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THE CONVERSION OF MANZONI'S
L'INNOMINATO OR,
THE REPRESSED CATHOLIC CONSCIOUSNESS
OF A CRIMINAL

ANNETTE LEDDY

In the portrayal of l'Innominato's religious conversion, we see the conflict which runs throughout *I Promessi Sposi* between two distinctly different narrators. One narrator extends the lens of psychological realism, the subjective dimension of the historical novel. The other narrator is Catholic, and seeks to prove the intrinsically Catholic nature of human psychology.¹ This problem is complicated by the fact that we are presented with characters who are the products of Catholic upbringings within a Catholic culture and who therefore, whether or not they have rejected Catholicism, would "realistically" possess a Catholic psychology. Thus, while the psychological-realist narrator often successfully captures the experience of Catholic anxiety, the Catholic narrator often makes this anxiety less credible, interesting and profound by his habit of informing us of when a character's anxieties are those of a good Catholic and when they are those of a bad Catholic. The Catholic narrator often seems to intervene in the analysis of a character so he can give that character's crisis a Catholic name. It is almost as though the Catholic narrator is resisting the discovery of the universal; that is, the potentially non-Catholic nature of

these anxieties, the conclusion toward which a genuine historical novel would lead.

The conflict between these two narrators is evident in the peculiar mix of secular terms and concepts, and Catholic or religious terms and concepts which are used to describe l'Innominato's feelings. While psychological realism demands that a narrator reproduce the emotions and thought processes of a character in that character's approximate terms, the Catholic narrator strives to describe in religious terms the experience of a character who doesn't consciously think in religious terms. Thus, we find such sentences as, «Già da qualche tempo cominciava a provare, se non un rimorso, una cert'uggia delle sue scelleratezze.»² «Una cert'uggia» conveys l'Innominato's experience of the return of repressed guilt; «le sue scelleratezze» is the Catholic narrator telling us l'Innominato should feel very guilty indeed because he is a very bad man. In the sentence which follows, however, we find the Catholic narrator successfully refraining from such judgements: «Quelle tante ch'erano ammontate, se non sulla sua coscienza, almeno nella sua memoria, si risvegliavano ogni volta che ne commettesse una di nuovo, e si presentavano all'animo brutte e troppe: era come il crescere e crescere d'un peso già incomodo.»³ «Se non sulla sua coscienza, almeno nella sua memoria» marks the successful collaboration of the two narrators, for here a distinction is drawn; l'Innominato's *memory*, activated by fear of death, is stimulating the rebirth of his childhood Catholic *conscience*, of which l'Innominato is as yet unconscious.

Ultimately, the two narrators give us the same information about l'Innominato's unconscious. For we do not question that l'Innominato experiences guilt, nor that he experiences it «come il crescere e crescere d'un peso,» nor do we question the probability of a religious conversion in an aging criminal. From the modern point of view of human psychology all this seems very plausible. It is only the Catholic narrator's assertion that l'Innominato is wicked before he consciously thinks in terms of wickedness that leads us to feel that the Catholic narrator is distorting a potentially convincing portrayal of a Catholic conversion.

Religious conversion is, of course, the perfect Manzonian subject.⁴ This is because the true believer, as Manzoni was, believes his faith to

be immanent in all people. The self-realization of a person or the inner development of a character is therefore merely the conscious acceptance of this already in-dwelling faith, that is, conversion. From a psychoanalytic view, however, a person like l'Innominato, who was raised to the Catholic faith, (we know he prayed as a child because he later discovers a childhood prayer buried in the recesses of his mind) might very well retain a repressed Catholic morality until his death. Thus, from a secular point of view the conversion of l'Innominato is not interesting and convincing because Catholicism is the 'true' religion, but because it is an accurate portrayal of the coming to consciousness of a repressed Catholic consciousness. Seen from this point of view, the portrayal of l'Innominato is often brilliant and moving. For unlike Don Rodrigo, l'Innominato is given something of a psyche, both in terms of interior monologue and in terms of personal history, so that it is possible to see his evil both as a symptom of his victimization and as that which has victimized him.

