

ANNA MORPURGO DAVIES, 10 YEARS ON

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Memories: Giorgio Graffi & Clelia Mora

When you're talking about someone you first met in an academic context, but with whom those links later developed into a personal friendship, it's difficult, if not impossible, in remembering her to keep the two sides of the story apart. In our case, it's even harder since our respective research fields are distinct (Anatolian studies for Clelia and theoretical linguistics and history of linguistics for Giorgio), with the result that we each came into contact with Anna on different occasions via different routes. Indeed, Anna only learnt that we were married just before a seminar on Anatolian hieroglyphics held in Naples and Procida in 1995. This unexpected discovery so delighted her that she immediately communicated her surprise to all the other participants.

From that time on we established a very friendly relationship with frequent exchanges of messages and telephone calls touching not only on matters academic but also on our respective feline friends (Mora 2015). We also visited each other from time to time, sometimes but not always for work-related reasons. We wouldn't want to presume, but we have always believed that it was thanks to this friendship that Anna, who, because of her heavy administrative load at Oxford, was for the most part reluctant to accept invitations to events abroad, almost always responded positively to our requests.

At this point our memories fall into two parts, each dedicated to one of the main strands of Anna's research interests and to the impact they have had on our own research. The narrative then reconverges when we recall special moments together with Anna, both in Italy and in Britain.

Clelia: Anna and the study of Anatolian languages and scripts

When Hawkins, Morpurgo-Davies & Neumann (1973) appeared, I had just graduated with a thesis on Hittite seals inscribed with Anatolian hieroglyphs. As is well known, that book represented a moment of fundamental change in research on Anatolian hieroglyphics: the new readings that were proposed for some of the key signs modified the phonetic analysis of the written language with the characters of the so-called 'Anatolian hieroglyphs'. The three authors took upon themselves this revision and systematization, proposing at the same time a unified system for the transcription of the ideograms. From a personal perspective, apart from my academic interest, I was also very proud that the book was dedicated to Piero Meriggi, 'dem Pionier vieler Entzifferungen' who, together with Onofrio Carruba, had supervised my thesis in Pavia. When I then read in the Proceedings of the following conference on writings from ancient Anatolia, organized in 1977 by Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli at the Scuola Normale di Pisa, the paper by Anna Morpurgo Davies and J. David Hawkins (1978), my interest in that topic, and in particular their way of approaching it, became even stronger. In the following years, as I continued my studies and attended more conferences, I got to know two of the authors of the 'booklet' from 1973, Hawkins and Neumann, while my meeting with Anna only came a good while later at the already mentioned 1995 seminar in Naples and Procida organized by Massimiliano Marazzi to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of that 'redecipherment' (Marazzi 1998). As I explained in my memory of Anna (Mora 2015), that meeting was for me not only the realization of a significant academic ambition but the discovery of a surprising and extremely communicative personality.

Among the many occasions when Anna came to Italy after our persistent invitations, I have particularly fond memories of the series of eleven classes that she gave when visiting Pavia in

2005. I had persuaded her – not without some difficulty – to give a brief cycle of classes on ancient scripts for advanced and doctoral students at the Istituto Universitario di Studi Superiori (IUSS). The course focused in particular but not only on the Anatolian Hieroglyphic and the Mycenaean scripts, and general problems connected to decipherment and interpretation. In fact, the handouts that she gave the students (and of which fortunately I have kept a copy) display a richness and depth of content going well beyond the needs of the specialist seminar and the illustration of the individual scripts and the mechanisms of decipherment. For those lucky enough to be present on that occasion it was without doubt a special experience, the only downside being that the material in question was never worked up into published form.

