The polychrome surfaces of Apulia's monuments between the 19th and 20th centuries.

The contribution of color to the spread of neo-medievalism and the creation of national identity

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ABSTRACT

As is known from studies published in recent years, starting from the second half of the 19th century, profound transformations affected the main monuments of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy. In this revolutionary climate, the definition of national identity was pursued through cultural actions, including the completion of restoration works of religious buildings. Are revived the characteristics of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, characterised in some cases by polychrome decorative surfaces and two-colour marble cladding. This triggered a process of rediscovery of the chromatic and ornamental aspects and medieval stylistic features, which was realised in the representative restorations of the neo-medieval period and in the design of neo-Romanesque and neo-Gothic buildings.

Within this complex historical framework of artistic renewal are the reasons that motivated the choice of a retrospective trend and the creation of a style, the reverberations of which also manifested themselves in Apulia, taking on a regional character. Real campaigns were inaugurated to eliminate Baroque decorations from monuments in order to rediscover or reinvent the "Apulian Romanesque". Sometimes this was done by simply removing the rich 17th and 18th century decorations. At other times, modernisation and "embellishment" operations were carried out with the creation of stuccoes and decorative plasterwork, now disengaged from structural logic but simulating polychrome and two-colour walls. They were made by alternating different materials or marble coverings of different colours.

This paper aims to examine the role of the colour of architectural surfaces in the creation of regional and national identity. It first illustrates the well-known "embellishments" of Apulian medieval churches designed by Federico Travaglini in the Cathedrals of Altamura and Troia. It continues with an analysis of the decorations created in the Cathedral of Conversano and in lesser-known buildings such as the rural Church of San Giorgio Martire in Bari. It concludes with a presentation of the decorations made in the neo-medieval churches of San Giuseppe and Immacolata in Bari and Sacro Cuore in Brindisi, built in the 20th century. The aim of this paper is to illustrate the extent of the spread of an architectural expression that was inaugurated in the second half of the 19th century and came to maturity in the first decades of the 20th century.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, a renewed interest has marked studies and research on the artistic currents of the 19th century, which had been negatively judged in the international context since the 1920s. Since the 1970s, scholars' attention has focused on neo-medievalism and the neo-Renaissance: between the post-unification phase and the Great War, these artistic expressions contributed to the foundation of a new cultural hegemony that made it possible to overcome the many regional identities and to create the Kingdom of Italy characterised by a definite nationalist sentiment. It was in this half-century, marked by the debate on national style and regional identity (Neri, 1997), that the propensity toward the recovery of the past was manifested through the neo-Medieval restoration work promoted by Pietro Selvatico Estense. At the same time, Camillo Boito promoted a versatile design approach following the principles of Neo-Romanesque and the models of Lombard architecture (Mangone, 2015). Studies on medieval architecture and the writings of the two authors contribute to the diffusion on the national territory of ideas and models from Germany, France and England characterizing European Romanticism and reworked by Italian neo-Medievalism (Zucconi, 1997). The Middle Ages thus become the reference era from the ethical point of view, the era of highest expression of moral and social values that takes on a strong symbolic connotation (Zucconi, 1997; Neri, 1997). «Taking the Middle Ages as a model therefore means rediscovering one's national roots and, at the same time, giving religious depth back to architecture» (Zucconi, 1997, p. 29).

2. In search of national identity: the rediscovery of the "colored Middle Ages"

Internationally, the intention of overcoming regional specificities and creating the official national style of the Kingdom of Italy is pursued through the adoption of neo-Renaissance in the realization of the public architecture representative of the new State in Rome Capital and in the palaces of the Province and Prefecture of different cities (Neri, 1997; Mangone, 2015). Neo-medievalism contributes to the creation of a national style by becoming the representative style of Christianity and place of worship. «Gothic is considered the "style" most suitable for Churches by all Nineteenth-century critics, starting with the diffusion in Italy of Chateaubriand's volume *Le génie du Christianisme*, the true manifesto of early French medievalism, to which the position of Pietro Selvatico Estense is directly linked» (Picone, 1996, p. 59). Thus, numerous churches, new convents - often refounded by previously suppressed religious orders - and neo-Romanesque and neo-Gothic cemeteries were built in the

Kingdom of Italy. They are differentiated by the specific material, formal and chromatic peculiarities of the plural regional identities that overlap the neo-Medieval style (Neri, 1997). «Each region was going to choose "its" Middle Ages, that is, the one that in regional or even local history had played a decisive role» (Billi, 2014, p. 2).

2.1. *The French contribution to the rediscovery of the "coloured Middle Ages" in Italy*

It is France that holds the record for rediscovering the polychromy of architectural surfaces, contradicting the belief that had matured over the centuries that medieval buildings of worship were uniformly white. A new sensibility aimed at the preservation of the most representative monuments is manifested by the new French preservation organizations in the phase following the revolutionary vandalistic destruction. Alexandre Lenoir, Prosper Mérimée and Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc rediscover medieval polychrome surfaces hidden by white plasterwork created in later centuries (Fachechi, 2014; Fachechi, 2016; Pollini, 2017). «It became clear then, in Nineteenth-century France, that between Antiquity and the Middle Ages there was a kind of "polychrome link", that is, that if Antiquity had combined form and color in its art, the Middle Ages had continued and enhanced this union, reaffirming the unity between architecture, sculpture and painting and finding in color an element of identity. Thus it was that many architectures were restored and freed from all those superfetations that had made them unrecognizable over the centuries, they were freed from the unreal whiteness, from the pale semblance that neoclassicism had given them, which had praised absolute white [...]» (Fachechi, 2014, p. 100).

