

“It is confusion and misunderstanding that we must first attack or we must fail hopelessly in the long run.”*

Taking Stock of the Published Correspondence
of Victoria Lady Welby

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Victoria Lady Welby (1837–1912)

1 Introduction

Victoria Lady Welby (1837–1912), the founder of signification as a sign theory with a communication orientation (cf. Schmitz 1985: lxxvi–cviii), favored the minor and at the same time less strict literary forms such as the essay, essaylet, parable, and less frequently even the poem – but above all the letter – when testing, relating and discussing her ideas and thoughts. Numerous texts in these forms, the shortest only a few lines in length, but the longest scarcely over ten or twelve typewritten pages, have been published in their original form, often self-published, but were also points of crystallization or at least components of nearly all her publications from journal articles to books. These short forms were fully retained in *Grains of Sense*

* Lady Welby to Frederik van Eeden, Nov. 10 1909 (Van Eeden/Welby 1954: 87; cf. also Petrilli 2009: 791).

(Welby 1897). They remain easily recognizable in the short chapters of *Significs and Language* (Welby 1911a/1985), whereas in *What is Meaning?* (Welby 1903/1983), with but a few exceptions, they serve merely to provide substance for purposes of a scientific monograph. Yet the scholarly article and monograph were so unrepresentative of Lady Welby's mind set and working methods that from about 1890 on, she repeatedly enlisted the support of her scholarly friends in framing texts of that nature – principal among whom was doubtless the philosopher, psychologist and (from 1891 to 1920) *Mind* editor George Frederick Stout (1860–1944). Later, from 1900 onward, she even employed assistants for such work (cf. Schmitz 1985: lviif., lxiiif.).

No matter how important to Lady Welby books and articles in journals, reference works and encyclopedias proved to be over the years, letters remained her central and predominant form and medium for queries, new proposals, trying out terminology, simply imparting ideas as well as serious discussion and collaboration. She had no problem incorporating essays, parables or drafts into a letter, thereby creating the learned audience she intended them to reach. By advance notice or mention in letters or through the mail, she paved a way for her publications to reach those recipients whose opinions and attention she valued most. And by appending copies of letters sent by others or herself to her missive, she served as a mediator between positions or broadened the discussion base, granting through dialogue access to her scholarly salon conducted with the aid of correspondence. For this reason, the letters between Lady Welby and persons of importance to her, the scholars, writers, clergymen, politicians and the like in Great Britain, the USA and on the continent, represent source materials for her thought, especially significs, that are nearly as important as her journal articles and books.

To characterize document availability, research status and research opportunities in this area, it is deemed both appropriate and helpful to survey the accessibility and availability of Lady Welby's correspondence in published works, to consider the editorial treatment it has received and to assess the usefulness of the published material as sources for scholarly historiography and other studies. The first step in this undertaking will be a consideration of only the older publications, taking each correspondent separately. In the second step, the editions of letters exchanged between Lady Welby and numerous different correspondents in *Signifying and Understanding* (Petrilli 2009) will be addressed, including, among other things, the Russell-Welby correspondence, presented there for the first time, which I plan to take up in greater detail later in a separate study.

2 Older Publications of Lady Welby's Correspondence

Even during her lifetime, a few of the letters written by Lady Welby or addressed to her were published. For instance, the poet and journalist Edwin Arnold (1832–1904) printed long passages from Lady Welby's letters to him and to the physicist John Tyndall (1820–1893) on the subject of his essay "Death – and afterwards" that appeared in 1885 in his later book of the same title (cf. Welby 1887a). The Hon. Canon of Durham Cathedral and Rector William O. Blunt followed suit with a letter written to him by Lady Welby about "spiritual life as manifested in private" (cf. Welby 1887b).

Intended for direct publication, on the other hand, were Lady Welby's letters to the editor of periodicals such as *Nature* (Welby 1898; 1911b; cf. also *The New York Times* 1911), *The Fortnightly Review* (Welby 1904) or the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* (Welby 1908).

Of letters addressed to Lady Welby, only some letters from the linguist and theologian Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) were published during her lifetime (cf. Müller 1902: 63–67, 85f., 104, 273). Müller's letters, which belong to a voluminous correspondence spanning the period from 1870 to 1900 with some interruptions, were not actually all printed in full, but they did include dates and they had a short preface by Lady Welby about her acquaintance with Müller (cf. Welby 1902).

Following her death (29 March 1912), Lady Welby's correspondence, which constitutes a considerable portion of her intellectual legacy, suffered highly diverse fates, to the extent that it survived at all (cf. Bowsfield 1990). As early as December 1912 the following appeal appeared in *The Academy and Literature* (vol. 83, no. 2119 (1912: Dec. 14), p. 773) and was repeated in January 1913 in *Mind* (N.S., vol. 22, no. 85 (1913: Jan.), p. 160) under the heading "The Late Lady Welby."

We are requested to state that a biography of the late Victoria Lady Welby is in course of preparation. It is hoped that her friends and correspondents may be willing to assist by placing such letters as they may possess at the disposal of her family. The greatest care will be taken of the letters, and they will be returned to their respective owners intact at the earliest possible date. In the absence of any definite expression of wish to the contrary it will be assumed that the loan of the letters implies permission to publish where deemed desirable.

The letters should be sent to Sir Charles Welby, Bart., C.B., Denton Manor, Grantham.

Ultimately, three books appeared instead of the planned biography. These were partly original works by Lady Welby's daughter, Nina Cust (1867–1955),¹ who also translated Michel Bréal's *Essai de Sémantique* (1897) into English for publication in 1900 besides having made a name for herself as a poet and sculptor, and partly her compilation of passages taken from letters exchanged by Lady Welby with the most diverse correspondents. The first to appear was *Wanderers* (Cust 1928),² started as early as 1913 and still very much in the mold of the initially planned biography, in which Nina Cust treats the first 30 years of Lady Welby's life, but above all the adventurous travels of the young Lady Welby with her mother, Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley (1806–1855), in a retelling based on diaries and letters.

Subsequently, in 1929 and 1931, Nina Cust went on to publish two volumes of excerpts from Lady Welby's correspondence (Welby 1929; 1931).³ The first volume covers the period from 1879–1891, and the second includes the years 1898–1911. The lay-out of these two books is utterly unconventional. Wherever possible, both sides of the correspondence with a total of 158 people are reproduced. The letters are presented without any commentary or introductory background aside from extremely sparse information on persons newly entering into correspondence with Lady Welby, which is relegated to footnotes. It is never mentioned whether a letter exists in the original or in the form of a carbon copy or typewritten copy. None of the letters is dated or gives the location where it was written. Were it not for adroitly paired letters grouped together in chapters spanning two and four-year periods at a time, the

1 Nina Cust, short for Emmeline Mary Elizabeth Cust, married Henry John Cockayne Cust (1861–1917) in 1893 and published all her books with the exception of her three books of poetry under the name of "Mrs. Henry Cust." For more on Nina Cust and her publications cf. Chipchase (1990: 46–54).

2 The following is a postscript to *Wanderers* (Cust 1928: 365) set in italics:
 "The greater part of this book was written in 1913–14, after the death of my mother, the younger traveller. When the war came it was put aside, and it is only lately that I have been able to complete it.
 July, 1927. Nina Cust."

3 For contemporary reactions to the two books, cf. reviews by Courtney (1929; 1932) and Shelmerdine (1931).

reader would be unable to arrive at an approximately chronological sequencing of the letters. However, examination of archived material reveals frequent errors in this grouping, as Nina Cust mistakenly assigned many letters to the wrong period. Apparently thematic ties and proximity were more important to her than chronological order in her basic effort, pursuing goals of a more literary nature, to characterize epochs, styles and persons by the selection, abridgment and arrangement of texts (cf. Chipchase 1990: 49–52).

