

A GIFT FROM NINA

an analysis of her handwriting

In Naples Moscati Archives housed in Gesù Nuovo Church by the Jesuit Fathers, is a multitude of correspondence from Giuseppe Moscati and his colleagues, friends and relatives. After my earlier graphological observations on the handwriting of the “Saint Physician”¹ I would like to draw your attention to what emerges from Anna (→Annina→Nina for short) Moscati’s² handwriting. On agreeing to examine her handwriting I was confident that graphology would allow greater insight into Nina, Peppino’s³ only sister – older by two years. She was his precious assistant both at home and in his professional life. Exceptionally, aged 23 and half he had attained a top level honours degree in Medicine and Surgery. Moreover, his impressive thesis was widely published. Besides, through a rigorous national selection process, he won the coveted position of hospital physician. He had acute sensitivity as well as an exceptional generosity towards the suffering and the poor. From the wide breadth of Nina’s handwritten samples/letters, I have chosen just the following two: the first is addressed to Peppino⁴ (fig 1), and the second housed (fig. 2 e fig.3) in Bartolo Longo Archives in Pompeii Sanctuary⁵ does not show the name of the addressee.

It is worth recalling that handwriting is a non-verbal symbolic language and each movement of the pen tells a story. Each twist and turn of the pen is significant. In other words, writing by hand, which is a uniquely human prerogative, is hugely expressive.

Scribbling/drawing/writing are all the outcome of the movement of the hand which, holding a writing tool, draws lines, curves, angles, etc... Though graphic movement, something revealing about us is shown because movement is behaviour.

The graphic movement is characterized by strength, speed, amplitude, continuity, precision, suppleness, etc... which make one handwriting unique. When we write, each of us records on the paper his pattern of movement. This pattern of movement stems from

- physiological factors, which imply hereditary characteristics
- mental factors, influenced by learning and experiences in life

The way and the direction the hand moves through the page have a symbolic meaning. They mirror *how* the individual *moves* in the space of existence.

¹ in *IL GESU' NUOVO* no. 1, 2014 and , no.4, 2015

² Born in Benevento in 1878

³ Born in Benevento in 1880 (Giuseppe→ Peppe→ Peppino)

⁴ Document no. 0360, Moscati Archives, Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo, Naples

⁵ Document no. 0718 and 0718 back, Moscati Archives, Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo, Naples

1923 Napoli: 28a sera
 Poppino mio carissimo, grazie del telegramma lo si
 sembra alle ne unidi di sera - da lettera la mostra
 in quella dei tuoi auguri: l'augurio più bello
 è che tu sia (come sono vicina) bene e che non si
 parli più dei tuoi occhi... da parte la fiducia in Dio
 è la mia guida e il Signore mi ha detto da
 tempo di non preoccuparmi che ho star bene
 e starai sempre, sempre, sempre bene... devi
 compiere un grande apostolato, il Signore l'ha
 da te. - Quanto godo del tuo ritorno a
 Edimburgo, quanto d'impegno solido dei tuoi che
 mi fa e che ricordo da lui unicamente! -
 Il più delle volte il mattino cedo a Londra al punto
 e... pero per te per dei tutti. - Non capiamo
 dove indirizzare la nostra lettera e solo stasera
 ricevendo la tua in data 15 si dice che indirizzar
 la nostra corrispondenza. - Ci accorgiamo che la
 nostra si arriva con ritardo. - Pensa a unirti
 padre di Londra, così come di Edimburgo e
 ... lascia il tempo il nostro indirizzo. - ti abbraccio
 con forte tua Nina.

fig 1

27 luglio
 Archivio di Stato
 Ministero di Agricoltura
 Industria e Commercio
 Milano - Pavia
 Le ire della Roccidacqua sono
 incomprensibili all'occhio umano
 quanto è grande il Signore!
 povero che non lo conosce!
 Occorre documentarsi dei due
 aspetti privilegiati... i ragazzi
 arrivarono subito - in pari
 data ho telegrafato e ho
 ricevuto la lettera che viene
 dalla suora che lei ha

