

PRETTY GOOD PRIVACY:  
THE DUAL IMPULSE  
OF SAMUEL PEPYS'S DIARY

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## PRETTY GOOD PRIVACY: THE DUAL IMPULSE OF SAMUEL PEPYS'S DIARY

On 11 April 1660, Samuel Pepys wrote of showing a lieutenant “my manner of keeping a journal” (I: 107) in which he recorded his private thoughts and daily affairs. Pepys forgot this early incident nine years later on 9 March 1669, when in the final months of the diary, he wrote:

Up, and to the tower and there to find Sir W. Coventry alone, writing down his journall, which he tells me now keeps of material things; [upon] which I told him, and he is the only man that I ever told it I think, that I have kept it most strictly these eight or ten years; and I am sorry almost that I told it him – it not being necessary, nor may be convenient to have it known” (IX: 475).

Pepys's concern for privacy grew over the nine years in which he kept a diary, as his conception of the diary project became clearer. Pepys's regret over sharing his diary's existence reflects the dual impulse to reveal and conceal that pervades Pepys's text, and it shows the ambiguous position of a written record of private acts and thoughts. Samuel Pepys had few precedents for his private, literary self-examination. Prior to the seventeenth century, autobiographers like St. Augustine wrote with an eye to providing readers with a moral lesson, while diarists like Nehemiah Wallington wrote for their own spiritual edification with or without an audience. Readers typically consider Pepys's diary a work created by and for the author, but a careful look at the diary reveals the author's desire to write for himself and another, external audience. Unlike

the typical diarist, Pepys developed a narrative voice aimed squarely at the external reader. He provides enough specifics to maintain narrative momentum without bogging down the text in excessive details. Meanwhile, the barriers Pepys placed between his readers and the text ensured that only the right kind of reader had the ability to read his words. Pepys created a work unusual for its time in its scope and structure. Pepys's achievement represents a humanist antecedent to spiritual autobiographies, and it affirms an early-modern sense of the self as subject.

Appreciating Pepys's humanist literary achievement requires a look at the state of diaryship in the seventeenth century. Diary researcher Arthur Ponsonby explains, "The idea of writing down daily thoughts and notes on passing events, especially when it takes a more or less introspective form, is of comparatively modern growth, and would seem to be the outcome of the increasing self-consciousness which intellectual development has produced in humanity" (3). The self-consciousness Ponsonby describes comes largely as a result of social and political changes in the seventeenth century that led to an increased emphasis on the individual in politics, religion, and society. Meanwhile, diary writing "was regarded as part of the religious exercise of pious people" (16), as seen, for example, in the writings of Cotton Mather or Lady Margaret Hoby. Pepys's diary represents a departure from diary-writing conventions newly established in the seventeenth century. When Pepys began his work, the new, largely religious genre of the diary offered no model for his wide-ranging, personal narrative, and he did not operate under many of the assumptions that modern readers take for granted. Modern-day diarists often use the form as a silent confidante with whom to share private thoughts free from public scrutiny, but most diaries of Pepys's day include stark prose or focus on a narrow spectrum of the diarist's affairs. Pepys's diary combines the candor of a modern-day diary with the seventeenth-century preoccupation with the preservation of the written word.

Scholars disagree about Pepys's motives for writing, and about whether he envisioned other readers for his diary. Ponsonby speculates that "it is almost impossible for anyone to write without imagining a reader, so to speak at the other end, however far off that other end may be"

(8). Comparing Pepys with fellow diarist Robert Hooke, Frederick Cowland Hopkins finds a clear motive for a readership in Pepys's "charming but more sophisticated records, with their sometimes almost sly effectiveness" (iii). Hopkins and Ponsonby emphasize an author's rhetorical approach during the writing process, but to imagine a reader while writing does not necessarily mean that the writer intends to share the text. R. Garnett imagines Pepys wanting to keep the diary private,<sup>1</sup> and many of Pepys's entries discuss the diarist's worry about unauthorized access to written documents, including the diary. Evidence that the diary was to remain secret includes Pepys's secrecy with the volumes in his own lifetime, the fact that he left no clear instructions about it, and the fact that his shorthand evidently baffled scholars until the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, for a writer so concerned with privacy to keep a diary seems to suggest he had an audience in mind, especially when the narrative flow of the text makes it particularly accessible to outsiders.