Even before l'Innominato enters the action of the novel, we are given, in the long and tedious description of his unparalleled wickedness, the sense of a man caught in his own machinations:

Nel fatto però, veniva anche lui a essere il faccendiere, lo strumento di tutti coloro: essi non mancavano di richiedere ne' loro impegni l'opera d'un tanto ausiliario; per lui, tirarsene indietro sarebbe stato decadere dalla sua riputazione, mancare al suo assunto. Di maniera che, per conto suo, e per conto d'altri, tante ne fece che, non bastando nè il nome, nè il parentado, nè gli amici, nè la sua audacia a sostenerlo contro i bandi pubblici, e contro tante animosità potenti, dovette dar luogo, e uscir dallo stato.⁵

We encounter him many years later, when the way of life in which he has trapped himself has taken a certain toll. The burden of the criminal life is evident first in his involuntary glance at the hands and face of Don Rodrigo. The internal price of having lived always alert to possible attack emerges in the physical description which follows:

Era grande, bruno, calvo; bianchi i pochi capelli che gli rimanevano; rugosa la faccia: a prima vista, gli si sarebbe dato più de' sessant'anni che aveva; ma il contegno, le mosse, la durezza risentita de' lineamenti, il lampeggiar sinistro, ma vivo degli occhi, indicavano una forza di corpo e d'animo, che sarebbe stata straordinaria in un giovine.⁶

The first impression, that l'Innominato is older than his years, is the true perception, for his physical and mental alertness is not derived from an internal joy or pleasure in life, as is that of Federigo, for example. Rather, his alertness is the result of a lifetime of paranoia in which his body has been regarded as a tool or machine ever-equipped for use by its proprietor. The strain of this instrumental relationship with himself is just beginning to be felt by the part of l'Innominato which gives the impression he is older than his years. It is his spiritual part or, in non-Catholic terms, the part of all men which seeks gratification and meaning in life, which is giving up the battle he has been waging against his own desire for fulfillment.

The desire for domination which on one level has been l'Innominato's driving force throughout the years, necessarily involves the domination of self as a preliminary step. In this sense, the portrayal of l'Innominato offers insight into what today we would call the compulsive criminal. One crime demands another; not only to preserve one's reputation and life within the criminal world, but also because committing a new crime is the only way to effectively repress pain or guilt over the first crime. «Ne' primi tempi, gli esempi così frequenti, lo spettacolo, per dir così, continuo della violenza, della vendetta, dell'omicidio, ispirandogli un'emulazione feroce, gli avevano anche servito come d'una specie d'autorità contro la coscienza....»⁷ L'Innominato, by placing himself in a situation in which he must continually act to defend himself, has successfully avoided the return of repressed guilt. In the past then, the struggle to save his life has been one with the struggle to repress guilt. The presentiment of a natural death threatens this habit of perception. This death «veniva sola, nasceva di dentro; era forse ancor lontana, ma faceva un passo ogni momento; e intanto che la mente combatteva dolorosamente per allontanarne il pensiero, quella s'avvicinava.»⁸ L'Innominato, as a man in the habit of struggling to survive, must now seek his survival in a different manner. His repressed Catholic consciousness tells him that *eternal* survival demands not the repression of guilt, but the confrontation of it.

A non-Catholic criminal of l'Innominato's age might feel that the internal and external costs of continuing to repress a lifetime of guilt, or simply continuing to live the criminal life, would no longer be

worth the little gratification derived from being alive. Thus, criminals in other novels unconsciously seek to arrange their own deaths, as does Lovelace in *Clarissa*. That which in our time is experienced as bitterness, weariness, and a confused sense of despair over the unrealized potential of life, is in this Catholic novel experienced as «certi momenti d'abbatimento senza motivo, di terrore senza pericolo.» For l'Innominato, these feelings signify the presence of God in his heart, the possibility of self-realization in eternity.

