From Boito to Giovannoni: a difficult legacy ANDREA PANE

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Abstract

A well-established opinion points out that Gustavo Giovannoni is an ideal follower of Camillo Boito in the field of preservation and restoration of monuments. Giovannoni himself wrote about this legacy, introducing Boito as the first theorist of an "intermediate way" in restoration, positioned somewhere between Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin. Many differences, however, mark the personalities of Boito and Giovannoni, from their personal biographies to the cultural milieu that surrounded each of them. But, at given moment, it is possible to confirm a kind of relationship which includes a similar approach to the history of architecture and a common interest in the training of architects. Above all, two issues seem more critical in their different approaches to restoration: the problem of contemporary additions to monuments and an interest in the historic fabric of the city.

Keywords: Camillo Boito, Gustavo Giovannoni, architecture, restoration, Italy.

A well-grounded historiographic tradition identifies Gustavo Giovannoni as an ideal disciple and follower of Camillo Boito's theories regarding the protection and restoration of monuments. Based on a linear and evolutionary view of the discipline, the figure of Giovannoni often appears at the end of a path which, starting from the first "philological" issues highlighted by Boito, would lead – apparently without contradictions and uncertainties – to a proper "scientific" doctrine, of which Giovannoni would be the main encoder and interpreter (Bellini, 1991: 159-160, Zucconi, 1997a: 43-44). If seen from this perspective, the personalities of Boito and Giovannoni would be closely linked, and their respective cultural experiences would be marked by significant analogies and affinities, as well as by sporadic direct contacts¹.

This interpretation is based on numerous evidences which, at first glance, seem hard to refute: 1) the public commitment to restoration, directed to the elaboration of norms to be shared and transmitted throughout the entire Italian territory, which produces an evident continuity between the principles promoted by Boito in 1883 at the *IV Congresso degli ingegneri ed architetti italiani* and the work undertaken by Giovannoni in Athens in 1931, and even more, within the Superior Council of Antiquities and Fine Arts and the writing of the Italian *Carta del restauro* of 1932; 2) the leading role that both men successively had in the debate for the establishment of Schools of Architecture and for the promotion of the professional figure of architects; 3) the connection between history and restoration, which, as Zucconi has observed, seems in both the cases of Boito and Giovannoni to be based on a vision of history

¹ "A chapter that still needs to be fully clarified, beyond mythologies, is the relation between the two putative founders of the Italian architectural history; it would merit a specific research, based on the rare occasions of direct interaction" (Zucconi, 1997b: 38). (Original quotation: "Capitolo ancora tutto da chiarire al di là delle mitologie, il rapporto tra i due padri putativi della storia architettonica italiana meriterebbe uno studio a sé, a partire dalle rare occasioni di confronto diretto").

of architecture as a field of study functionally linked to restoration work²; 4) the relationship between history and design, since both authors firmly believed, albeit with different nuances, that a new architectural style could only arise from knowledge of and continuity with the past (Medieval in the case of Boito, and Renaissance in the case of Giovannoni), facing any dangerous "breaks" with tradition. Finally, to these above mentioned four points a fifth may be added, no less significant than the previous ones: the recurrent contradiction between theory and practice, which distinguishes the work of both men at a moment when they were directly involved in the intervention on monuments. If, on the whole, these aspects seem to apparently confirm the thesis of a substantial continuity between Boito and Giovannoni – referring not only to the field of restoration, but more generally, to the entire field of architecture – there are more than a few critical nodes, that clearly distinguish the two historical figures, also due to the different cultural context in which they operated.

Giovannoni himself in his writings spoke about an explicit legacy from Boito, declaring on several occasions his debt to the Milanese master and proposing himself as a follower of the "intermediate theory" situated between the opposite ends of stylistic restoration and integral conservation (Bellini, 1994: 291, Grimoldi, 1995: 12 and ff.). While the most authoritative place for such statements is undoubtedly the definition of "Restoration" written by Giovannoni for the *Italian Encyclopaedia* in 1936, it should not be overlooked that as early as in 1913, when the Roman scholar composed his seminal text about the restoration of monuments - his first real systematic contribution to the subject, which he reworked several times in the following years – Boito, who was still alive at the time, plays a central role. As it is generally accepted, the long text originated from a lecture by Giovannoni during the first *Convegno deali ispettori* onorari ai monumenti e scavi³, which was held in Rome in October 1912. It was published a year later under the title "Restorations of Monuments" in the first issue of the *Bollettino* d'arte (Giovannoni, 1913a, 1913b⁴). The essay represents an important evolution in the Roman scholar's thoughts on the subject, after the brief reflections formulated ten years earlier, when, at the age of thirty, he had expressed a favorable opinion regarding the completion of monuments, explicitly quoting Viollet-le-Duc. This was in contraposition to the conservative attitude that emerged at the end of the Secondo congresso internazionale di scienze storiche⁵, related to the controversial question of completing the facade of the Duomo in Milan. Already on that occasion, and even in a synthesis, Giovannoni had outlined the need to refer to a

