

Theory and History of Conservation

Calogero Bellanca



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of Conservation

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PART I

Calogero Bellanca

with contributions by

Susana Mora Alonso-Muñoyerro and Ignacio Mora Moreno



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In this volume have collaborated specially these architect:
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Foto di Calogero Bellanca.

Dedicated to
GIOVANNI CARBONARA

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Fourth volume

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Chapter 5

Followers of Stylistic Restoration in Italy Some examples

The different theories of Restoration saw an almost simultaneous formulation in different European countries in the 19th century, however in delving into the history of the discipline it was seen that many intuitions attributed to some can be traced back to others who preceded them.

We can remember Quatremere de Quincy and his definition of the *Dictionnaire* (1832), and again Didron's well-known axiom (1845), Ruskin's aphorism n. 31, in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and others. It can also be remembered that in Viollet-le-Duc itself, in some passages, there are convergences with Ruskin.

From a doctrinal point of view, the figure of Carlo Cattaneo and the role of the magazine "il Politecnico" emerge in Italy. From the first issue of 1839, with an essay on the Restoration of some pre-existences in Milano, one can read an early attempt to recognize the "supremacy of historical data over aesthetic ..." for which non selective intervention, much less artistic, was shoreable.

A few years after Camillo Boito's enunciations of 1883, we find Alfredo Melani and his statements in 1899. In the letter: "restoring should be synonymous with conserving, fortifying, not restoring and unifying...".

But despite these statements, in the second half of the 19th century we find a wide diffusion of interventions in which we can read the epigones of Stylistic Restoration. Numerous examples can be found throughout Italy on the liberation of medieval church from baroque additions and trasformations, considered at that time to be worthless.

Alfredo Cesar Reis Freire de Andrade (1839-1925) conducted many restorations in Piemonte, Aosta valley and Liguria. In particular we remember: that of the castle of Fénis, already in ruins and restored by him in all its parts, the other of the "Sacra di San Michele" in the Susa valley, in Turin the Palazzo Madama and the construction of the medieval village, in the Valentino park for the 1884 exhibition.

Federico Berchet (1830-1909) reconstructs the Fondaco dei Turchi in Venice, while in Murano, he intervenes on the church of Santa Maria and Donato. In Bologna, another expression of stylistic restoration, intervenes Rubbiani in Palazzo delle Mercanzie, Palazzo Re Enzo, Palazzo del Podestà and San Francesco. With the restoration of the basilica some chapels were demolished to bring the tombs of the Glossators back into view.

An intervention that Rubbiani considers essential to trace the purity and sincerity of the document. He connects to Viollet and his rules of stylistic reintegration. In fact, dealing with French culture means facilitating stylistic remakes and additions.

So, to remember other examples we recall the stylistic projects of Carlo Maciachini (1818-1899), for different churches in Milano: San Simpliciano, San Marco and Santa Maria del Carmine.

Along this same line, also in Napoli, Federico Travaglini had intervened in San Domenico Maggiore and in other pre-existing churches. In addition, to recomposing the stylistic unity, he pays attention to the decorations.

Errico Alvino designed and built the new façade of the Duomo in Napoli (1880), eliminating the eighteenth-century additions and designing the authentic Gothic portals with a new Gothic architecture punctuated by pointed arches, cusps, pinnacles.

An attitude that is found in Pietro Selvatico in his operational activity, in particular in Trento for the solution of the façade of the church of San Pietro (1848-1850).

In Southern Italy many interventions are found: “improvements”, liberations, stylistic completations, mostly implemented by eliminating baroque character. In Sicily, there have been many restorations in detail on pre-existing medieval churches. In Palermo, the Martorana, San Cataldo, as well as Trinity of Delia, even in the first decades of the century after the Messina’s earthquake, the interventions on the Messina cathedrals met the criteria of stylistic unity.

It seems necessary to remember that the protection services is going through a phase of normalization with the measures launched between 1875 and 1880.

I will like to excuse me, because is impossible to explain the great number of stylistic restorations in Italy.

