register (i.e. excluding comic elements from tragedy) and his search for cohesion in dramatic structure and character development. Moreover, Alfieri's glosses show his attentiveness to the interior psychology and emotions of characters. His harsh criticism of structural flaws in *Merope* reveal his ideal of simplicity (e.g. eliminating secondary characters such as the *confidenti*). Beyond these formal elements, Salsano reveals that Alfieri's marginal notes contrast more abstract qualities in the playwright, that differentiate him from Maffei, those qualities which emerge from his antipositivist reading: one sees his energy ("forma energica", 160), his warmth ("calore vigoroso di espressioni calde", 160), his profoundly human poetry ("variamente e profondamente umana", 160), his intimate and familiar humanity ("più intima e familiar umanità", 166).

The annotated bibliography proposed by Salsano provides a list of chosen publications on selected topics, useful for scholars or students wanting to explore some of the themes or methodologies more in depth.

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Gianluca Cinelli. *La questione del male in Storia della colonna infame di Alessandro Manzoni*. Leicester, UK: Troubador, 2015. Pp. 143. ISBN 9781784622299. £ 14.95

When the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz published his seminal work *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil* in 1710, he could not have foreseen the effect it would have on Alessandro Manzoni, writing more than a century later, struggling to answer satisfactorily for himself similar essential questions. If man is free and God omnibenevolent, why does evil exist?

In the volume under review here, we find the detailed introspective journey that Manzoni experienced as he developed a coherent and reasonable answer. His was not a philosophical treatise. Rather, he chose to consider the conundrum through the measured deliberation and reflection on the egregious injustices that he describes in the *Storia della colonna infame*. As he had done with his novel, *I promessi sposi*, Manzoni prepared several drafts of the *Storia*. In fact, this recounting of the trial, held in 1630, of the dreaded anointers who supposedly

irresponsibly put populations at risk through unguents contaminated with the plague, was originally intended to be included as a long digressive narrative within the story of the betrothed couple when they were still called Fermo and Lucia. Manzoni removed the episode and refined it into a rather exquisite contemplation of good, of evil, of passion, and of the fallibility (intended and not) of mankind.

Gianluca Cinelli's study is presented in five chapters, bookended by introductory and also concluding pages, and complemented by a rich and informative series of endnotes as well as an admirable bibliography of sources (where I would love to have seen more references to work by S. B. Chandler, sadly a little overlooked since his passing).

In his considerations of how Manzoni must have debated and then nuanced his observations of good and evil, Cinelli reviews the fundamental authors whom Manzoni likely consulted in his reflections: Leibniz, of course, but also Voltaire, Rousseau, Vico, Bossuet, Kant, and Humboldt. Nor does Cinelli overlook the ideas of more recent Manzoni scholars who have deliberated on similar themes. Foremost, this study also offers a comparison with Pietro Verri's *Osservazioni sulla tortura* (1777, which had served as a basis for Cesare Beccaria's work *Dei delitti e delle pene*). Verri's treatise dealt with the same topic of the 1630 anointers and the degrading outcomes of their prejudiced trial by uninformed and corrupt judges. However, as Cinelli indicates, Verri's pages intended to promulgate the abolition of torture, while Manzoni had more philosophical concerns in mind although he fully supported Verri's perspective. In other words, Verri wrote in response to the growing demand for reforms and enlightenment in jurisprudence. Manzoni wrote with the firm conviction that "gli eccessi della tortura, che di per sé era solo uno strumento rozzo e crudele, dipesero sempre e solo dai giudici che la applicarono" (37). For Manzoni, injustice depends on the intentions of people. What Manzoni did, in effect, was really remarkable. In the *Storia della colonna infame*, he sought to describe those historical conditions of injustice and its juridical interpretation in order to contemplate how the tortures inflicted upon Guglielmo Piazza, and Gian Giacomo Mora, after they were accused of being *untori* by Caterina Rosa, might also implicate the moral heart of the events taking place at the time (41). No less remarkable is the fact that Manzoni created a parallel in his *Promessi sposi*. This he achieved not by offering abstract legal observations, but through the trope of two simple people, who although not physically tortured, were certainly traumatized by the injustice of their travails. What saved them was their deep conviction of a benevolent God.

Never wavering from his fundamental adherence to verisimilitude, Manzoni offered a rather radical reading of how such a beneficent God might deal with the detested judiciary. He was criticized as being anti-historical for this stance, but as Cinelli aptly writes, “lo storico non può discernere le ragioni del cuore, ma può conoscere i principi della giustizia, cioè della legge morale, e comparando questi con le azioni apprese nella storia si può giudicare e qualificare le azioni, discernere il bene dal male e apprendere a perseguire il primo e a bandire il secondo” (77). This requires taking a moral position, an ethical perspective beyond what the critical lens of historiographic metafiction (an anachronistic term, but certainly applicable here) might do. Manzoni’s is a deeply invested, personal interrogation into how the passions of men and women, noble and not, have such a profound effect on history and historiography and on personal freedom. Knowing yourself and compelling yourself to see from the perspective of others, says Cinelli in his conclusion, will not necessarily allow a harbour of safety, but it will lead to personal freedom (99).

This is a volume for serious contemplation. It is, of course, about Manzoni, about his process in coming slowly over time to terms with how to challenge his readers to ponder moral and ethical (but not necessarily religious) considerations in a world focused on the secular. But this book is also about Manzoni’s careful choices of phrase, of words, as he shaped his story, and carefully reshaped and rewrote, so that it would inevitably go beyond merely the sad story about grave injustices meted upon innocent people. Cinelli’s volume, where the author’s respect for and fascination with Manzoni informs each chapter, is a welcome return to fresh deliberations on Manzoni and his fundamental contributions to literature. Don Lisander has been rather neglected in recent years. This book, therefore, will be much appreciated by all for whom Manzoni still rightly remains a pivotal figure in Italian letters.

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