

Anonymous Letter Writing

To receive anonymous mail is deeply disturbing. The victim whether angry or tearful has received a letter from a coward. Such correspondence has been called 'hate mail' or 'a poison pen letter'; the person guilty of the act, a character assassin, whose deed causes much distress and anguish to the victim.

The majority of anonymous letter writers are mild or pronounced paranoiacs, suffering from a condition that is not easy to detect. It is a state of mind that has a distorted concept of reality.

From my own observations, these writers are sick individuals. Within their make up there is a weak streak which is inter linked with dishonesty and anyone who writes anonymously, even though purporting to have the receiver's welfare at heart, has a problem. At first hand I have witnessed the mental distress that has led to sorrow and illness. Families have been split, communities splintered, and an atmosphere of fear and suspicion invades what, once was, a closely knit community

It is stated in, 'Judicial Graphology by Renna Nezos,' that the personality is socially maladjusted and he/she suffers from a feeling of persecution and excessive jealousy.

From many discussions with victims of hate mail, who have had their suspicions confirmed, that it is a member of the family who is guilty of the offence, they describe the person thus.

He/she is very quarrelsome and never believes he is wrong, with very set opinions. He often stirs up trouble making the situations difficult, and often engineers an argument. When a row erupts he uses coercion, in order to persuade another person to take sides with him, not wishing to take the blame.'

This behaviour indicates inner feelings of personal inadequacy, for by transferring their own short comings, subconscious fears, anxieties and placing them on the shoulders of others, is justification, for their own actions.

Generally, this behaviour ties in with the lack of ability to trust and a fear that people are out to get them. At the same time, they can be a tyrant in their own home, ruling the household, sticking to the routine of set ways and views. Socially however, their self confidence is often very fragile. Within this paranoid personality lurks fear and cowardice.

What drives someone to write anonymously?

In a word-Power.

Simply because the correspondence is anonymous, the writer of this kind of mail is using a power hold over the selected victim. From the feeling of power comes an inner sense of superiority, as real or imagined developments are anticipated. The correspondence may be planned with care, to hit the target and then retreat into hiding to await the results; or it may be the outcome of supposed slights and resentful feelings that have been festering over a period of time. The reaction is triggered by sending a threatening letter.

Many of the samples I have analysed have been motivated by malice and spite. Often the accusations are almost ridiculous in their suggestions, yet written with cowardly determination to cause suffering.

Victims describe the experience as being followed by a stalker, looking and wondering who has a grudge against them and why have they been singled out for such treatment. The experience can take over their lives, invade their subconscious thoughts, create suspicions without foundation and split up families. Generally, victims of hate mail are not looking for revenge or prosecution but simply for the letters to stop.

Under the thin veneer of civilisation, beats the heart of the unseemly side of human nature.

To name a few motivating characteristics.

Jealousy

Envy

Malice and Spite

Revenge

Sexual Frustration

Inner feelings of personal inadequacy, which fuels a desire to cause suffering

The urge to wield influence

The writer may experience an additive rise of adrenalin, as strong emotions which direct the action, increase the feelings of danger, which adds to the excitement on one hand there is the real threat of exposure and on the other, the grudge borne against the person.

In the case of the ordinary man/woman in the street the suspect is usually within a close circle and often the author is known to the recipient.

The analyst must tread very carefully and remain objective and not be influenced by becoming emotionally involved,

Evidence, systematically researched and checked, using as many samples as are available for cross checking, will avoid a serious false accusation. It is better to say that the evidence is too limited for a positive conclusion than point the finger of doubt in the wrong direction.

Analysts must always have in the back of their minds, the possibility that the author of the offensive mail is the one submitting the letter. It is a sensible precaution to ask for a sample of writing from the supposed victim, as a process of elimination.

When the victim has calmed down and had time to consider, the number of possibilities has a narrow range. Anonymous letters are rarely a single happening, especially if the sender sees no reaction. Suddenly, he/she feels more confidence, to raise the stakes of personal excitement, to keep just one step ahead of the chase, invisible, hidden under the cloak of anonymity.

The thrill may become additive and more mail sent.

An attempt to disguise the hand writing is often adopted, a favourite choice being to write in capital letters (45% use this form of disguise) or use a print script. It is rare to find originality, and the samples I have been personally involved with have not been written by over bright individuals.

