Alessandro Manzoni. *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni. Scritti storici e politici*. Tomo 1 e 2. A cura di Luca Badini Confalonieri. Torino: UTET, 2012. Pp. 1614. ISBN 9788802086071 (2 vol. Hardcover)

In a beautifully written letter to Edmondo De Amicis dated *15 giugno 1863*, the elegance and eloquence for which Alessandro Manzoni was known pours forth as he responds to the burgeoning author's request of "due sole parole" to address the thoughts and sentiments regarding religion and politics that De Amicis had espoused in an earlier letter. In perhaps one of the most strikingly laconic statements on the dynamics between Church and State, Manzoni explains, "Religione e patria sono due grandi verità, anzi, in diverso grado, due verità sante; e ogni verità può spiegar tutte le sue forze e usar tutte le sue difese senza insultarne un'altra" (1029). Relaying his hopes for a harmonious institutional dichotomy that would herald a new age of political and spiritual prosperity in Italy, Manzoni, in a few simple words, concisely states the hopes that had, since Dante's *De monarchia*, long been elaborated upon by Italy's literary greats.

Going far beyond the more commonly recognized works that comprise the "standard" Manzonian canon, Luca Badini Confalonieri continues his work on Italy's most celebrated 19th century author to produce a two volume collection of Manzoni's historical and political works. Stating that, brevity aside, a more accurate title for these volumes would have been *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni. Scritti storici, politici, giuridici, ed economici*, Luca Badini Confalonieri delves into the heart of Manzoni's storied literary history to compile an assortment of writings that includes everything from the author's more substantial historical and political opuses and treatises to annotations, footnotes, and personal letters that elucidate Manzoni's stance on Italy's social, political, and economic state. Badini Confalonieri begins with Manzoni's more prominent historical texts, including his discourse on Longobard history, his comparative work on the French and Italian revolutions, and his *Storia della Colonna infame*, and transitions to a collection of assorted letters and writings addressed to Italy's most distinguished figures, providing exegetical annotations and a wealth of information that is sure to enlighten even the most specialized Manzoni scholars.

Structurally, *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni. Scritti storici e politici* consists of two volumes. The first is comprised primarily of Manzoni's major "historical" opuses including his *Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia*, *Storia della Colonna infame*, *La rivoluzione francese del 1789 e la rivoluzione*

italiana del 1859, and *Dell'indipendenza dell'Italia* which are all accompanied by an abundance of footnotes that serve to not only contextualize the work within a 19th century framework but also, as in the case of the *Discorso*, provide a necessary backdrop for readers not as familiar with Longobard history as Manzoni was. Similarly, the reproduction of Luca Badini Confalonieri's accompanying commentary to the 2006 Salerno publication of the *Storia della Colonna infame* is another welcome addition to *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni*, as it makes scholarly consultation significantly easier when compared to the 2006 illustrated replica edition. To conclude the first volume is a juridical work on literary property which comes in the form of a letter to lawyer and economist Girolamo Boccardo. Using the controversy surrounding F. Le Monnier's unauthorized republication of the *Promessi Sposi* in 1845 as a case study, the *Lettera al signor professore Girolamo Boccardo intorno a una questione di così detta proprietà letteraria* not only provides another fascinating example of Manzoni's vast interests, but also sheds light on a branch of intellectual property that has yet to be definitively protected.

To elaborate upon both the "formal" writings of the first volume and Manzoni's other published texts, the second volume features an expansive collection of footnotes, fragments, sketches, and letters ranging, as Badini Confalonieri claims, from the subjects of literature, to religion, history, politics, jurisprudence, and economics. With a section devoted to history and politics, and another to history and economics, this exchange of ideas between Manzoni and Italy's greatest minds, such as Antonio Rosmini, Massimo d'Azeglio, and Camillo di Cavour, provides an enlightening experience that delves into the aspects of Manzoni's civic and academic life that are often eclipsed by the monumental success achieved as author of *I Promessi Sposi*. From these pages emerges a masterfully eloquent author whose primary concern lies not solely in establishing an ideological hope for a new society but in discussing a practical political and social methodology rooted in an understanding of historical and contemporary factors. Citing economists such as Say, Mengotti, Garnier, and Ganilh whilst also channeling his grandfather Cesare Beccaria's insight to imbue in his work a glimmer of jurisprudential light, Alessandro Manzoni's collection of works is the perfect literary embodiment of who he was: a writer, a scholar, a thinker, and, most importantly, a citizen whose existence revolved around a search for a better society.

Despite the expansive nature of works found in *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni. Scritti storici e politici*, the unifying element that courses through each

essay, fragment, and letter is Manzoni's undeniably profound concern for the social elements that dictate and form the construct of societal life. Through an acute awareness of the past, Manzoni proceeds systematically in addressing the problems that plagued, and continue to plague, both Italian society and socio-political communities at large. In this regard, the more humane elements of *I Promessi Sposi* are elevated and formalized to unite a collection of individuals that work together for the common good of society. In the same way that Graziadio Isaia Ascoli described Manzoni, "con la infinita potenza di una mano che non pare aver nervi", of working to extirpate "l'antichissimo cancro della retorica dalle lettere italiane," so too does Manzoni work to extirpate the ills of society in order to herald the betterment of all. In doing so, he urges humanity to exercise its liberty, align itself with that which is universally good, and transcend the passions that obfuscate society's ability to realize its ultimate potential.

Without question, these two volumes are a magnificent reflection of Manzoni's lifetime of dedication to literature, religion, history, politics, jurisprudence, and economics, and Badini Confalonieri's dedication to the 19th century. With Manzoni's profound understanding of the human condition and society's social and political institutions expertly elucidated by Luca Badini Confalonieri's exegetical contextualization, *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni. Scritti storici e politici* is sure to form the cornerstone of the library of any *ottocentista*.

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Gabriella Romani. *Postal Culture. Writing and Reading Letters in Post-Unification Italy*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2013. Pp. 272. ISBN: 9781442647084. \$75. (Hardcover)

In an internet-dependent world where the accepted protocols of letter writing have largely lost their status as positive social capital, an in-depth study of how letter writing developed in the non-elite classes, and of the intricacies involved in the delivery of their letters, is both welcome and relevant. Romani is a specialist of late 19th century Italian literature. She is also a researcher whose breadth of knowledge, admirable ability of relevant and perceptive analysis, and just plain pleasure in pursuing new directions of research within her specialization,