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AN EXPLORATION OF THE DIARY AS A MEDIUM: DURING THE  
17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

BY

SAMUEL STEPHEN EVERY

CLASS OF 2017

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

BACHALOR OF ARTS IN MEDIA STUDIES

AT

VASSAR COLLEGE

# I

\* \* \*

What can a diary tell us about its author? How does the diary as a medium fit within manuscript culture? Diary writing, belongs to manuscript culture because, although there may be exceptions, it is mainly a hand written form. The diary as a medium of communication is a versatile form: it functions through many different means, to different ends. Historically, diary writing has a murky start, and it is hard to pin down with any confidence, exactly when and where the diary came into being. It shares many of the characteristics of ship logs, house logs, journals and commonplace books. These forms all obscure the inception of the diary even further. To limit the scope of this project, the point of focus is roughly on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in England and in America as a backwoods. In England it was a period of upheaval and turbulence, coming out of the Restoration period. Charles II rises to the crown in England, restoring a Stuart regime. Religious fomentation pushes the foundation of a new country. A clash between new and old is taking place. Life in the New World is marred with untimely death and harsh living conditions. America is a backwoods during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, religious tension is swirling and, although she doesn't know it yet, America is headed for independence. Written by second-class gentry and religious outcasts, early American diaries give a unique look into everyday life, and paint a vivid larger picture. A diary is a book that happened, one inexorably linked to its author and its

time period. A diary is the preservation of an essential self for posterity's benefit. I will explore the diary as a medium during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to see how it functions, for whom it functions, and what it may suggest about its historical moment in manuscript culture. Lastly, I want to think about the people who kept diaries, and what they wrote.

It is commonly held that the modern form of diary keeping started with Samuel Pepys who lived from 1633-1703. Pepys descended from the ancient family with the same name who settled at Cottenham in Cambridgeshire.<sup>1</sup> Eventually he became an administrator for England's Navy and a Member of Parliament. He had a passion, not only for recording, but also for seeing and hearing. His nine-volume diary has over 1 million words. His dogged persistence in writing for over 3000 consecutive days makes his diary a tool for historical discovery as well as personal exploration. What makes his books different from a journal or commonplace book? Drawing a line between the diary and the journal confuses the diary slightly because the line is somewhat fluid. A journal's main imperative is record keeping where the diary is a porthole to the lining of a man's soul. The journal's tie to news reporting is a main difference between the two. Both, however, are rooted in dailyness. The main point of divergence is the imperative for reporting in the journal and the intimate form in the diary. The diary is linked to "dear..." or the letterform, whereas the journal stays closer to record. The dividing line is not a hard one; journals sometimes cross into the world of the diary and vice a versa.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Lord Braybrooke, *Diary and Correspondence of Samuel Pepys F.R.S.: Secretary to the Admiralty in the Reigns of Charles II and James II*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1855), vii.

The commonplace book has a few characteristics that the diary does not share. The common ground between commonplace book and diary is found in observation of the natural world and interesting phenomena. Both books hold observations made by the author in a specific format. The commonplace book utilizes indexicality, and the diary is written chronologically. An exploration of the commonplace book from 1799, written in *Religion & Philosophy* states the value in a commonplace book:

The man who reads, and neglects to note down the essence of what he has read; the man who sees, and omits to record what he has seen; the man who thinks and fails to treasure up his thoughts in some place, where he may readily find them for use at any future period; will often have occasion to regret an omission, which such a book, as is now offered to him, is well calculated to remedy.<sup>2</sup>

In this respect the commonplace book and the diary share a goal; a place to store thoughts for an ambiguous future. The main difference is in the format of the

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<sup>2</sup> "A new commonplace book; being an improvement on that recommended by Mr. Locke; properly ruled throughout with a complete skeleton index, and ample directions for its use; Equally adapted to there Man of Letters and the Man of Observation, the Traveller & the Student, and forming an useful & agreeable Companion, on the Road; and in the Closet." Second edition. London, 1799. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Vassar College Libraries. 10-11. 12 Apr. 2017  
<[http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupname=nysl\\_se\\_vassar&tabID=T001&docId=CW117496008&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupname=nysl_se_vassar&tabID=T001&docId=CW117496008&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE)>.

commonplace book and the use of an index. The index, as explained in the same publication as the above quotation, assigns a letter to each page of the commonplace book. Each page is divided into six parts, one for each vowel. Headings for each page are explored and page numbers assigned. The page number in the index corresponds to the given entry at length, and location is further specified by the selections location under one of the six vowel subheadings. Topics are separated by the first consonant and vowel. For instance “Birds” would go under *Bi*. When the first letter of the word is a vowel and there are no more vowels in the heading, the vowel is used as the second letter as well; “Egg” falls under *Ee*, or “Art” under *Aa*. Subject matter is divided by some general term like “America” or “Observations”. The first concern of a commonplace book, therefore, is reference. In formatting the commonplace book, headings start on the left hand page, while the right hand page is left blank for further entries. If two pages are filled and the author wants to write more on the topic, then he simply moves to a blank page making reference in the index. Early descriptions of the practice also say to give reference when quoting directly. The commonplace book is a technology that facilitates an indexical function. It and the diary have overlapping functions. Both lend themselves to record keeping and both see the value in looking back from an undefined future.<sup>3</sup>

The diary is more than a tool for outward analysis, or even intense self-analysis. There is a desire for moral progress that diarists strive for. It is an introverted manuscript, rooted in privacy and practiced religiously. Diary practice

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,

follows the old precept to “know thyself.”<sup>4</sup> Practice is another point of divergence between the diary and the commonplace book. While one may record events in a commonplace book in the order they happen, the chronology of the events is muddled by the alphabetical index. Also content is usually more focused around excerpts from the author’s reading. The diary is distinct in its focus on record with respect to time and first person experience. Thomas Mallon wrote, “no form of expression more emphatically embodies the expresser: Diaries are the flesh made word.”<sup>5</sup> Recording events chronologically allows the reader to step into the diarist’s life- to experience the world as he or she does.

Encoding and short hand as practices within diary keeping are also common during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ciphers and coding books are common among a certain class of people. That is not wholly a restriction of wealth, but also of interest. Samuel Pepys wrote in Thomas Shelton’s *Tachygraphy*, which looks like a combination of Pitman shorthand and hieroglyphics.<sup>6</sup> This practice encodes his books, not in a way that makes them impossible to read, but in a way that requires persistence and interest in his book. William Byrd II of Westover, developed his own form of shorthand, a system of dashes, based on a system devised by William Mason.<sup>7</sup> Similar to Pepys’ it is not impossible to decipher, but calls for considerable concentration. Tachygraphical writers are shorthand writers whose practice can be

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<sup>4</sup> Pierre Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover 1674-1744* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1971), 108.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Mallon, *A Book of One’s Own: People and Their Diaries*, (New York, NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1984), xvii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744*, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1971), 107.

traced back to *Notarii* in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries developing Greek and Hebrew.<sup>8</sup> Stenography, another shorthand method designed for brevity, is “not inferior to many sciences,” writes Jonathan Angell in 1759. Angell credits Mr. John Mills B.D. with founding stenography as a practice. It is an evolution of Brachygraphy, developed by Peter Bales, with Roman letters and certain commas periods and marks. Bales Brachygraphy comes as an improvement on Timothy Bright M.D.’s treatise called *Characterie; The Art of Short, Swift, and Secret Writing by Character*, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth in 1588. As manuscript culture was explored and progressed slowly, accepted vernacular and method is adopted in various areas. Once mankind learned to write with good, consistent measure, brevity was the next frontier.<sup>9</sup> The advantages are evident; time saving, encoding, advancement and evolution and refining of manuscript culture. Shorthand is an ergonomic advancement of manuscript culture. It changes the speed with which a manuscript can be made. It also changes the size of a manuscript that covers the same information. Consider how a smaller notebook is easier to carry around, easier to store and keep safe. With advancements in shorthand, an author can fit more into a

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<sup>8</sup>John Angell, “Stenography; or, Short-hand improved: Being the most compendious, lineal, and easy method hitherto extant. The persons, moods, tenses & particles which most frequently occur, are adapted to join with ease & accuracy at pleasure: the rules are laid down with such propriety, consistence, & perspicuity, that the practitioner will need no other assistance. The whole illustrated with an alphabetical praxis, adapted to all purposes in general, but more particularly to the three learned professions; namely, law, physic & divinity. By John Angell, who has practised this art above 30 years.” London, [1758]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Vassar College Libraries. 2 Apr. 2017, x.

<sup>9</sup> Angell, “Stenography” London, [1758]. ECCO. Gale. Vassar College Libraries. 2 Apr. 2017, ii



smaller book. The diary is an exemplar of said refinement as systems of shorthand are devised and practiced within its pages.

Orthography is a big part of late manuscript culture. The practice of encoding can be looked at as a kind micro orthographic practice. Pepys needs to nail down accepted conventions in his written vernacular to make the rest of the diary understandable and standardized across his own books. His code is unique, just like most other diarists, but it is standardized across his own work. The same can be said for William Byrd II.

Keeping a diary means something different for every diarist. There are those who keep diaries when they are traveling, anticipating memorable experiences they may want to look back on in the future. A travel diary allows the traveler to bring a foreign place with them. It shows what the *diarist* saw, not what a camera saw. Thomas Mallon writes, in *A Book of One's Own*, how the travel diary allows the diarist to “hoard sights and sounds of places to which [they] may never return,”<sup>10</sup> thus differentiating the practice of keeping a diary only during travel from other forms of diary keeping. For the current iteration of the travel diary, an entry from a trip to the Virgin Islands is an “antidote for the familiar,”<sup>11</sup> when the diarist grows weary of the monotony of everyday life. Earlier travel diaries were kept less for sentiment and more for geographical record and mapping. Some write confessions and inner secrets as a way of unburdening themselves. Others still write apologies addressed to others but for themselves. Everyday diarists most accurately

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mallon, *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries* (New York, NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1984), 41

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,

encapsulates their lives. Their books are valuable as a record not only of their lives, but also of the times they lived and died in. For this body of work, the everyday diarist will be the main point of focus.