Certainly, the revival of medieval polychromatic characters asserted itself in the Italian and European art world with the rediscovery of the original coloured surfaces documented with studies and illustrations. This is what emerges from the drawings and watercolours implemented by the *pensionnaires*, Eugène Viollet le Duc and Jakob Ignaz Hittorff during their Italian visits. The latter two visited the Basilica of Assisi, the Cathedrals of Messina, Florence, Genova, Monreale and Siena (Savorra, 2005; Billi, 2014; Varagnoli, 2017; Pollini, 2017). On several occasions, Viollet le Duc has stated that, during his travels in Italy, he observed medieval monuments more closely than classical ones, dwelling more on the decorative rather than the structural aspects (Romeo 2013; Varagnoli, 2017, p. 114). Viollet le Duc's influence on the development of Italian stylistic restoration was considerable. «Until the moment of national unification (1861), Viollet's influence in Italy was part of the more general habituation to neo-medieval models that were spreading throughout Europe. However, Italian adherence appears limited to decorative and all in all marginal

aspects and, compared to other European countries, the codification of medieval styles is less rigorous» (Varagnoli, 2017, p. 117). In the post-unification phase, Viollet le Duc's influence is more noticeable, having been consulted several times on the completion of medieval monuments that contributed to the spread of polychrome architecture in the Kingdom of Italy. They are implemented, for example, by Niccolò Matas on the unfinished bichromatic façade of the medieval Florentine Church of Santa Croce, and it is no coincidence that Viollet le Duc was consulted on the occasion of the competition for the completion of the polychromatic façade of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, won by Emilio De Fabris (Varagnoli, 2017, p. 119). In the last quarter of the 19th century, similar interventions were carried out in other regional contexts. This is attested by the Lombard Churches of San Simpliciano, San Marco, Sant'Eustorgio and Santa Maria del Carmine in Lombardy - curated by Carlo Maciachini -, the Church of San Donato in Genova, restored by Alfredo d'Andrade, and the Church of San Francesco in Bologna reconstructed in its presumed original form by Alfonso Rubbiani. The reconstruction of the façade of Amalfi Cathedral is instead entrusted to Errico Alvino (Fachechi, 2014; Fachechi, 2016; Varagnoli, 2017; Savorra, 2018). All these interventions testify to a real phenomenon that spread in Italy between the 19th and 20th centuries. They are examples of the reinterpretation of the pre-existing representations of the political power of the Middle Ages and were implemented in function of the creation of national identity, with a clear intent to educate Italians. Thus, the moral and cultural re-appropriation of heritage anticipated the monumental one (Savorra, 2018). «However, for those who were about to put their mark on millennia-old religious architecture, the first step was to identify and understand the origins of such "Italian" monuments, as well as to determine "what" identity could represent Italy and the nascent consciousness of Italians» (Savorra, 2018, p. 16). Thus, next to the real Middle Ages arises an imagined Middle Ages that aims to affirm the continuity of the Nineteenth century from the glorious past centuries (Mangone, 2018). «The filtering action of the Nineteenth Century proceeds according to a pincer pattern: on the one hand the work of ideal sifting, on the other that of real transformation» (Zucconi, 1997, p. 36).

2.2. *The revival of polychromy: italian influences on english victorian architecture*

Probably the rediscovery of polychromatic Italian architecture of the Middle Ages - particularly that of northern Italy - influenced the experimentation and revival of English polychromy in the Victorian era. Architects William Butterfield and George Edmund Street rediscovered the Anglo-Saxon polychromy exhibited in bands in two medieval churches in Northamptonshire

(Jackson, 2004; Paine, 2011, p. 13). At the same time, in the first half of the 19th century, a number of British architects and art historians carefully observed the colourful surfaces of Venetian and Tuscan Gothic monuments and Pisan Romanesque and documented this feature with sketches and itinerary accounts (Paine, 2011, pp. 5-6; Chatterjee, 2017). This is attested by the writings of John Ruskin - *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* - and George Edmund Street - *Brick and Marble in the Middle Ages: Notes of Tours in the North of Italy* -. The study of colour allowed architectural theorists to reflect on the concepts of form and structure of buildings. It gave rise to a debate between the supporters of the polychromy of the "encrusting school" - purely Venetian - and the "constructional school" - prevalent in the Lombardy area - (Street, 1855, p. 282). If the former was conceived with the aim of concealment and camouflage of structural and constructional aspects, the latter is intended to show clarity and the true way of building (Jackson, 2004; Paine, 2011, p. 8; Chatterjee, 2017, pp. 13-14, pp. 17-18).

The deceptive and truthful duality of medieval polychrome surfaces constituted a starting point for the theoretical elaboration of 19th-century restoration, which later also influenced Italian exponents: the paradigm of "truth", argued by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and John Ruskin constituted the moral objective of religious research, which could be pursued in the architecture of the Victorian period with "constructional polychromy" (Chatterjee, 2017, pp. 13-14). Between the 1840s and 1870s, the use of polychrome bricks - mainly red and black - in the construction of new churches became widespread in the Anglo-Saxon cultural context. The use of brick in the revived church showed that the revival was not simply a nostalgic return to the past, but constituted a clear link with the contemporary industrial age (House, 1963, p. 112). From 1860 onwards, almost all urban churches were built of brick, often combined with stone elements. They were characterised by banded surfaces and a wide range of geometric motifs, polychrome inlays and decorative experiments. Emblematic are the buildings designed by William Butterfield between the High Victorian (1850-1870) and Late Victorian (1870-1900) periods: the Church of All Saints, Margaret Street, London; the College and Church of the Isle of Cumbrae; Balliol College Chapel, Oxford; the Churches of St Alban's, Holborn, Holy Cross, of Holy Saviour, Hitchin, of St. Augustine, Queen's Gate, Kensington, of All Saints, Babbacombe, Devonshire; the Rugby School, Rugby Parish Church and Keble College, Oxford (House, 1963). In the same period, "constructional polychromy" was experimented by other architects such as Henry Woodyer - in St Augustine, Haggerston - (House, 1963, p. 119), Richard Norman Shaw - in New Scotland