fig. 2

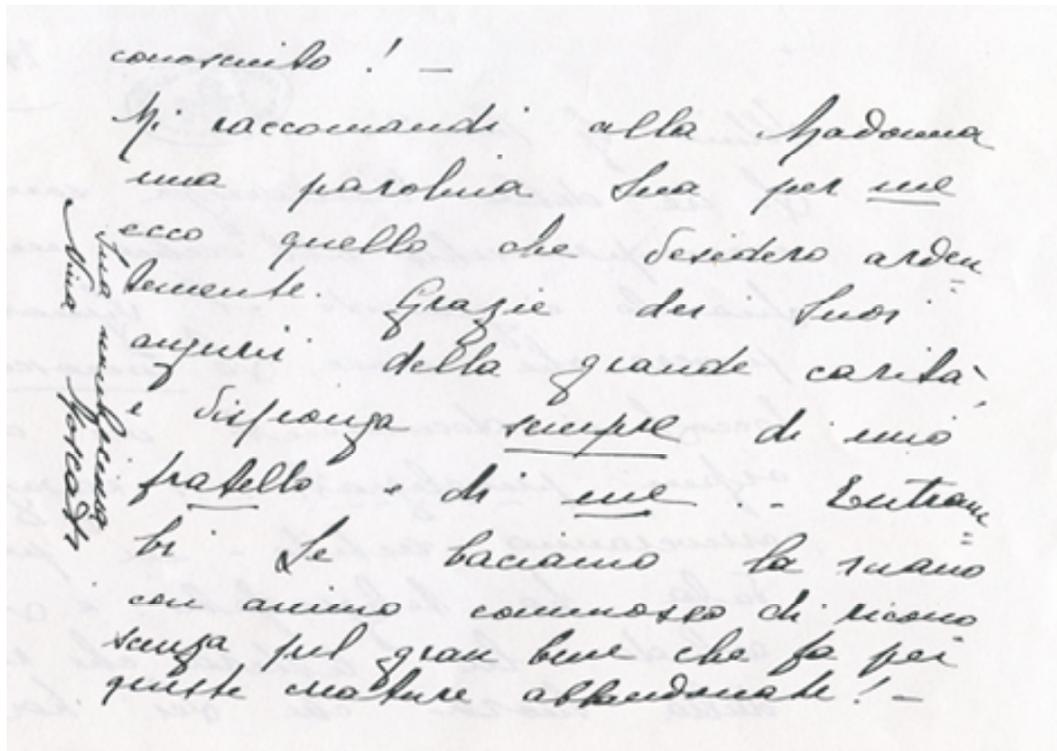


fig.3

Now, what meaning lies behind Nina's written gesture? By assessing the overall pattern of its movement, graphologists can then correctly interpret each minute graphological sign of the handwriting under examination. This skill is acquired over years of study and practical experience⁶. Nonetheless, if you, the reader, focus on the two words below ("*il mattino*"),

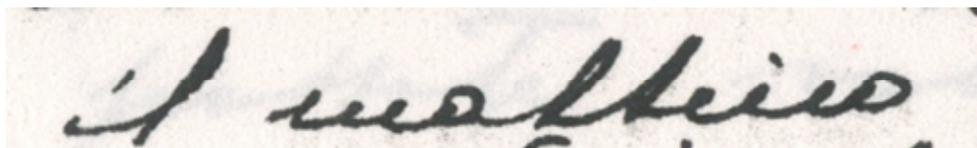


Fig.4

you may see that in Nina's rather regular handwriting, they reflect the same movement as the whole handwriting. The movement that has shaped the letter forms of the two words, line 23, fig. no.1, can be described as controlled. The hand, resolute and firm, has traced "*mattino*" as if it were set on a railway track without any deviation⁷. Now, if you view the whole page, you will see that the overall is characterized by order, organization, and homogeneity as to proportion and distribution of the graphological elements on the page. You will notice, for instance, that the baseline is regular, and stable as is the slant, interletter connections and spacings.

⁶ The author of this article has got a University Graphology Diploma, specialising in Family Consultancy. She obtained the diploma after a three-year course of graphological studies at *Scuola diretta a fini speciali di studi grafologici*, Facoltà di Magistero, Università di Urbino, aa.aa 1988-1991

⁷ Graphological signs *Accurata* (Careful)+ *Accartocciata* (Enrolled)+ *Convolvoli* (Beautifying embellishments)+ *Aste rette* (Straight Strokes)+ *Recisa* (Truncated)+ *Attaccata* (Connetted)+ *Mantiene il rigo* (Straight Baseline), according to the Morettian Graphological System after its ideator's name, Father Girolamo Moretti OFMconv (Order of Friars Minor Conventual) .

Let me make a musical comparison between the different rhythms of Peppino’s and Nina’s handwriting. I think it would be fair to say that Peppino’s is *Vivace con brio*, even occasionally *Vivace con fuoco* whereas Nina’s is *Andante-Adagio*. On the surface, Nina’s pace of life seems to be slower than her brother’s. However, due to many smaller gestures we know that there is a hidden quick-mindedness. By nature, she would be inclined to go faster. She puts the brakes on herself. That is the reason why she slows down. If you compared the hand to a vehicle, you could say that even if the straight road allowed higher speed, Nina would keep her foot close to the break. Nina possesses much vitality in her handwriting. What makes that in her handwriting is, for instance, the high degree of tension and control. By the way, a high degree of tension and control points out that there is a lot to be controlled. Consciousness and will-power intervene to have a firm grip on drives and emotions. Nina’s handwriting demenour reveals her tendency to stick to rules and principles. Nonetheless, she endeavours to put the needs of others above her own. In fact, some gestures in fig. 5 (the different starting stroke and ending stroke of the three words) show that inwardly Nina is receptive. Besides, she has vivacity in her approach and responsiveness. Among them, the variety of the word starting strokes as well as the final strokes⁸ is worth noticing as shown by fig. 5 with the three closing words of the letter in question.