Further distinction in the everyday diarists' practice is noticeable in spiritual and religious diary keepers. Take William Byrd II or Samuel Sewall as an example. Their diaries function in very unique ways to them as individuals, but hidden in the pages is a complex relationship with God. If God sees everything, then He knows about your secret diary. That acknowledgement frees the author up to have a conversation with God, or at least to acknowledge his presence as a reader of their book. For a religious person the diary can be a record of good deeds and piety, and even a ticket to Heaven. The religious diary is a conversation with God, one that magnifies the author's holiness and closeness to the divine. Mallon credits David Shields, a historian of diaries with the idea that, "the diary became the place where these divines examined their consciousness and prepared themselves for encounters with God in prayer," speaking of reformed clergymen of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. In 1656 John Beadle wrote an instruction manual for *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian* which explained how to keep a pious diary. In an entry from Cotton Mather's diary, circa 1635, while he was coming to America, he uses the book to accept God's Will. He wrote, "but in all ye grievous storme, my feare was ye lesse, when I considered ye clearnesse of my calling from God this way, and in some measure (ye Lords holy name be blessed for it) he gave us hearts contented,"<sup>13</sup> in a successful effort to calm himself and accept God's Will. Jonathan Edwards keeps a

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<sup>12</sup> Mallon, *A Book of One's Own*, 105.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.,

strict account of his spiritual life starting when he was 19 in 1723. He berates himself for sinful thought and imposes enumerated resolutions and conclusions. His diary is rigorous and prudent. He keeps some in cipher, with the biblical tradition of concealing knowledge, and displays the soon-to-be American tradition of industriousness, reminiscent of Benjamin Franklin himself. Edwards postulates, "I think Christ has recommended rising early in the morning, by his rising from the grave very early,"<sup>14</sup> displaying his industry. Samuel Sewall was a pious businessman and a judge during the Salem witch trials. He keeps a quiet, homely diary. One that recounts trials and the death of children and one who's ambiguous audience, or 'you', is God. William Byrd II's diary is also cognizant of God's presence and divine will. He ends almost every single entry with something like, "I said my prayers and had good health, good humor and good thoughts, thanks be to God Almighty," inserting Gods will and divinity into every day. Byrd is not as critical of himself as the Puritan Edwards: his relationship with God is one of equanimity, or an acceptance in all things, as well as the belief that all fortune, good and bad, is from God. A religious diary is less concerned with feelings and personal exploration and more rooted in a conversation with God- a conversation about worthiness and acceptance of God's will. The religious acceptance of God's will may be a symptom of lifelong misfortune and the hand of death in everyday life during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Religious persecution and violence, for the people writing diaries in America, like Samuel Sewall and William Byrd, is a key factor that drove them to America in the first place. Just the trip across the Atlantic had a mortality rate of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.,

15%; that coupled with little to no infrastructure in the New World, violence between natives and settlers and harsh living conditions, made death a major part of everyday life for an early settler. Belief in God as a necessity could be a factor to consider in understanding the presence of God in Puritan diaries from America compared to an Anglican, English contemporary like Samuel Pepys. Bradford writes how Pepys is not “the sort of man to court martyrdom for any faith, religious or political,”<sup>15</sup> although he was a loyal member of the Church of England during the diary years. Where Samuel Pepys is optimistic about God, William Byrd is tortured by Him. A Puritan has to accept the Will of God, in triumphs and failures, in fairness and unfairness. The religious difference is best observed in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, written as a Puritan autobiography of John Bunyan:

2. For my descent then, it was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation; my father’s house being of that rank that is meanest, and most despised of all the families in the land. Wherefore, I have not here as others, to boast of noble blood, or a high born state, according to the flesh; through all things considered, I magnify the heavenly Majesty, for that by his door he brought me into this world, to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel.<sup>16</sup>

Bunyan explores something important to a Puritan diary practice: a relationship with God that is blindly accepting of His will and his own origin from the lower sort.

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<sup>15</sup> Gamaliel Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1924), 210.

<sup>16</sup> John Bunyan, *Grace abounding to the chief of sinners*, Third New York ed. (New York: Evert Duyckinck, 1815), 5. Online. [Chester, Vt. : Readex, a division of Newsbank, Inc., 2004-2007]

Religious or not, a diary kept everyday over several years gives stunning detail and information about a given time period. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, diaries from people like Samuel Pepys and William Byrd capture an essence. The everyday dogged practice of diary keeping allows the audience to read years in minutes. The reader can zoom all the way in to a particular breakfast in May 1721 or see King Charles II rise to the throne in 1660. Zoom out a bit and the reader finds a time when the author was sick for a week, or when they spent time abroad. Zoom out again and see a period of financial prosperity or a social movement. Out even further and see the achievements of a man over decades. Taken from the farthest perspective, the diary is a person's life, their very essence, bound and produced. The diary is like a mosaic of one life through the eyes of the writer. It is broken down to individual pieces separated by time. One tile doesn't tell you much about the larger work but when you zoom out a bigger picture emerges. It is a mosaic in stunning, realist detail, down to the day and never missing a day. The diary is like a 4k TV, each entry is a bright and vivid pixel; stand back and let it amaze you. The diary is a cutting edge technology. It is like external hardware for your brain's CPU. It carries with it its own conventions and standards. The diary is the key to a deeper understanding of a life and a time period. Gamaliel Bradford wrote about the diary, "what gives it at once immortal worth and also a certain sacredness is the tremendous identity of human hearts, the fact that when the diarist records his inmost secrets he is recording your secrets and my secrets as well as his own,"<sup>17</sup> explaining how it allows us to probe the intimate depths of human nature. A reader

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<sup>17</sup>Gamaliel Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1924), 18.

tries to see himself in the author while they both try desperately to escape themselves.

Manuscript culture resides between orality and print. The diary is an exemplar of manuscript culture in many ways. It is as close as a work can be to the author's innermost thoughts and observations. There is no editor for a handwritten diary: the result is unabridged thoughts mediated through the actual thinker's hand. Being written by hand tethers the diary to a single person and further keeps the writer alive as an individual in its pages. These books are not produced en masse; they pop up sporadically, in most cases, long after the author is dead. They live untouched and unedited. Privacy as a central feature of the diary allows the author to unburden himself honestly. The diary is ingested differently than a printed book or essay because it is history and an individual preserved. The handwritten diary carries with it the story of how it came into being and how it traveled through the world in which it lived, just as medieval manuscripts do.<sup>18</sup> \*\*\* One person is solely responsible for its construction, no acknowledgments or footnotes.

Shorthand and encoding is heavily intertwined with diary keeping in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Advances in shorthand and development of new and unique techniques further confounds and confuses diary keeping by inserting an element of exclusivity and effort to read and understand a man's diary. In these two centuries lies the key and foundation to revolution and the beginning of a new global superpower, as well as a story of great religious upheaval and tumultuous times in England. Learning about the times on a day to day basis through the eyes of

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<sup>18</sup> John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994),

common men brings realizations about the practice of diary keeping. A diary is a good barometer for social atmosphere and historically relevant events. Recognizing patterns in diary keeping specifically related to perceptions about the author, built on that author's entries, makes content crucial in exploring the practice itself.

Looking at two figures in particular, Samuel Pepys, and William Byrd (referred to by some as "an American Pepys"),<sup>19</sup> my aim is to understand the diary as a medium in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and to think about the people who wrote them.

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<sup>19</sup> Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, "William Byrd of Westover, an American Pepys," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXXIX (1940), 259-74

## II

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Samuel Pepys had “an instinct for self-preservation and a keen desire for enjoyment,”<sup>20</sup> writes Gamaliel Bradford. Today we know most of what we do about Pepys as a result of his voluminous diary, kept faithfully from 1660-1669. In these 9 years Pepys does not miss a single day. We see first hand accounts of the Great Fire and the Restoration period, which brought the Stuarts back to the crown in the form of King Charles II. During the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, “there was the horde and swarm of new political ambitions, such as always infest a changing government, men who had little to lose by instability and everything to gain, men of quick tongue and ready intellect, and pliable conscience, eager to worm themselves into the indolent confidence of the half- foreign king.”<sup>21</sup> The Restoration period forms a backdrop, in front of which Pepys’ diary is framed. England is shaking off the strict yoke and mold of Cromwellian Puritanism with an inept court and a foreign King in its place. In short, England is in flux during this period, and Pepys captures it all with stunning veracity.