Yard, London - Alfred Waterhouse - in the Natural History Museum, London - (Paine, 2011, p. 6). The architecture designed by William Butterfield caught the attention of contemporaries and the All Saints Church, Margaret Street, London, was praised in the pages of the *Ecclesiologist*: «'He was the first to show us that red brick is the best building material for London, and to prove to us that its use was compatible with the highest flights of architecture. In the matter of bonding his red brick with black and other colours, we chiefly admire his moderation. His numerous imitators in this popular style of constructional polychrome have often overlooked his example of discretion. [...] In this impressive church, in spite of smallness of scale, he has approached the sublime in architecture'» (House, 1963, pp. 114-115). The All Saints Church, Margaret Street, London, also fascinated George Edmund Street, who called «'it is not only the most beautiful, but the most vigorous, thoughtful and original of them all'» (House, 1963, p. 114) and used it as a model for the designs of the Churches of All Saints, Boyne Hill, Maidenhead, and St James the Less, Pimlico, Westminster (House, 1963, p. 114; Paine, 2011, p. 6). Later, between 1873 and 1880, Street reproduced the polychrome surfaces in the Church of St Paul's Within the Walls in Rome (Blanchard, 1991).

One of the most distinguished proponents of the polychromy elaborated by the "encrusting school" was John Ruskin. The alternating use of horizontal bands of stone and brick not only evoked geological stratification (Paine, 2011, p. 7; Chatterjee, 2017, p. 14), but also allowed the art critic to reflect on the decorative aspects of polychromy, "ornament" and the principles of textiles, much discussed in the Victorian era, and to contribute to new developments in architectural theory (Chatterjee, 2017, pp. 17-18). Venetian and Tuscan architectures with polychrome surfaces that concealed the structural and spatial aspects of buildings were compared to clothed bodies. Their coverings were reminiscent of woven fabrics, made of alternating coloured threads. For John Ruskin, the beauty of ornament is revealed by some medieval Italian architecture: the Baptistery in Florence, described as the «'central building of European Christianity'» and the Doge's Palace at Venice, defined as the «'central building of the world'» and «'a model of all perfection'» (Chatterjee, 2017, p. 18).

2.3. *Clarity and camouflage of Italian neo-medieval architecture*

As was the case in England, in Italy polychrome surfaces are experimented not only in the restoration and completion of mediaeval architecture, but also in new buildings. The «counterpoint of materials, between brick and stone, and of color contrasts, between the brown and the light of the cladding» (Zucconi, 2016, p. 15) also recurs in Camillo Boito's new civil constructions of the Gallarate hospital, the Palazzo delle Debite and the school complex of the so-called "Reggia Carrarese" in Padua (Zucconi, 2016). It is therefore no coincidence that the "counterpoint of materials" - experimented with great expressive, figurative and scenographic freedom - scans the elevations of the buildings constituting the monumental cemeteries of the Verano in Rome, Gallarate and Milan (Neri, 1997), highly symbolic for the civic values held. In the latter, it is especially the Famedio that represents the «Lombard mixed with Byzantine elements» (Selvafolta, 2007, p. 187). Recalling many styles and eras, the building illustrates the echoes of neo-medievalism: «from the Romanesque-Pisan to the Comacine for the vestments lined with alternating white and dark red bands, from Gothic *tout-court* for the crowning cusps, to florid Gothic for the rose windows and tracery motifs, from Byzantine for the mosaics, to Ravenna for the carvings in the marble and the enveloping capitals. As if the traces of a long-lasting and geographically extensive Middle Ages had been imprinted on the Famedio [...]» (Selvafolta, 2007, p. 201).

In other cases, however, decorative and chromatic peculiarities are freed from structural and material logic, and imitative and inventive intentions overlap and blur. It is visual perception, the idea of the work, that constitutes the prerogative of the new architectures, while the material takes on an exclusively instrumental value. This is what is revealed by the neo-Gothic Church of the Sacred Heart of the Suffrage in Rome, «whose concrete façade re-proposes the well-known Tuscan bichromy with horizontal white/green grey bands» (Fachechi, 2016, p. 26). On the other hand, in the interior, the white/grey-red two-tone colour scheme is differentiated between the load-bearing parts of the columns and the ribs of the vaults - decorated with alternating bands of brick and grey stone - and the closing parts of the walls, marked by alternating painted bands. Making itself independent of the masonry support, colour can thus take on a function of "embellishment" of surfaces and be experimented in free stylistic variations and ornamental cycles. This can be seen in the interior surfaces of the Cathedral of Reggio Calabria - rebuilt in neo-Romanesque forms following the earthquake of 1908 - on which the rows of masonry are painted. Other examples are the coloured plasters of the twentieth-century Church of the Immaculate Conception and San Giovanni Berchmans in Rome or the Churches of Sant'Antonio da Padova in Turin and Sant'Antonio da Padova dei Minori Osservanti in Bologna. They were built in the last decades of the 19th century to emphasise, with a new decorative figurativeness inspired by medieval origins, the renewed presence of the minor orders in the Kingdom of Italy.

