 15 May 1657, a Paris: « vous croiez bien qu'elle [referring to herself] a un chagrin qui ne se peut exprimer destre separee de vous. » « je suis furieusement abbtatue. Je fust saignee ier et je pris medecine aujourdhuy et je seray saignee demain. »

²⁸ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 109 -112, fo. 112, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 18 July 1657, a Forges: « Je ne scay ou nous allons ni ou lon sarrettera cella mest fort indiferan car tout les lieux me sont egalemen desagreable puisque je ny trouveray pas mon cher enfan. »

²⁹ The aetiology of lovesickness is fully explained by Lesel Dawson in *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20-27.

³⁰ Gowland, 'The problem of early modern melancholy,' 84; Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella eds., *A Treatise on Lovesickness* (Syracuse University Press, 1990), 8.

³¹ Beecher and Ciavolella, eds., *A Treatise on Lovesickness* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 242-251.

³³ Michael Altbauer-Rudnik, 'Love, Madness and Social Order: Love Melancholy in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,' *Gesnerus*, 63 (2006): 36.

³⁴ Elena Carrera, 'Introduction: Madness and Melancholy in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Spain: New Evidence, New Approaches,' *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, LXXXVII, no. 8 (2010): 2. See also the other papers in this Special Issue of the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, in which papers explore the connections between melancholy and madness.

³⁵ Roy Strong, *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting Iconography* (Woodbridge: 1995), 301. Also cited in Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, 38.

³⁶ Michel Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 151.

³⁷ Marion A. Wells, *The Secret Wound: Love Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 3.

³⁸ Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁰ Beecher and Ciavolella (eds.), *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, 260-262.

⁴¹ Bound, 'Writing the Self,' 7.

⁴² Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, 97. See also her article: 'Menstruation, Misogyny and the Cure for Love,' *Women's Studies*, 36, no. 6 (September, 2005): 461- 484.

⁴³ Elena Carrera, 'Lovesickness and the Therapy of Desire: Aquinas, Cancionero Poetry and Teresa of Avila's' Muero porque no muero,' *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 86, no. 6 (2009): 736.

⁴⁴ Dawson also shows how other Renaissance women described their melancholy in a way which advertises their understanding of 'elite cultural codes,' *Lovesickness and Gender*, 97-98.

⁴⁵ As anthropologist Bartra noted in his study of melancholy in Golden Age Spain, "sorrow and desolation were experienced in an individual and private way, although they were transferences made from a global system of interpretation which gave sense to the suffering," *Melancholy and Culture*, 12.

⁴⁶ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, folio 76 – 77, fo. 76, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 11 May 1657, a Paris: « il faut aymer nostre seigneur plus que toutes choses car nous ne sommes rien il faut estre bien a lui et le prier qui nous fasse la grace de ne nous aymer qu en luy et pour lamour de luy. »

⁴⁷ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 94-99, fo. 94, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 27 June 1657, a Forge: « mais mon cher prions bien dieu que cette amitie nous serve pour nostre satisfaction et que nostre seigneur nous fasse la grace que nous vivions comme doivent vivre un mari et une femme cretienne. »

⁴⁸ On the prevailing conceptions of the sacrament of marriage, see Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 235-245. On the evidence of change, see Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France 1580 – 1730* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 326.

⁴⁹ Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change*, 327.

⁵⁰ The connections between lovesickness and Neoplatonic philosophies of love are discussed in detail by Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, 127-162.

⁵¹ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 140- 143, fo. 143, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 12 September 1657, a grandpre: « je t’envoie mon cher mari un bracelet de mes cheveux ayez moy bien et moy je vous aymeray toute ma vie mais ayman mon dieu et ne nous ayman que pour l’amour de luy. Il faut prier sans cesse pourquil nous rende nostre amitie telle quil faut qu’elle soit pour sa gloire et nostre satisfaction. »

⁵² Ibid, fo. 140: « cella est bien cruel mon tout destre sy longtemp sans se voir. Il faut offrir cette peine a nostre se[i]g[neu]r pour lexiation de nos peches. »

⁵³ Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, 159. On acedia and its relationship to melancholy, see Stanley W. Jackson, ‘Acedia the Sin and its relationship to Sorrow and Melancholia’, in Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good, eds., *Culture and Depression: Studies in the*

Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 43-46.

⁵⁴ Angus Gowland, 'The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy,' 84, 96.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 185.

⁵⁶ Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, 174-175.

⁵⁷ Gowland, 'The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy,' 106.