We know at this point that l'Innominato is a Catholic; that is, he seeks an internal self-realization for which God is the only available name. But he seeks to evade this realization because of the prerequisite confrontation of his past actions, because of fear of retribution both internal and external. He therefore moves to repress his emerging consciousness, or, in Catholic terms, his conscience: «Ma, non che aprirsi con nessuno su questa sua nuova inquietudine, la copriva anzi profondamente, e la mascherava con l'apparenza d'una più cupa ferocia; e con questo mezzo, cercava anche di nasconderla a sè stesso, o di soffogarla.»⁹ Thus, l'Innominato immediately gives his word to Don Rodrigo «per chiudersi l'adito a ogni esitazione.» As he feels himself beginning to regret his offer, he acts to repress this regret by ordering Nibbio to oblige Don Rodrigo. This specific incident, therefore, illustrates the psychological pattern which the psychological-realist narrator tells us has been operative throughout l'Innominato's life.

As l'Innominato awaits Lucia's arrival, he experiences a dread and anxiety which is not implausible given his state of mind. This is to say that the psychological-realist narrator has established a strong internal, non-didactic motive for his character to dread Lucia's approach. The Catholic narrator now makes these apprehensions appear incongruous and a mere ideological tool:

Cosa strana! quell'uomo, che aveva disposto a sangue freddo di tante vite, che in tanti suoi fatti non aveva contato per nulla i dolori da lui cagionati, se non qualche volta per assaporare in essi una selvaggia voluttà di vendetta, ora, nel metter le mani addosso a questa sconosciuta, a questa povera contadina, sentiva come un ribrezzo, direi quasi un terrore.¹⁰

The Catholic narrator here intervenes in the first person («direi») when the development of the character does not demand it. Rather, he subverts his own ideological purpose by this intervention, for he places the emphasis on Lucia as the instigator of l'Innominato's guilt. The Catholic narrator here gives us the sense that Lucia's arrival is an objective event ordained by God to save l'Innominato. But in order for the psychological-realist narrator to show the immanent nature of the Catholic faith, Lucia's arrival should be presented as the objective event which merely signifies the emerging subjective event: l'Innominato's internal religious conversion. While Lucia functions on one level of the novel as a saint or medium for the works of God, the Catholic narrator's loud announcement of this function portrays conversion less as a natural process of self-revelation and more as the vehicle of an ideology he seeks to promote.

For the modern reader, Lucia's arrival is best understood as the objective event upon which l'Innominato has projected his increasing anxiety. «che noia mi da' costei! Liberiamocene,» says l'Innominato, as though to rid himself of Lucia would be to rid himself of the anxiety he already understands as internally generated. L'Innominato then acts, in his habitual manner, to repress his feelings of guilt by asserting his authority over the now-perceived source of his guilt, Lucia. Here is the turning point in his life. For as he is about to send orders to Nibbio to conduct Lucia to Don Rodrigo, «... un *no*, imperioso che risonò nella sua mente, fece svanire quel disegno.»¹¹ Thus we see that the imperative to repress guilt has been supplanted by the imperative to confront it.

In order to understand how this change has taken place, we must seek the origins of l'Innominato's self-punishing, self-destructive drive. In his introduction to l'Innominato, the psychological-realist narrator offers an environmental reason for his character's disposition: «Fino dall'adolescenza, allo spettacolo e al rumore di tante prepotenze, di tante gare, alla vista di tanti tiranni, provava un misto sentimento di sdegno e d'invidia impaziente.»¹² Thus, due to the historical circumstances in which l'Innominato grew up he found the life of crime more glamorous and enviable than the respectable life. Indeed, l'Innominato already possessed great wealth and position and found only more adoration as an outlaw. He had the 'honor' of assisting

princes in difficult enterprises, and sometimes of helping the oppressed against nobility; altogether he enjoyed a phenomenal, if not favorable, kind of fame: «Ma la fama di questo nostro era già da gran tempo diffusa in ogni parte del milanese: per tutto, la sua vita era un soggetto di racconti popolari; e il suo nome significava qualcosa d'irresistibile, di strano, di favoloso.»¹³