But there are more serious flaws that, in combination with the shortcomings mentioned above, seriously limit the usefulness of these correspondence editions for historiographic purposes, these being the redaction of numerous letters and especially of the opening lines by Nina Cust, her failure to show where parts were eliminated from the letters, most of which had only been reproduced as excerpts in the first place, and even, in several instances, the melding together of different letters by the same author into one letter.⁴ And yet these two books by Nina Cust are more than just “[...] a most brilliant contribution to the picturing and documenting of a whole phase of Victorian progressive thought” or “[...] a window on a particular sort of Edwardian mental life [which] can hardly hope to be surpassed” (Chipchase 1990: 52). Notwithstanding all their limitations, which should be borne in mind every time they are used, they still represent valuable source material for research as even today they are the most exhaustive publication of the letters and, moreover, include a few letters and traces of correspondence that were later lost or sometimes partially or even completely destroyed (cf. Schmitz 1985: clxxxix, n. 4).

An early and, even for those who know Welby’s work, probably surprising trace of attention having turned to Nina Cust’s editions of correspondence is found in the English poet, author and translator David Gascoyne (1916–2001). In numerous letters written by Lady Welby between 1900 and 1907 (all cited according to Welby 1931), Gascoyne discovered characteristic traits of existential philosophical thought, which prompted him to include passages of several pages in length from these letters in his “Little Anthology of Existential Thought” (Gascoyne 1946: 192–198). This documentation, containing no commentary or information whatsoever on Lady Welby the person or her work, appeared in Gascoyne under the heading of “Victoria Welby” in the surprising company of texts by Kierkegaard, Chestov, Buber and others.

Probably the first to recognize and demonstrate how valuable Nina Cust’s editions of the letters could be for *research* was H.S. Thayer (1923–2008) by virtue of his plumbing the two books and utilizing them to reconstruct the line of connections and the transmission of ideas from Peirce by way of Lady Welby to C.K. Ogden and on down from Ogden and Richards’ *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) to Ramsey and Wittgenstein, not to mention Thayer’s analysis of the mesh of interconnections between Lady Welby, Peirce, James, Russell, Schiller, Vailati, Calderoni and others (Thayer 1968: 306–308, 333f., 338). In this way, Thayer was instrumental in rediscovering Lady Welby, as indeed was research on the history of pragmatism in general and Peirce in particular.

“There is no question about Lady Welby’s role as a center for the transmission of ideas, ideas mostly relating to her interest in language and meaning. She seems to have known almost everyone of intellectual note in England, America, and much of France. These luminaries who

4 As deplored by Myers (1995: 21): “This is unfortunate because one chief aspect of Welby’s value as a ‘serious worker,’ as she told Peirce she wanted to be known, transcends her intellectual work itself: her letters reveal an enthusiastic, questing personality devoted to bringing like minds together. In this she is the model of a life spent in the collaborative pursuit of the mind’s best access to the true and the real.”

happened to write on the nature of knowledge or language or both, and were not acquainted with Lady Welby, soon found themselves engaged in correspondence with her and even visiting her home.

For our purpose it is Lady Welby's correspondence with Peirce, James, Russell, Schiller, and Vailati that is of special interest" (Thayer 1968: 306).

And Thayer's reconstructions of philosophical history drawn from the published correspondence of Lady Welby led him to an important thesis that implied what was at the time a noteworthy re-evaluation of Lady Welby's intellectual work:

"If one surveys British philosophy in the twenty-year interval between the publication of Lady Welby's *What is Meaning?* and Ogden/Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning*, the impressive fact is how the subject of *meaning* became of increasing interest, puzzlement, and concern to philosophers. One reason, I suspect, for the waning of Hegelianism and the systems of Idealism is that while their spokesmen said a great deal about language and meaning, what they said appeared (rightly or wrongly) to shed very little light on the analysis of meaning" (Thayer 1968: 308).

Not until almost 30 years later was Thayer's re-assessment of Lady Welby's role explicitly spelled out and heightened by Russell E. Dale, albeit on the basis of a much broader and more reliable foundation of sources and research:

"The history of the theory of meaning in the twentieth century, I believe, should rightly begin with the work of Victoria Welby (1837–1912). Welby is the first, I think, to see the question, 'What is meaning?' as worth careful scrutiny in its own right" (Dale 1996: 38f.).⁵

Lady Welby's correspondence with the Dutch poet, psychiatrist and social reformer Frederik van Eeden (1860–1932) was doubtless one of her most extensive and longest. He introduced Lady Welby's ideas and writings on signification to the Netherlands, from which there ultimately arose a sweeping interdisciplinary scientific movement, i.e. the Signific movement in the Netherlands. In the 30s, this movement maintained close contact with members of the Vienna Circle and the Unity of Science movement and continued to enjoy a large following and organizational base on into the mid-50s in the 20th century (cf. Schmitz 1990a, b). Because the Welby family members had donated Van Eeden's letters to Lady Welby to the Frederik van Eeden Museum in Amsterdam,⁶ the Frederik van Eeden-Genootschap was able to use the original letters for its edition of the correspondence spanning the period from 13 August 1892 to 11 February 1912 (Van Eeden/Welby 1954). With a brief introductory framework, this edition is printed on 90 large format pages without further commentary aside from two footnotes and, upon comparison with the original letters, it proves to be very reliable. The only caveat is that occasionally parts have been left out without being signaled as usual by the editors. Also missing are identifiers indicating which letters were already previously published (in part) by Nina Cust (cf. Welby 1931: 49f., 71f., 113–116, 218f., 236–242, 250f.) and a listing of the many letters that never made it into the edition. The epistolary exchange frequently ranged far beyond questions having to do with signification. It repeatedly turned to the

5 Cf. also the online version of this unpublished dissertation, in which the pagination differs from the paper version cited here: www.russelldale.com/dissertation.

W. A. Myers (1995: 1) comes to a similar conclusion: "[...] Welby's work on meaning was influential in its time and still merits study and development."

6 Mrs. Henry Cust (i.e. Nina Cust) sent Frederik van Eeden's letters to Lady Welby to Van Eeden's son or the Frederik van Eeden-Genootschap with an accompanying letter dated "December 9, 1932", in other words a few months after Van Eeden's death.

personal relationship between F. van Eeden and Lady Welby and their very opposite positions on political and social issues.

As was the case with the publication of Lady Welby's correspondence with Van Eeden, so it was also with publications containing other letters (cf. for example Ogden/Richards 1923, Appendix D, §6; Peirce 1953) and even with the study of letters or other material in Lady Welby's papers up to the year 1970, all of which depended on the generosity of Welby's son (Sir Charles Welby, 1865–1938) and later her grandson (Sir Oliver Welby, 1902–1977) when it came to lending out letters or allowing access to the papers, although most scholars showed an interest primarily in Lady Welby's correspondents rather than in her or her intellectual work. So it was when the English philosopher Henry Siltou Harris (1926–2007), who taught at York University in Toronto since 1962, was also allowed access to the letters between Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909) and Lady Welby (cf. Harris 1963b; Schmitz 1985: clxxi–clxxvii). He had participated earlier in the “Convegno di studi sul pensiero di Vailati” in Italy (Milano – Crema, 4–5 maggio 1963) where he gave a presentation on logical pragmatism, Peirce and Vailati (Harris 1963a).⁷ His first encounter with Sir Oliver Welby in 1963 eventually led to an invitation for Harris to visit Denton Manor near Grantham in Lincolnshire in 1969 and examine the Welby Collection and offer his suggestions on a suitable location where it could be housed. When the inspection was completed, the final result – as so often before and again later – hinged on judging that the value of the Welby papers resided primarily in her correspondence with notable personalities of her day or, more specifically, in the letters penned by them and much less in the letters and other texts written by Lady Welby:

Upon examination of the collection Professor Harris was convinced that the importance of the Welby papers lay “in the voluminous ... correspondence that she conducted with a truly awe-inspiring array of intellectual leaders in her own time.” Professor Charles S. Hardwick, of Texas Tech University, whose opinion on the significance of the collection had been sought, reported that the extensive correspondence between Lady Welby and ‘the most important philosophers, theologians, and scientists, in England and America’ revealed ‘not only some important insight into the thinking of this remarkable lady, but also new and important insights into the thinking of the men whose ideas shaped and molded nineteenth century thought’.⁸ On the basis of this assessment and Professor Harris’ recommendation the Welby papers were acquired by York University in 1970 (Bowsfield 1990: 276).