Sometimes grotesque and bizarre shapes are produced in order to deceive and throw the receiver of the correspondence, off the scent. Often, the inner hatred experienced by the person responsible for the action spills out of the paper, causing revulsion and horror. The reaction is often to tear the offensive correspondence into tiny fragments or in the shredder.

The best course of action is to persuade the victim to save the evidence, in a plastic sleeve and to keep all correspondence including the envelope. There is a good chance that the writer will over play his/her hand and be detected. From my experience when conducting a consultation with the victim, they feel a great sense of relief at their problem being treated seriously. By talking the situation through, they mentally shed some of the distress.

But unless the writer of the hate mail has studied the subject of handwriting, in great detail he/she thinks by making a few alterations the disguise will be effective. When someone tries to disguise their writing, those little personal traits inevitable come through.

However, the hand writing analyst is only as good as the evidence.

DISGUISED HANDWRITING

Disguised handwriting is used in anonymous correspondence, by individuals who wish to avoid identification... It is, however, as stated earlier, rare to find originality, as there is a constant inner conflict between the fight of will over natural impulses.

The attempt to disguise is more likely to be successful when the text is short rather than if it is lengthy, as keeping up an effective disguise is hard to maintain. As we handwriting analysts know from studies in psychology, when the mask or persona is dropped, the true personality is revealed.

Identification of authenticity is based on the principle that no two people write exactly the same. Each writer is unique. The skill and action of writing has been acquired with practice over a long period. The choice of style, effort and coordination naturally varies from person to person, as each individual develops at a different rate and level of ability.

No one can write better than their level of skill, an individual can write at a lower level of their ability but not higher.

What the anonymous letter writer does not realise is that, it is their personal subconscious habits, which are so ingrained, their little peculiarities that are so difficult to suppress, which leaves behind an ink trail, leading to identification.

The range of suspects is often narrow and often known to the recipient of the anonymous letter

Methods of Disguise

Capital Letters-- A popular and frequently used method (used by about 45% of those who wish to avoid recognition)

Script or Print form-- A simple letter form

Change of Slant

Change of Size. -- Although size can be easily changed, the proportions between the zones remain the same.

The use of Grotesque or odd letter formations.

Writing with the unaccustomed opposite hand

Using a different writing instrument

Pretending to be illiterate by using poor spellings or incorrect grammar.

'i' dot (added or omitted) t cross altered.

Sometimes text is cut out of newspapers and pasted into a message.

Method of Examination for Authentication

- 1 Look at the similarities and the differences. Compare like with like. Capital letters with capitals – cursive with cursive. Ask yourself, are the differences as a result of the natural variations in the writing or do they belong to another writer
- 2 Two writings may resemble each other but in fact be written by two different individuals. Writers often imitate and adopt styles, when working in the same groups. Two scripts can appear dissimilar yet still belong to the same writer.
- 3 A writer can be identified by his/her subconscious habits.
- 4 Lack of spontaneity. The hands natural flow will be stilted, the speed often slow
The writer is balancing the effort off being found out and the grudge which is driving the action
- 5 It is advisable to only accept original copies for examination.

Most individuals try to make changes that are obvious such as size, angle of the slant, printing instead of cursive. I always look at the ends of words and the final text in a passage of writing (unconscious movement) first and work my way back to the beginning, then methodically make comparisons.

Photocopies

So often these days original documents are unavailable and the Document Examiner must rely on photocopies when making an attempt to validate authenticity or authorship.

During your examination, bear in mind that the depth of information is limited and so it is not possible to prove beyond any shadow of doubt your findings. Today, especially when analysing signatures, information can be lifted and transferred from one document to another, to make them appear original. (cut and caste techniques)

Ink colour and pressure patterns, the type of paper used on the original cannot be determined and alterations may be difficult to access.

The quality of your photo copy will dictate the outcome of your evaluation, for instance first copy taken from the original will render better reproductive qualities than subsequent samples.

When examining a photocopied document that is stated to be genuine, it is a wise precaution to say, ' the signature appears to be genuine, however without examining the original document, it cannot be concluded that the signature was originally placed on that particular document

Following that I add that should the original be located, my opinion/s based on the examination of a photocopy is subject to revision and I reserve the right to amend my findings/conclusions accordingly.