² "Rather than founders of a 'science and technique of restoration', Boito and Giovannoni appear as pioneers of a trend that tends to resolve problems in an empirical manner, in a rather strange mixture of love of history, good sense and, above all, of trust in their own instinctive abilities as designers. [...] For both men, the problems were all part of a same circuit that permits us to see an essentially operative aim: the study of monuments and the training of architects, which constitute the premise for a non-arbitrary intervention on heritage. Inserted in this circle, the history of architecture finds 'a practical function such as providing full determinations for restoration works'; this affirmation by Giovannoni could have also been shared by Boito. In fact, it seems closer to the theses of those who, like the author of *Senso*, do not allow any margin of autonomy to historical analysis" (Zucconi, 1997b: 38-39). (Original quotation: "Più che i padri di una 'scienza e tecnica del restauro', Boito e Giovannoni appaiono come i capiscuola di un indirizzo che tende a risolvere le questioni nel terreno dell'empiria, in un curioso *mélange* di amore per la storia, di buon senso, e soprattutto di fiducia nelle proprie doti istintive di progettista. [...] Per entrambi, i problemi appartengono ad un medesimo circuito che lascia intravedere finalità soprattutto operative: studio dei monumenti, formazione dell'architettura ritrova 'una funzione partica quale quella di fornire determinazioni complete nei lavori di restauro'; questa affermazione di Giovannoni potrebbe essere condivisa anche da Boito. Anzi suona più vicina alle tesi di chi, come l'autore di *Senso*, non concede nessun margine di autonomia all'analisi storica").

³ Congress of honorary inspectors for monuments and excavations. Note from the translator.

⁴ The conference by Giovannoni had been made "with projections" during the afternoon of October 23, 1912. In addition, during these works, to accompany the *Bollettino d'arte*, the scholar had proposed the publication of a booklet which would be entitled "Atti e notizie", and would contain useful information for inspectors (*Cronaca del I Convegno in Roma degli Ispettori onorari dei monumenti e scavi*, 1913: 70-71). The very relevant role played by Giovannoni during this meeting is due, much more than to his position as honorary inspector, obtained two years earlier within the province of Rome, to his influential position as representative and past-president (1910-11) of the *Associazione artistica fra i cultori di architettura* (Artistic Association for Researchers of Architecture).

⁵ Second International Congress of Historic Sciences. Note from the translator.

classification of the different types of restoration⁶ in order to facilitate the difficult adaptation of theories to operational reality, quoting Boito for the first time, in support of the opportunity to complete the façade of the Milanese Duomo.



ROMAN FORUM. Rome, ca. 1910. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

It was only in 1913, however, that Giovannoni attributed a significant relevance to Boito's contribution, probably also because of the vicissitudes that had accompanied the complex organization of the conference. The analysis of the correspondence between an elderly Boito and the director, Corrado Ricci, shows how the latter had initially invited the Milanese master as an illustrious rapporteur for the conference on the restoration of monuments, and how – due to Boito's refusal, motivated by fatigue as well as doubts on the usefulness of

⁶ In his brief text, Giovannoni defined four types of restoration ("of repair, of substitution of some elements, of completion, of renewal"), observing that the vote promoted by the Congress seemed to legitimize only the first type. Such a position – based on the premise "that the cult of monuments can be explained by leaving them as much as possible in the state in which they are found" – according to the scholar, would lead to "the imitation of the Arabs who allow their buildings to turn into ruins in order to not touch them; and only when they have collapsed, and the will of Allah has been completed, they rebuild new ones to replace them". Against the risks of this inclination, and vastly quoting Viollet-le-Duc himself (who he had already cited for the purpose of showing the inapplicability of the single use of repair restoration treatments), Giovannoni suggests opposite arguments: "we 'restorers' believe instead that it is better to care for the works that represent emblems of the most important artistic and cultural periods, by studying their essence and trying to render them as complete as they should have been". Later however, the scholar admits that there is a limit regarding ancient buildings, when "there are no longer living monuments, but only ruins"; he was hence anticipating a clearer distinction between "living" and "dead" monuments, using previous Belgian and French contributions, which would be better explained in the following years. The important references to the principles of stylistic restoration continue however with additional considerations – among which is the necessity by architectural restorers to "strip themselves from their own personality" – and which are essentially referred to the necessity by and Varagnoli (2005: 21-22).

the meeting – he had to instead opt for Giovannoni⁷. In the end, the choice of the latter had received the approval of Boito himself, who had described the Roman scholar as a man "who knows how to act and speak, measured and frank, experienced and young"⁸.



This small background investigation, therefore, adds new significance to the importance attributed to the figure of Boito in Giovannoni's writings. The thoughts of the Milanese master are introduced at the end of the long historical digression devoted to the origin of the concept of restoration, which Giovannoni – in perfect agreement with the position of Viollet-le-Duc (*"le mot et la chose sont modernes"*) and then with Boito himself⁹ – considered to be of recent origin, without neglecting a first reflection on the relation to pre-existent concepts from Classic Antiquity up to the 18th century. Outlining the "intermediate theory" of restoration, Giovannoni acknowledged that "the most influential and prominent defender among us, through precepts, advice and his example, was Camillo Boito", to whom above all he attributes the merit of

⁷ These interesting letters have been published by Guarisco (1995: 58-61).

⁸ Boito continues: "When you see him, please do me the courtesy of letting him know how happy I am to know that he will deal with monuments" (letter from Boito to Ricci dated 29 September 1912, (Guarisco, 1995: 61 and note 23)). (Original quotation: "Quando lo vedi fammi la cortesia di dirgli come son lieto ch'egli debba trattare dei monumenti").