Today the entire Welby papers collection, known as the “Lady Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Welby fonds” (Inventory F0443)⁹ is kept in the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections of the York University Libraries, 305 Scott Library.¹⁰

For many years now, Lady Welby's correspondence with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) has attracted the greatest international interest of all.¹¹ Here again the general

7 “The letters of Vailati to Lady Welby together with copies or summaries of her letters to him were preserved by her and are still in the possession of the Welby family. Through the courtesy of her grandson, Sir Oliver Welby, I was able to examine them and have copies made while on my way back to Toronto after attending the Centennial Convention of Vailati Studies in Milan” (Harris 1963b: 330).

8 Cf. further details in Hardwick (1971).

9 “The fonds consists of Lady Welby's correspondence, research and reference notes, publications, poetry, newspaper clippings, and printed material. It also includes of galley proofs of Francis Galton's papers on eugenics.” (Inventory of the York University Archives and Special Collections)

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11 “[...] (not to mention the famous correspondence with Charles Sanders Peirce, virtually the only thing Welby is known for – to the extent that she is known – in the United States)” (Myers 1995: 15).

consensus was that one not only could but should concentrate on the Peirce letters as it was there, after all, that he spoke about his semiotics with so much more clarity and detail than practically anywhere else in his body of work. Thus, this correspondence had quite a lively history, having passed through many different hands before Charles S. Hardwick (1931–2001) set out to publish the first complete edition of all the letters (Peirce/Welby 1977). Hardwick (1977a) recapitulated developments beginning with fragments published in Ogden/Richards (1923, Appendix D, §6),¹² on through the collection edited by Nina Cust (Welby 1931: 144–150, 154–158, 161–164, 296–314) and then Irwin Chester Lieb's (1925–1992) slightly commentated but incomplete edition of the Peirce letters (Peirce 1953) all the way to the 8th volume of the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (CP VIII, 1958/1966).¹³ He makes no mention, however, of Lieb's rather astounding justification for the decision to reprint only Peirce's letters:

As only preliminary versions of Lady Welby's letters to Peirce have come to hand, it has seemed advisable to publish but one side of their correspondence. What Lady Welby wrote to Peirce, with what interest and encouragement, are nevertheless clear from Peirce's letters to her (Lieb 1953, Introductory Note).

In chapter 24 of his *Values in a Universe of Chance* (Peirce 1958: 380–434; 1966: 380–434), Philip P. Wiener (1906–1992) reprinted a considerable number of Peirce's letters to Lady Welby from the Lieb edition. None too soon after Lieb's edition of letters appeared in print (Wiener 1962), Wiener targeted precisely the aforementioned justification given by Lieb, for Lieb had furthermore added but a meager footnote to Peirce's recognition of Lady Welby for having been asked to write an article on "the exact science of 'significs'" for the 11th edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, stating merely: "Lady Welby contributed the article entitled 'Significs' to the 10th [sic!] and 11th editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* [sic!]" (Peirce 1953: 29). This probably occasioned Wiener's comment echoing the sentiment:

Her article on 'Significs' in the *Encyclopedia* [sic!] *Britannica* (10th [sic!] and 11th editions), to which Ogden and Richards refer in their *Meaning of Meaning*,¹⁴ would not be judged as very significant from the standpoint of later developments in semantics (Wiener 1962: 270).

The correspondence begins with Lady Welby's letter dated 24 May 1903 and ends with a letter from Welby's daughter-in-law – not Welby's daughter, as stated by Hardwick (1977a: x) – dated 25 February 1912.

More information on the relations between Peirce and Lady Welby can be found in Deledalle (1990) and Schmitz (1985: cxlviii–clviii).

- 12 "[...] and by the kindness of Sir Charles Welby such portions of the correspondence as serve to throw light on his published articles on Signs are here reproduced" (Ogden/Richards 1923: 279).
- 13 There are numerous errors in Hardwick's account (1977a), however. For instance, Ogden did not cite Peirce's letter of December 14, 1908, but the one dated Dec. 23, 1908. Furthermore, Hardwick's listing of letters between Peirce and Lady Welby, parts and excerpts of which were published by Nina Cust (Welby 1931), has some omissions and errors. Not included in his list are one letter from Lady Welby to Peirce (June 29, 1904) (cf. Welby 1931: 149–150) and two letters from Peirce to Lady Welby (Dec. 16, 1904, and Dec. 23, 1908) (cf. Welby 1931: 161–163, 301–305). And Hardwick's statement to the contrary notwithstanding, Nina Cust published nothing from Peirce's letter of Oct. 12, 1904.
- 14 This refers to the place in Appendix D, §6, about Peirce, where Ogden und Richards (1923: 287) quote the passage from Peirce's letter of 1909 March 14, in which he discusses her article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and elaborates on the great concordance between her trichotomy of *Sense*, *Meaning* und *Significance* and his own three interpretants.

This bias, rooted in ignorance and misunderstanding, belittling the other party in Peirce's correspondence, persisted until Hardwick's new edition of the Peirce-Welby correspondence (Peirce/Welby 1977) put an end to it. When explaining his decision to reproduce the correspondence in its entirety – strangely, he still felt compelled to give an explicit justification – Hardwick leaves no room for doubt regarding the objective basis of his position:

The present edition has been expanded to include the letters from Lady Welby to Peirce. The justification for including them is twofold. Lady Welby was, in her own right, an important figure in the history of semiotic. Although her work is not as extensive as Peirce's, she nonetheless made a substantial contribution to the development of semiotic around the turn of the century. Also, including her side of the correspondence contributes to an understanding of Peirce's letters. Much of what he had to say was in response to comments and questions contained in her letters (Hardwick 1977a: ix).

But not even this could reverse the largely uninformed proclivity of strict Peirce disciples to undervalue the ideas and work of Lady Welby.¹⁵

In the preface, introductory background, accompanying in-depth commentary and appended supplementary material to Hardwick's publication of the correspondence, the generally required demands applicable to a scientific edition of correspondence are met for the first time. By the same token, it surely contributed in a major way to the rediscovery of signification. However it is no less true that Hardwick's own studies about Lady Welby's biography and signification (Hardwick 1971; 1977b) have added little beyond the insights communicated by Ogden and Richards (1923: 279–290) or brought to light by Thayer (1968).

Aside from the previously mentioned flaws in Hardwick's documentation of portions of the correspondence published before, this edition must also be faulted for omissions. I subsequently published the four apparently overlooked letters of Lady Welby along with one from Peirce to J.W. Slaughter¹⁶ several years later in a chapter on the relationship and exchange of ideas between Peirce and Lady Welby (cf. Schmitz 1985: cxlvii–clviii). Hardwick unfortunately did not avail himself of the opportunity to rectify these long since recognized defects when the second edition of *Semiotic and Signification* (Peirce/Welby 2001) came out as Number Eight of the *Peirce Studies*, which would finally have resulted in a complete edition of the letters. His only change to the first edition was to add a benignly uninformative "Introduction to the Second Edition" (Hardwick 2001) and a 48-page computer-generated index of key words.¹⁷

The last and most recent correspondence with Lady Welby to be published that should be mentioned here was with the Dutch philosopher Gerardus Johannes Petrus Josephus Bolland (1854–1922). Lady Welby's contact with the Hegelian Bolland, the pre-eminent philosopher

15 Thus, one already finds in a review of Hardwick's edition: "As for Lady Welby's letters and essays, their interest seems to me to be purely historical. While she did concern herself early on with the general topic of meaning, her substantive contributions to that area were minimal. [...] Unlike Peirce, she did not want to develop a detailed theory in this area [...] But what is so clear as one reads these letters is that Lady Welby's discussion lacks any sort of embedding in a theory of language, whereas Peirce's division of interpretants [...]." (Altshuler 1979: 95) Cf. the contrasting assessment by Rosenthal (1979: 487).

16 For more on John Willis Slaughter (1878–1964) and his correspondence with Peirce cf. Peirce/Welby (1977: 132, 138ff., 176f.) and Schmitz (1985: lxxv, clv–clviii).