5.1 Roma, Pantheon

The two bell towers of the Pantheon had been added in the Seventeenth century, at the time of Alexander VII (1627). The monument as a church needed bell towers which remained until 1885 (Fig. 1-2).

The work desired by Fea, the demolition of the oven in Via della Palombella, was begun on 20 July 1882 on the initiative of Minister Baccelli and will continue until 1885, also involving the ancient sacristy which was demolished as well as the two bell towers¹.

At the moment, the so called superior archaeological and architectural value prevailed over an addition, even if was mad by Maderno, with the collaboration of young Francesco Borromini.

Our generation would have preserved both the documentary and artistic value, and because it expressed a need of the time.



Fig. 1. Roma, Pantheon. Drawing with two towers bell, by Carlo Maderno. (Private Collection CB)



Fig.2. Roma, Pantheon. After "restoration" in the last years of XIX century. (CB 1991)

5.2 Firenze, Santa Croce

In reality in Firenze, the completion in style of the new façade first of Santa Croce and then of Santa Maria del Fiore is underway. In Santa Croce, Niccolò Matas (1798-1872) replicates Gothic form and styles that develop a fragment of a marble facing still present on the front, believed to be part of a project by Simone del Pollaiuolo. Accordingly to the ancient imposes the Gothic choice that the architect identified in the definitive project (1854), articulated in a tricuspid solution, then transformed to adapt it to the Arnolfian canons of the church. A choice that the architect from Ancona when he was commissioned to draw up the project for the “facciate” of S. Maria del Fiore (1842), which also based on the same stylistic character.

Santa Croce had its neo-gothic new bell tower designed by Gaetano Baccani in 1847. Matas completed it, in 1868, “in the Florentine Gothic Church”.

In detail, the use of the two-tone facing is resumed with the white marbles squares and underlined by the dark bands, but the design reveals the academic invention and mechanical workmanship (Figg. 3-5).

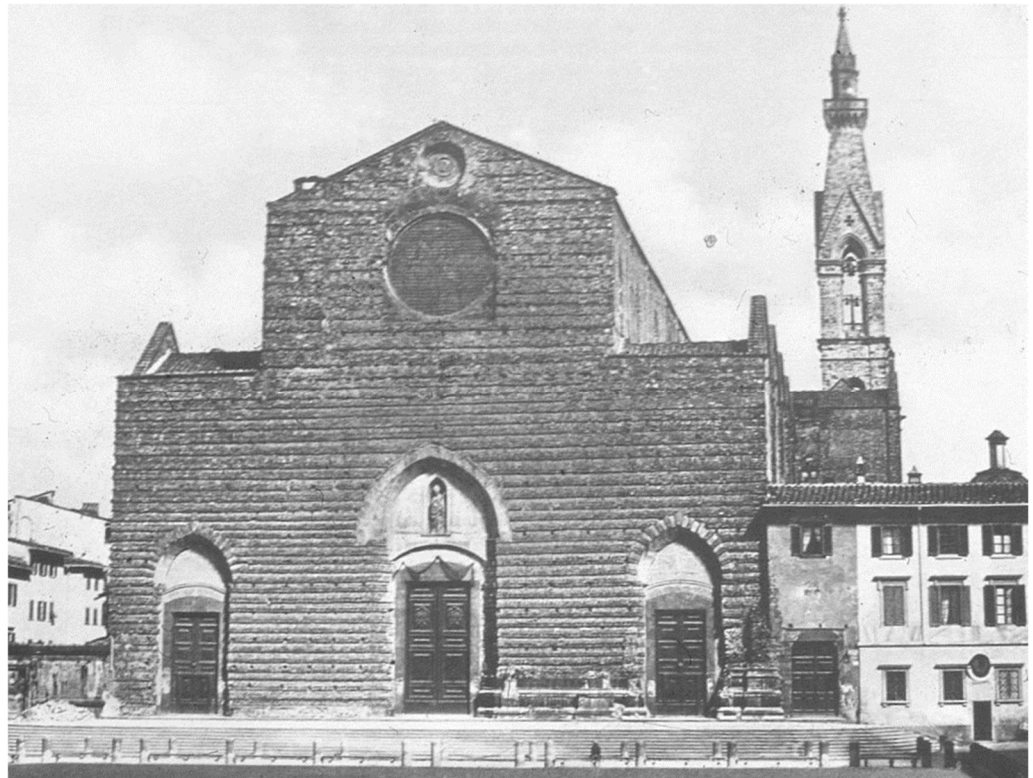


Fig. 3. Firenze, Santa Croce, before the restoration.