The original manuscript is in the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge. It is preserved in six leather- bound volumes written in ink. The writing is in Pepys’ unique shorthand, with proper nouns and places commonly in longhand. He never revised his diaries which is rare among diarists and only adds to the

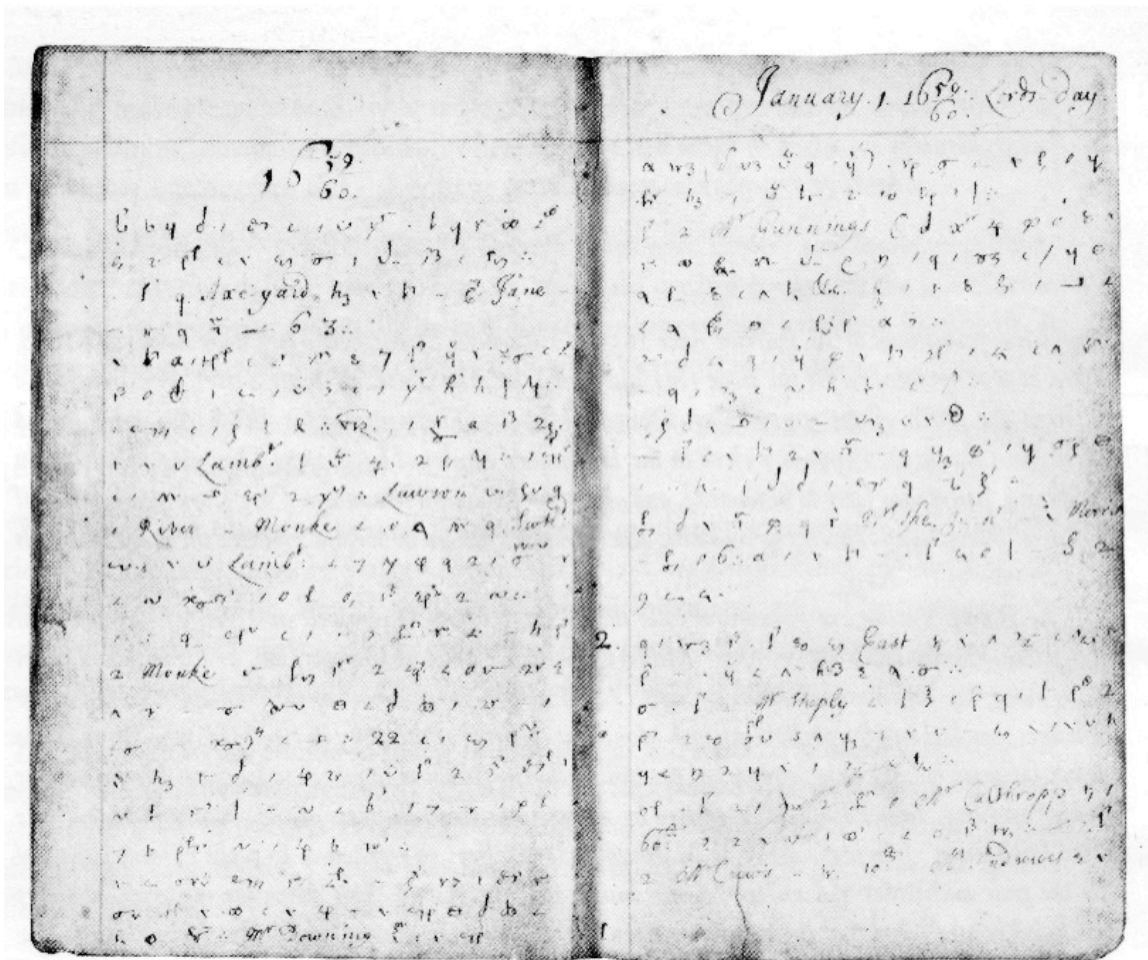
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<sup>20</sup> Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



manuscript's authenticity and its presence in a single moment in time. The first sections of the diary were published in 1825 by Lord Braybrooke. The diaries weren't printed entirely until 1970.<sup>22</sup>



The opening pages of the diary scanned from Robert Latham's, *The Illustrated Pepys: From the Diary*

In his diary, Samuel Pepys showed his true self and gave an intimate look at his life, his curated exterior, his decision making, his morality and so much more. Samuel Pepys had the diarist's instinct- the instinct to record faithfully and

<sup>22</sup>*The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary*, selected and edited by Robert Latham (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1978), 12-13.

truthfully. Such personal exploration is only achievable through the diary as a medium. Pepys' diary is the key to the depths of human nature.

Supreme sincerity and keen curiosity personify Pepys's books. Pepys writes about himself, "I, as I am in all things curious." On one occasion Pepys writes of a play, "I was sick to see it, but yet would not but have seen it, that I might the better understand her," speaking of the Duchess of New Castle. Pepys radiates the enthralling confusion of events through his book. Thanks to the diary's private nature, Pepys needn't hold anything back. Very little mediation takes place between the mind and the pen.

Pepys also values his books very highly. On one occasion his residence was in danger of invasion and he took great pains to save "my journalls, which I value very much."<sup>23</sup> His efforts to save the books might well have been an effort to stay away from the gallows. Pepys encoded his book, writing in a popular cipher for the time. He doesn't expressly say why, but the advantages are clear: expediency, safety and exclusion of the casual perusal. Pepys falls in love with his practice, "It is a most extraordinary thing to observe, and that which I would not but have had the observation of for a great deal of money,"<sup>24</sup> writing in his book, about his books' priceless nature and the priceless nature of his recorded observations.

Pepys' diary captures something very present in Pepys' life but unseen by many others. The diary houses an enigma: it has a way of illuminating truths about faith that cannot be admitted anywhere else. If something is important enough to make it on the page of the diary, it must be on the mind of the diarist at the time he

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.,

is writing it- it must inform some part of their image. Pepys, was a member of the Church of England and Reverend George Hickes said in an obituary that he never knew another “person that died with so much Christian greatness of mind, or a more lively sense of immortality, or so much fortitude and patience in so long and sharp a trial, or greater resignation to what he most devoutly acknowledged to be the wisdom of God.”<sup>25</sup> However in the pages of the diary, Pepys never really shows strong advocacy for the Anglican brand of Christianity he publicly subscribed to. In fact, he shows an affinity for Puritans, certainly not sharing their faith, but admiring from a distance. He writes on September 12, 1668, “my wife having a mind to see the play, *Bartholomew Fayre* with puppets; which we did, and it is an excellent play; the more I see it, the more I love the wit of it; only, the business of abusing the Puritans begins to grow stale, and of no use, they being the people that at last will be found the wisest.”<sup>26</sup> Notice he does not call himself a Puritan, or even admit to any kind of secret observance or internal struggle. Rather he states this as a fact, a conclusion he’s made, informed by his life before this day. Such subtleties are singular to the diary as a medium. The diary can show us these infinitely small moments, and still have them inform the author’s character and his decision making. We, the readers, are comfortable in knowing that this small reaction was not placed here for our benefit, rather we come across these moments like a hog finds truffles, by blindly sniffing them out. They are indicative of something from the outside. If Pepys were to re-read this section, there would not be anything special about it in

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<sup>25</sup>Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys.*, 9.

<sup>26</sup>*The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary*, selected and edited by Robert Latham (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1978)., 192.

the slightest. He might read it as a passing comment. The internal discrepancies never stopped Pepys from going to church but there are no real moments of profundity concerning God or religion. To someone outside of his head, this subtle moment is honest and telling about his character; something that informs his decision making. This is an example of the way our inner self can bleed through the diary's pages, not for drama or some knowledge of the future, but as a truism. This moment is a scientific discovery, an intimate look at what makes a person tick. Religion is often at the heart of that matter. Pepys referring to Puritans as 'others' and as a wiser group than his own makes his relationship with God seem perfunctory, or a matter of habit. While in church, Pepys often falls asleep and "confesses it on a number of occasions, with quite brazen equanimity."<sup>27</sup> Sometimes he falls into a mode of people watching, relaying curious and entertaining comments in his diary, like the fair Butler, "who indeed is a most perfect beauty still and one I do very much admire myself for my choice of her for a beauty, she having the best lower part of her face that ever I saw all days of my life."<sup>28</sup> His religion is observation, and he worships in his manuscript.

One of the many functions the diary hold for Pepys is ameliorating his need to see and record. He uses the book as a form of self-expression, one that gives him an outlet for his curiosity. One may think, without his books, Pepys would be driven mad by his need to see and record. He is so haunted and perplexed and excited by what he sees in everyday life, he needs an escape. The diary is the perfect medium because it does not require order and format like the commonplace book; it does

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<sup>27</sup> Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys*, 214

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

not call for simple record keeping like the journal. The diary's chronological prerequisite allows observations to come as they may, to remain part of the period they are from rather than being re-purposed and repackaged in a similar book. Pepys records his observations exactly as they come, spontaneous and honest. The movement of his hand across the page is the final part of the experience. His mind is a blank slate; as he moves through the day it fills up, and his diary is a reflection of that *tabula rasa*.

He records with wonder and disgust, "But, Lord! What a stir Stankes makes with his being crowded in the streets and wearied in walking in London, and would not be wooed by my wife and Ashwell to go to a play, nor to White Halle, or to see the Lyons, though he was carried in a coach. I never could have thought there had been upon earth a man so little curious in this world as he," speaking on the indifference of a guest of his in London. When Pepys personifies this man as "a man [with] so little curious," the reader learns the value Pepys places on curiosity. A curious being is well suited to the diary as a medium and as an outlet for self-expression.

Pepys also writes of some events that he does not witness first hand. In 1665 The Dutch and The English navies had a bloody engagement off Lowestoft in June.<sup>29</sup> News of the battle came to Pepys on the 8<sup>th</sup>:

*8 June. Victory over the Dutch. 3 June 1665.* This day they engaged- The Dutch neglecting greatly the opportunity of the wind they had of us - by which they lost the benefit of their freeships. The earl of Falmouth, Muskery, and Mr. Rd.

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen Coote, *Samuel Pepys: A Life* (New York, NY: Palgrave Publishers Ltd, 2000), 157.