17 This is most likely an (over)reaction to Altshuler's (1979: 93f.) review harkening back to the spirit of the times, in which he criticized the absence of a subject index as "the greatest defect," adding a minimal index with entries on 19 thematic categories to help the reader.

in the Netherlands at the time, came about through the intercession of F. van Eeden, who had already corresponded with Bolland in 1889, 1890 and 1896 (cf. Noordegraaf 2005: 119f.). Lady Welby hoped to interest him in *What is Meaning?* (Welby 1903) and her signifiacs, but was dismissed very brusquely by this correspondent, known for his arrogance, and not even the famously tenacious and imperturbable Lady Welby could prevail.¹⁸ This correspondence in 1904, from which Nina Cust herself published two letters as prime examples (cf. Welby 1931: 123f.), therefore did not continue very long and consisted of only a handful of letters. Jan Noordegraaf compiled the letters from each side, three from Bolland and three from Lady Welby, together with F. van Eeden's letter to Bolland that initiated their correspondence, adding a knowledgeable introduction and placing the letters in their historical context along with helpful commentaries (Noordegraaf 1991). A newer edition of this accomplished piece of successful scientific historiography has appeared in somewhat revised and more concise form (Noordegraaf 2005). No other edition of selections from Welby's correspondence lives up to the established standards for a scientific text compilation to the extent that this one does.

3 Editions of correspondence in *Signifying and Understanding* (2009)

Susan Petrilli's monumental *Signifying and Understanding* (2009) represents an attempt to make Lady Welby's numerous epistolary exchanges with all sorts of different contemporaries accessible by compiling them into her own edition for the first time since Nina Cust's books containing excerpts from Lady Welby's correspondence. Embedded in five of the book's eight chapters is the heading "*Correspondence from the archives,*" under which a sub-heading heralds and promises "A selection from her unpublished correspondence [...]." Grouped together and presented in this way as sub-sections are letters exchanged with 15 different correspondents, but although the author claims otherwise¹⁹, they are for the most part neither closely nor loosely related to the surrounding text written by Petrilli or Lady Welby. Nor would such close or loose connections be required by the general documentary and archival aims of *Signifying and Understanding*.²⁰ However, as will be demonstrated below, this is less in keeping with the special objective and aspiration Petrilli attaches to her edition of selected Welby correspondence, namely:

Here again, the selection presented in this volume aims to signal the interest of these materials from both a theoretical and historical point of view. It is to be hoped that research projects continue, resulting in the integral publication of Welby's epistolary exchanges, as in the case of the volume collecting the correspondence between Welby and Charles S. Peirce, *Semiotic and Signifiacs. The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, 1977 (Petrilli 2009: 5).

18 More about relations between G. J. P. J. Bolland and the Dutch signifiacs, who learned about the Bolland-Welby correspondence from F. van Eeden, can be found in Schmitz (1990b: 234–236, 269–271).

19 Cf. for example Petrilli (2009: 41): "This selection is related to the issues I have highlighted and discussed in this volume."

20 A broader discussion and critique in German of this more than 1000-page opus can be found in the comprehensive review by Schmitz (2011). Not one point, either concurring or criticizing, that is expounded or argued therein or in the remaining portions of the present article is also encountered in any of the other reviews dealing with Petrilli's *Signifying and Understanding* that have come to my attention. Instead, the others all fail to venture beyond the purely descriptive and noncommittal (cf. van Bendegem 2011; Cabak Rédei 2010; Nuessel 2011).

On the whole, Petrilli's correspondence editions clearly miss the mark stated above, but also fall short of the general documentary and archival aims, being at best not quite up to the basic standards that apply to scholarly editions.

Some persistent defects in the manner of presenting the correspondence can first be noted before addressing specifics of the letters exchanged with all 15 correspondents. The criteria used to decide which correspondence to publish preferentially and which to pass over are nowhere truly explained or spelled out in a comment, much less derived from a substantive analysis, and indeed only tentative indications of such can be found. The only remaining answer is couched in the following generalities:

The letter texts presented have been selected on the basis of their theoretical interest, while more personal comments are reported only when they illuminate some aspect of her studies, research method, and personality (Petrilli 2009: 17).

Not even the criterion implied by each chapter heading, announcing that "unpublished correspondence" is to follow, is taken seriously either in the accompanying text²¹ or in the practical selection process.

The only source material was letters in the form of originals, copies, carbon copies, and partial or complete typewritten copies found in the Welby Collection of the York University Archives when gathering material; in other words, not Welby's original letters (or copies thereof) from other archives. Although Petrilli (cf. for example 2009: 41) describes different types of documents, such as typewritten copies in a kind of shorthand or copies of letters sent or received minus greeting, closing or signature, she hardly ever mentions in what form a letter edited by her is extant in the archive. Indeed it is her avowed practice to omit all greetings and closings from the letters as a matter of course – "even when available" (Petrilli 2009:41)²² –, to format dates when the letters were written in a uniformly consistent manner ("15 January 1908") but leave out the addresses or place names on letterheads, and at times even to make other deletions that should be indicated accordingly, as the deleted information at the beginning and end of the letters is, by inserting '[...]' – although sometimes they are not.

But that is not all. Entire letters are almost routinely left out and not reproduced, whether intentionally or not, without being listed and without identifying when or by whom they were sent, thus rendering the correspondence edited by Petrilli practically useless for all but the most limited research purposes considering how untransparent and uncertain the data are and how meager or absent their factual integration and commentary. Even measured by the inclusion of documents in the Welby Collection, correspondence has not been fully compiled for any of the 15 correspondents, despite Petrilli's claims of complete edition, viz. the Russell-Welby correspondence. While previous publications must be faulted for their primary emphasis on letters from Lady Welby's renowned correspondents, Petrilli's editing efforts must be criticized for focusing in some instances almost exclusively on letters written by

21 Thus, in a remark pertaining to Lady Welby's correspondence with seven different authors in the context of the first chapter, it is stated that "Appended to this chapter is a selection of letters, previously published and unpublished, from WCYA [Welby Collection, York University Archives]" (2009:17), and it is stated elsewhere that "This selection of letters from the unpublished correspondence in the Welby Collection [...] includes excerpts from Welby's correspondence with the following authors [...]" (2009: 41).

22 A practice resembling that of Nina Cust, to whom it is possible to trace many of the copied letters in the Welby Collection that went into the Cust editions (Welby 1929; 1931) which were intended to be judged by literary rather than scholarly standards.

Welby, thereby neglecting the interlocutory aspect of epistolary exchanges she valued so highly and rendering the sequence of letters incomprehensible.

Turning now to correspondence with each individual, the small number of included letters between the poet and journalist Sir Edwin Arnold (1832–1904) and Lady Welby comprise three of Arnold’s letters and five from Lady Welby written in 1887 and 1888 (cf. Petrilli 2009: 42–47). They are thematically grouped around a letter from Lady Welby to the physicist John Tyndall (1820–1893) containing her response to his request for her to comment on Edwin Arnold’s essay entitled “Death – and Afterwards” (1885). This commentary and excerpts from Lady Welby’s letters to Arnold were subsequently included by Arnold in a reprint of the essay (cf. Welby 1887a). Petrilli comments at considerable length on this handful of letters and supplements them with reprints of other documents. However, there are contradictions in the information she provides about excerpts from the correspondence published by Nina Cust (cf. Welby 1929: 185).

In contrast, no commentary or even any sort of personal data accompany the excerpts from Lady Welby’s correspondence with the literary scholar Andrew C. [Cecil] Bradley (1851–1935), consisting only of a short letter (fragment) from Bradley and three of Lady Welby’s letters written in 1899 and 1900 (Petrilli 2009: 47–48).

Equally meager are Petrilli’s commentaries on the correspondence with Andrew C. Bradley’s more famous brother, the philosopher Francis H. [Herbert] Bradley (1846–1924), documented for the period from 1887 to 1903 (Petrilli 2009: 48–55). We are told nothing more about the six letters from Welby and five from Bradley than that the entire exchange has been reproduced – except for four brief letters that are all identified by date and author – and that one of these “unpublished” letters from Bradley was already published earlier by Nina Cust (cf. Welby 1929: 167–168).