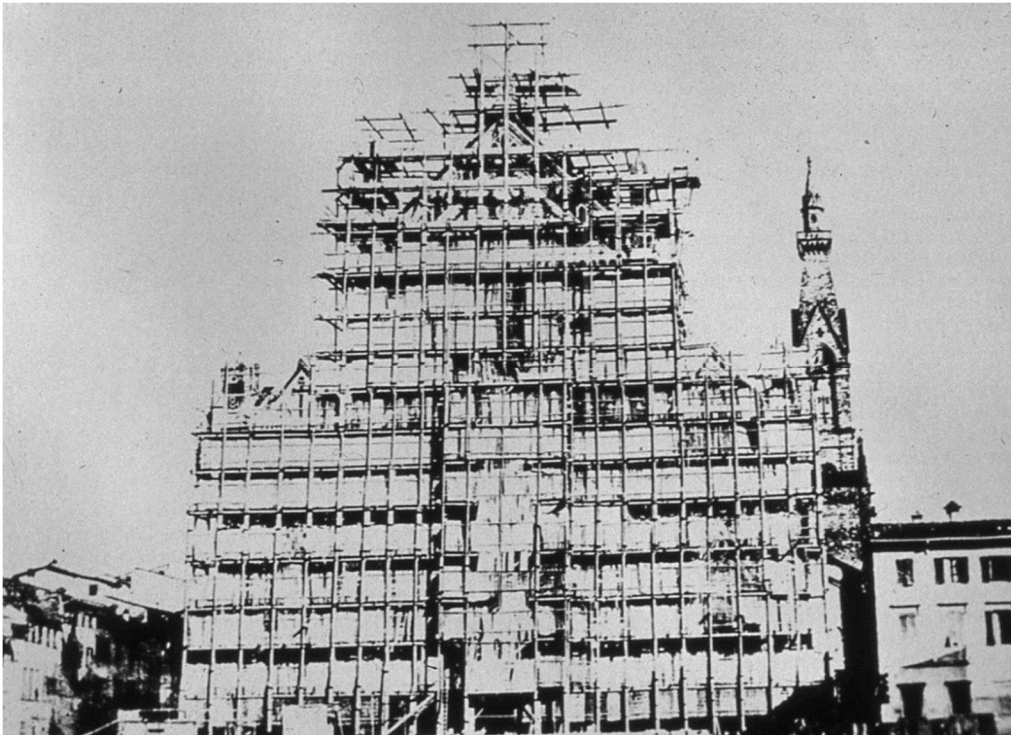


Fig. 4. Firenze, Santa Croce, during the stylistic restoration. (Private collection CB)



Fig. 5. Firenze, Santa Croce, after the addition of the new façade. (CAL 2024)

5.3 Firenze, Santa Maria del Fiore

A choice that the architect from Ancona when he was commissioned to draw up the project for the “facciate” of S. Maria del Fiore (1842), which also based on the same stylistic character.

While the solution for the façade of Santa Maria del Fiore was much more complex.

It was created by Emilio De Fabris between 1876 and 1883, after three different competitions (1860, 1864, 1867) and numerous variations and indecisions which had occupied various commissions for over fifteen years. It seems appropriate to point out that Pietro Selvatico states that “when a pre-existence in the majority of its parts present a certain character, reason dictates that its façade conforms with that character”².

In 1864 Viollet-le-Duc was also asked for his opinion, but he was busy at Pierrefonds at the time and apologized for not being able to participate. He participates in the debate by sending opinions (in 1865 and 1866), he also recommends the medieval solution and suggest adapting to Arnolfo’s ideas.

