

VICTORIA, LADY WELBY'S PAPERS AT YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO

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One of the fringe figures in British philosophical life during Russell's early career was Victoria, Lady Welby (1837–1912). Coming in middle age to academic concerns, she was the most receptive person in Britain to the semiotics of C. S. Peirce (1839–1914), giving his work some publicity especially in her books *What Is Meaning?* (1903) and *Significs and Language* (1911). After her death much of her library went to the University of London Library; her heavily annotated copies of journals such as *Mind* and *The Monist* are worth consulting. Her papers remained with her family until they were purchased from Sir Oliver Welby in 1970 by York University, Toronto. The large collection is stored in 42 large boxes, with the general reference number 1970-010; the archival staff has prepared an excellent catalogue.

I sampled the collection in a short recent visit. It divides into two nearly equal halves. One half includes her own manuscripts and essays, sometimes including comments made by friends. Some manuscripts by others, or transcripts thereof (for example, H. G. Wells) were also stored. I looked at the manuscripts related to logic and language, and found that several were composed of transcriptions of her notes typed out on strips and then set in a chosen order by fixing to large sheets with pins. Logic as such did not feature strongly; more prominent were aspects of linguistics or speech practice.

Lady Welby strove to popularize the work of fellow enthusiasts for linguistics. In particular, box 35 comprises her commissioned English translations of several articles published during the 1900s by the logician and philosopher Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909), also the earliest follower of Russell's hero Giuseppe Peano. Presumably Vailati's and Welby's deaths prevented the publication of the planned book.

The other half of the collection comprises Lady Welby's extensive correspondence, including copies or drafts of some of her own letters. Attached to many

letters are partial typewritten transcriptions, presumably prepared by or for her daughter Nina Cust (1867–1955) for a two-volume edition.¹ As these transcriptions suggest, the originals were not only selected but also mauled quite a bit; the edition provides only extracts both locally within a letter and also globally across a file. They are organized chronologically in chapters each covering a short run of years, so that any extensive exchange is spread across several chapters. Further, the precise date of each letter is never given.

This is a pity, for the full collection reveals an impressive range of serious contacts in the philosophical and other communities, and also with some figures related to her social status (from the aristocratic Stuart-Wortley family, Very Important in those days). Some letters relate to a discussion group which met at her home; first at Denton Manor, Grantham, Lincolnshire, and then during her widowhood in Harrow, London.

To Lady Welby herself, one of the most important exchanges was that with C. S. Peirce (1839–1914), some of which appeared in the daughter's edition and since has been published in full.² For my interests two other files stood out. One is an intense exchange, especially in 1884, with Mary Boole (1831–1916), in which her working relationship with her late husband and their religious stance were discussed. The other exchange was with Philip Jourdain (1879–1919); they used to lend each other books and recent issues of journals. When Lady Welby planned a visit in September 1908, Jourdain assured her that a “tyred fly” would be hired to bring her to his home from the railway station, and that it had a large room which should be satisfactory to “you and your maid”.

These two also exchanged opinions on recent philosophical literature, including that by Russell, whose work is mentioned in other files. There is a small exchange with Russell himself; both sides are available here, and of course also at the Russell Archives.

Some or all of these files are printed in the Cust volumes, but the full collection needs to be consulted in order to do justice to the material. Researchers visiting the Russell Archives might well consider including in their itinerary a short detour to York University Archives, where they will be made most welcome.

¹ Nina Cust, ed., *Echoes of a Larger Life: a Selection from the Early Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby* (London: Cape, 1929); and *Other Dimensions: a Selection from the Later Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby* (London: Cape, 1931). Most of the letters in the first volume are to her; in the second volume the balance is more even. A curiosity is a file of letters and poems from Rupert Ingham Brooke; two of her replies are in *Dimensions*, pp. 228–30. He was not the famous poet, but may be the brother of the poet's unrelated namesake friend Justin Brooke.

² I. C. Leeb, ed., *Charles S. Peirce's Letters to Lady Welby* (New Haven: Whitlock, 1953); superseded by (the late) C. S. Hardwick assisted by J. Cook, ed., *Semiotics and Significs. The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1977).