Narrative flow can reflect a writer's efforts to connect to an audience, and a diary's typical audience consists solely of the diarist whose memory of events shapes the reading experience. In a diary written for the diarist alone, many entries serve as touchstones to remind the diarist of details not identified in the text, often resulting in a patchy or undecipherable narrative. When reviewing entries, the diarist intuitively fills from memory any gaps or details missing from the text. Thus a diary can contain cryptic passages more meaningful to the writer than to other readers. The external reader fills gaps with inferred details derived partially from the text and partially from the reader's experience, prejudices, and subjective viewpoint. Supposing detail not explicated in the text comes perhaps as an unavoidable part of the reading process, and Pepys exploits the narrative's potential to mislead the reader by creating a text in which factual accuracy plays second fiddle to the rhetoric of fiction. Of course, writing in a literary style does not guarantee a wish for readers. A writer can practice literary techniques, or highly literate writing may emerge out of habit or inclination. Nevertheless, the evidence for an external audience grows in proportion to the care the writer takes using literary techniques, and the diary's

evidence emerges in structure and in style. Pepys's stark, unadorned prose does not reflect the self-conscious voice of a writer trying to sound poetic. A typical Pepys passage reads

All the morning with Mr. Berchenshaw and after him Mr. Moore, in discourse of business; and at noon by Coach by invitacion to my Uncle Fenners, where I find his new wife, a pitiful, old, ugly, illbread woman in a hatt, a midwife. Here were many of his and as many of her relations, sorry mean people. (III: 16)

The diarist's truncated prose style eliminates non-essential verbs, pronouns, and articles in imitation of a shorthand if not because of it, but the sparse style manages to evoke a vivid image in few words. Meanwhile, Pepys's rhetoric of fiction emerges in passages, episodes, and events framed in a dramatic structure with an inciting incident, rising action, climax, and foreshadowing. Such structure suggests a carefully wrought-out narrative few writers would create for themselves alone. The attention to literary self-fashioning that pervades the diary reflects the author's dual impulse to record his own touchstones of memory and to shape for his readers the fictional Pepys.

The fictional Pepys emerges not out of deception but out of the diarist's wish to convey his lived experience to his audience. A brief look at Pepys's social and intellectual society reveals why he might write for an audience and what sort of reader he may have had in mind. The London coffee houses that began to appear in the 1650s had reached full swing by the time Pepys started writing his diary in 1660. Coffee houses presented Pepys a slice of London life while introducing him to the habits of print found among different English subcultures. The mingling of social classes within coffee houses led to an exchange of ideas otherwise impossible in England's stratified social system, as Pepys's contemporary John Aubrey recognized when he praised the "modern advantage of coffee-houses ... before which, men knew not how to be acquainted, but with their own relations, or societies" (6). Coffee-house culture emerged as a *de facto* print culture because patrons read periodicals to which the proprietors subscribed and engaged in lively discussion of news, court gossip, and social and philosophical concerns. The mixture of print culture and egalitarianism fostered by the coffee houses exposed Pepys and his

contemporaries to print in ways they would not have encountered in formal education. Exposure to others' ideas led to new possibilities for the subject and inspired literary projects like Aubrey's *Brief Lives* as well as encyclopedic diaries like those of Pepys, John Evelyn, and Robert Hooke.

The diary reveals the role coffee houses played in Pepys's social and intellectual life. For example, Pepys recalls a coffee-house visit on 27 January 1664, in which he discussed Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*<sup>3</sup> with an acquaintance "who in discourse is methinks one of the most rational men that ever I heard speak with a tongue" (V: 27). The figure of speech "with a tongue" emphasizes the fact that Pepys and his coffee-house companion spoke on intellectual topics Pepys often read about but seldom discussed. On 3 February of the same year, he encountered old schoolmate Dryden "and all the wits of the town" at a London coffee house and regretted he could not stay among their "witty and pleasant discourse" (V: 37). A few months later on 14 April 1664, Pepys walked with Royal Society member John Creed on the way to a coffee house discussing some of the latest scientific experiments taking place at Gresham College. The coffee house represents a merging point for many of Pepys's diverse interests, and a place where he could network among the notables of his world. As Pepys met friends and acquaintances in coffee-houses, coffee-house culture influenced Pepys's approach to the diary. At the same time, the dog-eared pamphlets passed around in coffee-houses helped shape Pepys's concept of a reader. Patrons' exchange of books and magazines showed would-be authors how readers consumed texts far from their original context or intended audience, and that may have inspired Pepys to preserve for posterity what he would hide from his contemporaries.