In addition to the rewards of the life of crime, there were many disadvantages, and one would not choose powerful badness over powerful goodness if goodness were more internally rewarding. Clearly l'Innominato did not find this to be the case, and we sense that his decision in favor of the life of crime is the inversion of Fra Cristoforo's decision in favor of the religious life. Fra Cristoforo finds revenge for his feelings of rejection by the aristocracy in defending the oppressed; that is, those more rejected than he. His anger is thus given an outlet consistent with its cause, though one might say he did not ideologically disapprove of the existence of the ruling class, only that he wanted to be one of them. His conversion then, is the repression of his desire to dominate as those who rejected him dominate; that is, with violence. But it is also the resolution of his problem, because while his class position is valuable in his life as a Capuchin, he has ostensibly rejected it and those who rejected him much more convincingly than ever before. He continues to use his position to attack those of position, though without actual violence. Nevertheless, we see the continuing impulse to anger and violence in his dealing with Don Rodrigo, and sense that there is perhaps more repression than resolution in Cristoforo's conversion. Moreover, it would seem that the Catholic narrator considers this repressive state the *essence* of virtue.

L'Innominato, on the other hand, already had the class position Cristoforo lacked. His choice in favor of the life of crime therefore appears to have been born of his belief that the resources of his illustrious birth and great wealth could not provide him internal gratification. The Catholic narrator naturally does not allow the analysis of l'Innominato's character formation to be carried to the extent that Gertrude's is, for example. L'Innominato's desire to be evil is simply given as a fact. «Fare ciò ch'era vietato dalle leggi, o impedito da una forza qualunque....»¹⁴ Yet even the fact that l'Innominato took up rebellion as a principle is revealing in the light of his later sense of

internal loss, and in terms of what we know of the demonic hero within the novel as a form:

Thus the fundamental form-determining intention of the novel is objectivised as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers. The simple fact of seeking implies that neither the goals nor the way leading to them can be directly given, or else that, if they are given in a psychologically direct and solid manner, this is not evidence of really existent relations or ethical necessities but only of a psychological fact to which nothing in the world of objects or norms need necessarily correspond. To put it another way, this 'givenness' may be crime or madness; the boundaries which separate crime from acclaimed heroism and madness from life-mastering wisdom are tentative, purely psychological ones, although at the end, when the aberration makes itself terribly manifest and clear, there is no longer any confusion.¹⁵

The Catholic narrator refuses to understand l'Innominato's 'evil' as a social phenomenon, though the psychological-realist narrator clearly conceives of Gertrude's problem as significantly determined by conditions. Therefore, the implicit purpose of this novel, to portray consciousness as a historical phenomenon, is here explicitly betrayed. That l'Innominato's life is not portrayed as a 'search' is the mark of the failure of both the Catholic narrator and the psychological-realist narrator, for l'Innominato's unexplained evil reveals a secret admiration of this «tiranno straordinario», an admiration which is consistent with the world-view of the psychological-realist narrator, whose commitment to showing the workings of individuals carries him to a mechanistic view of the workings of society.

There is a kind of underlying philosophy of personality in this novel which surfaces in the words of the minor, somewhat corrupt characters for whom we have a certain fondness. We see it in the words of Cardinal Federigo's Chaplain who, upon being asked to usher in l'Innominato, mutters to himself, «non c'è rimedio: tutti questi santi sono ostinati.»¹⁶ Don Abbondio understands this as a quality of both saints and sinners: «È un gran dire che tanto i santi come i birboni gli abbiano a aver l'argento vivo addosso, e non si contentino d'esser sempre in moto loro, ma vogliano tirare in ballo, se potessero, tutto il genere umano.»¹⁷ Later in his ruminations, he makes a more subtle distinction between good men and bad men.