Boyle killed on board the Dukes ship, the *Royall Charles*, with one shot. Their blood and brains flying in the Dukes face- and the head of Mr. Boyle striking down the Duke, as some say. We have taken and sunk, as is believed, about twenty- four of their best ships. Killed and taken near eight- or ten- thousand men; and lost, we think, not above seven hundred. A great victory, never known in the world. They are all fled; some forty-three got into the Texell and others elsewhere, and we in pursuit of the rest. Had a great bonfire at the gate; and I with my Lady Pens people and others to Mrs Turners great room, and then down into the street. I did give the boys 4 (shillings) among them- and mighty merry; so home to bed- with my heart at great rest and quiet, saving that the consideration of the victory is too great for me presently to comprehend.<sup>30</sup>

On this day Pepys records second hand information and first hand information. The news of the victory first came from the Lord Treasurer's office.<sup>31</sup> He calls the victory one, "Never known to the world," and goes on say that the victory is "too great for me presently to comprehend." Pepys is clearly in the moment. The reader feels jubilation from reading about the gay bonfire some 350 years ago. This kind of unawareness of the future is singularly important to the diary. We know what the author knows, in the moment he learns it, but we also know the future, and we know that in that moment Samuel Pepys did not. The twists and turns are dripping with drama, but not like that of a novel or printed book. The drama in the diary is far more honest and tragic. Pepys does not yet know the full implications of this victory, "too great to comprehend." The vessels that fled would end up making the core of a new Dutch navy in a renewed struggle. Also Pepys does not yet know the

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<sup>30</sup> *The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary*, selected and edited by Robert Latham (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1978), 83-84

<sup>31</sup> Coote, *Samuel Pepys: A Life*, 158.

implications of strained relations and open warfare on trade. Fall in tax revenue thanks to decreased trade and losses to Dutch privateers gave Pepys immense financial problems.<sup>32</sup> Pepys of course is also unaware at this point about the devastating toll the plague takes on London. The diary is a book that happened, and a manuscript in a moment. From the future, a reader can see past the setting of the sun. The future reader can see into the next pane. In the moment he hears of a naval victory Pepys' prides soars because he, as a Clerk of Acts, worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the encounter possible. Pepys is made into a tragic character in this moment, one unaware of the larger picture. He revels in the glory, it is a time for celebration. The diary has an amazing ability to show the larger picture in retrospect, but at the time of its conception all is unknown. Every day is a story, neatly contained, where each new day is only aware of the ones before it.

The veracity of Pepys's books is evident. He is obsessed with studying the human condition and does so with astounding frankness and candor. While he does have affairs of his own that absorb him, he does not close his eyes or ears to the truth of the outside world. Pepys does not quote in excess, which is a signal of his truthfulness. Writing entries sometimes 10 days after any given event took place means a verbatim conversation is impossible to recall. Instead of recounting a conversation with verbatim quotation, Pepys seems to write that which he truly can remember. Pepys does not betray the reader like Madame D'Arblay who presents an impossible ability to recall lengthy conversations in verbal quotation. A kind of looseness in memory, as a feature of manuscript culture, reminds the reader how

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 159.

the stains of time distort that which already happened and adds to the authenticity of the medium as a reflection of the record in his mind's eye. Pepys copies what is left of his experiences in his mind as faithfully as he can. The movement of his hand across the page is the final moment of the event he is recalling. Filling his pages, unburdening his mind, puts a moment squarely in the past. His manuscript is not concerned with every detail of a conversation, but rather with his memory of it.

Pepys uses his diary to write of Kings, Queens, Lords, Ladies, judges and generals, and common folk. All share an ethereal humanness, which Pepys devotes a good deal of his medium to study and explore. He doesn't get lost in the greatness of a King or the virtue of a judge, that is not to say he doesn't perceive these qualities at appropriate moments, but those characteristics do not drown out the frail humanity underneath. On one occasion Pepys gets close to a particular King on a day-to-day basis. He notes, "how mean a thing a king is, subject to fall, and how like other men he is in his afflictions,"<sup>33</sup> showing this King as a King, but also as a human like Pepys or like you or me. With a similar tone he describes an encounter with the Deputy Governor, "But, Lord! To see what a young, simple, fantastique coxcomb is made Deputy Governor, would make one mad; and how he called out for his night gown of silk, only to make a show to us; and yet for half an hour I did not think he was the Deputy Governor, and so spoke not to him about the business, but waited for another man."<sup>34</sup> Pepys is unimpressed by the Deputy Governor. He's embarrassed for the Deputy Governor and embarrassed of himself. He uses the diary to unburden his memory: the act of writing it on the page helps to put a

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<sup>33</sup> Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys*, 24.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*,



moment squarely in the past. As well, his practice affords him a private forum to explore the humanness of a King or Lord. Again, this speaks to the driving forces behind the diary as a medium, to live in the author's bias, to be a record of his inner thoughts. Outwardly, Pepys probably would not point out the common-ness of a King.

In later manuscript culture there arises a particular importance for manuscripts and preaching. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century writing sacred books and copying sacred books was a very pious experience.<sup>35</sup> Copying manuscripts in a book brings the scribe closer to God. Copying memories in the diary brings Pepys closer to an essential human quality. Just as scribes' copied religious texts imperfectly, so does Pepys' memory fail him. In those moments he does not resign to making things up but rather he puts what is in his head on the page. That is why we see very little direct quotation from Pepys in his books. He never revised his books, not even to fill in a blank left for a name that slipped his mind in a moment.<sup>36</sup>

The privacy of the diary aids Pepys in exploring the human condition without consequence or judgment. Scattered through the pages of the diary is a collection of people and experiences. He locks them away in his private pages like a collection of fine china. A short obituary, "This morning I hear that last night Sir Thomas Teddiman, poor man! Did die by a thrush in his mouth: a good man, and stout and able, and much lamented,"<sup>37</sup> shows the reader that Pepys is unburdened by social

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<sup>35</sup> John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 211.

<sup>36</sup> *The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary*, selected and edited by Robert Latham (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1978), 12-13

<sup>37</sup> Bradford, *The Soul of Samuel Pepys*, 25.

standards in his books. He feels no need to remember Teddiman in better terms than he thought of him while he was alive. He is allowed to write the truth, not censored by social standards and customs, because the diary is inherently private. Privacy in the diary gives Pepys' eye and hand the freedom to see and write the world as it is. He is ready to recognize charm and wit as well as their opposites and he has a private place to collect people and experiences. He uses the private forum of his diary to learn people, to remember people and to think critically about them not out of malicious intent but rather as an endeavor. Pepys is a collector of experience and interaction. The diary itself is the only medium that is useful in this pursuit. Only in a book that is private and coded can Pepys unburden himself honestly, away from scrutiny. The diary allows him to drop his filter, to let his mind run free. Of Mr. Hill, "my friend the merchant, that loves musique and comes to me a' Sundays, a most ingenious and sweet-natured and highly accomplished person," or of Evelyn, "he read me part of a play or two of his making, very good, but not as he conceits them, I think, to be."<sup>38</sup> He writes with a remorseless pen and eye. He captures the foolish and the wicked quite matter of fact-ly. Pepys writes of the Blackwell pair: "I do, contrary to my expectation, find her something a proud and vain-glorious woman, in telling the number of her servants and family and expenses: he is also so, but he was ever of that strain," noticing a contradiction within himself, thinking the Blackwell woman as 'proud,' 'vain,' and 'glorious'. He doesn't always remain so even keeled however. Pepys writes about a man named Povy with palpable sarcasm, "he is a coxcomb, and, I doubt, not over honest, by some things

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.,

which I see; and yet, for all his folly, he hath the good lucke, now and then, to speak his follies in as good words, and with as good a show, as if it were reason, and to the purpose, which is really one of the wonders of my life.” He captures the wicked Lady Peters after an attempt to ease her anxiety about an enemy. Pepys writes, “she would not, to redeem her from hell, do anything to release him; but would be revenged while she lived, if she lived the age of Methusalem,” displaying the Lady Peter’s inability to forgive. The impressions left upon Pepys are recreated in his diary. He locks people and experiences away in the diary as a curiosities cabinet. Inside is that which is essentially human and sometimes critical. His cipher is the lock that keeps casual perusal away. A diary contains something sensitive, something not for the public. These perceptions of friends and enemies are private. They are not to be shared for fear of how they would be received. The diary as medium begs to be filled with secrets, with dirty dealings and characterizations that should never meet their subjects. These inmost secrets exist in a book that is inherently private but inevitably public.

Another role Pepys’ preferred medium fulfills is sincerely critiquing the world around him. Bradford writes, “we find in the Diary a terrible sincerity, a cool, unadorned, direct, fierce transcription of the vagaries of vice and folly, which no mere literary artifice could ever approach.”<sup>39</sup> This point is reflected in the passages where Pepys explores the “vice and folly” of the new court and regime. On June 14, 1667, Pepys writes of a threat of occupation on Parliament, “It is said they did in open streets yesterday, at Westminster, cry ‘A Parliament! A Parliament!’ and I do

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 27.

believe it will cost blood to answer for these miscarriages.”<sup>40</sup> Here he takes a step back from the conflict, taking the role of the omniscient narrator. Writing in his book lets him remove himself from the conflict; it allows him to better understand the factors surrounding it, once again, all in private.

He captures sullen discontent and grumbling from his own class of people, all from above. He captures ineptitude and waste with regret because ultimately Pepys sympathizes with himself. Writing of his own aristocratic class, “At all which I am sorry; but it is the effect of idleness, and having nothing else to employ their great spirits upon,”<sup>41</sup> Pepys seems to be remorseful. He sees greatness in his peers but not their desire to fulfill it. He writes, “What mad freaks the Mayds of Honour at Court have: theat Mrs. Jenings, one of the Dutchesse’s mayds, the other day dressed herself like an orange wench and went up and down and cried oranges; till falling down, or by such accident, though in the evening, her fine shoes were discerned, and she put to a great deale of shame,”<sup>42</sup> highlighting to his private audience, what a circus the court has become. Or of one courtier, “Their discourse, it seems, when they are alone, is so base and sordid, that it makes the eares of the very gentleman of the back-stairs to tingle to hear it spoke in the King’s hearing; and that must be very bad indeed.”<sup>43</sup> These collections of observation fall into a different category of collection in Pepys diary. He is not simply collecting them, as he does, the anger of Lady Peters, instead he is exploring a pattern of ineptitude and uncouth behavior-behavior that should not be present in the King’s court. In these instances, the diary

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.,

no longer functions as a curiosity cabinet; instead it serves to flesh out the folly of the new court through its individual actors. The diary here is a confidant; an object for cathartic release; an intellectual peer with which he can share his sensitivities to the new methods.