Of Welby’s correspondence with the American author Henry James (1843–1916) from 1892 to 1911, Petrilli (2009: 55–57) prints only two letters from 1911, which, as noted by her, Nina Cust had already published earlier in approximately the same length (cf. Welby 1931: 341–43).²³ The motivation for James’ opening letter and probably for singling out both of these letters, as Petrilli also explained, was that Lady Welby had sent James a copy of her most recent book, *Significs and Language* (1911a), with a three-sentence motto from James’ *The Question of Our Speech* (H. James 1905: 10) printed on the title page.

By comparison, it is harder to reconstrue Petrilli’s reasons for including only excerpts with no commentary from the correspondence in 1905 and 1908 with James’ older brother, the psychologist and philosopher William James (1842–1910), (cf. Petrilli 2009: 57–59), and why she failed to consider or at least correctly research and note the already published letters from that correspondence. Of the 12 letters in all that are known, eight from Lady Welby and four from William James, she prints five Welby letters (22 May 1905, 4 April 1908, 10 May 1908, 11 May 1908 and 24 May 1908) and two (26 May 1905 and 9 May 1908) from James.²⁴ Both letters from James have already been printed with thorough commentaries (cf. W. James 1986: 373, 583; 2004: 13) as well as the first, third and fifth letter from Lady Welby (cf. W. James 2003: 43f., 667; 2004: 13; 2004: 13f.). Furthermore, if not published in full and

23 In all, four letters from James to Lady Welby are known to Henry James research (cf. Jobe/Gunter 1999). They are dated 12 May 1892, 31 August 1892, 23 June 1911 (published by Nina Cust and Petrilli) and August (?) 1911 (?).

24 Petrilli neither mentions nor considers two letters from W. James (28 May 1905 and 26 June 1908) and three letters from Lady Welby (28 May 1905, 31 May 1905 and 23 June 1908).

annotated in Volume 11 and 12 of *The Correspondence of William James* (W. James 2003; 2004), all letters in the correspondence are listed in the respective “Calendar” and have been not only formally described but summarized by content (W. James 2003: 562f.; 2004: 583, 586, 588). In one case where Petrilli (2009: 58) actually does attempt to refer back to a Welby letter (4 April 1908) published earlier by Nina Cust, everything turns into a jumble, as one of the letters from Lady Welby to W. James is not in the cited work (Welby 1929: 246–247), but in *Other Dimensions* instead (Welby 1931: 245–247), and the text printed there, purportedly as one letter, is not Lady Welby’s letter of 4 April 1908 but the slightly modified and merged texts of her letters dated 10 May 1908 and 24 May 1908. It ultimately comes as no surprise that Petrilli’s rendering of the text contains numerous minor errors and, in the case of James’ letter of 26 May 1905,²⁵ even several misreadings that distort the meaning (cf. Petrilli 2009: 58; W. James 1986: 373.)

From the correspondence with the Oxford theologian and philologist Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893) only four of Jowett’s letters from 1880,²⁶ 1891 and 1892 are extant, reportedly “in illegible and fading handwriting” (Petrilli 2009: 59). Petrilli (2009: 59–60) has reproduced only the three surviving letters from Lady Welby dated 1891, 1892 and 1893 from this correspondence, without commentary. It is left to the reader to discover that the subject of these letters is two lengthy quotes from Jowett’s *The Dialogues of Plato* (1871; ³1892), which Lady Welby incorporated in her essay “Meaning and Metaphor” (Welby 1893: 521f.).

No doubt the most important and also the most voluminous correspondence in the group so far is that from 1894 to 1911 with the philosopher and psychologist George F. [Frederick] Stout (1860–1944) and his wife Ella Stout, documenting in detail the evolution of Lady Welby’s thought and attesting to Stout’s constant encouragement, support and cooperation throughout the years (Petrilli 2009: 61–80). Stout was, after all, a motivator, helper and proofreader for several publications, co-author of two publications, organizer of the Welby Prize, knowledgeable and astute discussion partner and, last but not least, instrumental in his capacity as the editor of *Mind* for many years (1891–1920) in drawing international attention to several important texts of Lady Welby’s (cf. Schmitz 1985: cxli–cxliv, *passim*). For these very reasons, the criteria for selection of the letters (ten from Stout and 41 from Welby) should have been reported in greater depth,²⁷ and the many factual details, names and titles of publications should have been discussed and annotated with particular care. As that task was left completely undone, however, the reader is left to track down all this information himself, which will hardly be possible without the broad grasp of background information available to the author and without familiarity with the unpublished letters and material.

25 In order to understand this letter, it is important to know that W. James, as noted by Frederick J. Down Scott in his commentary on this letter (cf. James 1986: 583 n. 10), had already received a copy of Lady Welby’s *What Is Meaning?* in 1903. He therefore is apologizing in the letter for not yet having even glanced at it.

26 “1880” could have been misread by Petrilli or the archivists, because in her letter of 25 March 1891, Lady Welby is quite obviously initiating the correspondence when she writes: “On the strength of a mutual friendship with Lady Airlie, I am venturing to write without a formal introduction, to ask if I may quote [...]” (Petrilli 2009: 59).

27 The only indication of all this provided to the reader is in a single note regarding this correspondence (Petrilli 2009: 61): “[This selection is from a large corpus of correspondence, including drafts and notes, consisting mainly of Welby’s letters to George F. Stout, and a few from his wife Ella Stout who took care of his correspondence].” – Nor is it mentioned that eight of the 51 letters were already published by Nina Cust (Welby 1931) and that included in the Cust edition is a letter from Lady Welby to Stout (cf. Welby 1931: 125), that Petrilli has left out of her edition, but quotes, based on the Cust edition, almost in full in a subsequent chapter about the correspondence with B. Russell (cf. Petrilli 2009: 294).

By contrast, the introduction into the correspondence with the French linguist and founder of semantics, Michel Bréal (1832–1915), that Petrilli (2009: 285–287) provides leaves little to be desired and indeed does address the most important stages and events from 1897–1908 around which the letters, ten from Lady Welby and seven from Bréal, compiled along the familiar lines are thematically grouped (2009: 302–307). However, it does come as a surprise that the only publication to date dealing with Lady Welby's signifiacs and French semantics of the late 19th century, that likewise focuses on and analyzes the Bréal-Welby correspondence (cf. Auroux/Delesalle 1990) is neither mentioned nor applied. Little is revealed about the sources for the letters reproduced here, many of them internally abridged and included in shortened form, and one identified as having been published previously by Nina Cust (cf. Welby 1931: 66), aside from an early footnote:

[...] All [letters] have been included in the present selection and are transcribed integrally, save for a final postcard from Bréal to Welby in which he thanks her for the proofs of her Encyclopaedic entry 'Signifiacs' (Petrilli 2009: 302).

However, it remains unclear how the last part of this comment is meant to be understood, because a text with exactly the same content has been included as Bréal's last letter ("5 Mai 1908") concluding the correspondence (cf. Petrilli 2009: 307).

We are given more detailed information than usual regarding the sources for the correspondence with the French philosopher [Pierre] André Lalande (1867–1963) that consists of six letters from Welby and three from Lalande:

[The exchanges between Welby and André Lalande have all been included in the present selection and are transcribed integrally. They are dated 1903 with the exception of the last letter dated 7 February 1911. The letter texts by Welby are all typewritten copies of the drafts or final versions sent to Lalande, WCYA, Box 9] (Petrilli 2009: 308–310).

Earlier chapters of *Signifying and Understanding* (especially chapter 3.1., pp. 253–258) contain several important comments on Lalande, the wider connections surrounding the exchange, and its significance for the reception of signifiacs in France (cf. Schmitz 1985: cxi–cxvii for more on this subject), but curiously, chapter "3.5. Signifiacs and semantics: Michel Bréal and André Lalande" (Petrilli 2009: 285–287), obviously intended as an introduction to the correspondence with Bréal and Lalande which should provide the necessary background, makes no mention of Lalande and his correspondence with Lady Welby.