⁹ Boito shared Viollet's theses on the modernity of the concept of restoration, basing it on the lack of a contemporary style in architecture, a motivation also adopted by Morris in his SPAB Manifesto (cfr. Torsello, 1984, 1997: 17-20). Giovannoni, among the numerous causes for the modern origins of restoration, also quotes the absence "of a real artistic faith, of a well-developed and specific stylistic sense", also adding that such "is the ideal situation in front of ancient monuments" (Giovannoni, 1913b: 2). (Original quotations: "di una vera fede artistica, di un proprio unico, ben affermato senso stilistico"; "è la condizione ideale di fronte ai monumenti antichi").

having extended to Medieval buildings, "a favorite topic for modern restorers", guidelines that were already partially applied to ancient monuments, as well as having promoted the vote of the *IV Congresso degli architetti ed ingegneri italiani*¹⁰ of 1883, which he did not hesitate to define "almost like a *Magna Charta* of modern restoration" (Giovannoni, 1913b: 11-12). It is not surprising then that Boito, who was already elderly, expressed in a letter to Giovannoni his own approval of the essay, pointing out that "it contains two virtues that are usually mutually exclusive, a warm feeling for art and a good judgment which is both measured and practical"¹¹.

Little more than ten years later, the reference to Boito is more than explicit in the collection of writings by Giovannoni, Questioni di architettura nella storia e nella vita (Rome, 1925), which recalls, from its title to its content, the most well-known text of Questioni pratiche di belle arti, published by Boito in Milan in 1893. In the introduction of the volume, in fact, the Roman scholar affirmed that he considered that "it is not idle to follow, modestly and from a distance, the example of that great and unforgettable master. Camillo Boito, who has so highly served art, even when he has supported, with his admirable eloquence, misconceptions", compiling essays and articles that appeared at different times on architectural subjects (Giovannoni, 1929: 7)¹². Among these, there is, with slight re-elaborations, the essay Restauri di monumenti, which basically confirms the opinion on Boito, with the addition of an interesting note on the origin of taxonomic practice in restoration, which already composed the backbone of the 1913 text. Stopping on the already known distinction between *living* and *dead* monuments (making an explicit reference to earlier writings by Schmidt and Cloquet) (Giovannoni, 1929: 127 and note 1)¹³, Giovannoni actually recalls the division proposed by Boito in his famous dialogue Conservare o restaurare (1886), between archaeological, pictorial and architectural restorations, almost as a means to justify and reinforce his own decision to introduce the five categories of restoration, consolidation, recomposition, liberation, completion and innovation¹⁴. Once Boito's figure has been placed in a historical perspective, for Giovannoni it begins to assume the role of a true "founding father", as confirmed by Boito's biographical entry in the Enciclopedia Italiana, compiled by the Roman scholar in 1930, where Boito is defined as "the true founder of studies of architectural history in Italy" and as an "undisputed legislator" in the field of restoration (Giovannoni, 1930: 295)¹⁵. In this discipline, the definitive consecration of a line of continuity between Boito and Giovannoni is reached, as previously mentioned, with the definition of the word "Restoration" in 1936. Here "the intermediate theory, supported in Italy by C. Boito and G. Giovannoni" is presented by the Roman scholar as the most modern orientation in the field (Giovannoni, 1936: 128)¹⁶. This is the linear interpretation proposed by Giovannoni, to which historiography has been aligned for at least fifty years, and only from the mid-1980s it has been guestioned (Grimoldi, 1995: 12 and ff.). Since then, the blossoming of texts on Boito has often highlighted the limits of this

¹⁰ IVth Congress of Italian architects and engineers. Note of the translator.

¹¹ Letter from C. Boito to G. Giovannoni from 1913, quoted in Zucconi (1997b: 38 and note 62). The positive appreciation is confronted by Zucconi with the contrary position that Boito had manifested three years earlier, as a member of the commission for the chair of Technical Architecture at the School of Engineers in Padova, where he had preferred Daniele Donghi rather than Giovannoni.

¹² The subtitles of these compilations also reveal some analogies: *Restoration, Tenders, Legislation, Profession, Education* is the one used by Boito, *Building, Architectural aesthetic, Restoration, Environment of the monuments*, is the one used by Giovannoni (cfr. also Zucconi, 1997b: 39).

¹³ The scholar specifically refers to the texts by J. P. Schmidt (1874) and L. Cloquet (1902).

¹⁴ For the three categories that were introduced, see Boito (1886: 490 and ff.).

¹⁵ It is very significant, as Zucconi has pointed out, that Boito represented, together with Raffaele Cattaneo, one of the only "non-Roman" personalities for which Giovannoni wrote an entry in the *Enciclopedia* (Zucconi, 1997b: 31).

¹⁶ In the last re-edition of his own texts on the subject, Giovannoni declared that the "intermediate theory [...] is now universally accepted. In Italy, it was first formulated by Boito and then completed by Giovannoni" (Giovannoni, 1945a: 30). (Original quotation: "teoria intermedia [...] ora è universalmente accettata. In Italia I'ha per primo formulata il Boito e poi I'ha completata il Giovannoni").

apparent continuity, although to date there is still no contribution that specifically addresses the relationship between the two figures. The intention of these short notes is, therefore, to propose a first close comparison between Boito and Giovannoni, starting from the apparent affinities mentioned in the premise.

At first glance the analysis of both biographies reveals more differences than similarities, starting from the fact that their lives –similar only for their place of birth in Rome (Boito 1836, Giovannoni 1873) – are separated by about forty years of particular significance in the history of Italy. Since childhood, Boito was influenced by the context of the *Risorgimento* uprisings¹⁷, whereas Giovannoni grew up during the fervor of the years that immediately followed the taking of Rome, which had actually completed the process of Italy's unification. Opposite and almost symmetrical, for example, are their respective training paths. It appears to be generally accepted that by attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice Boito's artistic components were favored, and further enhanced by two years of training in mathematics at the *Padova Study*, which in 1855 granted him the title of civil architect¹⁸. Meanwhile Giovannoni, after earning a degree in engineering in 1895 at the *Scuola di Applicazione* of Rome, continued on with two years of specialization in art history with Adolfo Venturi (1897-1899) at the Faculty of Letters.