«Quelli che fanno il bene, lo fanno all'ingrosso: quand'hanno provata quella soddisfazione, n'hanno abbastanza, e non si voglian seccare a star dietro a tutte le conseguenze; ma coloro che hanno quel gusto di fare il male, ci mettono più diligenza, ci stanno dietro fino all'fine, non prendon mai requie, perchè hanno quel canchero che li rode.»¹⁸ This quality, regarded with such irritation by the corrupt characters, is one which the psychological-realist narrator defines as strength of character; for in Cristoforo too we find this single-mindedness born of seemingly innate rage or violence. This is most evident in the physiological description of Cristoforo's eyes: «Due occhi incavati eran per lo più chinati a terra, ma talvolta sfolgoravano, con vivacità repentina; come due cavalli bizzarri, condotti a mano da un cocchiere, col quale sanno, per esperienza, che non si può vincerla, pure fanno, di tempo in tempo, qualche sgambetto, che scontan subito, con una buona tirata di morso.»¹⁹ Cristoforo is a character perennially at war with himself, yet we sense that it is this internal conflict which compels him to act ceaselessly "for God." «Tutto il suo contegno, come l'aspetto, annunciava una lunga guerra, tra un'indole focosa, risentita, e una volontà opposta, abitualmente vittoriosa, sempre all'erta, e diretta da motivi e da ispirazioni superiori.»²⁰ Thus we see that Cristoforo's habit or compulsion to repress his impulse to violence is simply the inverse of l'Innominato's habitual repression of guilt, or the impulse to goodness. It is this violent streak, or extreme temperament, which is in the novel the requisite quality of greatness, either good or bad. Characters such as Don Abbondio or Gertrude, who lack this quality, are condemned to an eternal miserable corruption. With regard to Gertrude, for example, the psychological-realist narrator writes, «Il delitto è un padrone rigido e inflessibile, contro cui non divien forte se non chi se ne ribella interamente. A questo Gertrude non voleva risolversi; e ubbidì.»²¹ The ability to completely throw off a mode of life and begin anew is one only those of a certain violent temperament can possess.

It is this notion at the very basis of the conceptualization of the characters which reveals the world-view which finally demands a didactic Catholicism and the intervention of the Catholic narrator. Because the psychological-realist narrator perceives temperament as existing outside history, as being a somehow innate quality, he finally

makes objective conditions, and therefore history, irrelevant. It is the traditional bourgeois view of society and human nature as essentially static, unchanging. As Moravia observes,

Manzoni's conservatism, . . . like all conservatisms, is decadent and fascinated by corruption, yet incapable of finding a solution on any but the aesthetic plane. *The Betrothed* is a nineteenth-century villa, not a temple, and the air we breathe there is not dogma but social conservatism. This decadent conservatism, or conservative decadence, leads directly, as we have already noted, to Catholic realism, or the attempt to overcome corruption by means of propaganda.²²

Because the psychological-realist narrator sees both personal and social corruption as inevitable, religion *is* essentially the repressive mechanism it appears to be in the case of Fra Cristoforo. It is simply the most effective way to keep unruly or lazy temperaments under control, to keep corruption from swelling into destruction. It therefore follows that the psychological-realist narrator should have the secret admiration for the criminal which characterizes the bourgeois, who makes an idol of the bandit cowboy or the Mafioso Godfather. This secret admiration is a kind of envy of the man who implicitly admits the ungratifying life of the good and repressed in society by challenging the hypocritical good with an open 'evil', and who enjoys the "pleasure of attacking civilization with its own weapons."²³ Because of his view that society's nature is static, the psychological-realist narrator cannot portray l'Innominato's criminal life as a search for gratification any more than the Catholic narrator can. But his secret admiration is felt by the reader, because it is this which causes us to identify with l'Innominato's painful process of self-revelation, and to feel the catharsis of his encounter with the cardinal.

