

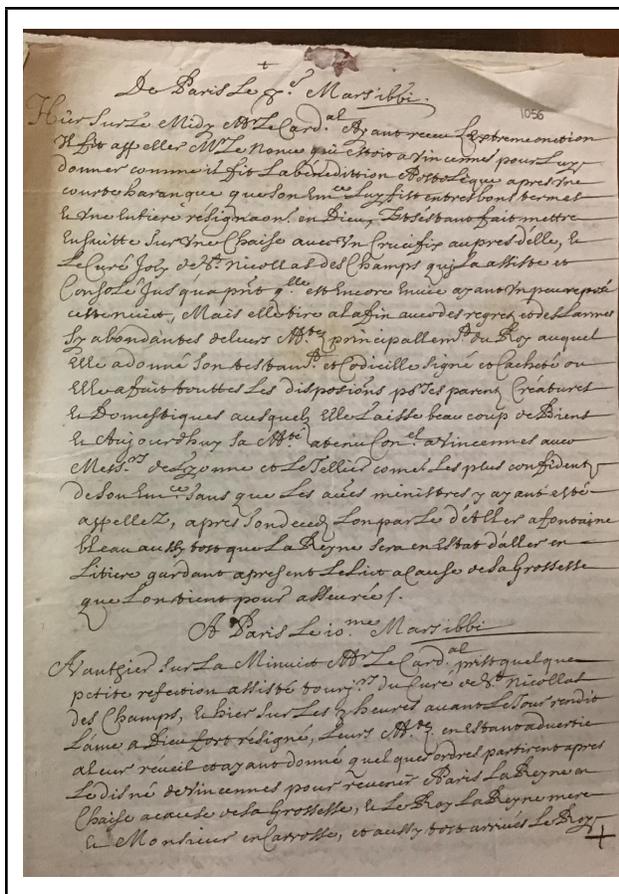
A Tale of Two Readings

by Brendan Dooley (University College Cork)

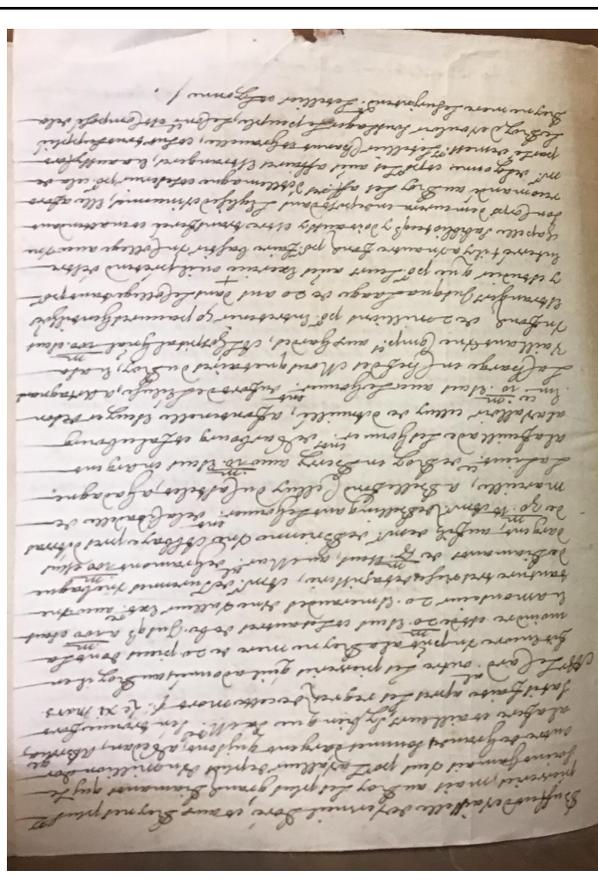
EURONEWS Project, Featured posts, 20/08/2021:
<https://www.euronewsproject.org/2021/08/20/a-tale-of-two-readings/>

Sometimes we find avvisi organized in the most curious ways. Consider this example from MdP 4891, beginning at fol. 1056r. On the left we have the first page of the writing, headed with “De Paris le 7e Mars 1661” (From Paris, the 7th of March 1661). Following the story under that heading, which regards the last days of Cardinal Mazarin, we have another heading, dated on the 10th of the month, reporting the actual death having occurred the night before. This story continues on the flip side of this page--but remarkably, upside down!