DUCAL PALACE. Venice. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

¹⁷ It is well known his participation, when he was only twelve years old, in the revolts of 1848, at the side of his father Silvestro, a painter by profession, but who was also head of battalion at the National Guard (Nardi, 1942).

¹⁸ As it has already been shown by Giuliana Ricci, Boito frequented only two of the four years envisaged by law in order to obtain a doctoral degree in mathematics. He therefore obtained a sort of graduate degree "by title" and the ability to practice the profession of architect, thanks to a certificate signed by the marquis Pietro Selvatico on October 26, 1855 (Ricci, 1991: 43 and note 26).

Their first academic experiences still seem to ideally follow similar paths: Boito began by studying the Medieval buildings of Lazio and Tuscany with a scholarship awarded to him in 1856, thanks to the support of Pietro Selvatico. During this time he committed himself in the study of Cosmatesque architecture (Miano, 1969: 238; Ricci, 2000: 272). Giovannoni, on the other hand, dedicated his first systematic research work to Medieval buildings. This brought to the two volumes on the monasteries of Subiaco of 1904, and several other brief contributions dedicated first to the activities of the Roman marble workers of the 12th and 13th centuries, then to the baptisteries, and finally to the pioneering proposal of presenting documentation sheets on the structures of Medieval walls (Giovannoni, 1904, 1905a: 37-38, 1905b: 25-27, 1906a: 9-11, 1906b: 37-39). The end of this affinity, however, soon becomes apparent upon comparing the importance acquired by Medieval architecture in Boito's reflection and activities (just consider the volume Architettura del Medio Evo in Italia, 1880) very much in line with his time, as opposed to Giovannoni's growing interest in Renaissance, coherent with the flourish of studies on these subjects in Europe since the early 20th century (taking into consideration the enormous influence of works such as *Die Kultur der* Renaissance in Italien by Burckhardt, translated in Italian as early as in 1876).



BENEDICTINE SUBIACO MONASTERIES. Image: www.benedittini-subiaco.com

Focusing on their biographies, we can trace some vague analogies between their two lives, both spent in solitude. Although Boito, unlike Giovannoni, married twice, he suffered sorrow and separation¹⁹. However, we perceive a profound difference in the cultural context that surrounds the two men. It is not, of course, only the geographical and historical distance that separates the post-Risorgimento Milan from Giolitti's and, later, Fascist Rome, but more importantly, it is also Boito's artistic inclinations and literary talent. It has been repeatedly pointed out that they had a significant influence on the building of his personality, although he himself considered it as a minor aspect of his many-sided activity²⁰.



DUOMO CATHEDRAL. Milan. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

¹⁹ In 1862 Boito married his Polish cousin Cecilia de Guillaume, from whom he separated a few years later; he then married, in 1887, Madonnina Malaspina dei marchesi di Portogruaro. His life, already marked by the abandonment of his father during his adolescence, and by the early death of his mother in 1859, would be saddened by additional sorrows: in 1867, he would lose his only son Casimiro, while in June 1898 his second wife would also die (Nardi, 1942: 40, 52-53, 109-112, 243-244, 550, 618). For more information on his first marriage, see also the letters by Camillo to his brother Arrigo in 1862, published in Boito (1998: 57-75), where other important aspects of Camillo's life, such as the restoration of the *porta Ticinese* in Milan, are also intertwined.

²⁰ In this regard, a letter during his youth to his brother Arrigo, dated 16 December 1861 and quoted by Mazzi, is quite interesting, as Camillo, referring to literary creativity, confesses his fear of remaining "eternally among the flock of the mediocre [...] perhaps my mind lacks of imagination, perhaps in my heart there is a lack of a powerful, brave, disdainful will, that can overcome all obstacles, and from which grand and long-lasting works can emerge" (Mazzi, 1990: XXVIII). A successive letter also seems to confirm the controversial relation with the literary component: "I have time left to write the long Article for *Nuova Antologia*. I am now working again on a *Novella*, to see if my brain has not become rusty" (letter by Camillo to his brother Arrigo from Padova, dated March 29, 1874, in Boito (1998: 107)). An efficient synthesis of the work of Boito with regard to his relationship with architectural and literary interests has been recently made by Dellapiana (2005: 622-639). (Original quotations: "fra il gregge dei mediocri in sempiterno [...] forse nella mente mi difetta la fantasia, forse nel cuore mi manca la volontà prepotente, ardita, disprezzatrice e vincitrice di ogni ostacolo, dalla quale possono uscire le opere grandi e durature"; "M'è rimasto tempo di scrivere l'Articolo per la *Nuova Antologia* lunghetto. Ora mi rimetto a una Novella, per vedere se il cervello non mi si è arrugginito").