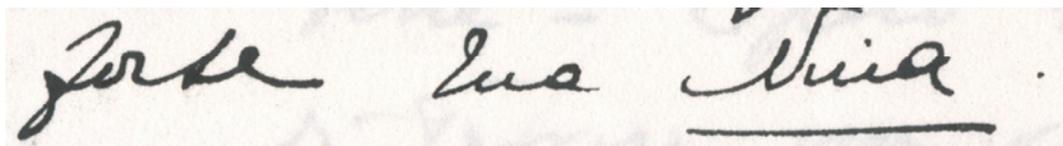


Fig.5

Besides, the way free strokes (e.g. apostrophes, accents, commas, and dots) are delivered/shaped mirrors that Nina’s personality shows an independent streak. For instance, the “i” dots, which vary with regard to pressure, size, and height are thrust ahead of the vowel axis, revealing the tendency to act and react rapidly and impatiently.

Nina is likely to have experienced anguish: imagination, creative power, intense drives on one hand and strong inner resistance on the other. Her handwriting shows that she tries her best to maintain her high level of dignity. She resists in order to prove herself she values moderation and self-restraint.. She attaches great importance to her firm principles which she has defended through a high degree of constant surveillance. Underpinned by solid family values – her father was a judge, and her mother an aristocrat – Nina undoubtedly absorbed from infancy her good manners, respectfulness, and obedience to rules. Her being cautious, kind, and tactful when dealing with someone is a protection for her own sensitivity, and she expects this behaviour to be reciprocated. Yet when life does not go her way, she can be very direct and self-assertive which might upset some relationships.

Nina thinks before she acts. Her thought processes are governed by quite strict protocols, and in order to satisfy her ideals she will examine life through a lens of pragmatism and usefulness⁹.. The graphic thread expands across the whole width of the page in a tense and constrained manner: her handwriting reveals

⁸ Varied types of Free Strokes *Ricci* (i.e. *Strokes of subjectivism*, *Strokes of sobriety*, *Strokes of concealment*

⁹ *Curva* (Curved) + *Flessuosa* (Flexuous) + *Convolvoli* (Beautifying embellishments)+ *Angoli C* (C Angles) + “t” bars connected to the following letter.

two opposing drives – one of progressing boldly and the other of inhibiting herself. A life of duty and self-sacrifice taking her brother’s causes upon herself provides Nina with a constructive distraction from her inner struggles/self-questioning and gains her a sense of fulfilment. She channels all her energies – physical and emotional – towards helping others.

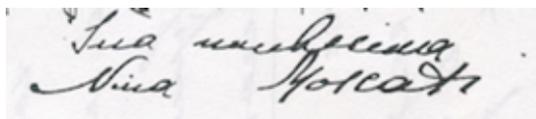
As a fully qualified primary school teacher (unusual for a girl in those times), Nina could have led an independent life. Instead, as Peppino’s only sister, her strong sense of duty prevailed over her personal aspirations, making her choose to give priority to her brother’s needs. Had Nina chosen otherwise, the burden of guilt would have been too heavy. She was brought up to put others first. In choosing the role of her brother’s helper she turned a loss into a gain and she achieved personal and social recognition in this important role. In saying this, the good she did for so many people is in no way diminished.

It is worth mentioning in psychological terms that self-esteem achieved through a strong Super-Ego always carry a cost. In Nina’s case her suppression of her own legitimate Ego needs for the sake of an idealized image of herself may explain the look of slight melancholy in her eyes.



And also the vast intimate loneliness as shown by the very wide interword spacing (spacing between words above average¹⁰) in fig no.2 and especially fig.no.3. This is emphasized even more in fig no.3 where words – as if they were islands – as the white of the empty space between one word and the next does stand out.

One more detail worth noticing in this respect is the gap in her signature – vertically placed on the left



margin (fig.no.3 and enlarged fig.no.6) between her forename and family name which underlines the distance between her private self and social self. Certainly, it can be said that Nina was able to tackle

¹⁰ In the Morettian Graphological System each sign is measured (quantification in tenths)

obstacles and problems: active, pragmatic, courageous, and persistent¹¹. Nina was a sister Peppino could always rely on.

To conclude, here a photo of the young Holy Physician being held closely by his elder sister. It is remarkably emblematic of the life-long supportive role guaranteed to Peppino by Nina.



Vincenza De Petrillo

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¹¹ *Intozzata I modo (Thickened Type I) + Aste rette (Straight Strokes)+ Recisa (Truncated) + Mantiene il rigo (Stable Baseline)+ Angoli (B Angles)*