

Leosini's *Monumenti storici artistici della città di Aquila e suoi contorni*: transcribing the author's annotated copy

Diana Sainz Camayd

This paper, written for the summer school 'Digital Humanities for Art History', which took place in June and July 2022 in L'Aquila, gives a brief overview of the current status of the ongoing research project for the digital edition of the *Monumenti storici artistici della città di Aquila e suoi contorni colle notizie de' pittori scultori architetti ed altri artefici che vi fiorirono* (L'Aquila, 1848),¹ by Angelo Leosini (L'Aquila, 1818-81),² with particular attention to the task of text transcription and markup.

The research project, created by Cristiana Pasqualetti, Associate Professor in History of Medieval Art at the Department of Human Studies (DSU) of the University of L'Aquila, is being developed by a multidisciplinary team of scholars from the University and the Bibliotheca Hertziana - Rome, Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften.³ The project received a significant place in the programme of the summer school thanks to the presentations of Cristiana Pasqualetti and the scientific members of the team, Klaus Werner and Elisa Bastianello of the Hertziana, whose own papers can be consulted for specific insights into the genesis of the project, the results, the future goals, and the digital tools accompanying the text.

Since 2020, under the guidance of Pasqualetti, Werner, and Bastianello, part of the text has been edited and Leosini's annotations in his personal copy of the book have been transcribed. This task became a springboard that enables understanding of the process of digital publication of historical documents for the first time and familiarization with digital tools such as the Transkribus platform. The possibilities of Transkribus in facilitating the transcription of manuscript

I would like to thank the professors who organized the summer school for allowing me to participate in this interesting course. I also wish to express my gratitude to Cristiana Pasqualetti for inviting me to join the research team, and to Klaus Werner and Elisa Bastianello for their help in carrying out my work.

¹ *Monumenti storici artistici della città di Aquila e suoi contorni: colle notizie de' pittori, scultori, architetti ed altri artefici che vi fiorirono*, Aquila: Perchiazzi, 1848. Fully digitized reproduction is available in the digital library of the Bibliotheca Hertziana:

<https://dlib.bibl.hertz.it/m3s/?show=https://dlib.bibl.hertz.it/iiif/leosinims/manifest.json>.

² See a brief biography of Angelo Leosini in: Giuseppe Rivera, *Memorie biografiche degli scrittori aquilani trapassati dal 1820 al 1893*, L'Aquila: Mele, 1898, 104-113.

³ For more information about the project, see the article by Cristiana Pasqualetti in this issue: 'Monumenti storici e artistici della città dell'Aquila e suoi contorni by Angelo Leosini (1848) as a semantic digital corpus online'.

sources were explained during the Summer School by Elisa Bastianello, who also presented the advantages of this software for the project.⁴

Before going into the specifics of the task, it is worth saying a few words about Angelo Leosini's groundbreaking book.⁵ *Monumenti storici artistici della città di Aquila e suoi contorni colle notizie de' pittori, scultori, architetti ed altri artefici che vi fiorirono* is a cornerstone of early art historiography of the Abruzzo. Published in 1848 by Francesco Perchiazzi's printing house in L'Aquila, it represents the first systematic guide to the monuments of L'Aquila and the surrounding towns, containing valuable information about local artists,⁶ and works of art. Most chapters deal with L'Aquila landmarks (among the most celebrated are the churches of San Bernardino and Collemaggio and the Rivera Fountain, popularly known as the Fountain of Ninety-nine Spouts), while many others cover nearby villages such as Pettino, San Vittorino, Pizzoli, and Leosini's hometown of Preturo. Leosini reports on works of art and interesting artifacts of interest preserved in the buildings discussed: paintings, church organs, bells, tombstones and even illuminated manuscripts. The author's interest in inscriptions, commemorative epigraphs, and artists' signatures as historical sources is significant. It is certainly noteworthy that Leosini obtained most of the information for his book through a painstaking exploration of local erudite literature, unpublished documents, and manuscript sources, as is evident from the footnotes to the text.

