

The restorers of Camillo Boito

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Abstract

This article analyzes the main restoration criteria presented by Camillo Boito in his conference held in Turin in 1884, which are both valid and applicable to the current restoration of both artistic work and architecture. His opinions regarding concepts, such as beauty, art, ruin, falsification, originality, safeguard, liberation and intervention, are expressed and bring us closer to contemporary theories of restoration; Boito conceives the effects of the passage of time on the monuments, as materials that must be preserved, so that they are faithful witnesses to the history and do not distort the author's original intention.

Keywords: *Boito, restoration, restorers.*

But it is one thing to conserve, and another to restore, in fact, very often one thing is the opposite of the other and my speech is not aimed at conservators, necessary and meritorious men, but to restorers, almost always superfluous and dangerous¹ (Boito, 2017: 14).

In his text entitled *I restauratori*, Camillo Boito (Rome 1836 - Milan 1914) presented a criticism and analysis of some examples of the restoration of well-known heritage sites. The text was the result of a conference he gave during the Turin exhibition in 1884, which he had been presenting at various congresses. In it, Boito analyzed his theory of intervention on buildings, which insists on viewing reconstructive activity as a scientific discipline, and not only as the application of pseudo-historical or emotional data.

The theory or critical thinking of Camillo Boito will take shape through an analysis aimed at put together knowledge about an object that needs to be recovered or completed. This requires that the restorer have an appreciation of history and knowledge of the past in order to interpret the origin and life of the artistic object: "these last fifty or sixty years have gained ground in the estimation and impartial knowledge of everything that has been, in first instance, an act of art and beauty"² (Boito, 2017: 10).

¹ Original quotation: "Senonchè, altro è conservare, altro è restaurare, anzi molto spesso l'una cosa è il contrario dell'altra; e la mia cicalata s'indirizza, non ai conservatori, uomini necessari e benemeriti, bensì ai restauratori, uomini quasi sempre superflui e pericolosi".

² Original quotation: "questi ultimi cinquanta e sessant'anni portano il vanto nello stimare e nel conoscere imparzialmente tutto ciò che è stato per lo innanzi in fatto d'arte e di bellezza.."



NEW GATE, TURIN, 1884. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

His speeches on this subject gradually created the criterion for interventions and for the proper behavior when dealing with artistic works which, in the case of architecture, which were comprised in the first Italian *Carta del restauro* of 1883; in it, the seven axioms or recommendations regarding the intervention of monuments were explained, including the need to show the difference between what the new and the existing fabric in restoration projects; to show and document all the remains of the intervention and objects dispersed in a special place, in such a way as to clearly expose the distinction between materials and to understand the intention of showing the intervention treatment.

Both in his lectures at the Polytechnic of Milan and in his professional life, works of art and their care were recurrent themes, not only the historical description of the subject, but also the origin of the work and state of preservation, its authors, the execution techniques, the materials and model of inspiration. He was passionate about the way of interpreting the various interventions these had undergone at the hands of restorers during different moments in history. Speaking about the interventions in Venice, which were changing the shape of the city, Boito mentioned:

... the façade of the Vendramin Calergi Palace had been liberated, that miracle of Pietro Lombardo, which rejoices the Grand Canal, and is not Gothic, but of the Renaissance—he purged it by following the precepts of Vignola, changing the proportions of the orders, lowering the half of the last cornice, removing the twin windows ...³ (Boito, 2017: 13).

³ Original quotation: “aveva purgato la facciata del palazzo Vendramin Calergi, quel miracolo di Pietro Lombardo, che rallegra il Canal Grande, e non è gotico, ma del Rinascimento – l’aveva purgata secondo i precetti del Vignola, mutando le proporzioni degli ordini, abbassando della metà l’ultimo cornicione, togliendo le bifore dalle arcate.”