The diary's efforts to shape readers' opinion of the author include name-dropping in order to affirm the author's social status. Many literary and scientific figures Pepys encountered became members of the Royal Society, which formed the year Pepys began his diary in 1660, and ideas about the study of the physical world emerged and developed among such groups of intellectuals. The Royal Society devoted itself to the study of ideas, the natural world, and theoretical concerns. Pepys's membership in the Royal Society gave him fuel for discussion and



contemplation. That Royal Society members like Robert Hooke and John Evelyn also kept diaries suggests that the Society may have influenced members with the idea of recording one's life and times. The mission of the Royal Society, as well as the interests and actions of its members in Pepys's day, suggest that the Society influenced Pepys's diary project. While the rhetoric of fiction influenced Pepys's writing style, the philosophy of Renaissance humanism affirmed by groups like The Royal Society inspired the diarist's choice of subject. Unlike the religiously motivated journals common to the period, Pepys's encyclopedic text focuses attention on his physical surroundings. Pepys's focus on the external events of his life in meticulous detail represents a literary vivisection, the kind of humanistic endeavor made possible by Renaissance thought. Pepys joined the Royal Society in 1665, but he records visits to the Society as early as 1660. The London intellectual climate that gave rise to the Royal Society inspired many literary projects, and Pepys may have looked upon the Royal Society as a possible audience for his diary. Pepys may have surmised that the secrets of his life differed little from those of his contemporaries, and that a look at a reasonably complete record of his life might yield some value to posterity. Pepys perhaps had little idea what benefit his writings would have for the future, but the ways in which Society members were beginning to study nature and humanity may have influenced him to produce a first step in a literary and humanistic experiment he entrusted to the future.

Pepys does not stand as the only seventeenth-century diarist to take a humanist approach. The diary of Pepys's friend Robert Hooke differs stylistically from Pepys's, but the two shared many of the same preoccupations. Both men "recorded similarly crammed lives" and "hated to waste time" (Mulligan 311). Lotte Mulligan views Hooke's diary as an attempt to "record the self as an exotic subject" (312). Hooke applied the burgeoning scientific method to his own thoughts and experiences, hoping to produce "a fully objective 'history'" (312). However, Hooke's endeavor began in 1672, three years after Pepys ended his due to eye trouble. Hooke created a diary startlingly similar in content (if not style) to the kind of work Pepys was creating in the

1660s. Pepys probably did not tell Hooke about his diary, but the texts' similarities show that the impetus for such a project existed at their place and time, especially in the Royal Society. In that environment, Pepys and other diarists of the period took the Puritan diary mode of documenting spiritual concerns and applied it to the world around them. Pepys's diary was a means of broadening his participation in the literary and scientific discourse he encountered among his friends and acquaintances, especially at coffee houses and the Royal Society.

Any claim that Pepys wrote for an external audience must account for the steps Pepys took to shut out external readers. Encryption gave Pepys the freedom to express his private thoughts without fear of casual discovery. However, as later English translators of Pepys demonstrate, encryption did not give Pepys the assurance of foolproof security. The shorthand employed by Pepys offers a concrete piece of evidence that Pepys had an outside audience in mind. A meticulous government official like Pepys could have developed his own, secret code or used a cipher system he might have encountered at the naval office. Pepys used a shorthand system developed by Thomas Shelton, who published several books on shorthand throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Shelton's many publications indicate the popularity of his system, and Pepys's use of a popular method belies the idea that his shorthand provided real security. Shorthand kept the text free from casual curiosity seekers like his wife Elizabeth and others in the house, but his encryption method had a key available to the right kind of reader. Shorthand limited his audience, but it did not shut out an audience entirely.

A second so-called security measure employed by Pepys unravels after a closer look. Diary readers know that Pepys describes his sexual exploits using a combination of foreign words (or *lingua franca*) that seemingly disguise his meaning. Pepys mixes Spanish, French, and other European languages in ways that do not always correspond to those languages' grammars. Aaron Kunin notes that Pepys used longhand to record the foreign text in part because his shorthand system cannot encode foreign words. As a result, the *lingua franca* sticks out on a page of shorthand as if marked with a highlighter. Pepys made a rudimentary attempt to garble his

foreign terms by inserting the letters *l*, *r*, *m*, and *n* into the text, but that kind of schoolyard encryption could not have deterred a resolute reader for long. Also, foreign terms offer little security when context gives English-speaking readers a strong sense of Pepys's meaning. French terms certainly wouldn't have confounded his French wife Elizabeth, who "would have been able to pick out the family names of anyone her husband had contacted, the titles of books he had read, lists of body parts, and sometimes brief descriptions of sex acts" (Kunin 206). If concealment had been Pepys's objective, he might better have used the usual shorthand and left his sexual encounters hidden deep within the passages of his volumes. Instead, garbled longhand makes the sexual parts easy to find, perhaps for his quick reference. Shorthand and garbled foreign text stand as alternate means of keeping away the casual browser, but the diary seeks a more determined audience. Perhaps for Pepys, a reader with the determination to translate the diary will likely appreciate its holistic attempt to depict a life.