Petrilli (2009: 294–301) devotes a separate introductory chapter to the exchange between Bertrand [Arthur William] Russell (1872–1970) and Lady Welby, who corresponded between 1904 and 1910 in letters whose substance can be valued as quite important and very revealing in terms of both correspondents' theories on signs and meaning. In it, Petrilli's discussion of the correspondence provides helpful context and orientation first by presenting and quoting at length from Lady Welby's exchanges with others on the subject, and also by a detailed recapitulation of the organization of the correspondence into four thematic phases proposed by me (cf. Schmitz 1995: 298–300), already briefly summarized earlier by her in a long footnote (Petrilli 2009: 296). She does not, however, go into my analysis of the thoughts exchanged in the letters or their place in the broader context of the history of science as discussed by me there and elsewhere (cf. Schmitz 1985: clviii–clxiii; 1995: 298–303).

The main problem with this edition of the Russell-Welby correspondence (cf. Petrilli 2009: 310–325) that, despite its claim to completeness, is actually incomplete in the extreme and riddled with inaccuracies is Petrilli's assessment of source availability and her lax treatment of sources. She announces at the end of the introductory chapter that "Welby's

correspondence with Russell (previously only available in the Welby Collection at the York Archives) is now appended to the present chapter” (Petrilli 2009: 301).

A somewhat obscure footnote in terms of content that is found where the presentation of the letters begins and at the same time is the sole footnote that contributes an informational commentary in the entire edition of this exchange (Petrilli 2009: 310), echoes this assertion: “[This correspondence is available on microfilm, other exchanges between Russell and Welby are available in typescript, WCYA, Box 13]” (Petrilli 2009: 310).

It may therefore be concluded that for her edition, Petrilli relied solely on the Welby Collection’s letters from Russell in their original form or in the form of copies and on carbon copies, other copies and drafts of the letters from Lady Welby to Russell and does not even know that The Bertrand Russell Archives (McMaster University Library, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada) exist.²⁸ This is confirmed by a comparison between the eight surviving original letters from Lady Welby²⁹ preserved in the Bertrand Russell Archives and carbon copies or typewritten copies of them in the Welby Collection. To wit, numerous corrections and additions to the original letters put in later by hand are not found in either the carbon and typewritten copies or in Petrilli’s edition. With regard to the copies – including those of the original Russell letters found in the Welby Collection – Petrilli frequently relies on the typewritten copies prepared by Nina Cust,³⁰ which are very legible but are characterized by abbreviations and other redactions.

Petrilli handles the documents in the same manner known to us from her other editions of letters: for example it is not evident, which version is reproduced and why, and the only documentation pertains to deletions, usually at the end of the letter text, sometimes at the beginning, and occasionally in the body of the letter. Nearly every letter is reproduced with at least minor errors. What is of greater consequence, however, is Petrilli’s decision not to include Lady Welby’s very informative “Rough Notes on some points in ‘Principles of Mathematics’, B. Russell, Vol. 1” (4 ½ typewritten pages) from her first letter of 1 Feb. 1904, so critical for understanding the meaning of the first letters, and also to leave out “Critical Passages in ‘The Principles of Mathematics’, Vol. 1: Bertrand Russell.” (2 ½ typewritten pages) appended to Lady Welby’s letter of 5 Feb. 1904, in which the content of the “Notes” is supplemented, with remarks referring to individual pages of the book.

Add to that the occasional mix-ups in how the letters are presented. Of the originally greater number of letters exchanged between Russell and Welby, there are 36 letters known today to have been preserved in one form and version or another, beginning with Lady Welby’s letter of 1 Feb. 1904 and ending with Russell’s letter of 6 April 1910. However, Petrilli prints only 35 letters, the reason being that she integrates Lady Welby’s letter of 16 November 1904 into Lady Welby’s letter of 16 December 1904 as constituting the first two paragraphs of the latter text (cf. Petrilli 2009: 317). This is the only resolution that is consistent with the available sources that can also, furthermore, be made congruent with the meaning conveyed in Lady Welby’s letter to Peirce of 20 November 1904 (cf. primarily

28 The archive’s holdings can be researched online at the URL: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/russdocs/russell.htm>.

29 These are the letters dated 1 Feb. 1904, 5 Feb. 1904, 9 November 1904, 16 December 1904, 12 Feb. 1905, 1 June 1905, 14 November 1905 and 15 November 1905.

30 They can be recognized by the larger typeface and handwritten emendations distinguishing them from the older copies that date back to the days of Lady Welby.

Peirce/Welby 1977: 42) and Peirce's letter to Lady Welby of 2 December 1904 (Peirce/Welby 1977: 43f.). Petrilli misread and printed the date on Russell's letter of 24 June 1907 (answering Lady Welby's letter of 24 June 1907!) as "24 June 1909," a mistake that should actually have been prevented by Nina Cust's handnumbering of the letters.

And lastly, it can also definitely not be said of the Russell-Welby correspondence that none of it was published before now. After all, Nina Cust published excerpts of six letters from Russell dated 3 Feb. 1904, 11 Nov. 1904, 14 Nov. 1904, 27 Dec. 1904, 20 Feb. 1905, 26 March 1905 (cf. Welby 1931: 128, 159f., 159, 160, 111, 111) and excerpts of two letters from Lady Welby dated 12 Feb. 1905 and 5 March 1905 (cf. Welby 1931: 110f., 111f.). Nicholas Griffin (1996: 58–60) has recently reprinted the full text of one of Russell's most interesting letters, namely the one dated 3 Feb. 1904, albeit with minor inaccuracies,³¹ as a major support for his interpretation of Russell's denotation theory in *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903).

A renewed and more exact study of the Russell-Welby correspondence, i.e. study based on the entire corpus of its original documents, and an in-depth analysis of the discussion between its protagonists in their historical context, also taking into account the consequences, would probably be worth the effort. Nicholas Griffin's approach and the success he achieved thereby should be taken as an encouragement to embark on such study and analysis.

Susan Petrilli's (2009: 407–418) edition of correspondence with the philosopher and mathematician Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909) in 1898 and then again from 1903 to 1908 is presented against a solid historiographical background (cf. Petrilli 2009: 379–384) with numerous detailed references to the ideas exchanged between Vailati, who apparently initiated the contact, and Lady Welby,³² so although not everything in the letters becomes comprehensible, at least the central themes can be understood. However, there are some problems with the information provided, firstly, concerning the available sources (cf. Petrilli 2009: 407) with regard to the correspondence as a whole and, secondly, regarding the selection of 16 letters from Lady Welby and 14 from Vailati's pen ushered in as a "selection from her unpublished correspondence."

Let us turn first to the corpus of source material. Petrilli drew exclusively from the Welby Collection for her selection of the letters printed in her edition, even though she knows of the Vailati Archive at the University of Milan.³³ In that archive's "219. Carteggio Welby Victoria" (cf. Ronchetti 1998: 119–120) there are 17 of Vailati's photocopied letters and 19 of Lady Welby's letters, 16 of which are photocopies of the typewritten copies already mentioned above, two of which are original postcards (18 March 1906 and 31 December 1906), and one more postcard (6 Sept 1906) in both original form and as a photocopy.³⁴ The extent

31 Thus, for example, one finds in the letter as edited by Griffin (1996: 59): "(2) *some ideas (concepts)* denote, as 'the present Prime Minister of England' denotes the actual man Mr. Arthur Balfour." But in his letter, Russell crossed out "*ideas*" and wrote above it and underlined the word "*concepts*." Only Russell's self-corrected version of the text agrees with Griffin's interpretation of *The Principles of Mathematics*.

32 For the relationship between G. Vailati and Lady Welby cf. also Thayer (1968: 333f., 338), Schmitz (1985: clxxi–clxxvii) and Ponzio (1990).

33 "Copies of some letters, mainly Vailati's, are available in the Giovanni Vailati Archives at the University of Milan" (Petrilli 2009: 407).