3. Neo-medieval Apulia between "embellishments", liberating operations and new creations

Between the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, echoes of the neo-Medieval style also manifested themselves in Apulia, contributing to the creation of a regional style. The rediscovery of the glorious past and of the regional cultural identity, identified in the "Apulian Romanesque", is sometimes pursued with transformation and "embellishment" operations experimented on the pre-existing buildings, others with the construction of new neo-Romanesque and neo-Gothic buildings. At other times, the destruction of the "encrusting baroque" (Guarnieri, 2007, p. 13) is carried out, aimed at revealing the presumed original medieval appearance of Apulian monuments hidden by the stratifications and decorative apparatuses dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries.

3.1. *Federico Travaglini and the "immegliamento" of the Cathedrals of Altamura and Troia*

Neapolitan cultural hegemony, still in force in the mid 19th century in Apulia, is attested by the "embellishments" of the Cathedrals of Altamura and Troia, designed by the Neapolitan architect Federico Travaglini (Civita, 1995; Picone, 1996; Picone, 2000). He became well known on the restoration scene of the time following the neo-Gothic transformation of the Church of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples, which was received with great enthusiasm by the public (Picone, 1996). Transposing only theoretically the precepts of Eugène Viollet le Duc due to insufficient philological and historical-critical preparation, the restorations conducted by Federico Travaglini took the form of operations not fully in line with the idea of restoration in style (Picone, 1996), that is, in interventions of «"immegliamento", understood as adaptation of the building to the aesthetic and taste canons of Naples in the second half of the Nineteenth century, oscillating between classicist and eclectic tendencies. It is that "retrospective orientation", understood as attention to the ways of the past, 'which is expressed through actions that tend to a further development of the architectural work, through operations of real design […]'» (Picone, 1996, p. 59) aimed at the restitution of a harmonious figurative unity. In this vision of restoration - aimed at enhancing the visual perception of the overall image with respect to structural and material sincerity and inspired by the "colored Middle Ages" -, decorative and chromatic aspects assume great importance.

In the Cathedral of Altamura, which still retains Travaglini's "immegliamento" interventions carried out between 1854 and 1864, colour is the undisputed protagonist (Fig. 1). This is also testified by photographs taken by Romualdo Moscioni between 1891 and 1892 and currently held in the Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut. In the last decade of the 19th century,
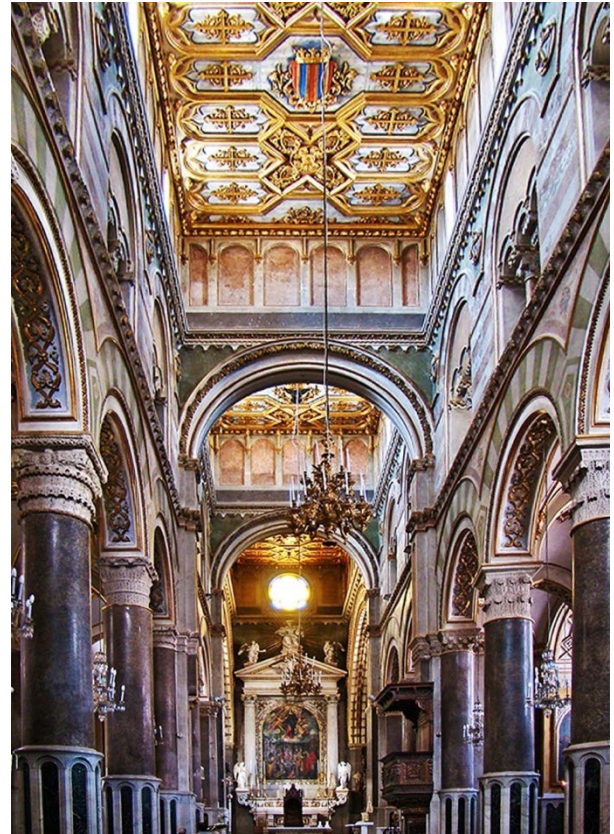
Fig. 1. Altamura, Cathedral. Current state of conservation (photography by Maria Antonietta Catella).