While the back doors in Pepys's encryption suggest he intended others to read his diary, the way events unfold on the page suggest a diary written for an outside reader. Pepys invites readers to assume that he composed late at night, alone at his desk before going to bed, but this charade becomes clear after a close look at the text. Pepys editors Latham and Dawson present similar models of Pepys's writing process: Pepys kept mementos of events that occurred during a given day, often saving several days' worth to record at one sitting. He would jot these bits and pieces into a kind of ledger which would serve as an outline for the text that eventually made its way into the diary. In addition, Tomalin claims that Pepys

trained his memory and shaped passages in his mind, a process he describes:

'enter all my Journall since the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, having every day's passage well in my head, though it troubles me to remember it; and what I was forced to, being kept from my lodging, where my books and papers are, for several days'.

(Tomalin 80)<sup>5</sup>

Pepys kept track of the narrative sequences he wanted to include in his diary, even as his actual life kept unfolding. His familiar phrases of “up betimes” and “so to bed” serve to bookend the days’ entries, but he did not necessarily compose each entry on the day specified. Berger has noted the fiction at work within the diary, in which the author presents the text as if he has written the entry for each day:

The emphasis on the presence of the scene of writing, the *dum scribo*, ironically places it to the past and precipitates out a later scene in which he writes that he was or ‘is’ writing. A generalized continuum of writing emerges, a ghostly sequence of serial but temporally unspecifiable acts of recording that dissociates itself from the putative sequence of the acts of writing the Diary refers to. (571)

Berger describes multiple timelines at work within the diary: the timeline which Pepys lived, the timeline Pepys attempts to contrive with dates and “so to bed” and so forth, and the timeline that perpetuates the fiction of writing. Berger and Kunin have both shown that the familiar phrase “and so to bed” has a rhetorical function within the text, reinforcing “the mimetic fiction that ‘this day’s passages’ of writing are correlated with or integrated into the daily passages of life Pepys writes about” (Berger 574). Readers should understand Pepys’s spontaneity as a fiction, like the feigned casualness of courtier-poets a hundred years before him. Pepys constructed his diary to maintain the illusion that it was written as it happened, but the chronology of the day does not represent the chronology of Pepys’s life. His self-conscious synopsis of each day selectively represents what Pepys wants to show. Instead of clear windows into the past, “What you find [in Pepys’s diary] are highly personal fantasies about what a day is supposed to look like” (Kunin 219). Pepys’s personal fantasies are not total fiction, but facts of the day arranged into a narrative that controls the reader’s reactions. The diarist’s rhetorical moves create a self-conscious impression for his external reader about Pepys’s thoughts and actions over the course of each day. Harry S. Berger makes perhaps the ultimate suggestion of Pepys’s self-consciousness when he proposes that “the life Pepys lived was raw material for the diary – not merely that it was raw

material but that it was lived as raw material” (579). Berger implies that the diary controlled Pepys’s life, that the diarist framed his lived experience or altered his behavior to create diary entries more to his liking. The interaction of Pepys the man and Pepys the literary creation offers many interpretive possibilities, and readers may never recover the degree to which the diary reflects or controls Pepys’s experiences.

The diary’s existence beyond the author’s lifetime suggests a wish for readers, and the diary survives not simply because Pepys neglected to destroy it, but because he sought to preserve it. The diary reveals Pepys as no packrat, and he records several instances of his destroying material he did not want others to see. For example, he memorializes the existence of a Romance he wrote in college, just before he destroys it: “This evening, being in an humour of making all things even and clear in the world, I tore some old papers; among others, a Romance ... (under the title of *Love a Cheate*)” (V: 31). Not only does Pepys destroy his youthful fiction, but he muses at his ability to create a compelling narrative. Later that same year, Pepys “judged fit to look over all my paper and books, and to tear all that I found either boyish or not to be worth keeping, or fit to be seen if it should please God to take me away suddenly” (V: 360). This shows Pepys to be particular about his literary legacy. Pepys’s willingness to destroy documents “not worth keeping” implies that he endorsed the idea that others would eventually read the papers he left behind. Therefore, the diary’s survival was probably not by accident or default, but a deliberate decision. If he wanted the diary around, especially after his death, then he must have wanted others to read it.

Just as Pepys’s language supports the idea of an audience, specific episodes of Pepys’s life show signs of a self-conscious narrative. Often, the passages many readers cite to support claims that Pepys writes only for himself offer the strongest support for an external audience. An oft-cited passage from Pepys’s diary involves his encounter with a French work of pornography entitled *L’echolle de Filles*. Scholars have discussed layers of performance and apparent self-deception at work within this passage, but the French Book passage exemplifies Pepys writing to

