**Pietro Giacomo Manzoni, 1870–1910 [Draft 4 amended]**

Manzoni was a north Italian carver and sculptor, born on 26 April 1870 at 43 Via Luprita in Calusco d'Adda, to the west of Bergamo. He was the third child and second son of Costanzo (sometimes Costante) Manzoni, then 41, and his wife Giovanna, daughter of Achille Filippini. He had an elder brother called Giacomo Achille who was born in 1866 and appears to have outlived him, and a sister, Elisa Antonia Catarina, born in 1868. The latter may not have survived given that another Elisa (Giuseppa) was born in March 1873 and Giulia Maria Clotilde followed in April 1877, when the family also moved to 12 Via Luprita: both these younger sisters lived to marry in Bergamo in 1894 and 1901 respectively. Another son, Giorgio Enrico was born in January 1882 but the children’s mother may have died before 1890 since in that year and 1893/4 their father had another daughter (Elisa) and son (Giovanni) by Felicita Zonca, an unmarried countrywoman, possibly a servant: the former died aged 37 days in October 1890 and the latter at two in February 1896.

The Manzonis were well-off landowning farmers and Costanzo also a wood carver who did much work in Calusco’s parish church of San Fedele, begun in 1864 and consecrated in 1886. Giacomo was probably initially his pupil and then of another carver called (probably Giuseppe) Zenoni at the evening technical school in Bergamo. He appears to have been living in the city at 36 Piazza Pontida by April 1892, when he obtained a certificate of good character from the mayor’s office. He entered the Carrara Academy, Bergamo, in 1896 and was in its painting school to 1897 but already called himself a ‘carver’ when he applied to join its life (nude) school that November and continued attending until 1899. At his death it was reported that his main teacher was Caesar Tallone and that while there he won a special prize from the local Society of Fine Arts. In 1898 he also appears to have begun to teach modelling at the Andrea Fantoni School of Industrial Applied Arts, was on its permanent staff from 1903 and at the time of his death in 1910 was noted as having his own studio in Via Ermete Novelli, Bergamo.

Manzoni’s main output appears to have been as a church carver in wood and stone, including building and furniture decoration, and the carving of religious effigies. His earliest church work so far identified is decoration in SS. Fermo e Rustica at Presezzo (1893) and a side-altar figure of St Joseph (1897) for S. Fedele in his native Calusco, where he also did a Madonna, the Sacred Heart and St Louis for other side altars. Other churches with work by him from 1898 to his death include three in Bergamo (S. Alessandro, Santa Maria delle Grazie and S. Leonardo), Borgo di Terzo, Almennno, Endenna, Martinengo, Olera, Ponteranica, Albino, Grignano, Verdellino, and Grumello del Monte. The final forms of late exterior figures that he modelled for Albino (1903), Verdellino (1906) Presezzo (1910) and S. Leonardo, Bergamo (after 1900), were in cast concrete. In his spiritual memoirs, Pope John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli), who was born at Sotto il Monte, north-east of Calusco, mentions a Manzoni processional Madonna of the Assumption, given to its parish church, that was one of his early favourite icons. His, or more probably his editors’, attribution of it to Manzoni is apparently in error for local brothers of the same fairly common name who were also church carvers (*Il giornale dell'anima e altri scritti di pietà*, [Rome 1964; 8th ed., 1975, p. 347]).

In 1903 Manzoni exhibited a *Pietà* in plaster at the annual Carrara Academy exhibition and two more plasters at the National Exhibition held in Milan in 1906: a statue titled *Dolore materno* (Maternal grief), and a group called *Ebbra d'amore* (Intoxication of love). In 1906 he also won a competition for a medallion portrait on the tomb of the lawyer and politician Federico Maironi (d. 1906) in Bergamo cemetery.

His most substantial currently known secular pieces are busts of the celebrated cellist Carlo Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901), also a native of Bergamo, both showing him in old age. Piatti divided his time between London and Italy and was long a teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, London. His daughter, Rosa Costanza, herself a fine pianist, married Count Carlo Lochis of the local Bergamo family who were generous patrons of the Carrara Academy. From 1898, her father spent summer months in a villa at Cadenabbia on Lake Como and the rest of the year with her at Crocette di Mozzo, near Bergamo, and he was buried there in the Lochis family mausoleum. Either late in Piatti’s life, or posthumously, Manzoni made at least two marble busts of him and in late 1909 Contessa Piatti-Lochis offered one to the RAM through the agency of the English cellist William Whitehouse (1859–1935), whom she called her father’s ‘favourite pupil and friend’ in a related letter to the Academy dated 31 January 1910. It had arrived to be shown to the Academy committee at their meeting of 16 February 1910.

A second, funded by public subscription and result of a competitive commission from the Art Circle in Bergamo, was unveiled in the lobby of its Teatro Donizetti on 21 April 1910, set up close to a previous bust (maker uncertain) of the celebrated local tenor G. B. Rubini. Its associated inscription reads, ‘Ad Alfredo Piatti/ Bergamo e Londra/ Sorelle nel ricordo’ (‘sisters in remembrance’). What may be Manzoni’s plaster maquette for the theatre bust, or a preliminary model for both, is also in the Museo Donizettiano at Bergamo (Fondazione MIA collection). There is another memorial bust in pale pink marble, made before March 1903, above Piatti’s gravestone in the Lochis mausoleum at Crocette di Mozzo: the building was reported in a neglected state in 1951 but has reportedly been used for at least one recent concert, with images that show the bust is still there: it is apparently unsigned and without maker attribution but Manzoni is an obvious contender. (Another, of 1908 by Daniele Scola, is in the Conservatory of Music in Milan: see:

<http://www.culturaitalia.it/viewItem.jsp?language=en&case;=&id=oai:www.internetculturale.it/metaoaicat:oai:www.internetculturale.sbn.it/Teca:20:NT0000:MI0285_AS_1844-02>)

Manzoni died at Bergamo on 31 July 1910, reportedly from cirrhosis of the liver of four months diagnosed duration. He was survived by a young wife (Narcisa) and his elder brother Achille. A brief press notice of his death appeared in the September issue of the Milan arts magazine *Ars et Labor* (no. 9, p.742), mentioning the ‘very life-like’ quality of his Piatti bust in the Bergamo theatre. He should not be confused with other Manzoni namesakes, or nearly so: (1) Giacomo Manzoni, better known as Giacomo Manzù, the 20th-century Italian sculptor also born in Bergamo in 1908, who died at Ardea (Lazio) in 1991; (2) an unrelated painter from Padua called Giacomo Manzoni (1840–1912), who exhibited in Italy from 1864 to 1906; (3) a contemporary sculptor/modeller called (Giovanni) Carlo Manzoni (1856–1910), who was born near Milan and trained in Turin before moving to Britain where he made his name in ceramics. He was first associated with the Della Robbia Pottery in Birkenhead, before founding Minerva Art Ware Manufacturers in Hanley, and later lived in London about 1899.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion on the authorship of Manzoni’s bust of Piatti in the Royal Academy of Music, July–Dec. 2020. With special thanks to Victor Rafael Veronesi for extensive Italian documentation, and others there contributing to it.*

PvdM, 7. 12. 2020