CA VENDRAMIN CALERGI. Venice. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

The work was projected by Mario Codussi and finished by Pietro Lombardo who worked on the façade, an intervention carried out towards the middle of 19th century. The architect Pietro Selvatico Estense, who maintained professional relations with Ruskin during his visits to Venice, taught him Medieval and Renaissance Italian art and ordered him to draw this building on several occasions: “he made me draw that punished model”⁴ (Boito, 2017: 13) during his apprenticeship as an architect at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice (it is strange that Boito did not mention that Richard Wagner had lived in that palace and died on February 13, 1883).

Camillo Boito admired the natural irregularity of the city of Venice: “considering it an organic and unforeseen product of an accumulation of centuries and opposed the demolition projects of a pauperized block of houses, near the Duomo and the Rebecchino district”⁵ (Dezzi Bardeschi, 2004: 403) in Naples, where the Sanitation and Hygiene Law was applied as a pretext for the demolition of entire neighborhoods, the *sventramento*⁶ as an option to sanitize the cities.

Boito intended to send a message to the restorers of this period of eclecticism; in spite of the various styles or ways of appreciating art, personal good taste required understanding, studying and reproducing the entire past of art: “they all had an ideal of their own time, absolutely different from other times, a unique, absolute, clear, immovable ideal”⁷ (Boito, 2017: 14).

⁴ Original quotation: “mi dava [...] quel castigato modello a copiare.”

⁵ Original quotation: “considerandolo un prodotto organico e imprevedibile di un accumulo di secoli, che si oppone ai progetti di demolizione di un blocco abitativo povero, vicino al Duomo e al quartiere Rebecchino”.

⁶ *Sventramento*: broadening, extensive demolitions in order to open wide spaces in historic centers

⁷ Original quotation: “tutti ebbero un ideale proprio al loro tempo, diverso affatto da quello delle altre età, un ideale unico, assoluto, chiaro, irremovibile.”

Boito set up a double debate between personal appreciation and the values of the element of heritage. Above all, he analyzed the interventions that attempted to complete the work of art by destroying the original:

...[in] *the works of each of the centuries that have passed, which come to us mutilated, altered or in ruins, the only wise thing remaining to do, except in a few rare cases, is this: to leave them alone or, when necessary, to liberate them from the more or less bad ancient restorations. It is difficult! Knowing how to do something well, and having to abstain or undo it!*⁸ (Boito, 2017: 14).

In the treatment of paintings and sculptures, Boito demonstrated his extensive knowledge of history and appreciation of artists. In 1879, he wrote *Leonardo e Michelangelo*, and in 1893, the *Questioni pratiche di belle arti*, where he drew attention to the different types of ancient monuments and their restoration objectives or methodology accord with their place in time: archaeological, picturesque or Mediaeval, and architectural beauty of the Renaissance up to the present. Boito explained why, in each of these types of monuments, one should act accordingly, emphasizing the specific character of the building, a distinction, we should add: “which is not valid in our time, although the fragility of the material and the state of ruin of the monument are those aspects that would guide the current restoration processes”⁹ (Gizzi, 1997: 117).

In the text we are currently analyzing, he explained how the Greek and Roman sculptures that had reached his time, “cracked, amputees, stripped of a limb, or at least missing one extremity. From the 16th century onwards, a fury arose to recompose them... [with] bad and mediocre restorations...”¹⁰ (Boito, 2017: 14). He also described examples of sculptures transformed even by famous sculptors such as Bernini, the same man who put towers on the Pantheon to make it look like a parish, placed a violin in the hands of Apollo instead of a zither, and then exclaimed: “How many errors have been caused by restorations!”¹¹ (Boito, 2017: 16).



THE PANTHEON AND
THE PIAZZA DELLA
ROTONDA.