34 "Tutte le lettere di Vailati alla Welby, in fotocopia, sono in lingua francese o inglese, tutte quella della Welby a Vailati, sempre in fotocopia con le eccezioni segnalate, sono in lingua inglese. In allegato sono conservate 3 lettere a Vailati (una di Meyer, una con firma illeggibile e un elenco di testi)." (Ronchetti 1998: 120)

to which the archives have shared their holdings with each other is not known. For example, Vailati's letter of "28 Juin 1908," already published by Nina Cust and more recently by Petrilli (2009: 418), is missing from the Archivio Giovanni Vailati. The question therefore arises whether the Welby Collection also has copies of both original postcards from Lady Welby (18 March 1906 and 31 December 1906), considering that these very same ones are among those left out of Petrilli's edition. According to the Vailati Archive lists, others not considered in Petrilli's edition include Lady Welby's letter of 20 November 1903 (published in Welby 1931: 143f.) and Vailati's letters of 31 August 1906, 2 June 1907, 19 December 1907 and 17 November 1908.³⁵

Indirectly related to questions having to do with the edition's sources are Petrilli's very vague remarks (2009: 407) reporting that Welby's letters are "mostly unpublished with the exception of a few letters" published by Lenaro (cf. Vailati 1971) and that "a few letters from this collection are also available in *Other Dimensions* [Welby 1931]". Now Lenaro (Vailati 1971: 135–150) did indeed publish three entirely uncondensed letters from Lady Welby (8 June 1898, 25 June 1898, 28 May 1905) and seven from Vailati (16 June 1898, 12 July 1898, 18 March 1903, 25 November 1903, 2 June 1905, 30 January 1907, 2 February 1908), all reprinted by Petrilli, albeit in some instances considerably shortened. And Nina Cust published excerpts from five of Vailati's letters (16 June 1898, 12 July 1898, 25 November 1903, 2 February 1908, 28 June 1908³⁶; cf. Welby 1931: 82f., 83f., 144, 275, 275) and two of Welby's letters (20 November 1903, 25 June 1905; cf. Welby 1931: 143f., 214), which together accounts for roughly 30 % of the "unpublished correspondence" now found in Petrilli's edition. Information regarding previously published letters is of interest primarily because Petrilli's edition has some gaps and furthermore because letters, when they are printed, have been shortened even more by omitting text found in the margins and often in the body of the letters, so that the passages left out here might be found elsewhere, namely in other printed editions of parts of the correspondence.

The brief correspondence with the Italian philosopher Mario Calderoni (1879–1914) from 1909 to 1911, consisting of four letters from Calderoni and three from Lady Welby (Petrilli 2009: 419–421), can be read as a continuation of the correspondence with Giovanni Vailati, Calderoni's teacher and friend. Vailati's death on 14 May 1909 first prompted Calderoni to begin corresponding with Lady Welby. He had known her personally through Vailati for several years and now apparently invited her to subscribe to the *Scritti di G. Vailati (1863–1909)* (Vailati 1911), which was being published by him and others.³⁷ A brief introduction and commentary by the editor of these mostly rather personal letters along these or

The Miss Meyer mentioned here was Lady Welby's assistant in the late 1890's and, at Lady Welby's behest (August 24, 1898), sent Vailati the list he had requested of English literature "related to the subjects treated in my writings" (Vailati to Welby, June 16, 1898). No more letters followed Miss Meyer's letter in 1898 until the correspondence resumed with a letter from Lady Welby in February 1903 (cf. Schmitz 1985: clxxiii for more on this).

35 A comparative examination of Ronchetti's (1998: 119f.) listings of the letters in the Vailati Archive and my own documentation suggests that Petrilli misread two dates in the letters, i.e. "20 February 1903" (Petrilli 2009: 409) should probably read "28 February 1903" and "28 Juillet 1905" (2009: 414) is probably "25 Juillet 1905."

36 A passage taken from this letter is appended to the text portion from the letter of 2 February 1908 as a final paragraph, making the whole appear to be one single letter.

37 Along with William James and Bertrand Russell, Lady Welby was one of the few foreign subscribers.

similar lines would have furnished desirable background and enabled the reader to understand and put into context at least the first two letters.

The same general information on sources provided earlier (copies, shorthand, etc.) appears again (Petrilli 2009: 419). A few parts omitted within the letters are identified but not explained.

The publication (Petrilli 2009: 617–640) of her selected correspondence between Lady Welby and the English philosopher Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller (1864–1934) takes the editorial practices we have already encountered in Petrilli’s work to extremes. This correspondence, spanning the period from 1900 to 1911, was one of Lady Welby’s longest, most intense and most extensive. There are occasional references to it in earlier chapters, especially in the treatment of Lady Welby’s concept of “Mother-sense” or “Primal Sense” (cf. Petrilli 2009: 583–590), but nothing laying the groundwork and no commentary is offered beyond the passage below in a footnote to the first letter printed, disclosing the unusual explicit and more implicit selection criteria:

The present collection is from the correspondence between Victoria Welby and Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller, WCYA, Box 14. The letters included are mainly Welby’s given that this monograph is dedicated to her, with the aim of evidencing different aspects of her thinking. Apart from a few exceptions, there are no typewritten copies of Schiller’s letters which are all in handwriting except for those reported otherwise. Schiller’s letters which are sometimes very long, also deserve publication for their theoretical interest. [...] Welby’s exchanges with Schiller open with a note from Welby dated 25 May 1900, and close with a letter from Schiller dated 30 June 1911, and include various enclosures. My own interventions are placed between square brackets. Letter openings and endings have been consistently eliminated to save space. Some of the letters are from *Other Dimensions*, edited by Nina Cust, 1931 (Petrilli 2009: 617).

Petrilli tells the reader little about Schiller himself, who was one of Lady Welby’s most active torch-bearers, and who was instrumental after her death through his writings and his initiative leading up to the 1920 symposium “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” in focusing the attention and efforts of English philosophy on the problem of meaning (cf. Schmitz 1985: clxiii–clxx). She confines herself to the terse data used by Nina Cust (Welby 1931: 409) to introduce Schiller in 1931 as one of Lady Welby’s correspondents: “‘Fellow and Senior Tutor, Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Author of *Riddles of the Sphinx*, *Humanism*, *Problems of Belief*, *Eugenics and Politics*, *Formal Logic*, *Logic for Use*, etc.’” (Petrilli 2009: 617).

This correspondence edition, taking up 24 pages, is the longest in the entire volume. In keeping with the aforementioned criteria, only four letters from Schiller and 26 from Lady Welby are included, whereby Nina Cust (Welby 1931: 90, 248) and Schmitz (1985: ccxlv–ccxlvi) had already published three of the selected Schiller letters and four of the letters from Lady Welby had been published before by Nina Cust (Welby 1931: 86f., 87, 90f.) and Schmitz (1985: ccxlix–cclii), as noted, except for one, by Petrilli. The general commentary and explanatory remarks from the Schmitz edition were not incorporated, however, and the letter from Lady Welby that is not dated in the version found in the archive is assigned Petrilli’s own date (cf. Petrilli 2009: 633).

Even when an edition of selections or excerpts from correspondence is appropriate, certain standards for the handling of historical documents must be maintained if the edition is to be taken seriously or to be suitable for any scholarly purposes. And in the case of Lady Welby’s correspondence with Schiller, the situation is better than usual when it comes to the availability of sources, because not only is there a large number of original letters and copies in the Welby Collection, there is also a 34-letter bundle from Lady Welby to Schiller that is part of

the “Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller Papers, ca. 1870–1940” at the UCLA Library under the Collection Number 191.³⁸

Lady Welby’s correspondence with Charles Kay Ogden (1889–1957), who went on to become a writer and linguist, was initiated (15 November 1910) and ended (24 December 1911) by Ogden and, in terms of intensity and in conjunction with Ogden’s visits to Lady Welby, developed into one of the most consequential of all her epistolary exchanges. Petrilli (2009: 731–747) devotes two sub-chapters of her book to their correspondence followed by the presentation of selected letters, and places them in context by offering a careful and historiographically sound account of facts and developments culled from the literature (Gordon 1990a, b; 1994; Schmitz 1985: clxxviii–clxxxiv), starting with Ogden’s acquaintance with Lady Welby and proceeding on from his first lecture on signification all the way to his collaboration with Ivor Armstrong Richards (1893–1979), the co-author of the famous book *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923). This account is a follow-up to Petrilli’s (1995) earlier article on “C.K. Ogden and V. Welby,” where all of the letters exchanged between Ogden and Lady Welby now found in one form or another in the Welby Collection are listed by date and author (cf. Petrilli 1995: 302f.). Petrilli now publishes (2009: 767–782) 36 (18 from each correspondent) of the 60 letters (29 from Lady Welby, 31 from Ogden) listed in the previous work.