When we consider that in the middle of the nineteenth century in L'Aquila, unlike many cities in Italy,⁷ there was no published guide to its monuments, then the importance of Leosini's work becomes even clearer. In the nineteenth century the first foreign tourists and scholars arrived in Abruzzo.⁸ It was clear that the city needed a descriptive handbook that could accompany travellers as they made their way among churches, monasteries and noble palaces. Aware of this need, Leosini

⁴ More detailed information on these aspects can be found in Bastianello's contribution to this publication.

⁵ For further information on Leosini see Cristiana Pasqualetti, 'I Monumenti storici artistici della città dell'Aquila e i suoi contorni di Angelo Leosini. Verso un'edizione commentata', in Howard Burns and Mauro Mussolin, *Architettura e identità locali*, vol. 2, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2013, 567-582.

⁶ See, for example, the section on the Bedeschini family of painters in the chapter S. Croce: Leosini, *Monumenti*, 28-31.

⁷ In the sixteenth century, some famous Italian cities, such as Florence and Naples, already had guides for their monuments.

⁸ Pasqualetti, 'I Monumenti storici artistici', 568; Pasqualetti, 'Monumenti storici e artistici', note 2. On the topic of foreign travellers in Abruzzo see: Adriano Ghisetti Giavarina, *Viaggi in Abruzzo: artisti, letterati, storici, architetti tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Pescara: Carsa, 2016; Vinni Lucherini, 'L'arte del Medioevo abruzzese tra Ottocento e Novecento: una scoperta straniera, una riscoperta locale', in Cristiana Pasqualetti, *La Via degli Abruzzi e le arti nel Medioevo (secc. XIII-XV)*, L'Aquila: One Group Edizioni, 2014, 17-26. The plates in Leosini's book are taken from the illustrations of one of such travellers, the English artist Edward Lear, on whom see Edward Lear, *Viaggio attraverso l'Abruzzo pittoresco*, Sulmona: Di Cioccio, 1988; Ghisetti Giavarina, *Viaggi in Abruzzo*, 6-11; Raffaella Antinucci, '... in those few bright (Abruzzi) days', *Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*, XVII-XVIII: 34-35, July 2012-January 2013, 159-188.

set out to write his book, also following the model of similar contemporary publications cited in the volume's preface.⁹ As the author explains, *Monumenti* was not intended to be an erudite publication, but as a kind of guide that could encourage travellers visiting L'Aquila to explore and study the city's artistic heritage.¹⁰

The Biblioteca Salvatore Tommasi in L'Aquila owns an annotated copy of the *Monumenti* belonging to Angelo Leosini (Coll. Rari 44/a), donated in 1903 by Leosini's heirs together with the scholar's library. This copy is characterised by a remarkable apparatus of autograph notes added by Leosini himself in the margins or between lines. As Cristiana Pasqualetti has pointed out, it is likely that Leosini annotated his book not only to correct the typographical errors of the printed version but also in preparation for a future edition that unfortunately never materialised.¹¹ Hence the project of a new edition of *Monumenti* that included the manuscript material of Leosini's copy.

The project, conceived in 2007 by Cristiana Pasqualetti, originally aimed to produce a traditional critical edition.¹² After the University of L'Aquila awarded it a grant in 2017, the initial idea became a broader project for a digital edition to publish Leosini's copy of the book online as a digital facsimile along with an annotated transcription. The author's annotations will thus be available digitally for the first time. The text will be accompanied by images, sources, artist biographies, a bibliography, and geospatial resources.¹³ The project combines historical research methods with new technologies and seeks to exploit the possibilities of digital media to enrich the visualisation of *Monumenti's* data and to gain new insights into the artistic heritage of L'Aquila and its surroundings.