Giorgio: Anna and the history of linguistics

Up until the mid 1980's, I knew Anna only as a name, especially (and thanks to Clelia) as a world-leading expert on Anatolian scripts and languages. Things changed, however, when I learned from Giulio Lepschy that she had been assigned the chapter on the nineteenth century in the *History of Linguistics* that he was editing. My immediate reaction was that it wouldn't be much different from the classic accounts by people like Delbrück and Pedersen with their almost exclusive focus on comparative-historical linguistics. That said, curiosity inspired me to read some of Anna's articles on the topic (for example Morpurgo Davies 1978, 1986), where I found myself face-to-face with a reconstruction for me at least completely new, one in which the comparative-historical and the theoretical-descriptive dimensions, far from excluding each other, were considered to be inseparable by nineteenth-century linguists. This account found its most complete expression with the appearance of Anna's chapter in 1994, opportunely republished as an autonomous volume in Italian two years later and in English, the language in which she had written her original draft, as Morpurgo Davies (1998). Anna's work was extremely useful when I came to write Graffi (1991), which deals with the study of syntax in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I was both surprised and delighted to then receive a phone call from Anna telling me how much she had enjoyed reading my book. A few years later she took part in two seminars organized by myself and my colleague Claudio Marazzini, one on general themes in the history of linguistics (held in Udine in 1996) and one on the life and work of Carlo Denina (hosted at the Università Statale in Milan in 1999 by the then professor of comparative philology, Renato Arena). Unfortunately, the proceedings of neither of these seminars were published and we thus have no record of Anna's contributions. By contrast, we do have the published version of her magisterial lecture at the 32nd Congress of the Società Italiana di Glottologia (SIG, Verona, 2007) organized by Paola Cotticelli Kurras and myself (Morpurgo 2009). Here Anna puts to rest many equivocations about the alleged racism of nineteenth-century linguistics as made manifest in the concept of 'Indo-European', and which, according to its detractors, sought to highlight the superiority of a presumed Aryan race. She showed with great clarity that the label in fact designated a purely linguistic category, even if it had been unfortunately exploited by Fascists and Nazis as support for their antisemitic policies. Among the many cases she cites, two seem to me of particular interest. The first concerns one of the fathers of Indo-European studies, August Friedrich Pott, who was a harsh critic of the racist theories of Count Gobineau, many of which had inspired Hitler. The other case involves Eduard Hermann, author of a work with a truly shameful title (Hermann 1937). In fact, as Anna notes (p.76), Hermann, who was 'a serious scholar', offers no more than 'an embarrassing attempt to speak about race then gives up and takes refuge in discussing the problem of *Urheimat*'. No doubt that Hermann's intention was to ingratiate himself with the regime, but what this case shows is that the problem lies not in the non-existent racism in Indo-European linguistics but in the political choices made by some linguists. By the same token, Anna never hid her profound antipathy for Antonino Pagliaro, an excellent linguist whose pupil she had been, but who was profoundly compromised by his engagement with Fascism, to the

extent even of teaching a course entitled 'Fascist mysticism' at the Faculty of Education in the University of Rome.

All three together: in Britain and Italy

Even if, for obvious professional reasons, our links and meetings with Anna were often separate, over the years a clear personal friendship had developed which grew richer and deeper in non-academic and less official contexts. In the autumn of 2004, during a trip to Rome (among other things to visit the exhibition about Arslantepe organized by Marcella Frangipane), Anna invited us to dinner in her lovely Roman home. As always, it was great to see her and to discover her outstanding, and hitherto unsuspected, culinary skills. In 2006 Anna wanted to reciprocate our invitation to Pavia the previous year and we spent some days in her Oxford house with its lovely garden, to which she was very attached. Those days were both delightful and intense, during which we came to appreciate her many other qualities and interests. Despite her very demanding commitments, Anna placed herself at our disposal and with her as our guide we visited several of the famous houses in the region. On the morning we were due to leave we were blocked at Heathrow, with all flights, including our own BA one, on hold because of the terrorist threat that August. As soon as she learnt about this Anna came to our aid putting us up for a couple more days until we were able to get seats on an Alitalia flight. Our stay in Oxford was also the chance to make the acquaintance of Tawi a very 'decent' (her word was *perbene*) black kitten that she had finally taken into her house after overcoming worries about who would look after her during her many absences (Mora 2015).

In September 2008 Anna was invited to Pavia together with Giulio Lepschy to hold another series of seminars at the IUSS. On that occasion, since we were their points of reference also for practical matters, and in particular choice of restaurants and *pizzeria*, we spent some truly delightful evenings in their company, along with Anna Laura Momigliano Lepschy, chatting about academic, but not only academic, matters. On that occasion we gave her some issues of an excellent gardening magazine published by friends of ours who lived in the province of Pavia. She read them with great pleasure and indeed, during a break in the seminar series, we found the time to visit our friends and their splendid garden, about which Anna was full of enthusiasm.

In December 2010, Anna was invited as guest of honour to open the event to celebrate Onofrio Carruba's 80th birthday. She was very much looking forward to it but on the day she was due to fly (21st December) bad weather in northern Italy blocked the flight. Very disappointed, all she could do was send a written message. And, sadly, there were no other chances for us to meet but we continued to exchange messages, on both academic and other matters, even during her illness.

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