With his brother Arrigo and figures like Praga and Tarchetti, Boito participated in the $scapigliata^{21}$ atmosphere, and in the field of literature showed a strong propensity to the pictorial and impressionistic suggestion typical of the short travel novels, widely popular in the literature of the second half of 19th century, as in *Gite di un artista*²², as well as an irresistible attraction to more macabre themes characteristic of the Scapigliatura, such as the vanity of beauty, death, anatomy, and the scientific research on the preservation of corpses (Cretella, 2007: 19-36).²³ All of these were themes rich in implications in the thoughts on restoration (Rocchi, 1974: 57-88; Di Biase, 2005: 168). As has been pointed out on several occasions, an eloquent testimony of this cultural horizon is the novella Un corpo, which opens the first literary work of Boito: the compilation *Storielle vane*, first published in 1876. Here the themes of medicine, anatomy and the transience of beauty are mixed with the dialectic between reality and image, with the background of a contemporary controversy between the artistic-romantic idealism and scientific positivist thinking (Boito, 2007: 87-125)²⁴. In a mysterious and nocturnal Vienna, Boito depicts the bad romance between a girl and a painter (alter ego of Camillo himself), who has portrayed her body in a painting dedicated to the nymph Arethusa. The beauty of the girl arouses the interest of a scientific embalmer, who favors chemical predominance over the spirit and is oriented toward discovering the scientific principle of beauty. Unable to have the girl's body, he purchases the painter's portrait. Terrified by the omen that she will end up on the scientist's dissecting table, the girl accidentally falls into the Danube and drowns, thus involuntarily subjecting herself to the embalmer's desire. The unfortunate painter, horrified upon seeing the lifeless body of his beloved on the autopsy table, resigns himself to reacquiring the portrait and leaving the body to the scientist²⁵. The literary talent of Boito, particularly prone to short stories or the impressionistic descriptions of places and landscapes, expands to include architectural subjects, to which he dedicated himself with the same commitment²⁶. Boito acquired an agility that is not found in the controlled, repetitive and often rhetorical prose of Giovannoni, the result of his eminently technical formation, despite his later humanist training. On the other hand, Giovannoni will recognize Boito as having an "admirable eloquence," describing himself instead as "little more than a mason who has exchanged the trowel for the pen" (Giovannoni, 1945b: 94).

Returning to the central themes of these notes, we can find an evident legacy between the two men related to the training of architects, an interest that formed an integral part of the thoughts of both Boito and Giovannoni even from their younger years, and to which both would dedicate a significant part of their lives. At the age of twenty-two, in November 1858, Boito published *Proposta di un nuovo ordinamento di studi per architetti civili* (Ricci, 1991: 42), which anticipates the contents of his most famous later writings. On the other

²¹ *Scapigliata* – disheveled. Bohemian artistic and literary movement raised in Italy during the *Risorgimento* and followed by several groups, with a vision against conformism. Note from the translator.

²² See M. C. Mazzi (1990: XXVI-XXXV), and the critical introduction by C. Cretella (2007: 10-19).

²³ See also E. Giachery (1969: 241), who, referring to the aforementioned *Storielle vane*, described how "an overview of the themes of this compilation refers unequivocally to the atmosphere of the *Scapigliatura*, even if the style remains distant from certain grim effects that frequently appear on the pages of the *scapigliati*". (Original quotation: "uno sguardo ai motivi di questa raccolta ci richiama senza equivoci all'atmosfera della Scapigliatura, sebbene lo stile si tenga lontano da certi effetti truculenti che appaiono frequentemente nelle pagine degli scapigliati").

²⁴ The compilation was reedited with reference to the text of the third and final edition of 1895. For the interpretation of the essay as in clear position between romantic and positivistic ideals, see A. Carli (2002: 193-206). Cfr. also M. A. Crippa (1989: XXXIV-XXXVI).

²⁵ "There is a singular range of variations on the subject: authentic/inauthentic, which is covered and hidden by the theme life/ death, or rather organic life/mechanism; the theme of the object and of its image recalls the discussions by Plotinus and Ficino during the Renaissance" (Rocchi, 1974: 66). It therefore seems interesting to clarify that in the first version of the essay, which appeared in *Nuova Antologia* in June 1870, the ending differed sensibly – it had a more macabre and *scapigliato* tone – due to the painter's decision to destroy and burn the portrait (cfr. Cretella, 2007: 82-83). (Original quotation: "Vi è una singolare gamma di variazioni sul tema: autentico/inautentico, che è coperta e nascosta dal tema: vita/morte, o meglio: vita organica/ meccanicismo; il tema dell'oggetto e della sua immagine, richiama quello plotiniano e ficiniano del Rinascimento").

²⁶ "All the writings by Boito possess a narrative quality, betray rhetorical forms, and reveal very fine techniques that are unique of a writer" (Zucconi, 1997a: 15). (Original quotation: "Tutti gli scritti di Boito possiedono qualità narrative, tradiscono espedienti retorici, rivelano tecniche sopraffine, proprie di uno scrittore").

hand, Giovannoni acted as rapporteur of a specific commission appointed by the *Associazione artistica fra i cultori di architettura*²⁷, dedicated to the subject of architectural schools. This laid the foundation for his most famous writing on the matter, published under the title *Gli architetti e gli studi di architettura in Italia* in 1916, which outlines the profile of the *integral* architect²⁸. More precisely, as Giuliana Ricci observed, a true passage can be seen from Boito's testimony to Giovannoni, which led, in the mid-1910s, to the affirmation of a "Roman line" in the debate on schools of architecture, as opposed to the importance of Milan defended by Boito. It does not seem strange then, that the adoption of the Rosadi decree for the establishment of the School of Rome would take place at the end of 1914, a few months after the death of the Milanese teacher (Ricci, 1991: 50)²⁹.

The historiography has often highlighted a similar and ideal transfer of responsibilities within the *Direzione Generale per le Antichità e le Belle Arti*³⁰, taking into account the preeminent role of both the scholars in several advisory bodies, first of all the *Consiglio Superiore*, of which Boito, already part of the *Giunta Superiore*, became a member upon its creation in June 1907, remaining so until his death³¹. In this context, Boito would come face to face with more conservative positions on restoration; in his *Memorie autobiografiche*, the younger Adolfo Venturi would remember his own battles opposing the perpetuation of late reconstructions, often supported by his prestigious colleagues Boito and D 'Andrade³².