Thinking about the priorities of the King and the court: “Sir H. Cholmly come to me this day, and tells me the Court is as mad as ever; and that the night the Dutch burned our ships the King did sup with my Lady Castlemayne, at the Duchess of Monmouth’s, and they were all mad in hunting a poor moth.” The diary is a safe place to explore the shortcomings of high society without the danger of rumors and secrets leaking to the outside world and marring his public image. It is more than that though. It is a place for Pepys to converse with himself- a place where he can catalogue where he sees shortcomings and who holds them. Pepys tells stories with vivid simplicity- in a style that is only conducive to the diary as a medium. He is not concerned with prose or grammar. The literary value of the diary, especially the diary of Samuel Pepys, is not cheapened by the haste or crudeness with which he fills the pages. On the contrary, his broken language, lapses, omissions and repetitions all reflect how the mind thinks. The diary is as short of a distance from the brain as a medium can be. It is imperfect and through my own diary practice I learned that its contents are still mediated by the hand and the pen- some thoughts don’t make it on to the page, but still, the privacy allows the diarist to write as honestly as he can bare and explore facts about his nature without consequence. The haste with which the diarist writes is not a sign of illiteracy and does not cheapen the literary value of the medium, as some would suggest. Rather, haste in

this scenario is indicative of a mind running and a hand doing its very best to keep up. Filters and fear of judgment fall to the side as the pen desperately tries to lasso the mind. The “childlike disregard of finish and correction,”<sup>44</sup> is a sign of unfiltered, unfettered access to the diarist’s perceptions. Take the execution of the regicide Harrison: “Went out to Charing Cross, to see Major general Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy. It is said, that he said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now had judged him; and that his wife do expect his coming again.”<sup>45</sup> How easy it would be to write of this gruesome scene in a more verbose and dramatic effort. However, Pepys’ pen is guided by his thoughts, and instead it is a quietly profound and tender observation of the human heart. He conveys just what he saw and just how he felt about it, without getting tied in eloquence. Poems live in his subtleness. Imperfection and incompleteness are part of the diary as a medium; without them the veracity of the contents is called into question. His sentences are simple but they give the color of the world with dreamy delicacy: “But I in such fear that I could not sleep till we came to Erith, and there it begun to be calm, and the stars to shine, and so I began to take heart again, and the rest too, and so made shift to slumber a little.”<sup>46</sup> Such is the true value in the diary: it has the power to put the reader as close to the author’s mind, his true thoughts, as possible. Pepys writes as his mind

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 33.

thinks, "It is strange weather we have had all this winter; no cold at all; but the ways are dusty, and the flies fly up and down, and the rose-bushes are full of leaves, such a time of the year as was never known in this world before here. This day many more of the Fifth Monarchy men were hanged."<sup>47</sup> We follow him as his mind weaves through the various stimuli of the day. He leaves us, in this passage, with something that will cling to our memory, simply because of the way it was written- with the natural winding path that the mind likes to take. Natural, understated beauty is specific to the diary as a medium if the author writes honestly. The diary delicately captures the naturally meandering ways the mind works, in those bends are something beautiful and singularly recognizable.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 34.

### III

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William Byrd II of Westover was the first of his family to be born in the New World. He kept a faithful diary for most of his adult life. It is a secret diary in more ways than one. Naturally one of the diaries chief characteristics as a medium is privacy, but Byrd encoded his book even further than Samuel Pepys. Between the covers of Byrd's secret diaries lay some points of convergence with and divergence from Samuel Pepys's diaries. Both men use the medium to explore universal qualities of mankind with great sincerity. Their styles, however, couldn't be more different. Where Pepys is lighthearted and entertaining, Byrd is cryptic and in danger of boring the reader to death. There are two schools of thought on reading Byrd's diaries. Many historians believe, like William Matthews, "that it is possible for a diarist to be historically minded, scientific, honest, accurate, careful, copious, even to write in shorthand, and yet to be considerably dull, is evident from the diary of an eminent American colonist, Richard Byrd of Westover Virginia."<sup>48</sup> Clearly Mr. Matthews close reading of the Byrd diary was not quite close enough to get his name right, which may be the worst sign of dullness he brings up. The second school of thought, led by Kenneth Lockridge, believes that inevitable repulsion from Byrd's diary comes from the fact that it is so repetitive and tedious. It has military order and appearance. Nearly the same formula is followed every day of Byrd's life

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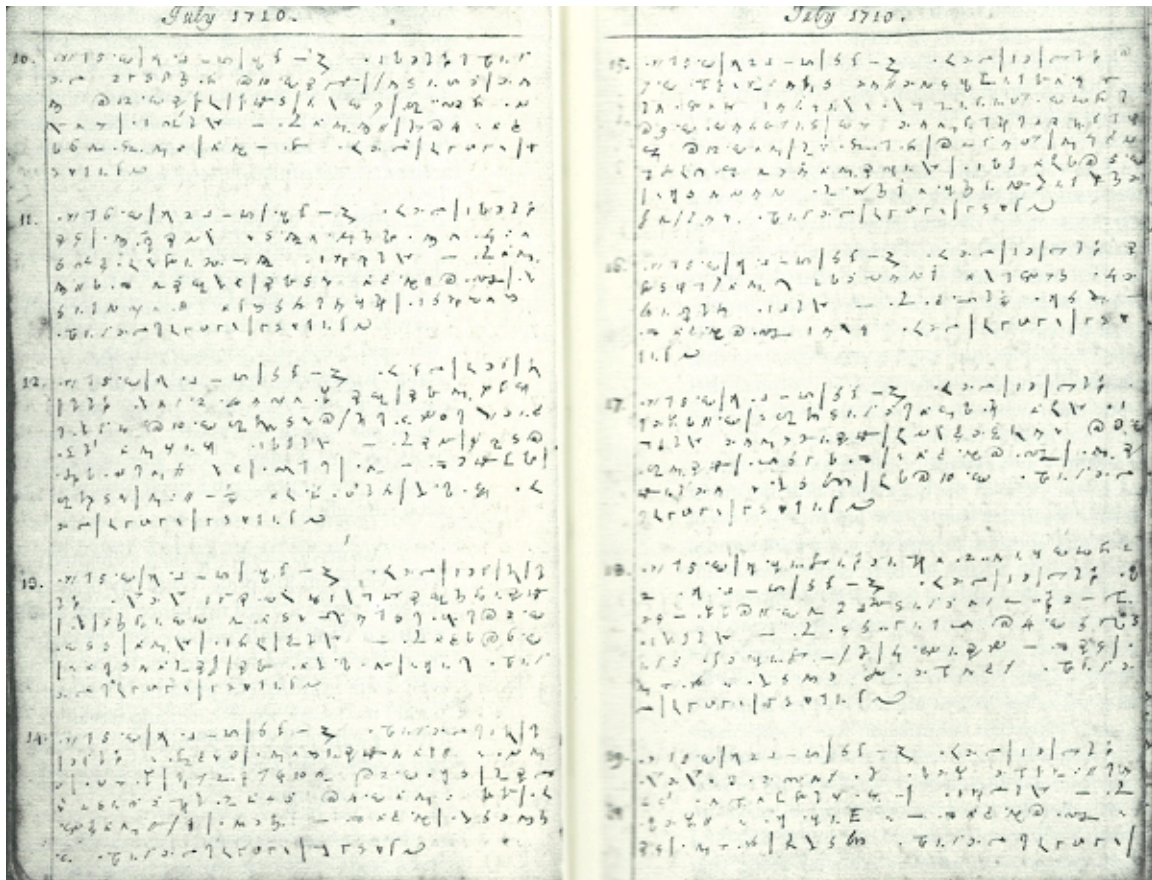
<sup>48</sup> Kenneth A. Lockridge, *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744* (Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 9.



recorded in the diaries. The second school of thought reads this repetition as a code in itself- a gentlemanly code. Written in Byrd's diaries are the expected behaviors of an 18<sup>th</sup> century gentleman, "repeated and obsessively reviewed," writes Lockridge. He writes in almost every entry, "I had good health, good thoughts and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty," showing the Christian-gentlemanly trait of equanimity to all things, and thanks to God for all things. He also takes in culture, as a gentleman should, almost every day by reading or writing in Greek, Hebrew or Latin: "I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some in Greek in Josephus," is a phrase again repeated almost every day in the secret books. First, the book is literally encoded in Byrd's own form of shorthand, built on William Masons "La Plume Volante" (1707) revised from "A Pen Pluck't from an Eagle's Wing," (1672).<sup>49</sup> Next the entries are encoded in a strict behavioral code, or gentlemanly code, and lastly the entries are codified through Byrd's emotional restraint. This theory seems to be far reaching, but reading Byrd's diary with this eye sees the last of these codes acting very powerfully to filter and hide everything of William Byrd II out of sight. Byrd's use of the diary as medium becomes vastly more interesting because of its repetition and dull nature. This is a theory that will be honestly explored later in this section.

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<sup>49</sup> *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1709-1712*, Louis B. Wright & Marion Tinling ed. (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1941)., vii.



(Pages from William Byrd's secret diary scanned from *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd II of Virginia 1674-1744*)

Regarding the physical diaries themselves. They stand in octavo and are broken into 3 portions. The first covers from February 6, 1709 through September 29, 1712. The second portion is from December 13, 1717 through May 19, 1721, and the last covers August 10, 1739- August 31, 1741. Unlike Pepys', Byrd's diary practice saw him writing the previous day's events during his leisurely mornings. In nearly every entry Byrd wakes up between 5am and 7am- part of his strict routine and formula. Byrd's variation on the early shorthand style was frequent omission of vowels as well as using shorthand for proper nouns.<sup>50</sup> Most of William Byrd's

<sup>50</sup> *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1709-1712*, Louis B. Wright & Marion Tinling ed. (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1941), vii.

published works, like “The History of the Dividing Line,” and “A Journey to Eden,” were adapted from his diary.<sup>51</sup> In fact these works put Byrd’s diary especially within manuscript culture with the practice of copying his own diary, like a scribe, into a new work for publication and distribution. William Byrd always had a notebook or a diary with him to write in. For Byrd the diary as a medium becomes an extension of himself. He was careful to note when the diary entry was being recorded later than the next morning. Historians are confident in the assumption that he never considered future publication of his diaries mostly because the book, in some passages, explores Byrd’s sexual revelations, quarrels with his wife, his passions and his meanness; things that a gentleman would not want publicly known about himself. As far as we know today, the diaries were kept secret even from his closest friends. There is no mention of them in any of Byrd’s published works or anyone else’s for that matter. William Byrd truly kept a secret diary.<sup>52</sup>

He never unburdens himself at length in the diary, which, reading the entries as Lockridge may have, makes them seem like a private set of reminders- a point of reference or a map to his mind. This makes Byrd’s writing that much more of an enigma. The day’s events are regimented and formatted into a structure that is nearly identical in all entries:

7. I rose at 5 o’clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some in Greek in Josephus. I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance, and settled my accounts. I read some Latin. It was extremely hot. I ate stewed mutton for dinner. In the afternoon it began to rain and blow very violently so that it blew down my fence. It likewise thundered. In all the

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<sup>51</sup> Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover: 1674-1744*, 117.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

time I have been in Virginia I never heard it blow harder. I read Latin again and Greek in Homer. In the evening we took a walk in the garden. I said my prayers and had good health, good humor and good thoughts, thanks be to God Almighty.