his external audience.<sup>6</sup> The diary entry for 13 January 1668 reads: “I saw the French book which I did think to have had for my wife to translate, called *L’echolle de Filles*; but when I came to look into it, it is the most bawdy, lewd book that ever I saw, rather worse then *putana errante* – so that I was ashamed of reading it” (diary IX: 21-2). Pepys mentions the book casually as though he happened upon it by accident, but that seems unlikely. Despite Pepys’s implication that he mistook the volume for a woman’s etiquette manual, (the title in English means *The School of the Girls*), few booksellers would have placed a pornographic work where such a mistake was likely to occur. The farcical scene is part of Pepys’s rhetorical strategy to defer responsibility for his actions with the book. Several critics have noted previous Pepysian encounters with “the French book”, but Pepys bluffs himself and his readers with his claim that he thought the book suitable for his wife. Similarly, Pepys relates *L’echolle de Filles* to *Putana Errante*, the book on which *L’echolle* is evidently based and with which Pepys had some familiarity. Clearly, Pepys encountered the book because he knew what he was after. He records feeling ashamed reading it in public, but he freely discusses it in the diary. Whether Pepys expresses real shame or an ironic joke, either mode finds the author shaping an outside reader’s interpretation of his behavior. Pepys’s willingness to discuss “shameful” topics in the diary seems to suggest he wanted to keep it private, but that is only half true. He wanted privacy from a contemporary audience who could damage his career or reputation, but he anticipated a future audience worldly enough to excuse his sexual adventures, and who would be reading the diary after his death. Thus we find Pepys hiding from his contemporaries what he would share with his intended audience.

Pepys encountered the French book again a couple of weeks later, and he bought it “in plain binding” (avoiding the buying of it better bound) because “I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found” (IX: 58). His choice of plain binding and his worry about the book “disgracing” the other books on his shelf create a metaphor for Pepys’s fears about his contemporary reputation. Meanwhile, his premeditated plans to burn the book after reading it show that he

encounters the book neither accidentally nor impulsively. The next evening, Pepys puts the book to its intended use:

We sang till almost night, and drank my good store of wine; and then they parted and I to my chamber, where I did read through *L'escolle des Filles*; a lewd book, but what doth me no wrong to read for information sake (but it did hazer my prick, para stand all the while and una vez to decharger); and after I had done it, I burned it, that it might not be among my books to my shame; and so at night to supper and then to bed. (IX: 59)

Pepys's reading session reflects the spirit of his time. Like Milton in *Areopagitica*, Pepys claims that even a lewd book can bring him edification, and like Aubrey's notes for *Brief Lives*, Pepys records even those details his contemporaries might find ignoble. Diary researcher Mark Dawson discusses the French book episode as evidence of an external audience, but he finds in Pepys's claim to read for information sake a symptom of middle-class morality. Dawson's charge of Pepysian prudery belies the sexual frankness elsewhere in the diary. The French book passage uses the *lingua franca* familiar to most Pepys eroticism, and the non-English text conveys the message as clearly as an English description might have. After his *una vez to decharger*, Pepys burns the book out of a calculated plan to enjoy an auto-erotic experience and destroy the evidence. He orchestrated a seemingly accidental encounter followed by remorse and shame, but the diary preserves the carefully narrated story of an erotic consumer who did not want to get caught. Pepys's scripted reading session echoes the rhetorical moves he makes in composing the seemingly private diary. Pepys's security measures focused on contemporary invasions of privacy, not future ones. Burning *L'escolle des Filles* kept his secret from visitors to his library, but the secrets of his diary waited for those able to unlock his shorthand. Like a sensual Milton, Pepys wrote for "the fit and the few" with the background to appreciate his narrative skill and the temporal distance to view his experiences with the detachment of another time and place.

Pepys's dual impulse to reveal a concealed incident like the French book affair also informs ongoing issues such as arguments with his wife over her loneliness. Their loneliness conflict reached a peak on 13 November 1662, when, "my wife in her discontent sent me a letter, which I am in a quandary what to do, whether to read it or not; but I purpose not, but to burn it before her face, that I may put a stop to more of this nature" (III: 257-8). Unlike a private diarist, Pepys gives readers just enough detail to fuel the story without digressing into a litany of marital problems. His calculated vagueness indicates that he anticipates an external audience more interested in the proceedings of Pepys's life than in the nuances of his decision. Pepys's wish to "stop more of this nature" suggests he wants to silence Elizabeth, but he shows throughout the diary a willingness to listen to his wife's comments and to share long conversations with her. Pepys does not record destroying the letter that day, but the next day, "She begun to talk in the morning and to be friends, believing all this while that I had read her letter, which I perceive by her discourse was full of good counsel and relating the reason of her desiring a Woman and how little charge she did intend it to be to me" (III: 258). Pepys speaks candidly about letting Elizabeth believe he read her letter, as he has often done about other matters of duplicity. The diary regularly shows Pepys using trickery to spare his wife's feelings and avoid confrontation with her, but his records of these deceptions represent an attempt to assert his status as a man in control of his wife.