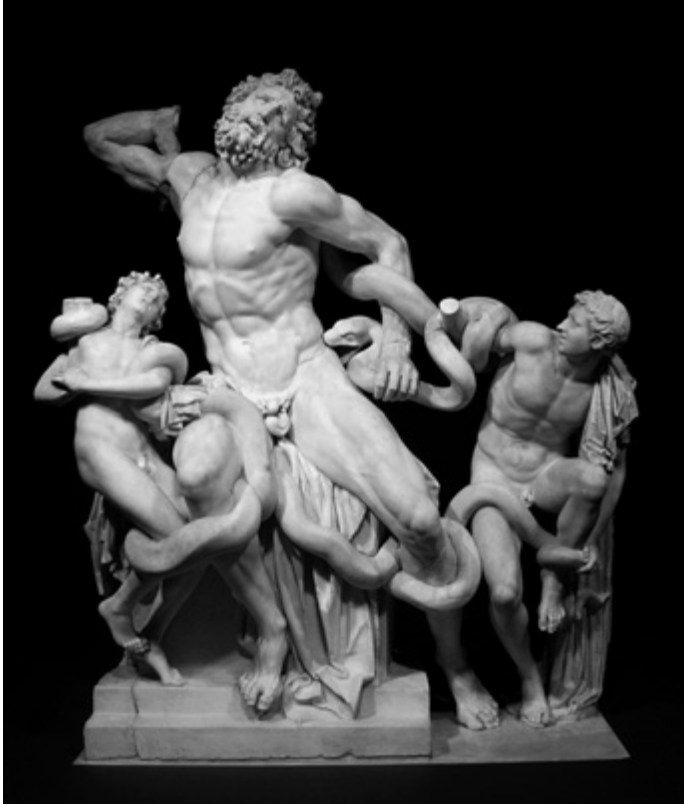
Watercolour, Jakob Alt, 1836
Image: Wikimedia Commons.

⁸ Original quotation: “le opere d’ogni trascorso secolo, giunte a noi mutilate, alterate o rovinose, la sola cosa saggia che, salvo rari casi, ci rimanga a fare è questa: lasciarle in pace, o, quando occorra, liberarle dai più o meno vecchi, più o meno cattivi restauri. È dura! Saper fare una cosa tanto bene, o doversi contentare o di astenersene o di disfare!”

⁹ Original quotation: “che non è valido nel nostro tempo, anche se la fragilità del materiale e lo stato di rovina del monumento sono ciò che guiderà gli attuali processi di restauro”.

¹⁰ Original quotation: “squartate, monche, prive di qualche membro, almeno dell’una o dell’altra estremità. Dal Cinquecento in poi ci fu la furia di restaurarle. I restauri cattivi o mediocri...”

¹¹ Original quotation: “Di quanti errori sono mai stati causa i restauri!”



LAOCÖON. Vatican Museums
Image: Valerie Magar.

Boito explained in detail two failed interpretations made on sculptures. One was the Farnese Hercules, which is currently in the museum of Naples. It is a giant sculpture by Glykon, that appeared with no legs. In the restoration eagerness of the 16th century, Pope Paul III commissioned Michelangelo to add legs to the sculpture, which he could not or did not want to do. It is said he exclaimed, "I would not even know how to make a finger of this sculpture." The legs were finally sculpted by Guillermo della Porta. But according to Boito, no one realized that they had been done incorrectly until two centuries later, when the original legs were found not far from where the body had been discovered. In another part of his text, Boito analyzed the restoration of the sculpture known as the Laocoön. When it was found in 1506, the right arm, the hands of the children and part of the snake were missing. At the request of Pope Julius II, Michelangelo gave his opinion as to the correct position of the missing arm. Several restorers wanted to reinterpret the lost part, first Giovanni Montorsoli and then Agostino Cornacchini carried out restoration treatments in the 17th century. Even Canova, two centuries later, also gave his opinion, but none were right. With this anecdote, Boito invites us to reflect on whether restorations are not, in the end, but interpretations of the truth made by artists who believe in what they do, even if they are wrong.

When the original arm appeared in 1905, it turned out to be in the position that Michelangelo had suggested, and which Boito had explained at the end of the 19th century, justifying his argument on failed restorations.