the chromatic peculiarity of the church was emphasised by the documentary photographer commissioned by the Ministry of Education to photograph the *Apulia Monumentale*, consisting of the most representative monuments of Apulia. In the Altamura Cathedral colour is manifested in paint, gilding, stained glass and horizontal bands decorated with phytomorphic motifs and white and pink two-coloured polished stucco in imitation of marble (Fig. 2). These decorations are similar to those created a few years earlier in the transept and apse of the Church of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples (Picone, 1996). The decorative apparatuses are made exclusively at the surfaces visible to the faithful along the ordinary liturgical route, leaving all other wall faces exposed instead. It is thanks to the horizontal bands that the arches of the naves and women's galleries are enhanced, marked by alternating white, green and pink stucco scores (Fig. 3). The marble decorations in green and white marble covering the lower portions of the pillars enrich the environment with the aim of restoring a harmonious whole of the religious space (Civita, 1995; Picone, 1996; Pollini, 2017). «The neapolitan experience remained a reference for a wealth of formal and decorative details that the architect himself drew on, also pointing out neapolitan workers of marble workers and decorators, who provided their services in the Altamura factory» (Civita, 1995, p. 330).
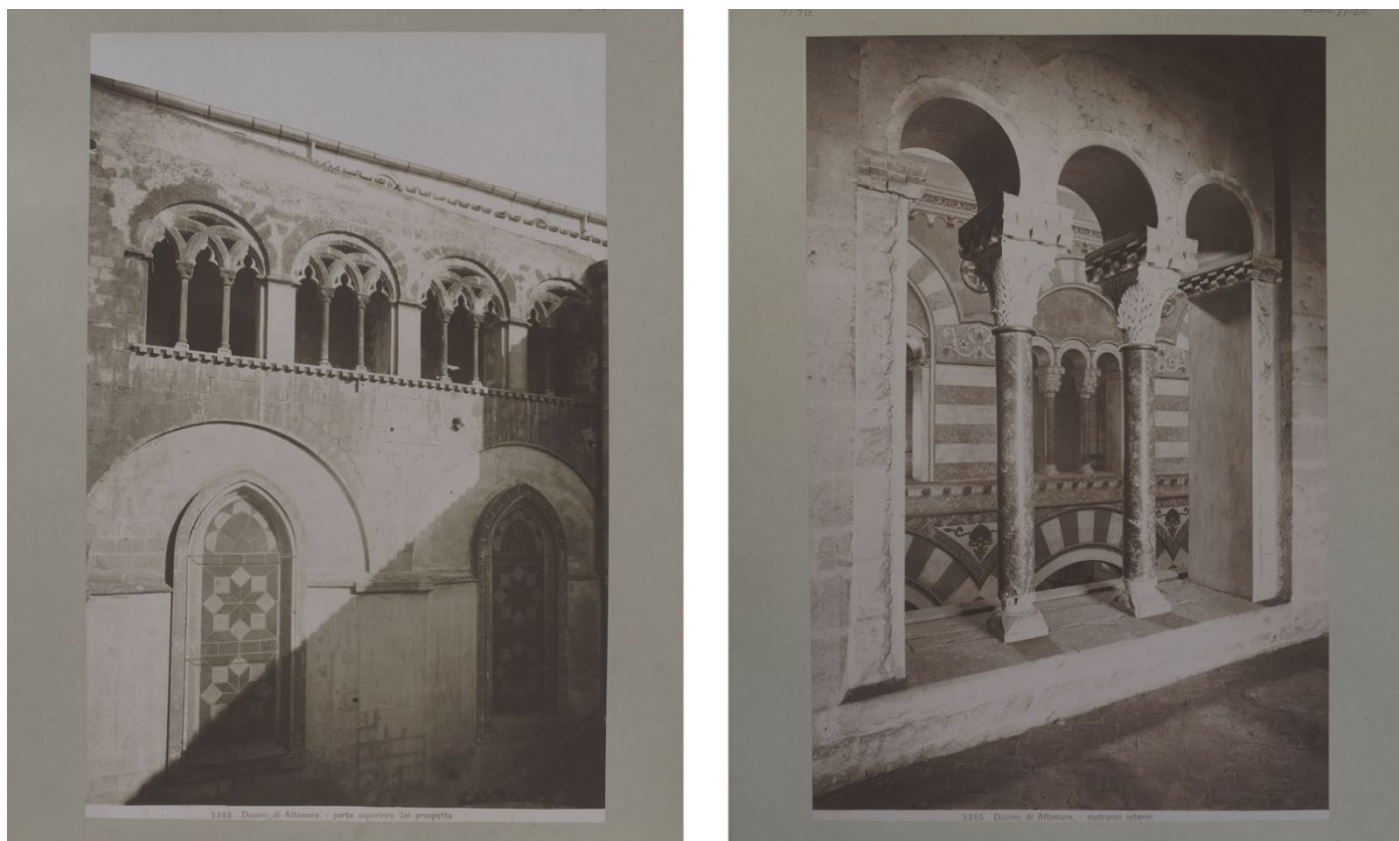
Fig. 2. Altamura, Cathedral, 1892. Left: detail of the stained glass windows. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, photographer: Romualdo Moscioni. Right: detail of the decorations made only on the surfaces visible to the faithful along the ordinary liturgical route. The other surfaces are devoid of polychrome decorations. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, photographer: Romualdo Moscioni.

Fig. 3. Altamura, the interior of the Cathedral in 1892. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, photographer: Romualdo Moscioni.

Compared to the "embellishments" of the Churches of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples and Altamura Cathedral, the one directed by Travaglini on the Cathedral of Troia between 1857 and 1860 turns out to be more respectful of the pre-existences and the most important Baroque stratifications and implemented with less "vibrant" and evident decorations (Picone, 1996; Picone, 2000): «rather than restoring the factory to its "Romanesque nakedness", he seems interested in the re-functionalization of the Cathedral through the consolidation of the degraded parts and an operation of artistic enrichment of the whole space» (Picone, 1996, p. 112; Picone, 2000, p. 86). Some photographs taken in the last decade of the 19th century witness to the interventions carried out by Federico Travaglini at Troia Cathedral, which no longer exist (Fig. 4)

Fig. 4. Troia, the Cathedral in 1895. (William Henry Goodyear - Brooklyn Museum) Available at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concattedrale_di_Troia#/media/File:S03_06_01_001_image_581.jpg (Access: 5 September 2023).

Following the demolition of the Baroque stone altars, the wide walls of the aisles allowed the architect to experiment with decorative motifs in polished stucco. Federico Travaglini's aim is to restore a unified image of the church, which is also in harmony with the exterior of the cathedral. For this reason, along the back walls of the nave, enriched by a Carrara marble base covering, the two-colour decorations present on the cathedral's exterior elevations

are reproduced. These were made from the 12th century onwards by alternating white and grey/green stone elements (Fig. 5) and refer to the Pisan motifs of the blind arcades framing the lozenge-shaped openings. Bichromy also distinguishes the ferrules of the arches above the columns dividing the naves of the liturgical space and framing the apse, chapels and presbytery area. Similar to what was implemented in the Church of San Domenico Maggiore in Naples, shiny faux-marble stuccoes cover the columns, while the vaults of the aisles and transept are painted with blue backgrounds and gold stars. Colors and geometric motifs also characterize the intrados of the coffered ceiling and the glass surfaces, with the aim of restoring a uniform figurative and spatial unity and special light effects (Picone, 1996; Picone, 2000; Belli D'Elia and Derosa, 2018).