Though Pepys discouraged correspondence from Elizabeth, he remained open to conversation. On 9 January 1663, Elizabeth again brings up the letter she tried to give Pepys in November. Elizabeth pulls from her trunk "a bundle of papers; and pulls out a paper, a copy of what, a pretty while since, she had writ in a discontent to me, which I would not read but burned" (IV: 9). Here, the audience receives a late confirmation that Pepys burned the letter of November 1662. Elizabeth retrieves a fair copy of the letter, and "She now read it, and was so piquant, and written in English and most of it true, of the retirednesse of her life and how unpleasant it was"



(IV: 9). Pepys's verification of Elizabeth's complaints offers a significant clue to his rhetorical approach to the diary. Pepys admits this to the reader, not his wife:

“That being written in English and so in danger of being met with and read by others, I was vexed at it and desired her and then commanded her to teare it – which she desired to be excused it; I forced it from her and tore it, and withal took her other bundle of papers from her” (IV: 9).

January's incident revisits the issues of loneliness and privacy but in a more volatile confrontation. Pepys does not want Elizabeth's lonely letters lying around because he cannot control the privacy of unencrypted text. Where the diary's records of subterfuge assert Pepys's supposed control of Elizabeth, her letters of complaint would signal to Pepys's contemporaries his inability to control her. When Elizabeth refuses to obey her husband and destroy the letters, he becomes enraged.

I pulled them out one by one and tore them all before her face, though it went against my heart to do it, she crying and desiring me not to do it. But such was my passion and trouble to see the letters of my love to her, and my Will, wherein I had given her all I have in the world when I went to sea with my Lord Sandwich, to be joined with a paper of so much disgrace to me and dishonour if it should have been found by anybody (IV: 9-10).

Just like *L'escholle* would disgrace his bookshelf, his wife's letter would disgrace their personal papers. When Pepys claims it goes “against his heart” to destroy the letters, he expresses more tenderness for his wife in the diary than he does in person, and the grieving Elizabeth emerges from the narrative as vividly as the remorseful Samuel. He admits “And the truth is, I am sorry for the tearing of so many poor living letters of mine from Sea and elsewhere to her” (IV: 10). Pepys evidently did not stop with Elizabeth's letter but tore many written documents of their relationship. His regret of the act shows affection for Elizabeth and respect for the documents of his personal history. The restricted candor with which he describes these events allows diary

readers a closer view into his feelings than he makes available to his wife. Whether Pepys sincerely regrets hurting his wife or merely claims to do so, readers still find Pepys preoccupied with his readers' interpretation of events.

Perhaps the most complex example of Pepys's dual impulse comes from the entries describing his affair with Deborah Willet. Pepys first mentions Deb in 1667 and discusses her for nearly the rest of the diary. The most significant entries come at the beginning and end of their relationship. Pepys finds himself attracted to Deb from the start, and he foreshadows the supposedly inevitable sequence of events leading to their affair. He explains, "While I was busy at the office, my wife sends for me to come to home, and what was it but to see the pretty girl which she is taking to wait upon her" (VIII: 451). Pepys defers responsibility for what will eventually occur by indicating Elizabeth's role in introducing Deb to the household. Pepys pretends to accidentally stumble upon Deb as if she were a walking French book, but he sets out from the beginning to have sex with her. Of course, he cannot know what will transpire in the months to come, but he has no reservations about pursuing his latest attraction. He foreshadows finding Deb "so pretty, that I find I shall be too much pleased with it, and therefore could be contented as to my judgement, though not to my passion, that she might not come, lest I may be found too much minding her, to the discontent of my wife" (VIII: 451). As Pepys prepares to seduce Deb or coax her into receiving his advances, he is also preparing the reader to receive her as his new love interest. A woman ready to receive her seducer becomes dilated, a term Patricia Parker uses to discuss the female literary figure whose physical dilation becomes a metaphor for the expansion or propagation of a text, a means of control.<sup>7</sup> Pepys controls the literary Deb as he pursues the physical one, and he invites his readers to belatedly participate in the seduction as he dilates Deb into an object of lust for himself and his audience.

Of course, the premonition of infidelity does not come to diary readers alone. On 12 October 1667, Pepys reports, "I perceive [Elizabeth] is already a little jealous of my being fond of Willett, but I will avoid giving her any cause to continue in that mine, as much as possible" (VIII:

477). To “avoid giving her cause” is not to remain chaste but to pursue Deb slyly. To avoid giving Elizabeth cause “as much as possible” suggests that pursuit of Deb is beyond his control, and for Pepys it can imply that Deb bears some responsibility for his strong attraction to her. Nevertheless, the early Deb passages offer evidence that, far from being out of his control, the Deb affair comes as a result of Pepys’s deliberate calculation. Pepys invites the reader to savor the experience of Deb along with him, just as Pepys savored the conversation between a virgin and an older woman depicted in *L’echolle de Filles*. He carefully contextualizes the affair among other events of his life. Contextualization naturally comes with Pepys’s standard practice of recording the events of the day, but it also reveals his feelings for Deb. Pepys’s emotional attachment to Deb invests her with importance, and it makes the Deb passages especially relevant to Pepys’s dual impulse. As his attraction to Deb grows, it leads him to discuss her in the diary while increasing his motivation to conceal the affair from his wife.