The theme expressed in his lecture is the question: Why restore? Why give the ancient work the appearance of a finished work, instead of accepting the mutilations and losses which leave the lost genius to the imagination? Substitution with new additions and implants implies a new creative act, which will never be equal to the original one. Boito questioned whether those

fantasies were not but mere adaptations in line with the taste of the restorer; he therefore added with emphasis: "There shall be no restorations and one should immediately eliminate with no remission, all those that have been made until now, recent or old"¹² (Boito, 2017: 19). As a general rule, Boito recommended that in regard to sculpture, no intervention should be made because of the risk of disfiguring the work, except when precise data of the missing parts was available; otherwise the author's concept would be misrepresented. The vocation of Boito as a teacher can be appreciated even more in these arguments, which reveal his didactic method that included establishing dialogues, exaggerations and anecdotes that maintain an interest in the subject matter.

When dealing with the restoration of paintings, Boito, thanks to his great knowledge regarding the subject, had already written *Scultura e pittura d'oggi: ricerche*; in 1877, in the introduction he mentioned: "The art of today is hesitant, confused, dominated by diverse traditions of the past... but as the future comes we must safeguard the memories of the artists and their works..."¹³ (Boito, 1877). In the text we are here analyzing, he talks about the falsification of works that were sold on the market and of the recovery efforts, or of "transportation from the wooden panel, the canvas or the wall onto a new wooden panel, canvas or wall"¹⁴ (Boito, 2017: 21). His interest in painting led him to write several texts about their authors and history. Regarding the interventions, he said that the transportation of the fresco (*strappo*) had been attempted since the beginning of the 18th century, while the transportation of an oil painting was done in 1729, by Domenico Michelini and later by Robert Picault, who worked on a painting by Andrea del Sarto. The technique used by Picault at that time was terrible, given that he used vapors derived from nitric acid. He forced the vapors to pass through from the back of the canvas in order to soften the paint and the preparation layer, and destroy the ancient canvas. At a precise moment, just before the acid attacked the paint itself, it was secured with paper (*cartonnage*); in this manner, the coat of paint became detached and could be transferred onto another backing. Of course, the techniques used today are less aggressive and more precise, without compromising the painting.

In the 19th century, the technique of relining was extended to all Italian art galleries. In many cases, terrible mistakes were made by the excessive retouching of painting or transforming it into another, thereby changing art history; the cleaning of soot, or drops of wax from chapels and temples led many so-called restorers to scrape the pictures, even with razors or scalpels, to remove the old varnishes or dirt:

*It is necessary to confess, moreover, that the painters-restorers give an example of rare unanimity in two essential issues. First: in swearing by all the gods that on the pictures entrusted into their hands they have not arbitrarily given, even the slightest stroke of a brush; nor have they added the faintest glaze. Second: in the attack against each other, behind their backs, and sometimes face to face, attributing the sweet titles of forger or imbecile*¹⁵ (Boito, 2017: 23).

¹² Original quotation: "Restauri niente; e buttar via subito, senza remissione, tutti quelli che sono stati fatti sinora, recenti o vecchi."

¹³ Original quotation: "Le arti al giorno di oggi sono ancora titubanti, confuse, dominate dalle diverse tradizioni del passato ... ma mentre il futuro sta arrivando dobbiamo conservare i ricordi degli artisti e delle loro opere..."

¹⁴ Original quotation. "trasporto della tavola, dalla tela o dal muro sopra una tavola, tela o muro nuovi."

¹⁵ Original quotation: "Bisogna confessare, per altro, che i pittori-restauratori porgono esempio di una rara unanimità in due cose essenziali. Prima: nel giurare per tutti gli Dei che sui quadri affidati alle loro mani non hanno dato arbitrariamente neanche il più leve colpo di pennello, non hanno aggiunto neanche la più pallida velatura. Seconda: nello scagliarsi l'un contro l'altro, dietro le spalle, e talvolta anche in faccia, i dolci titoli di falsificatore o somaro."