Fig. 5. Troia, Cathedral. Detail of the medieval polychrome decorations on the south-west elevation (photography by Maria Antonietta Catella).

3.2. *"Coloured Middle Ages" or "monochrome Middle Ages"? Sante Simone's restorations at Conversano Cathedral*

A few decades after Federico Travaglini's Apulian "embellishments", the use of polychromy, and in particular of two-colour banding reproposed with polished stucco imitating marble, is still appreciated, although a different idea of "Apulian Romanesque" begins to mature. The "Apulian Romanesque" is imagined as uniformly white and the region begins to seek its own cultural identity, independent of Neapolitan influence. The restorative events involving the Cathedral of Conversano between 1877 and the early 1880s (Guarnieri, 2007; Pollini, 2017) are emblematic of the different value attributed to color. In addition to Romualdo Moscioni's photographs (Fig. 6), these interventions are evidenced by the numerous images preserved in the Photo Library

Fig. 6. Conversano, the interior of the Cathedral in 1892. Photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, photographer: Romualdo Moscioni.

of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio for the metropolitan city of Bari, which show the cathedral's state following the fire that occurred between 10 and 11 July 1911. In 1877, the Architect Sante Simone agreed to remove the Baroque decorations, adhering to the commission given to him by Bishop S. Silvestrin, who «wishing to give greater luster and decorum to the beautiful temple, proposed to cover it inside with polished plaster» (Simone and Sylos, 1896, p. 10). But with the continuation of the work and the discovery of the "Lombard-Pugliese" (Simone and Sylos, 1896, p. 10) features recurring in the various Cathedrals of Apulia, Sante Simone elaborates a new proposal for the implementation of «the way of true restoration» (Guarnieri, 2007, p. 47). It is no longer aimed at the polychrome decorations desired by the bishop, but at the rediscovery of «primitive architectural ornamentation» (Simone and Sylos, 1896, p. 10), elaborated on the basis of faint surviving traces. «Naked should remain the walls, as they were from the earliest times. They should all restore the walls in ashlar stone, make the deplorable fault caused by successive transformations disappear» (Simone and Sylos, 1896, p. 10). The

disapproval of the project expressed in 1881 by the architects of the Ministry of Public Education and the criticism of Sante Simone's first interventions, which rendered an overly resigned image of the building, show that during the 1870s and 1880s the public was not yet fully ready to accept the image of the "Lombard-Pugliese", radically different from the "colored Middle Ages". These were the reasons that forced Sante Simone to please the patron. «Other works were carried out, but with criteria at all discordant from mine. With the only purpose of fulfilling the bishop's wish, [...] I agreed that the little columns of the three-mullioned windows of the women's gallery should be covered with cipolline stucco and the half-columns leaning against the pillars of the main nave should be executed in granite. The remainder of the church was to be plastered with glue, in the color of the limestone of the ancient masonry. While this covering was being executed, the crowd of the ignorant, who were ill-suited to see the temple restored to the simplicity of primitive Christian worship and stripped of chicanery, arose in protest. From the intimidated clamor, the good bishop ordered that the work be suspended, and the church be adorned with fictitious marbles and

multicolored musaics: the people applauded, believing they could worship God exclusively in the orgy of colors and precious metals» (Simone and Sylos, 1896, p. 12).

In fact, the idea of a "monochrome Middle Ages" (Pollini, 2017), pursued by removing the plasterwork and leaving the walls of Apulia's main Romanesque monuments exposed in all their expressiveness, began to materialize with greater insistence from the last years of the 19th century. Took place the removal of the Baroque decorations of Bitonto Cathedral (Guarnieri, 2007; Belli D'Elia and Derosa, 2018) and of the superfetations and the «white stucco lining suspended inside the medieval three-ship building» (Belli D'Elia and Derosa, 2018, p. 264) of Bari Cathedral, built in 1737 by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro. Later, in the first half of the 20th century, the restorative tendency fully asserted itself with the demolition of the imitative coloured marble surfaces in the Cathedrals of Conversano (Guarnieri, 2007) and Trani (Belli D'Elia and Derosa, 2018). Not even Travaglini's "embellishment" of the Cathedral of Troia, removed between 1956 and 1959 in order to re-propose the presumed original medieval appearance of the building, is spared (Picone, 1996; Picone, 2000).

3.3. Neo-medieval echoes in the minor architecture. The Church of San Giorgio Martire in Bari

But the taste for the "colored Middle Ages" continued to persist in Apulia even in the early decades of the 20th century, manifesting some reverberations even in modernization operations of secondary and private religious buildings, as evidenced by the rural Church of San Giorgio Martire in Bari. In 1920, the small 11th-century church, which had become the aristocratic chapel of the adjacent 19th-century farmhouse, underwent significant transformations. These interventions were promoted and financed by the Sarnelli family, owners of the church, probably with the aim of reinventing the building in a new neo-Romanesque appearance. Again, color is the protagonist of the interior space: along the wall faces, up to the impost of the vaults, it is shown in alternating horizontal bands of white and blue plaster simulating marble. The pattern of vertical lines on the two-coloured bands renders the fake isodomic device of the marble cladding, which in reality hides the less regular masonry, highlighted by the partial fall of the plaster. Thus, no proportional and formal relationship seems to emerge between the stone elements constituting the wall and the fictitious ones of the cladding. The invention and imitation of neo-Romanesque characters overlap and blend with the pre-existing. On the other hand, the white plasters covering the arches, vaults and the wall portions above the shutters are different: the horizontal incisions that divide the covering into bands and those made at the plasters covering the arches' ferrules seem to coincide with some of the real joints of the wall faces below. In addition, the

reproduction in stucco along the intradossal surfaces of the vaults and arches of plastic decorative elements peculiar to Apulian medieval lithic architecture - such as checkerboard cornices, cruciform lobes framing palmettes and dentils - gives a greater neo-Romanesque character to the rural church (Derosa and Triggiani, 2005).