Deb became Pepys’s secret mistress while working at the household for slightly more than a year. Pepys grew accustomed to the arrangement, even as his affections for the girl increased. Perhaps familiarity with Deb led to laxness that contributed to his getting caught. Sexual encounters between she and Pepys had become routine by 25 October 1668, when Pepys begins his account of the day with the mundane: “Up, and discoursing with my wife about our house and many new things we are doing of; and so to church I, and there find Jack Fen come, and his wife” (IX: 337). The meticulous way he sets the scene suggests a flair for dramatic narrative, and the presence of a reader other than Pepys. Getting caught with his mistress has to weigh heavily on his mind as he writes, and yet he defers discussing Deb in order to frame getting caught in the context of an otherwise typical day. If Pepys intended the diary for himself alone, then he would likely focus on his reactions to the day’s outcome rather than setting the scene.

After a few more sentences describing mundane daily events, Pepys writes, “And after supper, to have my head combed by Deb, which occasioned the greatest sorrow to me that ever I knew in this world; for my wife, coming up suddenly, did find me imbracing the girl con my hand

sub su coats; and ended, I was with my main in her cunny” (IX: 337).<sup>8</sup> He uses mainly English<sup>9</sup> to describe his actions when caught with Deb, unlike the entry from 25 May of the same year, in which foreign terms describe sex with his wife: “Waked betimes, and lay long hazendo doz vezes con mi moher con grando pleasure to me and ella” (IX: 211). Pepys clearly does not reserve *lingua franca* for infidelities, and he uses English to describe the Deb incident. The ungarbled manner in which Pepys describes getting caught reflects the painfulness of the event because he uses *lingua franca* as a dialect of pleasure, not concealment. Meanwhile, Pepys “was at a wonderful loss upon it, and the girl also; and I endeavoured to put it off, but my wife was struck mute and grew angry, and as her voice came to her, grew quite out of order” (IX: 337-38). The narrator Pepys creates dramatic momentum by giving the reader more information than the characters of Pepys and Deb who were “at a loss” as to how much Elizabeth witnessed. The reader clearly knows what Elizabeth saw, and that helps the reader grasp the tension between Pepys and his wife that grows by the hour. “I did not know how much she saw and therefore said nothing to her” (IX: 338), Pepys admits to his audience in a kind of stage whisper. Pepys’s nervous, guilty conscience adds to the suspense as the diarist draws the reader through the conflict between husband and wife. Meanwhile, shifting attention to Elizabeth instead of Deb invites the reader to shift sympathies in the same direction. Finally, “My wife did towards bedtime begin to be in a mighty rage from some new matter that she had got in her head, and did most part of the night in bed rant at me in most high terms, of threats of publishing my shame” (IX: 339). Though she may not have had access to the diary, Elizabeth knew her husband would chafe at public humiliation. Pepys emphasizes Elizabeth’s threat to show her level of anger, but the details of Elizabeth’s threat affirm Pepys’s preoccupation with shame among his contemporaries.

However accustomed Pepys had become to writing about adultery, that did not mitigate his remorse at getting caught by his wife. Elizabeth reacts angrily, and Pepys concedes that, “While [I], that knew myself to have given some grounds for [her chastisement], did make it my

business to appease her all I could possibly” (340). His efforts to placate his wife put Elizabeth in control of the relationship. The narrator recognizes his loss of control, adding, “I have no mind to part with [Deb], but much less that the poor girl should be undone by my folly” (IX: 340). Pepys tries to assert his authority over his wife by stating to the diary audience that he intends to retain Deb as a lover, but keeping his intentions from Elizabeth suggests that he wields an authority more imagined than actual. Meanwhile, his wish that Deb should not suffer as a result of his “folly” reads like an attempt to win the sympathy of the audience.