8. I rose at 5 o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some Greek in Josephus. I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance. I read some Latin. Tom returned from Williamsburg and brought me a letter from Mr. Bland which told me the wine came out very well. I ate nothing but pudding for dinner. In the afternoon I read some more Latin and Greek in Homer. Then I took a walk about the plantation. I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

9. I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Josephus. I said my prayers and ate milk and apples for breakfast with Captain Wilcox who called here this morning. I danced my dance. I wrote a letter to England and read some Latin. I ate roast chicken for dinner. In the afternoon I saluted my wife and took a nap I read more Latin and Greek in Homer. Then I took a walk about the plantation. I neglected to say my prayers. I had good health, good thoughts, and good humor thanks be to God Almighty.<sup>53</sup>

The recurring phrases fit into the more complex aspects of Byrd's code. He must remain a proper gentleman- equanimity, moderation, balance and acceptance in all things. These are the roots of civilized behavior for the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He is proud of his equanimity. In one instance he, "had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, notwithstanding my misfortune, thanks be to God Almighty," 'misfortune'

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<sup>53</sup> Lockridge, *The Diary, and life, of William Byrd II of Virginia*,), 3-6.

referring to the loss of a ship carrying much of that year's tobacco crop.<sup>54</sup> He values a "come what may" attitude. When he was faced with the death of his infant son, "God gives and God takes away; blessed be the name of God."<sup>55</sup> It was important to Byrd to keep this attitude, not for God, but for his own image of himself. He uses his book as a reminder, as a rudder, a mentor, a mirror to gaze through and paint his own image. He wills his equanimity into being every morning when he writes the previous day. A skeptic would ask, "How do you separate correlation from causation?" It is equally possible that Byrd's equanimity was present before he picked up his pencil. Reconstructing William Byrd II's early life is the key to understanding the extraordinary way he used his diary and by extension the full utility of the diary as medium.

There is a brittle personality at the root of William Byrd's diary. A look into his past, with modest assumptions, gives Byrd's use of the diary a new depth. His father William Byrd I was from middle class English stock. He was an ambitious man who made his beginning in the Indian fur trade. In 1673 he married Mary Horsmanden Filmer who had gentle origins but no family wealth. In 1676, Nathaniel Bacon led a rebellion against William Berkeley, the crown appointed governor of Virginia. Bacon had the support of 1000 from all races and classes.<sup>56</sup> WBI joined the side of the rabble in the beginning of the rebellion, but made a timely switch at such an opportune moment that he emerged as Berkeley's right hand man. WBI was made a member of the Royal Council in the upper house of the Virginia

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>56</sup> Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover 1674-1744*, 15-17.

legislature. He moved down the Jamestown River to the tidewaters of tobacco country. The end of the rebellion did not ease his own or his peer's frustration with directives from the crown. WBI's station in life was improving but he likely recognized the ceiling on his upward mobility. These new 'Virginia gentlemen' were not seen as such by agents of the crown. Even those like Byrd, who rallied around Berkley could not command respect in his world. Berkley hanged the leaders of the uprising despite their advice against it. Education could separate the next generation enough to be considered by the crown for real leadership positions in the colonies. There were field schools in the colony but "these uncertain, makeshift sessions could not carry an ambitious student very far,"<sup>57</sup> writes Beatty. The reality was that this half-polished first generation was limited and could not command respect during times of political turbulence from people who believed in the aristocracy. Most of the first generation of settlers were from middle class backgrounds and may be fleeing religious persecution.<sup>58</sup>

This first generation recognized the pivotal role the second generation could play in the future of their young colony. Gentle status was attainable in the New World. With enough land and an heir with a proper English education, WBI could see his name become a legacy. WBI worked to fulfill the first condition and would see his son fulfill the second. The thought was that with the right education, their

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<sup>57</sup> Richard Croom Beatty, *William Byrd of Westover* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), 11.

<sup>58</sup> Lockridge, *The Diary, and Life, of William Bryd.*, 12-13. This section relies heavily on Kenneth Lockridge's research on William Byrd before the diary, as well as ideas of Byrd's personality

sons could successfully navigate the rabble from free slaves and command political respect from the tyranny of the crown.

When WBII was seven years old, five years after Bacons Rebellion, WBI sent him to Felsted in London.<sup>59</sup> Felsted was a small school made up of a few gentleman scholars but more charity cases. It was entering a period of decline as WBII got there when one of the noteworthy families withdrew their patronage. WBII would only see his father one time in person and receive two letters, both prompted by WBII, for the rest of his life. Warhem Horsemanden, his maternal grandfather with this note, received him: “My little son William comes herewith, to whom I shall not doubt your kindness.”<sup>60</sup> Young William’s boarding arrangements changed frequently but he was most often left in the care of his uncle, Daniel Horsemanden, who was only interested in the modest compensation that came for housing WBII.<sup>61</sup>

In the earlier years WBI’s only contact to his son is through notes on business dealings with Warhem - “our blessings to our children.”<sup>62</sup> WBII writes to his father occasionally to report his progress in school. On two occasions WBI replied. Once in 1685 when he advised, “improve your time, and bee carefull to serve God as you ought, without which you cannot expect to due well here or hereafter,” and again in 1690 as WBII is leaving school: “Heartily glad to hear you had your health so well, and hope to find you have improved your time so, that you may answer the expectation of all your friends.”<sup>63</sup> The letters read in the same tone as the Diaries

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<sup>59</sup> Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover 1674-1744*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Lockridge, *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd.*,14.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 10-15.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 15.

but come decades before. It is as if WBII writes in his father's voice. In fact his diary takes on the role of a father figure or a mentor, which he was lacking in his biological father. In a moment of uncertainty in the beginning of the diary years, Byrd digs up his dead father's body in "wasted countenance,"<sup>64</sup> to seek council, but finds no solice. William Byrd I is central to the way William Byrd II needs his manuscript.

With his father such a distant presence WBII did not have a role model. Without much advice to go on, other than to 'improve' his time – whatever that means – WBII was starving for a gentlemanly role model so he could fulfill his father's lofty expectations. He was never close with any of his schoolmates at Felsted. In fact he only mentions one person in all his later writing: "my old school fellow" Dr. William Cocke, who incidentally ended up in Virginia as a physician in 1710.<sup>65</sup> He doesn't make a single memorable or lasting connection with his rectors or his extended family.

When Byrd was 16, his father sent him to learn about trade from the Dutch in Holland. Byrd Sr. wanted his son to, "imbibe some of the fine business sense of the Dutch,"<sup>66</sup> but young Byrd found Holland not to his liking and begged to be allowed to return to England<sup>67</sup>. In 1690 WBII landed an apprenticeship with Perry and Lane in London for a couple of years with his father's blessing to leave Holland. In 1692, he attended Middle Temple to learn law. While there he identified himself in the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>66</sup> Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover 1674-1744*, 17.

<sup>67</sup> *The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings of William Byrd of Virginia*, Edited by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1972), 7.



inscriptions in his own books as “son and heir apparent of William Byrd of Cree Church, London, Esq.”<sup>68</sup> Byrd feels safe in this status as a gentleman. This could be a sign as to why he was never close with his peers in school. Byrd is colonial; the people who could make those judgments would never recognize him as a true gentleman. This effort to conceal that fact may suggest that he was rejected because of his colonial origins earlier in his life. This rejection would certainly help to explain his lack of friends during his school years. His time at Middle Temple was much more positive than his previous school experience. He made quick friends with Benjamin Lynde, a Massachusetts native. This was a lifelong friendship and significantly, Lynde also had colonial origins.<sup>69</sup> All this trouble to form close relationships serves to explain the brittle personality that lives beneath the rigid code of his diary later in life. He would later characterize himself as “sensitive to slights, and the slight he most sought to explain away or to rise above was any aspersion on his colonial origin.”<sup>70</sup> The title, “son and heir apparent of William Byrd of Cree Church, London, Esq.” could point to the reason for his loneliness in his earlier years and his eventual silence about them.

While at Perry and Lane, WBI is sure to remind his son to “bee mindful of your duty to heaven, and then you may be assured God will bless you in all your undertakings.”<sup>71</sup> This very dependent relationship with God sticks with young Byrd. It is clear how seriously he took the few words from his father. God plays a very

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<sup>68</sup> Lockridge, *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd of Virginia, 1674-1744*, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover*, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Lockridge, *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd of Virginia, 1674-1744*, 18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

important role in Byrd's diary life, and we can see that he even adopts a tone reminiscent of his father in thanking God. What's more, Byrd senior's association of God with success is passed on and amplified in his son. That is one aspect of Byrd's diaries that is very clearly influenced and learned from his limited relationship with his father. It is one of the things he holds on to very closely. Byrd junior takes on his father's tone in thanking God, as if the entries were his father talking to him. Using his father as a role model, Byrd does his best to think himself into a man. WBI only visits his son incidentally, when business trips take him to London. The same thing can be said for their correspondence via letter in the early years when WBI only communicated through the occasional 'P.S.' in letters to Warhem. So Byrd junior was sent to become a gentleman and a scholar but has no real direction, except limited ambiguous advice and his father's actions to go on. With that in mind it makes perfect sense why Byrd junior associates God with success and the 'improving' of time with business endeavors.