⁵⁸ Ellen M. Ross, "'She Wept and Cried Right Loud for Sorrow and for Pain,'" *Suffering, the Spiritual Journey and Women's Experience in Late Medieval Mysticism*, in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, ed. Ulrike Wiethaus (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 45. On tears, see also Kimberly Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley, eds. *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ The literature on mysticism and spiritual suffering is too large to cite in its entirety here. In addition to the works cited below, it is a theme in Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 79-81 and Stephen Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For two more recent examples, see two essays: Maria Berbara, 'Esta pena tan sabrosa: Teresa of Avila and the Figurative Arts in Early Modern Europe,' and Jans Frans Von Dijkhuizen, 'Partakers of Pain: Religious Meanings of Pain in Early Modern England;' both in *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of Physical Pain in*

Early Modern Culture, ed. Jans Frans Von Dijkhuizen and Karl A. E. Enenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 267-297; 189-220.

⁶⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987), 26. See also her essay in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum (Cambridge: MIT, 2002), 181-238, especially 184. For a different interpretation of female mystics and their suffering, see Marie Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confront the Modern World (Marie de L'Incarnation 1599 – 1672 and Madame Guyon 1648 - 1717)*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), 52-55.

⁶¹ Gabriella Zarri, 'Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century,' in D. Bornstein and R. Rusconi (eds.), *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 235. See also her *Le Sante Vive: profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990).

⁶² Massimo Leone, *Saints and Signs: A Semiotic Reading of Conversion in Early Modern Catholicism* (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 494.

⁶³ Some scholars have now contested the implicit historical assumption that medieval and early modern female conversions always conformed to typically 'feminine' modes of pious expression. See, for example: Clarissa W. Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim: The Book and World of Margery Kempe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 158-159. Andrea Janelle Dickens has shown that the intellectual content of female mystical writings is often ignored, *Female Mystic: Great Women Thinkers of the Middle Ages* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 3, 5.

⁶⁴ This is discussed in my *Female Piety and the Catholic Reformation in France*, 40, 93.

⁶⁵ Trevor Johnson, 'Gardening for God: Carmelite Deserts and the Sacralisation of Natural Space in Counter-Reformation Spain,' in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 195-196.

⁶⁶ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 134-136, fo. 135, 30 August 1657, a peronne.

⁶⁷ Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 78.

⁶⁸ Barthelemy, *Une nièce de Mazarin*, 78.

⁶⁹ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 120-121, fo. 121, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 6 August 1657, a peronne: « Je croy mon cher mari que je mourray de chagrin sy je ne te vois bien tost. Je ne puis plus vivre sans vous [...] Priez bien nostre se[i]g[neu]r pour moy car je suis bien mechante jespere que vostre compagnie et vostre exemple me rendrons meilleure. »

⁷⁰ Sherry Velasco, *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 110-112.

⁷¹ Adelisa Malena, 'Ego-Documents or Plural Compositions? Reflections on Women's Obedient Scriptures in the Early Modern Catholic World,' *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2012): 98.

⁷² John W. Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 2-3. See also John W. Coakley,

‘Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans,’ *Church History*, 60, no. 4 (1991): 445- 460. The example of François de Sales and Jeanne de Chantal is one which has been illuminated by the work of Ruth Manning, in ‘A confessor and his spiritual child,’ *Past and Present*, Supplement 1 (2006): 101-117. Patricia Ranft has argued that spiritual experience determined who was dominant in the relationship in *A Woman’s Way: The Forgotten History of Women Spiritual Directors* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 120.

⁷³ An example of the more traditional approach to confessor-penitent ties is Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (2 volumes, London: Fontana Press, 1995), vol. 1, ‘1500 – 1800,’ especially at 375.

⁷⁴ Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1450 – 1750* (New York: Cornell, 2005). See also her ‘Navigating the Waves of Devotion: Toward a Gendered Analysis of Early Modern Catholicism,’ in *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women*, eds. Margaret Mikesell and Adele Seeff (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 161-172.

⁷⁵ Bilinkoff, *Related Lives*, 82, 88. The various forms that spiritual direction could take in the medieval and early modern periods is explored in the collection *Storia della direzione spirituale*, ed. Giovanni Filoramo (3 volumes, Brescia: Morcelliana, 2006 – 2010). I am grateful to Gabriella Zarri for this reference.

⁷⁶ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, folio 162 onwards are her letters to the abbé de La Vergne.

⁷⁷ The letters of Armand are printed in Barthelemy, *Une nièce de Mazarin*, 98.

⁷⁸ BnF, MS. FR, 24982, ff. 157-158, Anne-Marie Martinozzi to Armand de Bourbon, 19 October 1657, a Metz.

⁷⁹ Frances Harris, *Transformations of Love: The Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 156.