1056r



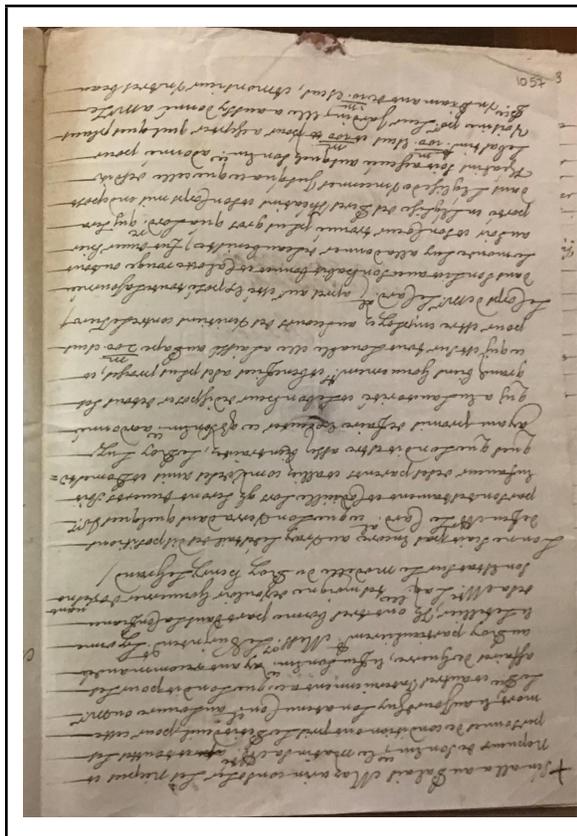
1056v



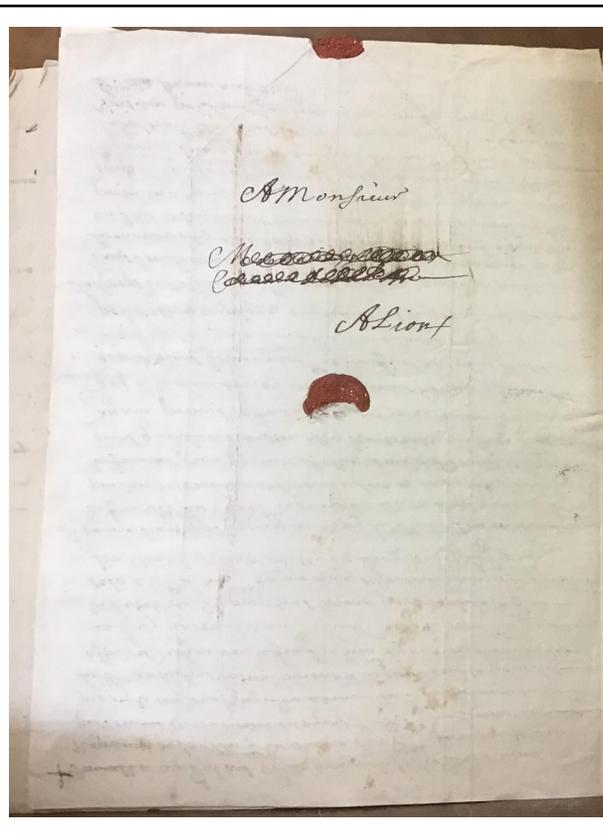
[in Medici Archive Project Database,
<https://mia.medici.org/Mia/index.html#/mia/document-entity/54834>]

This curious orientation continues in fact to the third and last page of the newsletter, as in the following illustration on the left, where the new folio as we can see is numbered in the upper corner as 1057 (recto). Now, if we go to the other side of this page (1057 verso) we find the addressee and traces of sealing wax, for this entire writing was evidently folded up and sealed, as was customary, somewhat like a twentieth-century air letter, making its own envelope. So the newsletter, for better or worse, was sent as written, to a certain “Monsieur” in Lyon whose identity has since been obscured.

