



# **The Novelist and the Archivist: Fiction and History in Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (Early Modern History: Society and Culture)**

*Claudio Povolo*

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The title of this book refers to two personages who, though belonging to very different cultural worlds, were secretly in contact in the second decade of the 19th century. What united them was their shared interest in the history of the judicial institutions of the Ancien Régime and especially the records of a trial which had been housed for two centuries in the Venetian Ducal Palace before passing, along with other precious documents of the Serenissima, to the provisional seat of San Teodoro in Venice where, along with others, worked the archivist Agostino Carli Rubbi.

Alessandro Manzoni became famous for his novel, *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*), which he claimed was inspired by an anonymous manuscript of the 1600s and which became the Italian national novel. Indeed, both the characters and the complicated plot that unites them can be found in a file of a trial from the early 17th century. This book reconstructs the engrossing story of this unknown secret relationship between the novelist and the archivist, which in the end inspired Manzoni's great historical novel.

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