Boito attacked the pseudo restorers and warned that it is better to “Stop in time; and here is the wisdom: to be content with as little as possible”¹⁶ (Boito, 1884: 24), that is to say, not to intervene more than is technically possible. The question is whether this is also valid for our times. Are the paintings we observe that have been treated by accidental causes or by the passage of time really the work of the original artist, or? Are the restored paintings by Tintoretto and Titian really the same ones that the authors painted or are they modified, as with sculpture? Boito preferred the truth to the interpretation of another truth, and he added that he feared more the ambition of wanting to stand out above the work of art, to ignorance, since one who does not know and does not intervene, causes less harm than the audacious who reinterprets and eliminates the original paint.

We could place ourselves in the time of Boito, when the instruments and techniques that allow current intervention treatments without altering the original painting were still unknown, and when the criteria of restoration force us to conserve the work of art, leaving testimonies of the process and the different actions, which permit the identification of the original elements and of the intervention treatments.

The third and last section of Camillo Boito’s lecture deals with restoration of architecture. We should remember that, in this sense, he: “proposes a theory of restoration that has as its first axiom the preeminence of the historical aspect and the safeguard of the documentary authenticity of the work of art”¹⁷ (González, 1999: 229). From the intervention treatments made in the Coliseum (1807-1827) and on the arch of Titus (1819-1824) by Giuseppe Valadier, in collaboration with Raffaele Stern, the concept of restoration acquired a new means of solving the matter of the incorporation of new elements into ancient structures. Boito would return to these criteria when he mentioned the ways to evidence intervention treatments on historical buildings (*IV Congresso degli ingegneri ed architetti*, 1883, Rome).



ARCH OF TITUS. Etching, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, ca. 1760. *Image: Wikimedia Commons.*

¹⁶ Original quotation: “Fermarsi a tempo; e qui sta la saviezza: contentarsi del meno possibile.”

¹⁷ Original quotation: “propone una teoría de la restauración que tiene como primer axioma la preeminencia de la instancia histórica y la salvaguarda de la autenticidad documental de la obra de arte”.

What Boito proposed was to conserve the authenticity and history, even if objects were not in their complete state or if they had already been treated. The idea of preserving the object so that it could be conserved for future generations encompassed excessive or erroneous interventions; for Boito, it was better to have an incomplete torso, such as the Hercules of the Belvedere, whose strength lies in its incompleteness, or a sincere but damaged architecture, rather than a barbaric intervention. As an example, he mentioned Venice, where the complete interventions that were being made at that time were modifying the aspect of the city. The doubts presented by Boito consisted of explaining that if monuments stayed untouched, they would probably collapse over time:

When [...] the mud dragged by rivers will have buried the lagoons and the fevers will have expelled the last of the poor inhabitants and all the houses will have collapsed, and over the vast spaces full of weeds [...] the remains of some ancient buildings [...] will remain standing. The church of the Frari will show its enormous naves; from afar, the solid dome of La Salute will dominate, impassible; the more distant temple of San Giovanni e Paolo will be a pile of ruins [...] and only the Colleoni will remain intact [...], but the ornaments of the Hospital, so fine, so delicate will have to be searched for among the rubble¹⁸ (Boito, 2017: 27).

In the face of such a desolating panorama of an imagined ruin, he lamented; he said that it would be necessary to faithfully replace or reproduce the lost parts and to keep the ancient ones in a place where they could be studied.

A romantic idea runs through the thoughts of Camillo Boito, not only in his writings, but also in his works. We should remember that he built the retirement home for musicians in an Italian neo-Gothic style. The work was sponsored by Giuseppe Verdi, who was his friend, and where the latter is buried. Eclecticism, a fashionable period among architects, also allowed history to be known; the reflection of the past in forms adapted into the works of architecture facilitated the conservation and interpretation of the restoration project; in the same manner as Viollet-le-Duc in France, the study of the architecture of the past reinforced the idea of nationalism.

In Italy in 1870, a few years before Camillo Boito's fundamental writings on restoration, Italy's unification had barely been achieved; this romantic and libertarian idea, which is also explained in Verdi's work, was fundamental for the expression of his theory and for the safeguard of that history, which was now part of the new Italian State. In 1882, a group of architects and painters joined the text on *The future of monuments in Venice*:

Let us not delude ourselves, it is impossible, like raising a dead man, to restore anything that was great and beautiful in architecture [...] [if there is] a need to destroy [...], demolish the building, scatter the stones, make them lime or ballasted from them [...], but do it honestly and do not put a lie in the place of truth¹⁹ (Boito, 2017: 28).