The greatest dispute was over the top part, which could be tricuspid as in the cathedrals Siena and Orvieto, and as Matas had done in Santa Croce or with a spire on the central part and the inclined lateral slopes inclined or flat with horizontal frames. The solution chosen was the latter with a timid hint of a tympanum in the centre. The façade had remained unfinished and had been plastered and decorated with painted architecture in Seventeenth century, until in the 19th century these additions seemed jarring with the Arnolfian architecture of bell tower, and the competition to restore stylistic unity began (Fig. 6-7).



Fig. 6. Firenze, Santa Maria del Fiore. The unfinished façade in XIX century. (Private collection CB)



Fig. 7. Firenze, Santa Maria del Fiore. After a competition E. De Fabris in 1868 realized a stylistic restoration. (CB 1992)

5.4 Amalfi, Cathedral

Alvino himself, together with Dalla Corte, also reshaped the façade of the Amalfi cathedral between 1880 and 1894, in the so-called Amalfi style, replacing the partially collapsed Baroque addition.

Under the Eighteenth-century addition, it was not clear what remained of the medieval period; the tympanum and the central part of the large window had been destroyed.

What does not seem justifiable is the solution of the central “portico”.

Here, the central arch has been raised with the insertion of a pair of columns above the old ones to support a new pointed arch.

In summary the Amalfi cathedral is an example of the artistic culture that was learned in the academies and in some manuals for composing in the different styles in the different Italian regions.

The revival of traditions, in this period linked to the Gothic revival, proposes actions aimed at strengthening in “medieval” nature of pre-existence through the re-proposal of forms derived from ancient models (Figg. 8-9).



Fig. 8. Amalfi, Duomo, with the baroque additions. (In P. Benoist, *Amalfi, the cathedral*, lithography Le Mercier, Paris 1850).

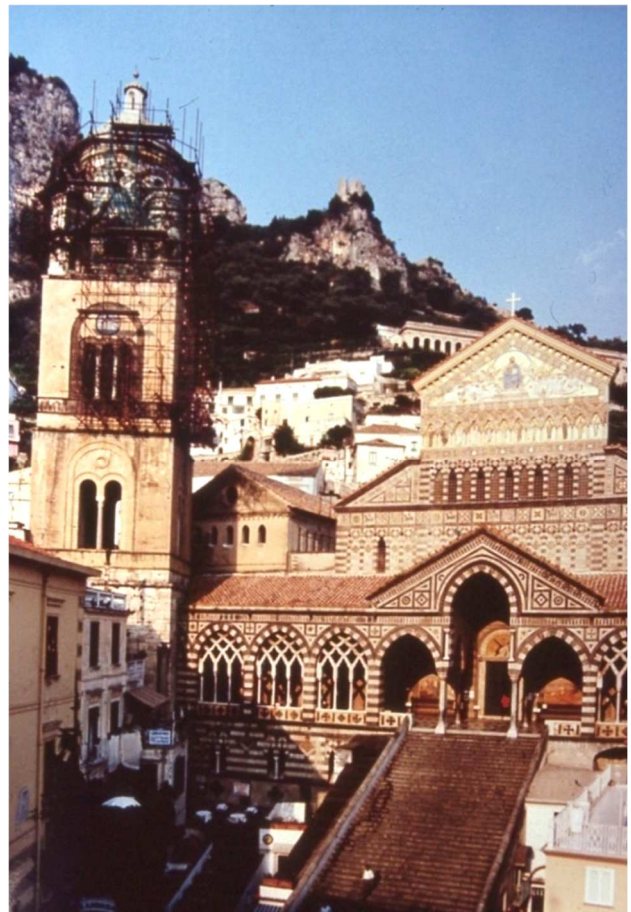


Fig. 9. Amalfi, Duomo, after restoration by Errico Alvino in unity of style. (CB 1988)

5.5 Roma, Santa Maria in Cosmedin

The façade in its Eighteenth-century composition by G. Sardi (1718) takes up the widespread of the continuity of the present with the past in many monuments. G. B. Giovenale wrote: “The problem of restoration has not yet found its solution in a single formula. We will therefore gladly refrain from establishing ... principles ... The façade, once Sardi’s baroque screen was demolished at the top and the plaster was peeled off at the bottom, was recognized that the roofing of the small rooms superimposed on the portico no longer occupied the ancient position, but had been raised”³.

