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“Who wants to be a refugee?”



C1 FIRST SHORT EXCHANGE

“RECOGNIZING A REFUGEE”



**Visit to Gabriele
D'Annunzio's house
(old town)**

Sunday 25th March 2018

Who was Gabriele D'Annunzio?

Gabriele D'Annunzio was an Italian poet, novelist, dramatist, short-story writer, journalist, military hero, and political leader. He was born here in Pescara in 1863, but he spent most of his life travelling in Rome, Naples, Florence, France and Gardone Riviera where he died in 1938.

He occupied a prominent place in Italian literature from 1889 to 1910 and later in the political life from 1914 to 1924. He was often referred to under the epithets *Il Vate* ("the Poet") or *Il Profeta* ("the Prophet"). He studied and created his own image carefully, a mixture of exquisite taste and love for heroic actions, symbol of his time. His affairs with several women, including the famous actress Eleonora Duse, received public attention.

D'Annunzio was associated with the Decadent movement in his literary works, which interplayed closely with French Symbolism and Aestheticism, a literary and artistic movement which flourished in England in the 1880s, devoted to 'art for art's sake' and rejecting the notion that art should have a social or moral purpose. Such works represented a turn against the naturalism of the preceding romantics and was both sensuous and mystical.

Later he came under the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche which would affect his literary and political contributions. In fact during the First World War, the perception of D'Annunzio in Italy transformed him from a literary figure into a national war hero.

D'Annunzio was fond of bold, individual military actions. Two of his best known ones came in 1918: his flight over Vienna, where he dropped thousands of propaganda leaflets over the city, and his prank at Buccari Bay, a daring surprise attack on the Austrian fleet with power boats.

D'Annunzio's literary works are marked by his egocentric perspective, his fluent and melodious style, and an overriding emphasis on the gratification of the senses, whether through the love of women or of nature. As a poet D'Annunzio derived much of his power from his great emotional susceptibility. In the great work of his maturity, the *Laudi*, and especially its third book, *Alcyone*, D'Annunzio proclaims his sensuous, joyful feeling of communion with nature: they are among the masterpieces of modern Italian poetry.

The museum

The museum "Gabriele d'Annunzio's birthplace" occupies the first floor of the building where the poet was born and spent his childhood; it maintains the original atmosphere of the nineteenth century, with its elegant wall decorations and its furnishing, as it appears in his prose poem *Notturmo*: the first five rooms form the nucleus of the museum-house, and each of them contains a description from *Notturmo*, a prose poem in which imagination, experience, and remembrance intertwine.

The somber atmosphere of the poem reflects the circumstances of its creation: D'Annunzio suffered months of near-total blindness in 1921. He fuses the darkness of the present with the immediate past, haunted by war memories, death, and mourning, and also with the more distant past, revolving mainly around his mother and childhood.

The rooms

Vestibule

In this room we can breathe the years of his childhood here in Pescara; there are photographs of the poet at the age of 11, and quotations from his works. On the right wall there is his high school diploma (1881) and below there is a copy of the act appointing his father, Francesco Paolo Rapagnetta-d'Annunzio, as mayor of the city

Room one (the Sitting Room)

This room is of great interest for the vaulted ceiling, the most ancient in town, for wall decorations and for the elegant nineteenth-century furniture as well. They are inspired by 18th century neoclassical motifs, with cupids driven by fantastic animals, plant motifs, shields with quivers and arrows. In the center there is "The rape of Proserpina" as described by Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*. It was very common to use mythology for palaces decorations, especially the ceilings which were called "megalographs". On the walls there are portraits of Antonio d'Annunzio and Anna Giuseppa Lolli who in 1851 adopted the nephew Francesco Paolo Rapagnetta, father of the poet.

Room two (the Study)

In this room we admire wall decorations and the neoclassical ceiling . At the center of each segment of the vault there are dancing cupids, eagles, hunting dogs and birds, plumes and a couple of Harpies. In the center there is "The flight of Aeneas from a burning Troy". Here is the portrait of the father of the poet, Francesco Paolo Rapagnetta-d'Annunzio and some lithographic prints such as S. Giovanni Battista from Tiziano Vecellio and S. Sebastiano from Marco Basaiti. A Japanese porcelain dish can also be admired. A musical stand is placed in a corner, probably the one used by his brother Antonio, who was a musician.

Room three (the boys' bedroom)

This is the room of the poet and of his brother Antonio. Unfortunately the beds have been stolen so these are not the original ones. There is the "painted wardrobe" mentioned in the "Notturmo" and the "kneeler of the childish prayer" used to pray on by the poet. On the wall there is a Christ carrying the cross (a painting on glass). We can see an old tricycle (so as to recreate the original atmosphere of the room).