Another significant aspect of Byrd's earlier years on his diary practice is his affinity for reading and writing. While at school he learns Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French and Italian. He writes and reads in a combination of those nearly every day for the rest of his life. He learns about reading and solitude at school, another small indication of his possible rejection, and those meditative practices stay dear to him for the rest of his life. Among the books that he kept from his years at school, found in his library posthumously, were by the men who defined the Christian Gentleman for the world. Books like Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman*, and titles from Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Steele and many others through whom he might cast himself in a

gentlemanly mold.<sup>72</sup> Byrd seems to have shaped his personality from the books and languages he learned at school rather than from real world role models. He took the little bit that his father gave him; ideas of God and success, and mixed them with teachings from books like *Compleat Gentleman*, and crafted his personality in their image. He explains the hurt of rejection as a necessity, as his father may have explained it. He needed to fulfill his father's expectations, to come back with the polish the older generation lacked.

William Byrd latched on to the challenge of becoming a gentleman as a way of fulfilling his father's wishes. However, without a real world model of a gentleman who was readily accessible, young Byrd is left to learn from books. This is an important aspect of his personality, one that is crucial in the Lockridgian reading of William Byrd II's diaries. Learning how to be a gentleman through books makes Byrd's ideas of a gentleman very rigid and narrow. That lines up with his repetitive practices of "dancing his dance," reading in Hebrew, writing in Greek, day in and day out. He learns his gradual pursuit of perfection from Sir Thomas Elyot's "The Boke Named the Governor," as well as an advocating for classical learning. When Elyot recommends "frugality in diet," Byrd listens, usually only drinking a glass of milk for breakfast or maybe an apple.<sup>73</sup> He recommends dancing as a moral form of exercise. William Byrd II brings literary codes to reality in his diary. The way Byrd uses his book is an example of the extreme length this medium can be pushed to. It is an example of a moment in the history of manuscript culture. Like spiritual manuscripts were copied as a method of worship, of betterment, of exploration,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 48-52.

Byrd's repetitive transcriptions lay at the foundation of his legacy- the legacy of those "first gentlemen of Virginia"<sup>74</sup>

The only constant that Byrd can hold on to for his whole life is his diary. He spends his first 30 years in London and then the rest, save for *the London Diary* years, in the colonies. He was a Virginian in London and a Londoner in Virginia. Needing a confidant in both of these places, Byrd takes the logical turn to his diaries. Captured within them are 30 years of colonial history and the first Southern diary reminiscent of Puritan New Englanders like Sam Sewall's and John Edward's.<sup>75</sup> Over that span there is a certain arch- a character development that Byrd undertakes. In the beginning, young Byrd needed the rigid structure of his books to craft himself into the gentleman he needed to become. He created an intense manuscript that guides him, one that he can craft his own personality in, molded after his gentlemanly library. Practicing in manuscript culture, Byrd obsessively copies and repeats the actions, the movements of a gentleman in all things. *The Secret Diary* features a continuous even flow of entries. He doesn't give a single thought to a prospective reader. It is more than just a repeated practice; it is diary keeping as soul craft. His aim is not to record everyday colonial and spiritual life, but rather his diaries are foundational to his very conception of himself. He practices like the scribes of old; writing and repeating, day in and day out, as a necessity, as a practice in personal development. The idea that Byrd's diary hides a brittle personality is

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<sup>74</sup> Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia*, (San Marino, CA: Dominion Books, 1982), 392.

<sup>75</sup> Pierre Marambaud, *William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744*, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1971), 112.

not completely an assumption. In his own self portrait, titled *Inamorato L'Oiseaux*, he writes:

And when he was in love no man ever made so disingageing a figure. Instead of that life and gait, that freedome and pushing confidence which hits the Ladys, he wou'd look as dismal as if he he [sic] appear'd before his judge, and not his mistress. Venus and the graces cou'd leave him in the lurch in the critical time when they shou'd have assisted him most. When he ought to have had the most fire he had the most flegm, and he was all form and constraint when he shou'd have the most freedome and spirit. He wou'd look like a fool, & talk like a Philosopher, when both his Eys and his Tongue shou'd have sparkled with wit and waggery. He wou'd sigh as ruefully as if he sat over a dead friend, and not a live mistress. No wonder this awkward conduct was without success for what woman wou'd venture upon a solemn swain that lookt more like her confessor than her gallant, and put her more in mind of a sullen Husband than a sprightly lover?<sup>76</sup>

Such self-deprecation! One can only imagine the awkward encounters and heartbreaking rejections he must have suffered. However, the mere fact that he could write this about himself, suggests to me that he is not as fragile as he once was. This portrait was written in 1722, when Byrd was 48 years old. Perhaps his diary as a method of learning to be a gentleman, learning to *be*, was working. As he grows he needs his crutch less and less. This lines up with the pattern of decline as entries become shorter and shorter as time wears on. Entries average about 15-20 lines in *The Secret Diary*, then down to about 12 on average in *The London Diary*, and

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<sup>76</sup> *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, edited by Maude H. Woodfin and Marion Tinling, (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press Inc.), 276-282.

finally, in the last diary the old Byrd is down to 7-8 lines on average per entry. On August 12, 1710 Byrd wrote:

I rose at five o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some in Greek in Lucian. I said my prayers and ate boiled milk for breakfast. I danced my dance. I had a quarrel with my wife about her servants who did little work. I wrote a long and smart letter to Mr. Perry, wherein I found several faults with his management of the tobacco I sent him and with mistakes he had committed in my affairs. My sloop brought some tobacco from Appomatox. Mr. Bland came over and dined with us on his way to Williamsburg. I ate roast shoat for dinner. In the afternoon Mr. Bland went away and I wrote more letters. I put some tobacco into the sloop for Captain Harvey. It rained and hindered our walk; however we walked a little in the garden. I neglected to say my prayers, but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty.<sup>77</sup>

Ten Years later on August 2, 1720:

I rose about five o'clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some in Greek in Lucian. I said my prayers and had milk for breakfast. The weather was cold and cloudy, the wind west. I danced my dance. Sam G-r-d-n's mare broke into my pasture, of which I sent him word and let him know I would shoot her if she came there again. I wrote some English till dinner and then ate some fish again. After dinner I put several things in order and then wrote two letters to Williamsburg till the evening and then took a walk about the plantation. At night I talked with my people and particularly with Tom who had taken a vomit again because he had an ague. His vomit had worked very

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<sup>77</sup> *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1709-1712*, edited by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1941), 216.

well and he was better, thank God. I said my prayers and retired but committed uncleanness, for which God forgive me.<sup>78</sup>

On August 13, 1740:

I rose about five, read Hebrew and Greek. I prayed and had tea. I danced. The weather was very hot and clear, the wind southwest. I read Latin and played piquet and billiards and read Latin till dinner when I ate roast pigeon. After dinner we played piquet again and I read Latin till the evening when we walked to visit the sick. I talked with my people and prayed.<sup>79</sup>

To this reader the shortening of his entries has a more meaningful explanation than, “he was getting old and stagnant.” Rather I see the same amount of movement covered in each of these three entries. The change is in the older Byrd no longer relying on his diary for mentorship and guidance. The rigidity and dogged practice he took on in the early years in an effort to become the gentleman his father, and the colony of Virginia, needed him to be was effective. As he grows older he becomes more confident and assured in his gentlemanly status. He now has real experience to build that precept on rather than book learning. The older Byrd successfully learned from his books. Looking at the degradation of the gentlemanly code that is so central to Byrd’s writing in the earlier diary years also reflects the evolution of his character. “I rose at five o’clock and read a chapter in Hebrew and some in Greek in Lucian,” from 1710 turns into “I rose about five, read Hebrew and

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<sup>78</sup> *The London Diary (1717-1721) and Other Writings of William Byrd of Virginia*, Edited by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1972), 435.

<sup>79</sup> *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, edited by Maude H. Woodfin and Marion Tinling, (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press Inc.), 94.

Greek,” in 1740. “I neglected to say my prayers, but had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thank God Almighty,” from 1710 turns into “I talked with my people and prayed,” in 1740. He taught himself, willed himself into existence through repetition and a rigid mold of a gentleman. He breaks out of the gentlemanly mold later in life like the butterfly breaks out of its cocoon. The evolution of his triply encoded entries lives in a moment of manuscript culture again reminiscent of the scribes of old. Just as their copies would take on subtle differences and errors and change over time, so does Byrd. When he lacked an emotional outlet, a father, a confessional, a mentor he turned to the pages of his diary. His medium tells a tale of perseverance against great odds. Byrd does more than ‘know thyself’; he creates himself. Once he is comfortable in who that is, the rigidity of his structure breaks down. He writes in his diary as a habituated practice still, but the diary is no longer his north star. His legacy is that of a gentleman, so his fragile construction worked.

