

IMMAGINI DI CASA MANZONI

a cura di JONE RIVA



CENTRO NAZIONALE STUDI MANZONIANI
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Immagini di Casa Manzoni

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in copertina

la facciata decorata in cotto di Casa Manzoni prospiciente piazza Belgioioso (foto Diotti)

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Pictures of Casa Manzoni

Notes

by JONE RIVA
translated by DAVID GIBBONS

Translator's note

This insert contains a translation of the notes to the volume *Immagini di casa Manzoni*, edited by Jone Riva. The volume is intended as a guide for visitors as they move through the rooms where Manzoni lived and worked; and this translation is intended in much the same spirit, to accompany those whose native language is not Italian on their visit to Manzoni's house. Bibliographical details are as per the Italian edition.

1. *Photograph of the house in Via Morone with an autograph dedication by Manzoni to the architect Andrea Boni*

The dedication reads thus: «To Mr Andrea Boni, author of the felicitous design and execution of this façade, from the house owner Alessandro Manzoni».

Andrea Boni, who was born in Campione d'Intelvi (now Campione d'Italia) on 4 March 1815 and died in Milan on 15 September 1874, studied sculpture and architecture at the Brera school in Milan. The autograph letter (Manzoni, *Tutte le lettere* III. 262-63) greets visitors as they enter the Museum on the first floor.

2. *Study, ground floor*

The study retains its original furnishings and the library of books studied by Manzoni. Many of these contain Manzoni's own marginal notes and underlinings, which document his always intensely critical readings. It was here too that Manzoni's historic meetings with Garibaldi, Cavour, Verdi and Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil took place. The windows look out onto the garden that once belonged to the house.

The passage from Louise Colet's *L'Italie des Italiens* (I. 107) in English reads as follows: «I cross the threshold of the poet's house with emotion. I walk through the courtyard, am shown into a small library preceded by a narrow corridor that looks onto a staircase; the house is silent and icy, it seems like a convent, as all houses in Milan do. The two windows of this library – the room where Alessandro Manzoni works – look out onto a small garden, the trees and shrubs stripped bare due to the winter season; the flowers in the flower beds invisible beneath the snow that has fallen in recent days, and which now glistens under a ray of sun passing through the clouds. A few Bengal roses raise their heads between the frosts; their pale flowers open out as though they were smiling. Between the two windows is a small console, on which a marble bust of Professor Grossi sits (Grossi was one of Manzoni's dearest friends). Opposite it, above one of the library bookcases which line the walls, is a fine copy of a head of Christ by Leonardo da Vinci, made by the Marchionness d'Azeglio, Manzoni's daughter, whom death snatched from her father while still young, leaving him disconsolate. The desk where the poet writes is opposite a narrow fireplace, with a little door on either side. Almost as soon as I have been introduced Alessandro Manzoni enters the room, through the door on the right. He holds out his venerable hand to me good-naturedly, and with emotion I shake it. Before me stands a handsome old man, tall and upright; his proud head with regular features, his inspired brow crowned with soft white hair, like a halo of purity, bears a surprising resemblance to the head of