**LA MONACA DI MONZA – CHARACTERIZATION’S ANALYSIS**

The object of the present work is to analyse the Monaca di Monza’s characterization, in the verse taken into consideration, which is an extract from Alessandro Manzoni’s “I Promessi Sposi”.

The present work will discuss the most important strategies of the characterization. A denotative analysis will be first provided, on a second moment connotative choices will be considered to find out how they add to meaning.

The most important strategies used by the narrator are: reputation; social status; lack of information; setting; the character’s way to relate with other people; dressing style.

At the very beginning, an element that can’t be ignored strikes the reader attention: the direct speech. The intelligent reader understands that he’s reading about the nun from the boat man’s point of view, therefore the idea he gets is filtered by the boat man’s judgment. This is the first hint at the strategy of reputation, indeed the reader expects to know other’s people impressions and judgements about the nun.

Right from the start the omnivorous reader cannot disregard the exceptional quality of the character he’s going to meet: one who is addressed with a different language from the common people generally inhabiting a monastery. Indeed, while he expects to meet a nun, he is introduced to a “signora”, a lexical choice repeated over and over again. Thus creating a climatic suspense, which needs to be satisfied. What feeds curiosity on the part of the intelligent reader is not “la signora”’s hierarchic position in the monastery, but rather her uniqueness: her being different, and everybody knows that it is always difference to create curiosity for anybody whatsoever, whether it is a fictional character or not.

In my opinion, the reader may be annoyed to read about all the information concerning her family, the dynasty she belongs to; because having he or she already read eight chapters of the novel, he cannot have missed the plenty references the narrator makes when he juxtaposes social status to power.

The intelligent reader is one able to make sense of all the strategies the narrator relies on to create a reason to go on reading about “la Monaca”, that’s why even the title of the lady is interesting since she’s not only “la Monaca”, but she’s “la Monaca di Monza”, where there are two determiners to highlight her peculiarity.

“La”, a definite article, is used to convey a peculiar definition, and “di Monza”, the place inhabited by the powerful, the ones that rule the region, the Spanish ones.

The narrator is great to introduce the character by creating a lack of information in a very intelligent way, because the nun uniqueness is given through general reputation, but without specific information.

Moving forward with the next paragraph, the narrator makes clear that it is very difficult for anyone to approach the nun using the strategy of setting. Indeed, the two women have to go through eight places, that looks almost like obstacles, to reach her: the first courtyard, a room, the second courtyard, the ground-level room, the parlor, an angle, a window and eventually a metal grill.

Not only he creates a feeling of distance between the nun and anyone else, he also manage to increase the already-present suspense.

Furthermore, the narrator highlights the above-mentioned aspects of the nun also using the strategy of her way to relate with the people surrounding her, indeed she expects everyone to address her with obeisance, thus developing the idea of unavailability.

The difficult path the reader has to travel along with the two women doesn’t only underlines the distance of the nun, but it can also be a hint to the way the nun occupies the space of the monastery. Indeed, the reader wonders why she is so deeply positioned in the building. Is the distance set between the outer world and her, or between her and the outer world?

She may seem like a prisoner.

The peculiar questions push the reader to go on reading the text, as the narrator expected.

Later, when the two women are finally able to look at the nun, the narrator uses the strategies of physical language and physical description to add to the nun’s characterization. Indeed her upright bearing underlines her arrogant, intimidatory, harsh and aristocratic trait, and her beauty, connoted by the idiom “sbattuta, sfiorita, scomposta”, that is highlighted by the alliteration of sound “s”, recalls the opening setting, thus creating a decaying atmosphere.

Last but not least, using the strategy of dressing style, the narrator presents a contrast between black and white that connotes the nun herself, and her conflicting presence. Indeed she doesn’t look like an ordinary nun, first of all because of the hair escaping from the veil and then all the other following hints.

As a result, the reader wonders why the “Monaca” embodies a conflict and a contrast. Why does she look out of place?

Once again the narrator succeeds in his aim: the reader is forced to go on reading to satisfy his curiosity.