1057r

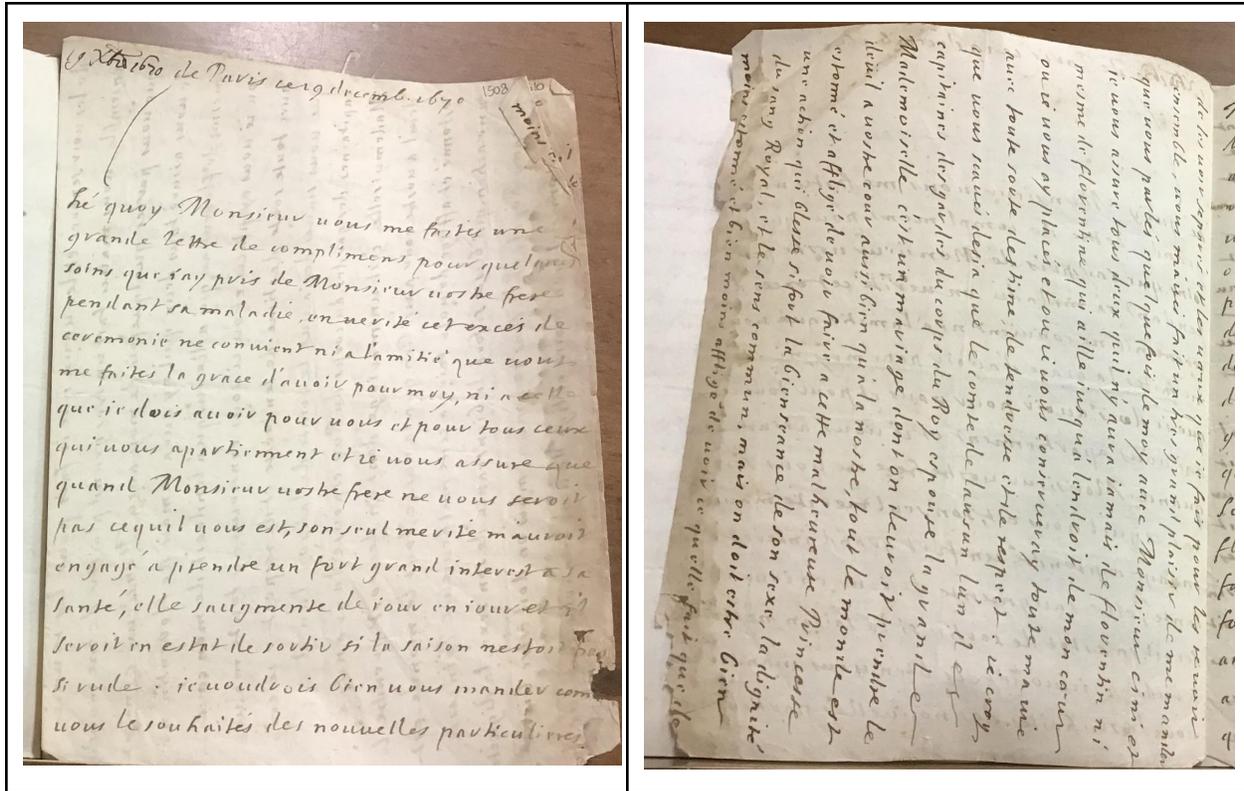


1057v



Why the upside-down writing? Did the hurried writer pick up the pen for side two without looking at the orientation of side one? This seems hardly likely, since the sentence on the bottom of 1056r continues on the next (upside down) page, as we can clearly see if we use our tools to place folios 1056r and 1056v side by side, re-orienting the latter for better consultation:

<p>1056r last line: ...le Roy the King</p>	<p>1056v first line: <i>s'en alla au Palais Mazarin consoler les niepces et nepveux...</i> went to Mazarin palace to console the nieces and nephews...</p>
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[in M.A.P. database: <https://mia.medici.org/Mia/index.html#/mia/document-entity/54836>]