²⁷ Artistic Association of Architectural Researchers. Note from the translator.

²⁸ Already in 1907, Giovannoni identified four fundamental aspects for the formation of an architect, basing them partly on reflections made by Boito: "1. A complete artistic training that will make him familiar with the means in which the artistic thought can be materialized [...]; 2. a technical preparation comparable, even if the field is more restrained, to that of a civil engineer [...]: 3. a vast and varied general culture and the capacity to be able to study on his own, which can only be given by a superior school; 4. a well-grounded knowledge of History of Architecture and of Art, which allows him to be familiar with the spirit of the artistic periods which preceded ours" (Giovannoni, 1908: 127-128). This "luggage" of knowledge was further specified in 1916: "No less than five pieces of luggage are required: the first one is a vast and varied general culture, not inferior to that of any other professional [...]. The second is a complete artistic preparation, which will make him compatible with the other arts, and which will grant him a clear sense of proportions [...]. Third, a scientific and technical preparation in the field of civil constructions, that can be comparable to that of the engineer [...]. Fourth, a well-grounded knowledge of History of Art and Architecture, which allows him to know, more than the forms, the spirit itself and the meaning of the Art periods that preceded ours. Fifth, and finally, a practice based on experience, to solve all those small problems of construction, administration, etc. presented by real life (Giovannoni, 1916a; 1916b: 11-12). On this subject, see also De Stefani (1992: 117-119.) (Original quotations: "1. Una completa preparazione artistica che gli renda familiari i mezzi con cui il pensiero d'arte può plasmarsi [...]; 2. una preparazione tecnica paragonabile, pur essendo un campo più ristretto, a quella degli ingegneri civili [...]; 3. una coltura generale vasta e varia ed una facoltà di saper studiare per proprio conto che solo può esser data da una scuola superiore; 4. una conoscenza ben basata della Storia dell'Architettura e di quella dell'Arte, che lo renda familiare con lo spirito stesso dei periodi artistici che hanno preceduto il nostro"; "Non meno di cinque valigie gli occorrono: la prima è una coltura generale vasta e varia, non inferiore a quella di verun altro professionista [...]. La seconda è una preparazioneº artistica completa, iniziata fin dall'adolescenza, che gli renda congeniali le altre arti, che formi in lui il senso sicuro delle proporzioni [...]. Terzo, una preparazione scientifica e tecnica che nel campo delle costruzioni civili sia paragonabile a quella dell'ingegnere [...]. Quarto, una conoscenza ben basata della Storia dell'Arte e di quella dell'Architettura, che gli faccia conoscere, più che le forme, lo spirito stesso ed il significato dei periodi d'Arte che hanno preceduto il nostro. Quinto, infine, una pratica fatta di esperienza, dei tanti problemi spiccioli di costruzione, di amministrazione, ecc., che presenta la vita reale").

²⁹ On the creation of the School of Rome, see Nicoloso (1999: 23-28).

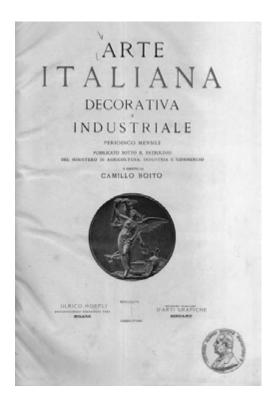
³⁰ General Directorate for Antiquities and Fine Arts. Note from the translator.

³¹ The Superior Council for Fine Arts, created by the Act 386 on June 27, 1907, held its first session on January 25, 1909. Boito was a member of the second session, entitled "Medieval and modern art," together with Alfredo D'Andrade, Pompeo Molmenti and Adolfo Venturi (Dalla Negra, 1992: 201).

²² "There was a large lack of criteria: but God wanted that promoters of reconstruction such as Camillo Boito, forgers of the ancient such as the wise architect D'Andrade, converted later to a very simple principle: the ancient cannot be redone [...]. If the correctness of such a view had been recognized earlier, we would not have had the restoration [...] of the Sala delle Assi in the Castle of Milan, of the main altar of the Saint at Padua, of the apse chapels of San Francesco in Bologna. [...] How many battles held almost until today! At the Palazzo del Podestà, of an art foreign to Bologna and dating from the end of the Quattrocento, they wanted to add a Bolognese edging, and even crenellations: I rose up at the Superior Council for Fine Arts, even against my companions Boito and D'Andrade, when I saw them give in" (Venturi, 1991: 77-78). It is interesting to note that Venturi also included, among the reconstructive restorations that had to be banned, the recomposition of the altar by Donatello undertaken by Boito at the Basilica of the Saint. (Original quotation: "Era gran miseria di criterii: ma Dio volle che poi ricostruttori come Camillo Boito, contraffattori dell'antico come il sapiente architetto D'Andrade, si convertissero a un principio molto semplice: l'antico non si rifà [...]. Se ne fosse stata per tempo riconosciuta la giustezza, non avremmo avuto il restauro [...] della Sala delle Assi nel Castello di Milano, dell'altar maggiore del Santo a Padova, delle cappelle absidali di San Francesco a Bologna. [...] Quante battaglie sostenute quasi sino ad oggi! Al Palazzo del Podestà, d'arte forestiera a Bologna e della fine del Quattrocento, si voleva metter la bordatura bolognese, perfino le merlature: insorsi nel Consiglio Superiore per le Belle Arti, anche contro i miei compagni Boito e D'Andrade, quando li vidi piegare").