l'Innominato's encounter with the cardinal is the dramatic embodiment of l'Innominato's confrontation of the guilt which signifies his desire for fulfillment. This scene functions brilliantly on both the religious and psychological levels, and marks the successful collaboration of the Catholic narrator with the psychological-realist narrator. So successful is it, that one can potentially read the scene as one between a patient and his analyst in which the analyst/cardinal initiates the 'transference' of l'Innominato's guilt onto himself. l'Innominato, torn between the desire for relief from internal anguish and the

humiliation of being forced to seek this relief externally, is met by an authority figure who lacks the imperious, judgemental quality of his own internal voice. Not only does the cardinal not judge l'Innominato; he accepts his guilt as his own. «Certo m'è un rimprovero,» says the cardinal, «ch'io mi sia lasciato prevenir da voi; quando, da tanto tempo, tante volte, avrei dovuto venir da voi io.»²⁴ The cardinal here functions much as Lucia does in the scene discussed above. L'Innominato there perceived Lucia as the embodiment of his guilt so that he could externalize his feelings and then rid himself of them by ridding himself of Lucia. Here the cardinal externalizes l'Innominato's feelings so as to help him confront them.

The cardinal then tells l'Innominato that he loves him; that he has always loved him, and that he is the one he should most have desired to see had he believed it were possible. This declaration of love, occurring in conjunction with the cardinal's acceptance of guilt, seems to allow l'Innominato to feel he can somehow love himself. The desire for punishment is thus replaced by the desire for love, or self-acceptance. «L'Innominato stava attonito a quel dire così infiammato, a quelle parole, che rispondevano tanto risolutamente a ciò che non aveva ancor detto, nè era ben determinato di dire; e commosso ma sbalordito, stava in silenzio.»²⁵ The fact that l'Innominato certainly could not have determined to say the cardinal loved him reveals by its seeming inconsistency the more profound psychological consistency of the scene. Federigo goes on to inform l'Innominato that God has touched his heart, and then explains the agitation l'Innominato has been experiencing as the presence of God in his heart. «Non ve lo sentite in cuore, che v'opprime, che v'agita, che non vi lascia stare, e nello stesso tempo v'attira, vi fa presentire una speranza di quiete, di consolazione, d'una consolazione che sarà piena, immensa, subito che voi lo riconosciate, lo confessiate, l'implorate?»²⁶ In our terms, the cardinal is here telling l'Innominato that it is the perceived possibility of love which is creating his inner turmoil, because he is unable to love himself or feel that he deserves love. L'Innominato thus sees his desires objectified both in psychological terms and in religious terms, for the cardinal here ostensibly tells l'Innominato that the possibility of living in accord with himself (becoming one of God's) is what he seeks. The moment of catharsis occurs when the cardinal

then transfers l'Innominato's guilt back onto him, that is, when he defines l'Innominato as an evil and universally feared criminal. L'Innominato here trembles and experiences a surprising sense of relief, because he is finally forced to confront his own cruelty. Because his reason for committing these cruelties has been revealed to him, or at least emotionally understood by him, he welcomes the sense of guilt which he need no longer resist, but is free to make amends for. For that something which l'Innominato feels devours him is his deep and long-buried desire to be loved and to love in return, to experience a self-fulfilling oneness with the world. The cardinal, who tells l'Innominato God has inspired him as well with a love for l'Innominato which devours him (the cardinal), is again the objectification (projection) of l'Innominato's desire to be loved. L'Innominato finally bursts into tears, «come vinto da quell'impeto di carità.»²⁷

L'Innominato, having accepted God, the Church, and the reform of his evil ways, now slowly fades into the novel's oblivion. We are given only one brief glimpse of his interior life after the scene with Federigo. This occurs in the account of the night following the conversion, and consists of two paragraphs in which the psychological-realist narrator appears for the last time:

Andò finalmente a dormire. Sì, a dormire; perchè aveva sonno.