S. Maria in Cosmedin, the current façade is the result of the “liberation intervention”, implemented according to stylistic criteria by G. B. Giovenale between 1892 and 1899. Recent studies in reference to Giovenale tend to demonstrate that it is a historical restoration rather than a stylistic one, as the monument is not as it should have been, but as it actually appeared at a certain date in 1123.

“... the final result of various compromises is that, for the interior, it appears to us as the result of a much more modern conception of restoration than it is in reality, as a coherent application of Scientific principles”⁴.

A recent intervention (has further modified the connections and joints, erasing what remained of the medieval character.

The recent result highlights a classic case of “old brand new”, to resume statements already proposed since the eighties of the last century, when some attitudes towards the treatments of surface in Central Europe were realized (Fig. 10-11).



Fig. 10. Roma, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, before Giovanni Battista Giovenale works (from G. B. GIOVENALE, *La basilica di S. Maria in Cosmedin*, Roma 1927).

In this photo dating back to the end of 19th century we can see the baroque addition, by G. Sardi, 1718.



Fig. 11 Roma, Santa Maria in Cosmedin, now with the return to the unity of style. (TC 2024)

5.6 Palermo, “la Martorana”

The set of attitudes towards pre-existences during the 19th century, particularly in the seventies and eighties, reflects in the microcosm of the Martorana, some Italian and European restoration positions conceived both stylistic restorations and as conservation of architectural stratifications. Even if the restoration in the due style, carried out by Patricolo with the elimination of the baroque decorations from the nucleus of the Norman age, will prevail, it seems appropriate to recall a little-known but effective writing in respect of the continuity of making architecture, by Ernesto Renan, forerunner of Anatole France, who in 1876 stated that what can we say about the Martorana, that “what can we say about the Martorana that little masterpiece of a church with its Arabic and Greek inscriptions, which has bizarrely become chapels and religious women, who without much altering the primitive parts, adapted them to their uses by means of additions of a very pretentious style, yet pleasant in its simplicity?”. The question of restoration arises here in all its clarity⁵ (Fig. 12-15).

Fig. 12. Palermo, la Martorana, façade before the stylistic restoration, realized from “Genio Civile” in 1874 for the demolition of the “Altana” and the Baroque additions. (C. BELLANCA, *Niccolò Palma a Santa Maria dell’Ammiraglio (La Martorana) a Palermo*, in “Storia dell’Architettura”, IX, 1-2, 1986, pp. 127)

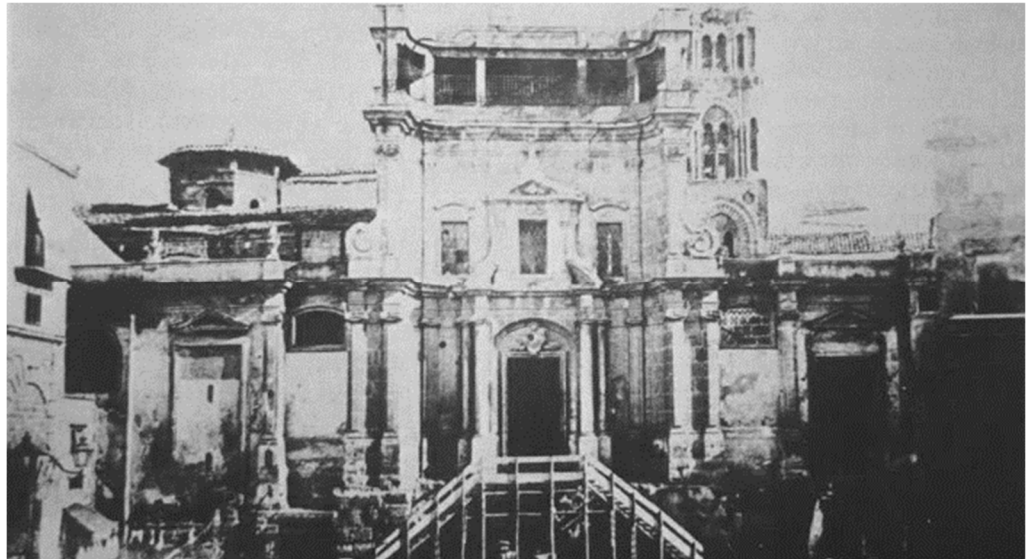


Fig. 13. Palermo, la Martorana, general view of the northern front from Bellini square, with the Ammiraglio’s church, and on the right the S. Cataldo’s one. (CB 1985)