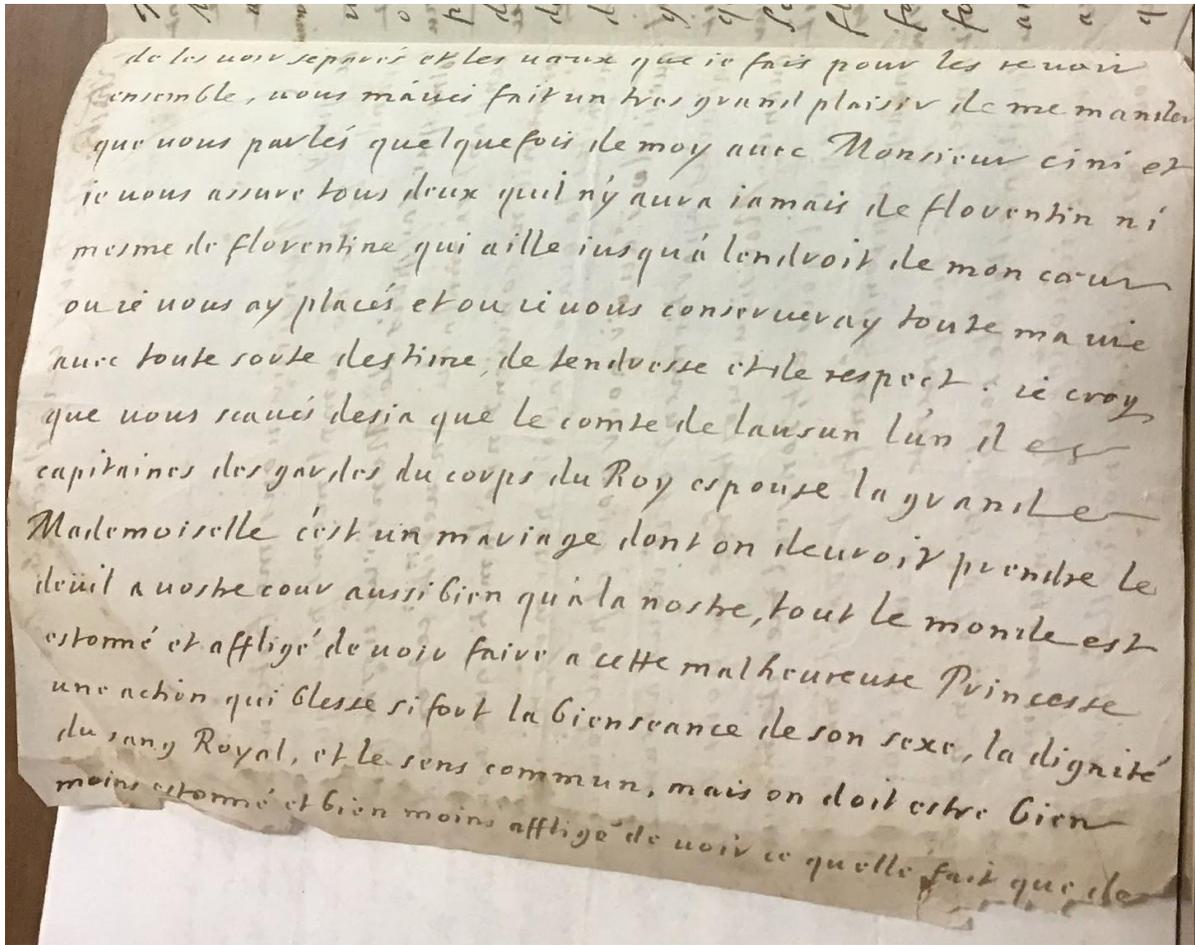
What's going on here? The last lines of 1508r seem to be:

Son seul merite m'auroit engagé a prendre un fort grand interest a sa santé, elle s'augmente de jour en jour et il seroit en estat de sortir si la saison n'estoit [...] si rude. Je voudrois bien vous mander comme vous le souhaités des nouvelles particulières

Reorienting the verso side (1508v) we get this continuation:

....de les voir separés et les voeux que je fais pour les revoir ensemble.