One could only have hoped to find precisely this kind of catalog of the letters and their dates repeated in this case as part of a report detailing the state of source availability and disclosing the nature of the selection and the criteria by which the letters were chosen. A note that Nina Cust (Welby 1931: 335–337) had previously published a nearly complete version of Lady Welby’s letter of 16 May 1911 (Petrilli 2009: 778) would also have been welcome. But instead, there is only one note on the correspondence in a footnote at the beginning, telling the reader that the source for the included *selection* of letters is the Welby Collection and supplying details about the letter openings and endings:

This conspicuous corpus of materials counts various enclosures from Welby. Letter texts are handwritten and reproduced in typewritten copies, sometimes in Welby’s shorthand, but mostly redacted for publication. The few that are not typewritten, mostly Ogden’s, are not included in the present selection. However, given the interest of these exchanges the whole corpus deserves publication. Letter openings and endings have been consistently eliminated. My own interventions are placed between square brackets (Petrilli 2009: 767).

What are the implications for how accurately original texts are replicated in Petrilli’s edition? What are the consequences when, despite the systematic elimination of letter openings and endings, the location is seldom signaled by ‘[...]’ marks and is often shown instead by an ellipsis with no square brackets (‘...’), and only in Ogden’s letters, at the beginning, end, or even in the middle of the text? What can be the justification in the case of this correspondence for relying exclusively on material in the Welby Collection even though an additional 16 original letters from Lady Welby and one postcard from Ogden that was returned are found in the “Ogden, C.K. (Charles Kay), 1889–1957” archive?³⁹

38 A1713 Charles E. Young Research Library, Department of Special Collections, Los Angeles, CA 90095–1575. – The Finding Aid for the Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller Papers, ca. 1870–1940 is available online at: www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt5q2nb18w.

39 The archive is in the McMaster University Libraries, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Mills Memorial Library, Lower Level, McMaster University, 1280 Main Street W., Hamilton, ON,

With regard to the content of the letters published in Petrilli's edition, many passages and even more details are not made comprehensible to the reader. Commentaries and explanations would have been needed even by experts versed in the history of significs, but nothing of the kind is offered by Petrilli.

Petrilli's (2009: 782–796) last "selection from her unpublished correspondence," comprises selected letters and excerpts drawn from the correspondence with Frederik van Eeden (1860–1932) which are set before an historical backdrop in the two previous chapters that provides a very informative and useful overview of the Signific movement in the Netherlands (Petrilli 2009: 748–766). For whatever reasons, the selection is restricted to letters between 1906–1912, 17 from Lady Welby and 11 from Van Eeden. It is noted in general terms that some of them were already published by Nina Cust (cf. Welby 1931: 49f., 71f., 113–116, 218f., 236–242, 250f.), but without giving the specific details. At this point, the very comprehensive partial edition of the exchange published by the Frederik van Eeden-Genootschap (Van Eeden/Welby 1954) is not mentioned. Only five of the letters selected by Petrilli are not in that edition at all,⁴⁰ and all of the others are present there either in full or in similar excerpts. Just as Petrilli made little use of that edition, although it is mentioned in her bibliography, she also did not take advantage, in her role as editor, of the Frederik van Eeden Archive, which has a more complete collection of letters than the Welby Collection.⁴¹

Aside from the fact that neither (partial) edition of the Van Eeden-Welby correspondence contains an in-depth commentary, several misreadings and mix-ups stand out in Petrilli's replication of texts. The letter on page 783 dated "10 October 1906" should be dated "17 October 1906." On p. 785, the date should be "30 March 1907," not "3 March 1907." On p. 786, the second letter from Van Eeden bears the same date as the first letter ("21 May 1907"), but it should in fact be dated "10 August 1907." And finally, it should be noted that Lady Welby never mailed her letter of 4 November 1908 (cf. Petrilli 2009: 786f.), and wrote the one dated 5 November 1908⁴² (2009: 787) in its stead.

4 Conclusions

Looking back over Petrilli's vast and certainly also highly labor-intensive edition of excerpts from Lady Welby's correspondence with 15 highly diverse contemporaries, one cannot help asking again, what the author hoped to achieve by (re-)publishing these letters and why she chose to do it as she did. The general intent for publishing the letters stated in *Signifying and*

Canada L8S 4L6. The letters are cataloged under the heading "Cambridge Magazine," which consists of nine boxes, and are found in Box 112 T-Z, Folder 7: "Welby, Victoria (16, includes card of C.K.O's, returned). See also Macdonald, William, above and "Significs" mss., Box 125, F. 3" (Finding Aid; online: www.mcmaster.ca/archives/findaids/fonds/o/ogden.htm).

40 Four letters from Lady Welby to Van Eeden: 1 January 1907, 22 November 1908, 2 December 1908, 19 May 1910; one letter from Van Eeden to Lady Welby: 23 February 1910.

41 Petrilli (2009: 782) incorrectly writes, referring to the Van Eeden-Welby correspondence, that: "Part of their correspondence is also available at the Frederik van Eeden-Archives, University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands." She also incorrectly (on the basis of material in the Welby Collection) dates the first letter beginning the exchange back to "4 September 1892." The first letter (from Van Eeden) actually goes back to "Haarlem, Aug. 13th '92" (cf. Van Eeden/Welby 1954: 5).

42 Instead, Petrilli (2009: 787) gives the date as "5–7 November 1908," apparently because this letter's postscript is dated 7 November.

Understanding at the beginning of the chapter containing excerpts from the Van Eeden-Welby correspondence reads: “My aim with this volume given space limitations is simply to signal these materials in the hope of stimulating further significs-related research.” (Petrilli 2009: 782)

This will not convince the reader at all, who, due to the lack of explanatory notes and commentaries, cannot even gain sufficient understanding of considerable passages in her edition to allow him to judge the value of the letters to the history of science. If the errors, omissions and mix-ups in these editions are also factored in, the question arises why the stated goal could not have been served equally well by taking a cue from Thayer (1968) and recommending that the reader reread the two volumes published by Nina Cust (Welby 1929; 1931).

Then again, if she was really guided by the goal stated above, why was Petrilli so obviously intent on publishing complete editions in the case of exchanges with some authors (such as Bréal and Russell) – incomplete as they turned out to be? Unfortunately, this may have thwarted her overriding aim. For, as becomes evident from the survey attempted in the preceding pages, researching and analysis of Lady Welby’s correspondence from the standpoint of the history of science is still in its early phase and only two editions of the correspondence that truly meet scholarly standards and that are truly reliable and more or less complete come to mind, namely Jan Noordegraaf’s edition of the letters between Bolland and Welby (Noordegraaf 1991; 2005) and – with certain reservations – Charles S. Hardwick’s edition of the Peirce-Welby correspondence (Peirce & Welby 1977; 2001).

But now that Petrilli has published her edition of the letters, it must be feared that hardly anyone else will embark on the task of preparing a truly reliable and useful edition with careful commentaries, say of the correspondence with Bréal or Russell, and carry it through to publication.⁴³ No matter how keen the need may be, authors and publishing houses will, I fear, look on such projects as already taken care of for the time being by Petrilli’s nearly 1100-page thick tome. This they will do although, as we have seen and now realize, the book has much in common with the “false giants,” who are known to appear so large only at a distance and grow smaller and smaller the closer one gets.

Essen, March 2012

Illustration

Miniature, water-colour painting about 17 cm x 13 cm, executed by Edward Richard Taylor (1838–1912) in 1862; owned by the Welby-family (<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ztomasze/cis702/enrich1.html>)

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43 For example, Ahti-Veikko J. Pietarinen, who had intended, with Rosalind Carey, to publish the Russell-Welby correspondence in the *Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly* under the title “The Welby-Russell Correspondence, with introduction” told me when asked about the project that “Yes, we have transcribed the Welby-Russell letters over the years, but that work was made redundant by Petrilli’s recent publication of the material. [...] I’ve had gone through Welby’s correspondence over the last 10 years with view of publishing what [is] indeed is an enormously important collection, but Susan [Petrilli] got the first!” (e-mail on 10 March 2011).

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