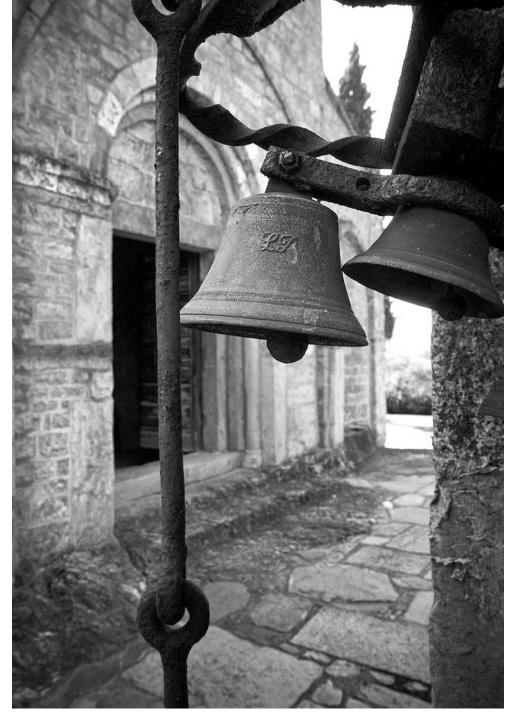
Less than a year after Boito's death, in May 1915, Giovannoni would enter the second section of the Council as a substitute (Curuni, 1979: 16), remaining an effective member for more than twenty-five years. During that time, he played, much more than Boito, the role of itinerant superintendent for the peninsula, something that he himself remembered at the end of his life (Giovannoni, 1945c: 173 and ff.). In this field, as it is well known, the Roman scholar often assumed the role of mediator between opposing parties, tending to seek mutually agreeable solutions between conservation and *ripristino* with mixed results. Therefore, an additional affinity emerges that seems to unite Boito and Giovannoni, and which is often underlined by their respective detractors: a kind of *aurea mediocritas*, of amateurish³³ superficiality (in the judgment by Melani on Boito)³⁴, which was almost a complete turnabout from that vision of effective synthesis applied to complex problems which, instead, represents the most significant distinctive character of their personalities and which largely determined their success.

Different from the issues discussed, but common in their intentions, is the commitment that both Boito and Giovannoni give to a periodical publication for educational purposes, aiming at the dissemination of the national artistic and architectural tradition. Such is the case, for Boito, of *Arte italiana decorativa e industriale*, a journal financed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, which the Milanese master helped to found in 1890-1891. The following year he became its director and held the post until it ceased to be published in 1911. The aim of the journal – characterized by a large format and notable typography, which also included various chromolithographs – was to disseminate the knowledge of the Italian tradition in the field of decoration. It was directed to schools of design and, more directly, to craftsmen (Selvafolta, 2003: 133-166). It is not too difficult to detect at least an echo of these themes in the emergence of *Architettura e arti decorative*, founded and directed by Giovannoni and Piacentini in 1921, even though this journal served principally as a reference for the Superior school of architecture in Rome, maintaining in any case a great deal of attention to the subjects of furniture design and decoration.



COVER OF ARTE ITALIANA DECORATIVA E INDUSTRIALE. Image: www.maremagnum.com

 ³³ In the Italian text *Orecchiante* – someone who plays by ear, without knowing music. Note from the translator.
³⁴ This judgment is quoted and vastly commented in G. Zucconi (1997a: 12 and ff.).



MONASTERY OF SAN SALVATORE. Lombardy. Image: Valerie Magar.

Regarding the subject of architectural tradition, in the more general context of the binomial history-design, a remarkable affinity, already mentioned in the premise, arises between the two figures. The central relevance of the introduction of the volume *Architettura del Medio Evo in Italia* – perhaps the most important contribution of Boito – has been justifiably highlighted toghether with the not less significant fact that it was entitled *Sullo stile futuro dell'architettura italiana*³⁵. In the Boitian perspective, in fact, the study of Medieval buildings, and in particular of their principles, should serve as a lesson for the present, avoiding all passive imitations. Boito then assumed a leading role for this varied neo-medieval model "of 'ethical' character", which characterized Italy from 1860 to 1890, based on the desire to define an architectural style suitable to consolidate the national identity of the newly formed

³⁵ On the future style of Italian architecture. Note from the translator.

united State³⁶. Since 1872 Boito's intention was quite clear, as evidenced in the brief essay *L'architettura della nuova Italia*, which shows an interest in "language" issues in architecture, with attention to regional declinations, among which the Lombard architecture from the 11th to the 13th centuries, together with the "14th century community forms," would play an eminent role (Zucconi, 1997a: 147-159). In this panorama, only the city of Rome would be the exception, where the *fright*³⁷ for its ancient architectural greatness would convince Boito to deny any possibility of affirmation of the neo-Medieval language³⁸.

If we replace the rhetoric of the Fascist regime to the cultural context of the 19th century, and the fortune of Renaissance to that of Medieval architecture, we can find an analogous attitude also in Giovannoni. The progressive interest in the analysis of architecture between the 15th and 16th centuries is, in fact, guided by the Roman scholar with an attentive look at the problems of the present time, thus giving rise to a completely Italian peculiar way of making history of architecture, emblematically represented by his relation to the figure of Bramante (Thoenes, 1996: 64-73). However, unlike Boito, the result of Giovannoni's reflections on the subject seems to have a more attenuated influence on the contemporary architectural culture, also marked by the controversial dissemination of the Modern Movement, thus, compared to his predecessor, emphasizing a much less hegemonic role in the field of the new architecture.