Affari intralciati, e insieme urgenti, per quanto ne fosse sempre andato in cerca, non se n'era mai trovati addosso tanti, in nessuna congiuntura, come allora; eppure aveva sonno. I rimorsi che gliel'avevan levato la notte avanti, non che essere acquistati, mandavano anzi grida più alte, più severe, più assolute; eppure aveva sonno. L'ordine, la specie di governo stabilito là dentro da lui in tant'anni, con tante cure, con un tanto signolare accoppiamento d'audacia e di perseveranza, ora l'aveva lui medesimo messo in forse, con poche parole;...²⁸

Here the incongruity of l'Innominato's sleepiness with his newly acknowledged burden of guilt has meaning on both the religious and psychological levels of the novel. The Catholic narrator clearly means to assert that peace of mind follows acknowledgement of guilt and conversion to the "true" religion. This point is heavy-handedly made by the refrain «eppure aveva sonno.» The passage survives this didacticism, however, because it is psychologically realistic. L'Innominato's

sleepiness increases because the now harsh voice of his super-ego has supplanted the need for «L'ordine, la specie di governo stabilito là dentro da lui in tant'anni.» The external guards of the castle have been replaced by internal guards.

Whenever l'Innominato appears in the remainder of the novel, it is in the terms of the Catholic narrator, who presents him as a toy model of Catholic good works. It is interesting that conversion is presented primarily as a public act in this novel, as though one of the advantages of conversion is the abolition of an inner life. L'Innominato is now entirely an ideological vehicle, serving only as an excuse for the Catholic narrator to argue the benefits of conversion.

The account of l'Innominato's way of life at the time of the siege is a tedious, repetitive, overcompensating description of the great joy experienced by his enemies upon his conversion. It is indicative of the Catholic narrator's lack of conviction that he does not so much convey the enemies' feelings as argue the various reasons why it would be "realistic" for them to rejoice. This logic is particularly specious in the explanation of why l'Innominato is not legally prosecuted.

The most striking aspect of this Catholic fairytale is the Catholic narrator's repeated reassurances that l'Innominato's social status remains utterly unchanged. He sacrifices none of the power and admiration he had as a criminal; if anything, his position is enhanced. L'Innominato's people believe «... quella voce, annunziando che la volontà era mutata, non dava punto indizio che fosse indebolita.»²⁹ They perceive him «al di sopra degli altri, ben diversamente di prima, ma non meno; sempre fuori della schiera comune, sempre capo.»³⁰ The authority structure of l'Innominato's household remains intact. Perhaps the strangest passage is the description of the time of the siege, when we are told, «... stabili l'ore e i modi di dar la muta, come in un campo, o come già s'era costumato in quel castello medesimo, ne' tempi della sua vita disperata.»³¹ Clearly the Catholic narrator feels Catholicism's biggest selling point is that it can transform the authority structure which fights for evil into an authority structure which fights for good, without at all altering the nature of the structure itself. This is because, as we have seen above, he believes evil does not dwell in a repressive social order but in human nature

itself. Evil leaders become Catholic leaders because one is born with «un animo come quello del loro padrone,»³² with «quel tono naturale di comando»³³, or one is not. Strength is not a moral/religious category but a question of birth, and on this point the psychological-realist narrator is in perfect agreement.

Notes

1. The term "Catholic" in this paper necessarily refers to (Manzoni's) Jansenism, which emphasized the individual's direct responsibility to God, and predestination of the soul. The Catholic narrator is clearly Jansenist and each character who is given an interior life seems to have a Jansenist conscience.
2. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi* («La Nuova Italia» Editrice, 1935), p. 379.
3. Ibid.
4. While I distinguish between Manzoni the author and the two narrators of the novel, my sense of the narrative conflict is clearly informed by my knowledge of Manzoni's Jansenist intention.
5. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*, p. 372.
6. Ibid, p. 378.
7. Ibid, p. 380.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid, p. 381.
10. Ibid, p. 388.
11. Ibid, p. 389.
12. Ibid, p. 371.
13. Ibid, p. 374.
14. Ibid, p. 371.
15. Georg Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel*, (The MIT Press, 1971), p. 60.
16. Alessandro Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*, p. 427.
17. Ibid, p. 444.
18. Ibid, p. 457.
19. Ibid, p. 68.
20. Ibid, p. 82.
21. Ibid, p. 383.
22. Alberto Moravia, *Man As An End*, (Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1965), p. 217.
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