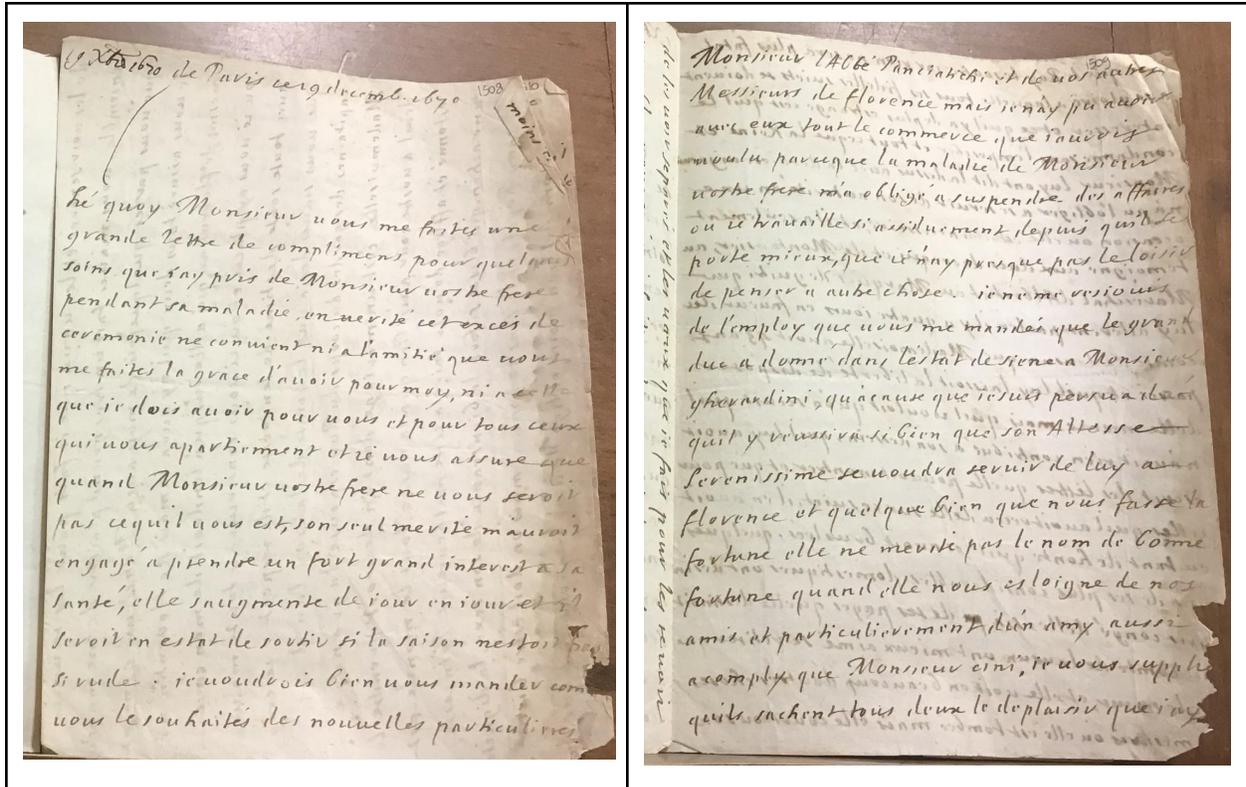
The whole translation would be: (1508r) "His sheer merit should have gotten me to take a great interest in his health, which improves from day to day and he would be able to go outside if the season were not ... so rigid. I would like to send you as you wish the particular news (1508v) to see them separated and the vows I make to see them together again."



But what is the subject of "separated"? Are we missing something?

Another candidate for what might go after fol. 1508r, is the very next page, 1509r (skipping the verso side of 1508). Then we get:

<p>1508r Last lines: Son seul merite m'auroit engagé a prendre un fort grand interest a sa santé, elle s'augmente de jour en jour et il seroit en estat de sortir si la saison n'estoit pas si rude. Je voudrois bien vous mander comme vous le souhaitez des nouvelles particulières [obliterated: de]</p>	<p>1509r First line: Monsieur l'Abbé Panciatichi et de vos autres Messieurs de Florence mais je n'ay pu avoir avec eux tout le commerce que j'aurois voulu...</p>
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And hence, the translation, (1508r) “His sheer merit should have gotten me to take a great interest in his health, which improves from day to day and he would be able to go outside if the season were not ... so rigid. I would like to send you as you wish the particular news [about] (1509r) Monsieur Panciatichi and the other gentlemen of Florence, but I have not been able to have as much association with them as I would have liked.” Sounds more logical, doesn't it?

But then what do we do with our twisted segment? Are we missing a page?

For the moment, we close this Tale of Two Readings on an inconclusive note, in the expectation that we will have the definitive answer as research proceeds!

FURTHER READING

Pierre Goubert, *Mazarin*, Paris, Fayard, 1990