Finally, upon analyzing the aspects related to conservation and restoration, some significant differences emerge between the approaches of Boito and Giovannoni. Although they are already partly outlined by the historiography, it seems opportune to go into more detail. The most significant theme refers to the additions, for which Boito himself showed an ambiguous, but partially positive position regarding contemporary architecture. It is worth remembering that in the *Conservare o restaurare* of 1886, the Milanese master referred to the seven points voted on three years earlier in the IV Congresso degli ingegneri e degli architetti italiani, faithfully respecting the text of the proceedings. Point 2 stated: "Additions or renovations must be made in our contemporary style³⁹, possibly preventing, in the appearance envisaged, the new forms from clashing with the look of the old building" (Boito, 1886: 503). When a few years later, Boito reprinted the famous dialogue in his anthology Questioni pratiche di belle arti (1893), this passage suffered two small but significant corrections: "The additions or renovations must be made with a character different from that of the monument⁴⁰, possibly preventing, in the appearance envisaged, the new forms from clashing too much with its artistic appearance" (Boito, 1893: 124). The invitation to resort to contemporary architecture has disappeared, while the envisaged agreement no longer refers to the ancient building, but to its *artistic aspect*. It is no coincidence that Giovannoni in his own essay of 1913⁴¹ cites the passage on the vote of 1883, using this last version, further attenuating its scope in the writing of the Italian Carta del restauro of 1932, where it is recommended that the additions have "a character of naked simplicity and in accordance with the constructive scheme" (Norme per il restauro dei monumenti, 1932: 326).

³⁶ "Our story has almost no links to the *Gothic revival*; ours is a neo-Medievalism with an "ethical" character, where there is no place for the replication of trending models" (Zucconi, 1997a: 20). (Original quotation: "La nostra storia non ha quasi nulla a che vedere con il *gothic revival*; il nostro è un neomedievalismo di stampo "etico" ove non trova posto la replica di modelli alla moda").

³⁷ Spavento in the Italian text, quoting the title of Boito's article Spavento delle grandezze di Roma (Boito, 1875). Note from the translator.

³⁸ "Who would ever like, in a city like Rome, to introduce the pleasantries of the Middle Ages or the ingenious novelties of the French-like modern art? Rome is the only city where a classically academic architecture can find a place even today" (Boito, 1875: 190). On the controversial relation between Boito and Roma see also Torsello (1984: 117-123), Grimoldi (1991: 193) and Fontana (2002: 41-42). (Original quotation: "Chi vorrebbe mai in una città come Roma introdurre i garbi del Medio Evo o le novità ingegnose dell'arte infranciosata [sic] moderna? Roma è la sola città, dove l'architettura classicamente accademica possa trovare anche al giorno d'oggi un qualche sviluppo").

 $^{^{\}scriptscriptstyle 39}$ The italics are by the author.

⁴⁰ The italics are by the author.

⁴¹ Cfr. what has been observed on this subject by Etlin (1991: 127-128), who erroneously attributed to Giovannoni the modification of the 1883's text without mentioning the version published by Boito in *Questioni pratiche* in 1893.

We can conclude by dwelling for a moment on another additional and substantial difference that marks the two characters of Boito and Giovannoni on conservation issues: that is the relationship with the urban environment and with the city, which can be detected not only for obvious chronological reasons. In fact, considering that the European debate on this subject evolved precisely during the years when Boito was still fully active - just consider the dates of the famous contributions of Camillo Sitte (1889) and Charles Buls (1893) on the theme of the aesthetics of cities (Pane, 2005: 293-314) - it is surprising that the Milanese master did not pay much attention to it. His vision of the context, as demonstrated by the famous speech from 1883, in favor of the conservation of Venezia che scompare, remains that of an artist who does not seem interested in the technical and operative aspects of the problem. Quoting the minor fabric of Santa Elena and Santa Marta, he notes that "it is not enough to say that in a monumental city it is sufficient to maintain the admiration of the monuments of contemporaries and posterity: it is necessary to maintain the settings of monuments" (Boito, 1883: 630). In that sense, the invitation – quoted by Zucconi – that Sitte himself extended to Boito in 1903, is guite peculiar; he invited him to collaborate in the newly created magazine Der Städtebau, recognizing that he had actively helped save Venice from the threats of hygienists at the turn of the century (Zucconi, 1997a: 268 and ff.).



DETAIL OF SAINT MARC'S FAÇADE. Venice. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

On this subject, the additional step taken by Giovannoni would be very significant, precisely thanks to his capacity to synthesize, into a unitary vision, the artistic culture and the technical experience of the sanitary engineers, proposing an original *intermediate way* for urban transformation, for which we can find no anticipatory footprint in Boito. This passage seems to represent, symbolically, the fatal nemesis of the 19th-century artistic vision regarding this problem, which was definitively supplanted by the rising figure of the *integral architect* around the 1910s⁴².

References

Note from the author: in the ten years that separate us from the first publication of this contribution, not many new essays have been published with explicit reference to Boito. Among these, however, it is necessary to report at least the monographic issue of *Ananke* (57, 2009), in which the present contribution was contained, due to the presence of numerous and interesting essays by authoritative scholars, among which Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, Gabriella Guarisco, Sandro Scarrocchia, as well as younger researchers. To this followed, in 2013, the volume by C. Cretella, *Architetture effimere. Camillo Boito tra arte e letteratura*, Dakota press, Ancona 2013, which also contains documents and ideas worthy of interest for architecture and restoration. Finally, in December 2014, the "Camillo Boito moderno" international conference was held in Milan – promoted by a joint initiative of the Accademia di Brera and the Politecnico di Milano. The conference has collected contributions from numerous scholars whose papers are currently under publication.

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⁴² On these aspects, cfr. Zucconi (1989).

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