¹⁸ Original quotation: "Quando [...] la belletta portata dai fiumi avrà interrato le lagune, e le febbri avranno cacciato via gli ultimi pitocchi abitatori, e le case saranno tutte crollate, e sugli ampi spazi erbosi [...] si alzeranno tuttavia [...] gli avanzi di alcuni vetusti edifici. La chiesa dei Frari mostrerà sventrate le sue navi enormi; di lontano la salda cupola della Salute dominerà impassibile; più distante il tempio de' Santi Giovanni e Paolo sarà un mucchio di rovine [...] e resterà intatto il Colleoni sul piedestallo informe, ma gli ornati dell'Ospedale, così fini, così gentili, bisognerà cercarli fra le macerie [...]."

¹⁹ Original quotation: "Non c'illudiamo, è impossibile, impossibile come far rialzare un morto, il restaurar cosa qualsiasi, che fu grande e bella in architettura... [...] può venire la necessità di restaurare. [...], gettare giù l'edificio, disperdetene le pietre, fate di esse zavorra o calce, [...]; ma fate ciò onestamente, e non ponete una menzogna al posto del vero."

The idea of nationalism can only exist by showing the architecture of the past in its splendor, a ruin only means loss and mourning; if history is involved, it cannot be deformed, it must be done by informing the truth.

Conscious of the picturesque adaptation of Venice, Boito accused the architecture counterfeiters, and warned that it was important to respect the right to authenticity. In this matter, Boito and Ruskin share points of view regarding respect for the monument and the importance of not altering it; it was preferable to accept its loss, rather than imitate the missing or demolished parts. Doubt is also among his principles. Especially at the end of the 19th century, changes in the criteria of restoration, between stylistic restoration and the conservation of ruins, came into play; he confessed that he did not feel free of contradictions. He affirmed that the work of a restorer was like that of the surgeon: "(If the) human body had a need for surgical procedures, not everyone believes that it would be better to see a relative or a friend pass away, rather than accepting that a finger be cut, or that he ends up with a wooden leg"²⁰ (Boito, 2017: 28). Something similar will be said by Marco Dezzi Bardeschi:

... the two fundamental duties of the architect are to preserve and to innovate, that is to say: to respect the testimony of the past and to create a new resource to be transmitted to the future... personally I prefer an impure material document, but with the sign of time or history... It is necessary to confront the contrast (...) established by the two concepts of permanence and mutation, two opposed ways of relating to reality (...) and which represent two conflicting and antithetical options, but both necessary for our own equilibrium²¹ (Dezzi Bardeschi, 2004: 164-165).



GRAN CANAL, VENICE, 1960. Postcard. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

²⁰ Original quotation: "[se] il fragile corpo umano non avesse bisogno dei sussidi chirurgici; ma non tutti credono che sia meglio veder morire il parente o l'amico piuttosto che fargli tagliare un dito o portare una gamba di legno."

²¹ Original quotation: "...i due doveri fondamentali dell'architetto sono di conservare e innovare, vale a dire: rispettare la testimonianza del passato e creare una nuova risorsa per trasmettere il futuro ... Personalmente preferisco un documento materiale impuro, ma con il segno dei tempi o della storia ... è necessario affrontare l'opposizione [...] che si stabilisce tra i due concetti di permanenza e mutazione, due modi opposti di relazionarsi con la realtà [...] e rappresentare due opzioni contrastanti e antitetiche, ma entrambe necessarie per il nostro stesso equilibrio..."