Room four (the aunt's bedroom)

His aunt Maria Rapagnetta lived in this room. When D'Annunzio was a child he was very close to her. On the right there is a lithographic print of Madonna with seven swords named also Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.

Room five (the parents' room)

This is the room where the Poet was born on the 12th of March 1863. The bed is a copy of the original one. The watercolor painting by Michele Cascella called "Luisa D'Annunzio's bedroom" (1940) shows how the room was. Next to the bed we can see a brass brazier and an armchair part of the original furnishing.

Room six

This room, which used to be a dining room, is now D'Annunzio's wardrobe. His most characteristic clothes are the dinner suit and the red hunting suit. As we can see from the sizes of these, D'Annunzio wasn't very tall but he was very elegant, a real dandy. Like Andrea Sperelli, the main character in "Il Piacere", he was an aesthete who wanted to "make of his life a work of art". The only female dress is a gift by a friend, Countess Caproni.

Room seven

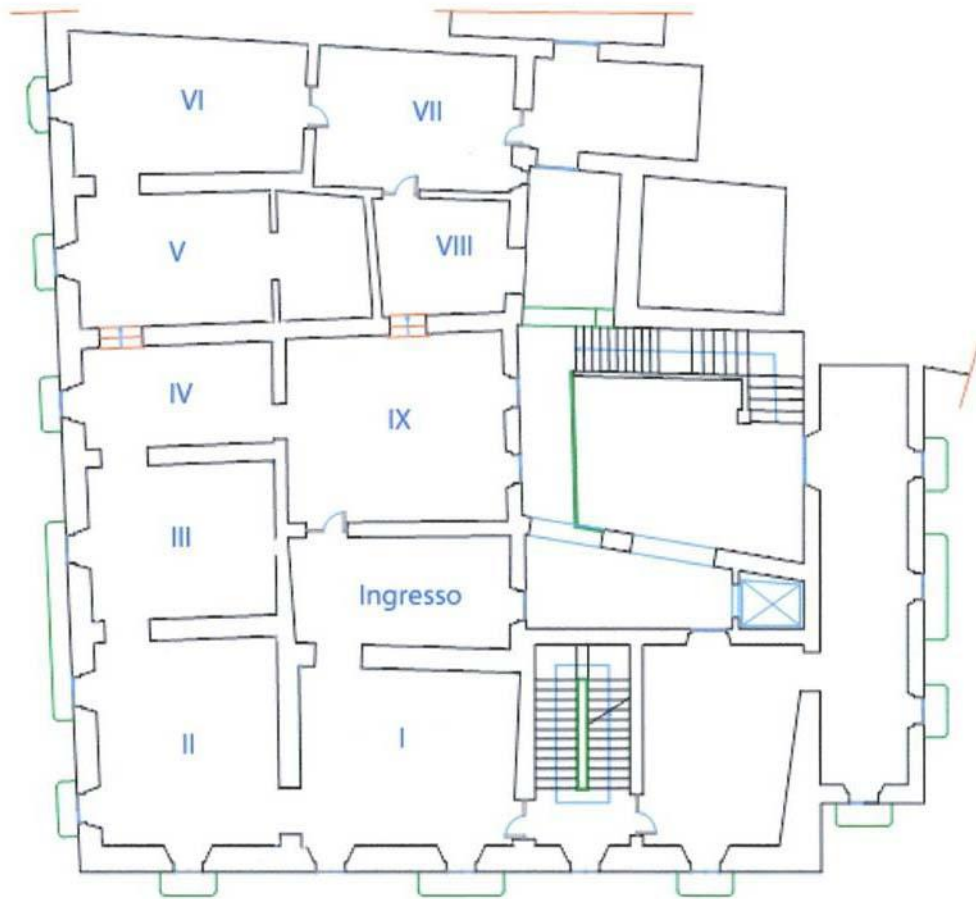
In this room there are documents of the 19th century, some original editions of D'Annunzio's works and two letters that the poet addressed to his mother.

Room eight

In this room there are the casts of the face and the hands of the poet. The funeral mask is in wax and it was molded by his friend sculptor Arrigo Minerbi in 1938. The cast of the hand is in plaster, also molded by Minerbi.

Room nine

This room was a living room, today it houses some didactic panels recalling some episodes of D'Annunzio's military engagements during the First World War. There are honorary uniforms, and historic photographs. The ceiling was painted by Dante De Carolis in 1937.



First floor plan