Following prolonged neglect and a fire in 2014, the polychrome surfaces of the church were severely damaged and almost totally destroyed. Curtain walls at the doors currently do not allow access to the building, emblematic of neo-medievalism in Apulia.

3.4. The independence of colour: decorative experiments in 20th century churches

But the fictitious polychromatic vestments found the greatest freedom of expression in the new creations of neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque churches in Apulia. The decorative aspects become completely independent of the architectural structures, realised with new materials and construction techniques, and the surfaces become vast areas for experimentation with the most diverse decorative motifs. In Bari, neo-medieval dictates asserted themselves between 1900 and 1930 in conjunction with urban expansion and the establishment of new parishes. They manifest themselves with chromatic and decorative peculiarities in the Churches of the Immacolata (Fig. 7) and San Giuseppe (Fig. 8) designed by Engineer Mauro Amoruso-Manzari.
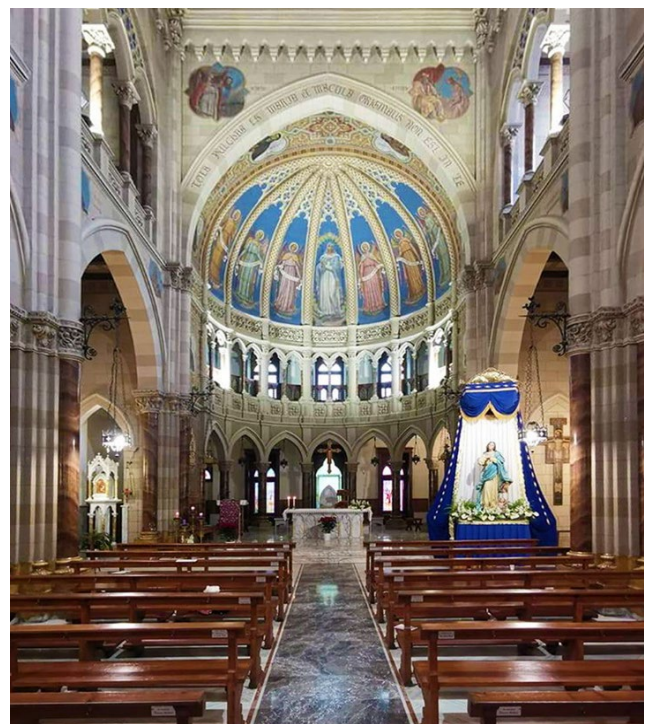
Fig. 7. Bari, Church of the Immacolata Concezione. Current state of conservation (photography by Maria Antonietta Catella).
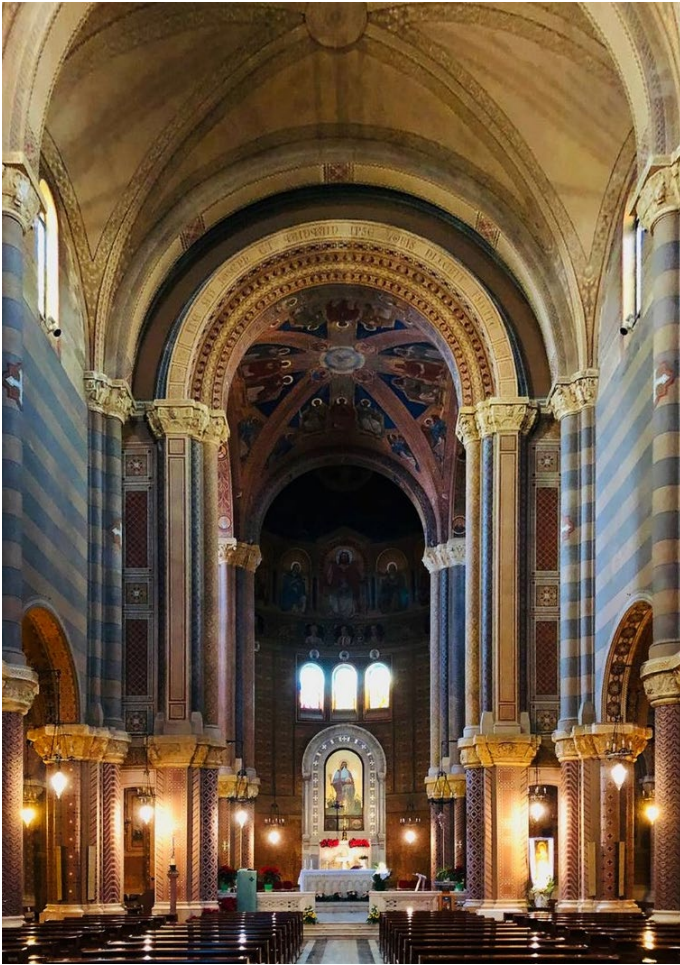
Fig. 8. Bari, Church of San Giuseppe. Current state of conservation (photography by Maria Antonietta Catella).

In the first church, built between 1923 and 1926 and consecrated in 1936, the Artist Mario Prayer enhances the presbytery area with elaborate polychrome decorations, while the surfaces of the rest of the rooms take on an illusionistic character. They are marked by imitative paintings of isodomic wall facings and the lintels of the ogival arches, composed of white, grey, beige and brown "ashlars".

In contrast, in the Church of San Giuseppe, built between 1913 and 1930, Mario Prayer experiments with plural and articulated polychrome painted decorations on the facings of the presbyterial, apse and the masonry of the area, on the columns, on the intradoses of the arches and on the areas adjacent to the ribs of the vaulted structures. They are emergent from the horizontal scans in white and blue bichrome bands painted on the facings and half-columns of the upper order of the nave, above the columns separating the spaces of the liturgical environment.