Byrd’s diary practice in a moment of manuscript culture actually informs the very manuscript history of Virginia. *The History of the Dividing Line* is an elaboration of the rough diary that Byrd kept during his expedition to survey the border between North Carolina and Virginia. Beatty writes, “the unhurried manner in which he wrote suggests his philosophy of authorship. One’s literary output should reflect, he believed, the essence of a lifetime of observation.”<sup>80</sup> *The History of the Dividing Line* was kept by Byrd to send to the Lords of Trade to make sure the men were compensated adequately. He keeps the diary to emphasize something

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<sup>80</sup> Richard Croom Beatty, *William Byrd of Westover* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), 140.



that could easily go unseen- a unique trait of the diary as expository from an intimate perspective. Oldmixon says of Byrd in *British Empire in America*, “he had seen and knew so much, that, by his assistance, the Account of Viriniga is one of the most perfect of these Histories of our plantations. This refers to the History of Virginia which was written by Col. Bird, whom the Author knew when he was of the Temple; and the Performance answered the just opinion he had of that gentleman’s ability and exactness.”<sup>81</sup> Byrd is of the generation that took Virginia from a tidewater to an independently functioning colony with feudal estates. His diary practice informs and is crucial to the earliest manuscript history of Virginia. His ‘lifetime of observation’ is all filtered through, and informs, the structures he built in the cave of his diary. He retreats inside its pages to paint his face, to put on his shell and to learn the actions of a gentleman. Byrd’s diary, in a moment of manuscript history and culture, is central to his image as a gentleman, and Byrd’s legacy as one of those first Virginia gentlemen births the very possibility for gentle status from colonial origin.

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<sup>81</sup> Oldmixon, Mr. (John). “The British Empire in America” Vol. 2. London, MDCCXLI. [1741]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Vassar College Libraries. 25 April. 2017.

## IV

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For the two actors in this play, the diary is a special place. Think of the diary as a cave, or a mind palace. For Pepys the diary is an outlet, it is a place where he can live a part of his nature in words rather than in public. He explores his undisciplined traits, his vices, indulgences, desires, irritations and prejudices. By writing in his manuscript, Pepys got great relief and pleasure from these vices, which he knew had the potential to hold him back in life. There was the public life and the private life to him. To be successful was to be disciplined. Pepys knew that if he ever had a chance at getting ahead in life it would take a practical mind and a strong will. Pepys was able to keep discipline in the public and private matters that he deemed important. He built relationships, he was focused on the Admiralty, gained public recognition as, "Fellow of the Royal Society, Younger Brother of Trinity House, honorary burgess of Portsmouth, Justice of the Peace, Master of Arts from Cambridge, Commissioner for affairs of Tangier, deputy for the Clerk of the Privy Seal, Member of the Cloth worker's Guild, Assistant in the Corporation of Royal Fishery, governing member of St. Olave's; and he had had his portrait painted twice, and a miniature and a bust made of himself."<sup>82</sup> He recorded a somewhat unacted life, one where he can admit the 'wisest' are the Puritans for example. He retreated to the diary to live among the impulses he regularly silenced in public. In private

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<sup>82</sup> Percival Hunt, *Samuel Pepys in the Diary* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 158.

Pepys made a fool of himself and the diary was a break from publicity. The diary shows the private 'yin' to the public 'yang'. The diary is a tool for balance, the complementary sum of two equally opposing forces in Pepys very nature. He harnesses the awesome power of the diary to act as a vast and expansive mind palace, a home for fights with his wife, or desires of the flesh- the impulses he could not explore anywhere else.

For Byrd the idea of the diary as a mind palace also as traction. In his mind palace we might find his father, or God, or his gentlemanly role models. Every morning he visits them, keeps correspondence better than with any single person in his life. When he needs guidance or mirror to craft himself in, he retreats to the diary.

Phillippe Lejeune asks, "What is the end of a diary?" This is an important moment for the diary, one that makes it different from literary modes of writing and even unique within manuscript culture. The beginning is simple, it usually starts with a name, or title or epigraph. The ending means something different. It can't exactly be judged on Aristotle's posit that a story must have a beginning, middle and end. The diary is a different kind of writing, one closer to the soul of the author. The unspoken end of a diary kept faithfully over a life is of course death, but there is no dedicated scientific exploration on the conventions of suicide. Another end in the diary is the end of each day. Another end in the diary comes when the last page in a notebook is filled. A new, blank book takes its place the next day, reminiscent of the last one, in the same format, but unique.

How should we think about these multiple endings? Do they mean something different for the future reader and the present author? Earlier in this text I compared the diary to a 4k TV, where each pixel is an entry. I think a more apt analogy would be a flip book. A flip book is made of individual, neatly packaged frames. The frames are physically separated from the each other but also relate to each other. The reader can look at one illustration or flip through and see the movement over the whole work and the author is stuck drawing one page at a time, only cognizant of the past. He exists as an accumulation of his past experiences looking toward an unknown future. The author is stuck in the diary, shuttling between the past and the future. Every time he reaches the future, when he catches his book up to the moment he resides in, it turns into the past. There is always something unwritten, something to be written in the future. The diary follows closely behind the present, where you as the diarist know the ending of the entry because you are standing in it. Every entry ends with a “horizon of expectation” - writing today prepares you to write tomorrow. Counting entries assumes there will be a next entry. The implication of the perpetual nature of the diary is that it inevitably runs into death. Death is not the end of the diary, actually it is a rebirth. The diary is not only, “the recording of successive presents,” but it also, “programs its own rereading.”<sup>83</sup> Truly the diary transcends finality. A diary is created with a knowledge of an ambiguous future, a knowledge of the fact that when you, the author, die, the species lives on. Paper has its own biology. It turns yellow and crumbles long after the last traces of the author’s body are gone. The diary speeds

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<sup>83</sup> Phillippe Lejeune, “How Do Diaries End?” *On Diary*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), 190.

toward an end with the goal of separating from its physically embodied author and jumping straight over end. The diary is never finished, it is re-purposed, repackaged, re-printed and re-read. The idea of “what comes next protects us from the end,”<sup>84</sup> writes Lejeune, “the diarist is protected from death by the idea that the diary will continue.”<sup>85</sup> The diary exists as a model of life and a second life- as livable and re-livable. This unending nature is unique to the diary in a moment of manuscript culture. Only a practice of writing by hand can get a book as close to a person’s life as the diary is. It is the shortest distance of mediation, and through the trials of time it has not yet been bested.

Lejeune identifies two distinct ways a diary ends. He reduces them to *Perseverance* and *Resignation*. *Perseverance* is a method for holding yourself up through the diary. You know the end is nearing, and the diary becomes a battlefield against death. It covers the advance of illness or sickly nature. Byrd falls into this category. He ends his diary in a similarly abrupt way as he starts it. The last entry follows the same triply encoded structure as all the previous entries. Towards the end Byrd covers his time with doctors and the thoughts of mortality and knowledge of the end show through these entries. August 25, 1741 (8<sup>th</sup> to last entry) - “After dinner I put things in order. My wife was out of order. In the evening I walked about the plantation. I had a cold; God preserve me.” August 25, 1741- “I walked about the plantation. At night I talked with my people, had apples and milk, and prayed. In the night I had a fever which disturbed me.” August 31, 1741 (the last diary entry) - “I rose about 5, read Hebrew and Greek. I prayed and had tea. I

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 189.

danced. The weather was cold and clear, the wind north. I sent Mr. Procter to Mr. Fraser about an escheat and then wrote letters till dinner when Doctor Monger came and I ate fish. After dinner we talked of several matters and then the Doctor went away without a fee because he came not in time. I walked in the evening, and at night talked with my people and prayed.”<sup>86</sup> While Byrd writes, he survives. He struggles with the end, until it absorbs him. It does not, however, un-do the diary. Byrd lives on through his books, he still rises early every morning and reads his classics, he dances his dance, but now it is from the shelf in a library rather than on the plantation in Westover.

Pepys falls closer to *Resignation*. Lejeune writes, “sometimes, in a touching gesture, the diary’s abandonment is thematized in the final entry, and there is a farewell ceremony,” and after this moment the diarist still heads toward death but without the diary as a shield. In Pepys’ last entry, on May 31, 1669, he writes:

And thus ends all that I doubt I shall ever be able to do with my own eyes in the keeping of my journal, I being not able to do it any longer, having done now so long as to undo my eyes almost every time that I take a pen in my hand; and therefore, whatever comes of it, I must forbear; and therefore resolve from this time forward to have it kept by my people in long- hand, and must therefore be contented to set down no more then is fit for them and all the world to know; or if there be anything (which cannot be much, now my amounts to Deb are past, and my eyes hindering me in almost all other pleasures), I must endeavor to keep a margin in my book open, to ass here and there a note in short- hand with my own Hand. And so I betake myself to that course which is] almost as much as to see myself go into my grave- for

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<sup>86</sup> *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover*, translated by Marion Tinning, (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1942), 184-5.

which, and all the discomforts that will accompany my being blind, the good God prepare me.<sup>87</sup>

He keeps the idea of something to come alive, which is the ramp the diary takes over his death 4 years later. Pepys too lives on the shelf now, after every word in his books has been scrutinized. He lives whenever the pages of his diary are opened by the modern reader.

The diary is an extraordinary medium and technology. In my own diary practice, there was a learning curve. I had to learn to be honest with my pen, not to muddle the timeline of events, not to gloss over events thinking, “the feelings will come back when I read it.” For me it is a tool for self-analysis, I use it as a cave, where I store my reactions and my feelings to better understand them. It allows me to disassociate, to talk to myself like a friend or mentor. It is a cataloguing technology, one that allows me to recall details and overviews. The writing experience is different when putting together a manuscript. The fatigue is different. I understand now why Angell looked at shorthand as a science. Most of what limits my own entries is the shooting pain that goes through my hand. Hurried handwriting and mistakes are a sign of too much thought and not enough speed. My mind runs too far ahead of my hand. I still need to learn to take better dictation from my brain. My own diary practice has done a lot to contextualize and fully grasp what the diaries from Pepys and Byrd mean. Their full weight is huge. The diary as a moment in manuscript culture, as a medium, as a technology is as advanced as

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<sup>87</sup> *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, vol. 9, edited by R.C. Latham & W. Matthews, (London:G. Belland Sons LTD, 1976), 564-565.

artificial intelligence. I think of myself in terms of two people now. There is the me that writes and the me that reads. There is the me that records and the me that analyzes. We work in harmony, walking a tightrope toward nothing in particular. I wonder what my diary will look like in 10, 20 or 30 years. I wonder who will read it, and who will preserve me on a shelf?



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