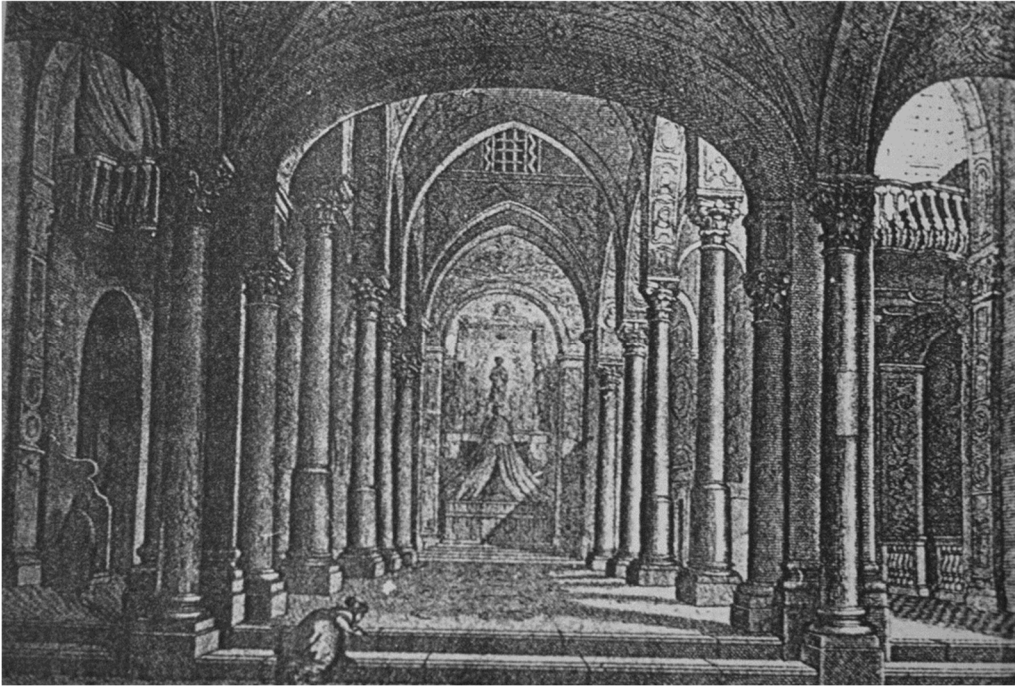


Fig. 14. Palermo, Martorana, internal view during 18th century. We can see the different baroque decorations and the ecclesiastical furnishings in the “Cappellone” designed by Paolo Amato (1683-1686). In the space under the choir we can glimpse some frescoes by Guglielmo Borremans and two side small choirs for the Benedictine nuns. Finally, it should be noted that the drawing was created before the insertion of the baroque floor of 1738 by Niccolò Palma.

(Private Collection CB)



Fig. 15. Palermo, la Martorana, internal view of the Norman age space, with floors with Byzantine insertions and reuse of ancient. The ancient Norman apse is replaced by the large baroque chapel. (CB 1990)

Messina, Cathedral

The most relevant episode is the reconstruction of the church after the 1908 earthquake. Regarding the façade, eliminate the additions including the baroque completion. The architectural part of the reconstruction was entrusted to Francesco Valenti, while Aristide Giannelli was responsible for static aspects. The discussion focused on the dual possibility of preserving the remains by pre-existence, a new factory or, alternatively, restoring the “original” form. The latter solution prevails and was implemented by Valenti, in a true complete “renovation” project.

Finally, to comply with the new seismic regulations made mandatory in 1908, the new load-bearing structure designed by Giannelli is made up of closed reinforced concrete frames hidden in the walls (Fig. 16-18).