A similar chromatic device also distinguishes the interior surfaces of the Salesian Church of Sacro Cuore in Brindisi (Fig. 9), designed by Architect Giulio Valotti between 1931 and 1934. In the latter two examples, the two-tone colour scheme seems to evoke the chromatic peculiarities of neo-

medieval architecture, but without any imitative intent of the masonry: the horizontal two-tone bands have no vertical interruptions along the surfaces. There are no ferrules at the arches above the columns or at thewindows. In this way, is realized the total independence of the decorations from the structural logic of the buildings.
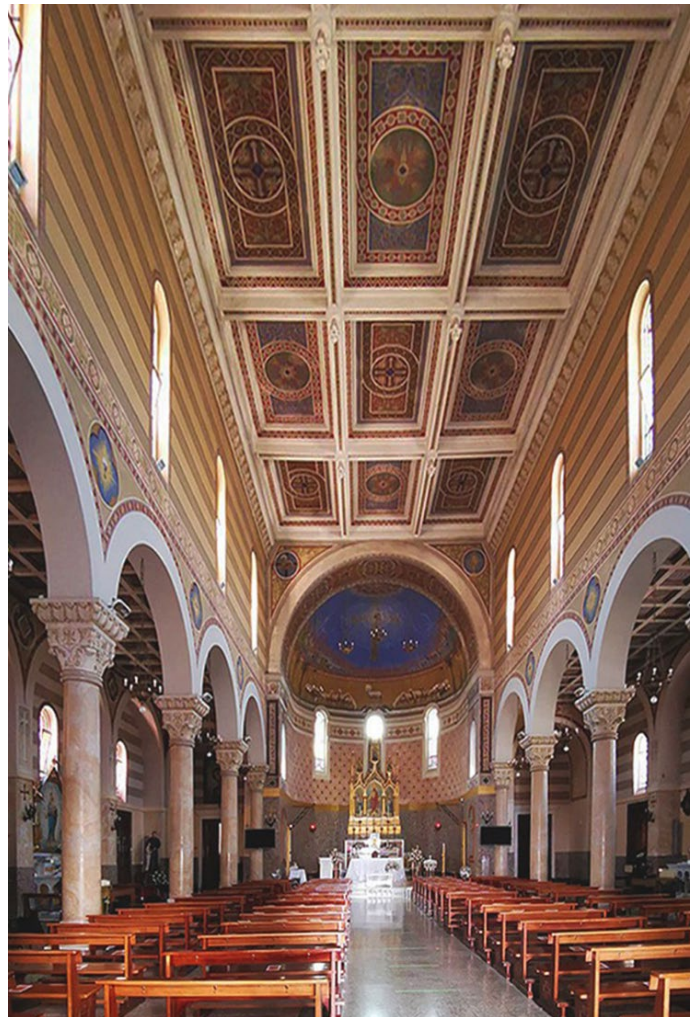
Fig. 9. Brindisi, Church of Sacro Cuore. Current state of conservation (photography by Maria Antonietta Catella).

4. Conclusion

This paper briefly illustrates the first results of an ongoing research project aimed at investigating the significance attributed to the colour of architecture during the 19th and 20th century in view of the definition of national identity. By analysing the restoration theories expounded by the protagonists of the time, the operational choices made in Italy and other European countries in the restoration of medieval monuments and in neo-Romanesque and neo-Gothic realisations, it is possible to understand how the colour of architecture was perceived at the time. Today's way of looking at medieval art has been filtered and determined by the taste of the 19th and early 20th century.

Furthermore, the in-depth study of case studies in Apulia contributes to analysing the extent of the spread of neo-medieval taste in the region, providing useful insights into a strand of expression that is still not fully investigated today.

The study of the polychromatic neo-medieval surfaces of the monuments in Apulia was carried out thanks to the inspections carried out at the buildings under study, the consultation of the publications produced so far and the documentation held at the archives in the region - such as the State Archives in Bari and the Archives of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio for the metropolitan city of Bari -. Also important was the observation of historical photographs of the monuments, stored at the Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut and the Photo Library of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio per la città metropolitana di Bari. The contextual study of buildings that showed polychrome surfaces in the past and those that continue to show polychrome surfaces created between the 19th and 20th centuries currently provides an insight into a true historical phenomenon of great importance for the definition of regional and national identity. Due to their historical, artistic and identity values, the polychrome surfaces of Apulia's monuments need to be preserved and undergo constant maintenance or restoration. This can be said because the rediscovery of the "Apulian Romanesque" did not only take place with the well-known restorations carried out between the 19th and 20th century - consisting of the demolition of Baroque decorations and the restoration of a presumed original configuration - but also with the realisation of neo-medieval polychrome surfaces. At present, the historical, artistic and intangible importance of the latter is little known, as the recent events of abandonment and destruction of the Church of San Giorgio Martire in Bari testify. This is why it is necessary to get to know and enhance the cultural significance of Apulia's polychrome mediaeval surfaces. It is necessary to do this with a view to their conservation and constant maintenance, which is currently carried out regularly on the restorations implemented in the region between the 19th and 20th centuries.

5. Conflict of interest declaration

The author declares no conflict of interest related to this publication.

6. Funding source declaration

7. Short biography of the author

Maria Antonietta Catella is an Architect, Specialist in Architectural and Landscape Heritage and PhD. She undertakes studies and research pertaining to knowledge, theories of restoration, protection and conservation of architectural heritage and the historic city, participating in national and international conferences, seminars, advanced training courses, workshops and internships relevant to the aforementioned topics.

Licensing terms

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