The manuscript apparatus is extensive and varied. Of the three hundred and seventeen pages of the book, about two hundred and twelve contain handwritten notes. These include comments and annotations, brief additions, corrections and re-elaborations, and deletions. On some pages (e.g. pages 176, 177, 247, and 286), the notes completely frame the text along the four margins, like glosses. An unusual case is found between pages 124 and 125, between which there is a leaf with a long commentary that expands on the content of the first paragraph of page 124. Other leaves are inserted between pages 134 and 135 and 178 and 179.

⁹ Leosini, *Monumenti*, 6.

¹⁰ 'Alla qual cosa volendo io in piccolissima parte riparare [...] toccherò brevemente le cose più degne di nota, lasciateci dai nostri maggiori, non intendendo già di scrivere per gli eruditi [...] ma solo per primario fine di mettere in luce qualche opera di arte ed incidentemente qualche punto di storia e di archeologia men noto che io sappia, dare ad altri, che visiterà questi luoghi, una guida ed un incitamento alle sue ricerche': Leosini, *Monumenti*, 237.

¹¹ Pasqualetti, 'I Monumenti storici artistici', 570.

¹² Pasqualetti, 'Monumenti storici e artistici'.

¹³ See Klaus Werner's paper for more detailed information on geolocation, mapping and data visualisation tools being implemented in the project.

After making high-resolution scans of the book, the first task undertaken was to create a new transcription of the text using the OCR text recognition feature. To make the transcription as accurate as possible, it was decided to scan a copy of the *Monumenti* without Leosini's marginalia. As is well known, handwritten marginalia can easily lead to noisy text after the conversion process, so the team decided to add them manually at a later stage. This decision reduced the number of common OCR reading errors such as word detection, word segmentation, and character recognition. In parallel, the team uploaded a digital facsimile of the annotated copy to the Transkribus platform and then segmented it into text regions and lines. Once it was ensured that each baseline of the document was correctly linked to the corresponding line in the text editor field of the platform, the OCR transcription was copied and pasted into the editor field.

Following this phase, we moved on to transcribing the handwritten notes. One of our biggest challenges was the complex and irregular layout of the handwritten texts, which contain both extensive marginal notes and interlinear annotations and emendations. Layout analysis on Transkribus (a division of the image into text regions and lines, necessary to link the text regions on the image to the transcribed text) therefore required time-consuming manual corrections.

The transcription of both the printed text and the handwritten sections is now complete. However, it still needs to be revised to correct typos and automatic text recognition errors: the most common being the confusion of s and f. There are other critical issues to be worked on. The research team is listing the abbreviations to write out, most of which concern the bibliographic references in the footnotes: Leosini frequently contracts the titles of the books he quotes as well as authors' names (see for instance 'Bucc. Rain. Cos. dell'Aquil.'). In addition, minor adjustments, especially in punctuation, word spacing, and the use of italics and capitals letters, should be made to the edited text to bring it in line with the standards of current Italian spelling. This work is based on the editorial guidelines prepared by Cristiana Pasqualetti.

Recently marking up the structure of the document by adding Transkribus structural tagging to each section was completed. The main structural tags used are 'page number', 'heading', 'paragraph', 'quotation', 'footnote', and 'marginalia', but some custom tags like 'marginalia-continued' for handwritten notes that extend over more than one page were also added. So far only a few text tags have been used, such as 'add' and 'abbrev', but in the next steps, we will extend the tagging to dates, people, place names, and works of art. More text tags will be added after the document is exported to TEI. There is still much to do, but there is satisfaction with the results achieved so far.

Diana Sainz Camayd holds a Master's degree in Cultural Heritage from the University of L'Aquila and she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli". Her research interests include manuscript illumination in Abruzzo and Southern Italy from the Gothic Period to the Early Renaissance, with particular regard to liturgical chant manuscripts and Books of

Diana Sainz Camayd

Leosini's *Monumenti storici artistici della città di Aquila:*
transcribing the author's annotated copy

Hours, as well as historiography on illumination, collections and exhibitions of illuminated manuscripts in Italy between the 19th and 20th centuries.

diana.sainzcamayd@unicampania.it



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)