Boito was ahead of contemporary criteria or, rather, he initiated the theory of modern restoration by looking at the monument as if it was a document; as Victor Hugo said, he established that any change in it must be explicit and documented, so as not to call it a deception. But he also drew on the arguments made by other theoreticians and thinkers, including Prosper Mérimée, who in 1834 succeeded Louis Vitet as General Inspector of Historical Monument. He quoted Mérimée in his text:

...in restoration, the first and inflexible principle is not to innovate, even when one is driven to novelty by the laudable attempt to complete or embellish. It is necessary to leave incomplete and imperfect everything that is incomplete and imperfect. It is not necessary to correct irregularities nor to align deviations, because those deviations, irregularities and defects of symmetry are historical facts full of interest, which often provide the archaeological criteria to discover a period, a school, a symbolic idea. No additions or deletions²² (Boito, 2017: 30).

Finally, Boito established two principles that would be taken up later in the *Athens Charter* (1931), the *Carta italiana del restauro* (1932) and the *Venice Charter* (1964), especially articles 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the latter, and in other norms and recommendations on modern restoration:

1. *It is necessary to do the impossible, it is necessary to perform miracles to preserve in the monument its old, artistic and picturesque aspect.*
2. *It is necessary that integrations, if they are indispensable, and additions, if they cannot be avoided, show not to be old works, but to be works of today²³ (Boito, 2017: 30).*

In the last part of his text he warned pretenders and spoliators of works of art, antiquarians who removed from buildings the ornaments, furniture and objects that complement the architecture, in order to resell them; traffickers who trade with art even by means of counterfeit, and he exclaimed that it takes a love of the monuments and their past greatness, in order to respect them and understand them in their integrity.

Boito's critiques initiated a scientific path towards restoration that warned against falsifying and insisted upon a knowledge of history and an awareness of the existence of limits in restoration. Without a respect for buildings, there is a risk of falling into supposition and deceit.

The literary talent of Boito and his discursive eloquence he not only clearly explained how to view and treat monuments, but he tried to create a language to interpret restoration, explaining what should be intervened and how it should be intervened. This analysis initiated a third path for restoration that included knowledge of the history of the building, the moment it was created and its interventions over time, which give it the appearance with which it has reached us. Boito emphasized that intervention has its limits and that it depends on our historical and architectural knowledge to extend those limits, in order to be able to give an interpretation as accurate as possible. Boito sensed a dialectic approach in the way of appreciating a monument, which he then explained.

²² Original quotation: "...in fatto di restauri, il primo e inflessibile principio è questo, di non innovare, quand'anche si fosse spinti alla innovazione dal lodevole intento di compiere o di abbellire. Conviene lasciare incompleto e imperfetto tutto ciò che si trova incompleto e imperfetto. Non bisogna permettersi di correggere le irregolarità, nè di allineare le deviazioni, perchè le deviazioni, le irregolarità, i difetti di simmetria sono fatti storici pieni d'interesse, i quali spesso forniscono i criterii archeologici per riscontrare un'epoca, una scuola, una idea simbolica. Nè aggiunte, nè soppressioni."

²³ Original quotation: "1. Bisogna fare l'impossibile, bisogna fare miracoli per conservare al monumento il suo vecchio aspetto artistico e pittoresco; 2. Bisogna che i compimenti, se sono indispensabili, e le aggiunte, se non si possono scansare, mostrino, non di essere opere antiche, ma di essere opere d'oggi."

In creating this language for restoration, Boito explored the differences in interventions, both in techniques and in materials, justifying what is to be restored and how it is to be restored; this literary view places the monument within the context of its past history and of its future life, and by distinguishing restoration from interpretation, creates an explicit language in the monument.

Camillo Boito suggested to restoration architects that they should understand and read the monument and its authors adequately, through the interventions that have taken place in them. The knowledge of the constructive elements, of styles, artistic periods and influences is necessary to achieve a correct interpretation of the intervention; this was known as philological restoration, that is, the structure and evolution of the monument, its heritage and cultural legacy.

Boito's literary inquisitiveness also extended to other horizons, and less to architectural themes, such as the short stories and novels. One of the best known was *Senso*, included in his work *Storielle vane*, which successfully describes the events of a marriage composed of a young woman and an old and feeble husband, as well as the expected results. In 1954, it was adapted for the movie screenplay by Luchino Visconti.

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