Fig. 16. Messina, Cathedral. Before the 1908 earthquake. (From S. Boscarino, 1987, p. 518)

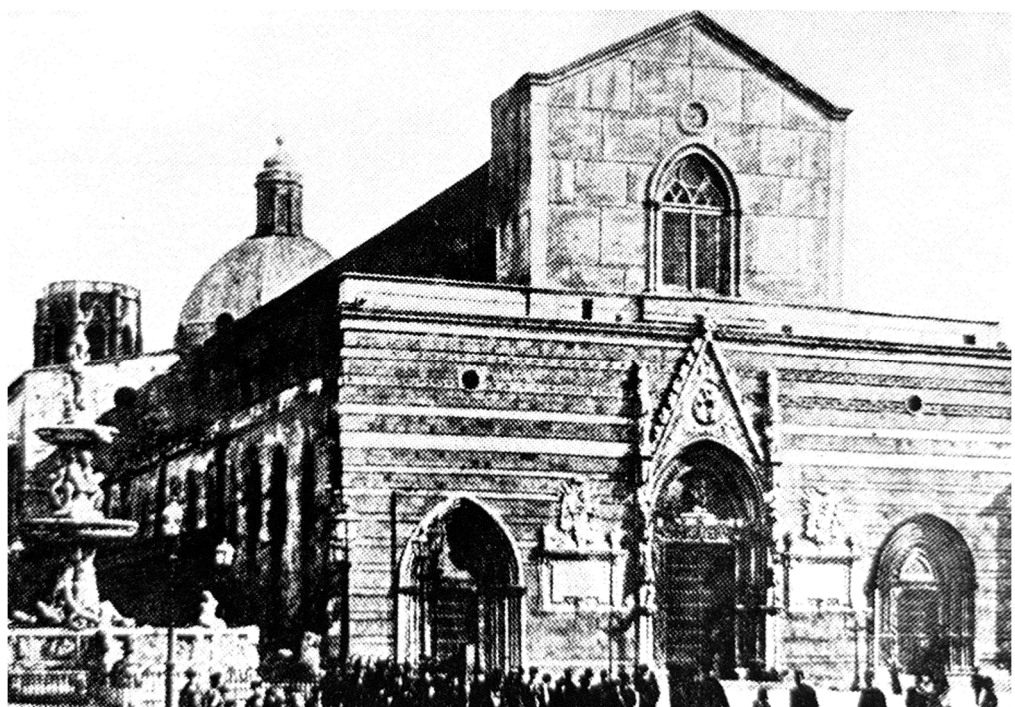


Fig. 17. Messina, Cathedral. Façade before the 1908 earthquake, after the restoration works by Patricolo. (From S. Boscarino, 1987, p. 518)



Fig. 18. Messina, the Cathedral after the reconstruction. (CB 2018)

Final considerations

Throughout the XIX century, Viollet's school had a prevalence in contemporary men way of thinking. It must be recognized that Ruskin's theories lived beyond his death and echoed today for the interventions on pre-existences.

The most rigorous method acquired by the Roman architects, in the restoration of ancient monuments were confirmed in the first middle of the 19th century, in Italy. We can talk about completions in style and about the so-called liberation restoration.

The stylistic culture that was learned in the Academies and in Manuals provided the architects with the necessary language to compose in different styles, even with regional differences.

We agree with different authors of *La parabola del Restauro stilistico nella rilettura di sette casi emblematici*, Milano, 1994.

About Napoli, see also the well-known volume of R. Picone with introduction of Stella Casiello, *Il restauro e la questione dello "stile", il secondo Ottocento nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, Napoli 2012.

The design component prevailed, which gave primacy to the architectural composition not to respect the authenticity, and not to the coincidence between the "original state", and the ideal state. Later in Italy, when the monument's administration had developed, the figure of a restorer-conservator assert itself, more careful in defining the intervention criteria.

Notes

All photos are by the author (CB), by Tommaso Ciciarello (TC) and by Cecilia Antonini Lanari (CAL) except when indicated.

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