Pepys depicts the day he got caught cheating with a narrative approach aimed at winning his readers’ sympathy. He repeats that rhetorical strategy on 19 November, adding a bit of irony: “Up, and at the office all morning with my heart full of joy to think in what a safe condition all my matters now stand between my wife and Deb and me” (IX: 367). Here, Pepys again controls the reader’s response to the diary, setting the scene for what happens shortly. Recording the day’s events after they have taken place, Pepys knows that family matters stand in anything but a “safe condition.” The passage’s rhetorical structure shows the author’s interest in irony, drama, and readership. The diary’s faithful readers will know that Pepys met with Deb a few days before, and when Pepys finds Elizabeth upset in her bedroom, readers know immediately that she has learned of her husband’s encounter with Deb. The character Pepys does not seem so sure: “Thinking impossible for her to understand, I did a while deny, but at last did, for the ease of my mind and hers, and for ever to discharge my heart of this wicked business, I did confess all” (IX: 367). Pepys describes an afternoon of haranguing, which he admits to deserving, as Elizabeth again threatens to humiliate him among his peers by publicizing his activity. By admitting that he deserves the harangue, Pepys maintains the reader’s sympathy as he describes an elaborate series of negotiations until “at last it came to this, that if I would call Deb “whore” under my hand, and write to her that I hated her and would never see her more, she would believe me and trust in me” (IX: 370). The clause “at last it came to this” alludes to an extended struggle with Pepys caught between reconciling with his wife and sparing Deb’s feelings. Pepys extracts himself only

through another ruse, as his assistant Will Hewer offers to help his boss by delivering the letter after secretly removing the derisive passage. The deception perpetrated by Pepys through Hewer shows the author putting his fictive powers to practical, if Machiavellian, use. The letter that calls Deb a whore creates a fiction for Elizabeth in which her rival is scorned, and the letter Deb actually received creates a second, more congenial fiction that shields her from Elizabeth's wrath. Thus Pepys designs a fictional world for each of the women in his life, and he shares his charade with his diary audience as if the character Pepys has restored normalcy to his personal life. Once Elizabeth believes she has gotten her way, "From that minute my wife began to be kind to me, and we to kiss and be friends, and so continued all the evening and fell to talk of other matters with great comfort, and after supper to bed" (IX: 370). As mentioned earlier, Pepys's "to bed" serves as a rhetorical strategy to place events within a fictional timeline. Additionally, "to bed" punctuates entries as a kind of denouement, implying that all has ended well in the Pepys household as in a Shakespearean comedy.

The diary's neatly encapsulated entries play to the audience, but they do not explain why it matters whether Pepys intended to share the diary. Generations of critics have debated whether "the design or intention of the author" is "available or desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (Wimsatt 468), but their arguments focus on unencrypted text. Traditional arguments against authorial intent do not apply to encrypted texts because readers know, at the least, that the author intended to shield the text behind an obstacle. An encrypted document's provenance of privacy invites the question of why the author encrypted the work. An encryption method the author must have known to be breakable invites the question whether the author meant for others to decode the text. Thus for Pepys's diary, authorial intent becomes important because the reasons for encryption define the diary. The diary whose author writes candidly because he never expects others to read it, and the diary whose author self-consciously shapes his narrative for a future audience, present two different stories for the reader. The diary's

socially engaged and self-aware Pepys carefully orchestrates his narrative to shape a particular opinion about Pepys and his life even as he took steps to conceal it.

Pepys's dual impulse to reveal and conceal reflects the ambiguity of a seventeenth century populated by puritans and libertines, where conflicting impulses fought for control in the public sphere. In the diary, narrated episodes show the influence of fiction and drama as the diarist framed the experiences of Pepys the character, as constructed by Pepys the individual. Pepys's diary prefigures later works like Swift's *Journal to Stella* and Rousseau's *Confessions*, but it could not have directly influenced them. Instead, the diary indicates Pepys's response to a gradual literary trend to look inward and write about one's self. Finding the external audience in Pepys highlights the diary as a seventeenth-century literary innovation that helped define the later course of literature.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Ponsonby quotes Garnett's introduction to the Everyman edition of Pepys's diary.

<sup>2</sup> John Smith first decoded the diary in the 1820s, and it was first published in 1825.

<sup>3</sup> Browne's *Religio Medici*, or "The Religion of a Physician," contains an explanation of the author's religious beliefs, and opinions on a wide range of topics, including that men and women should reproduce like trees.

<sup>4</sup> According to Latham, Shelton's shorthand system is evidently fairly simple: "For the cumbrous, time-consuming symbols that we have inherited from Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks and Latins, the shorthand substitutes a set of brief signs, a few of them cut-down forms of ordinary letters, but the majority straight lines and simple curves" (Latham li). Shelton's titles include *A tutor to tachygraphy* (1642), *Tachygraphy* (1659), *Tachy-graphia* (1671), and *Zeigliographia* (1685). The 1659 work served as the reference text for Latham and Matthews's translation.

<sup>5</sup> Tomalin cites Pepys's entry from 10 November 1664.

<sup>6</sup> Barker, Dawson and Kunin all discuss the French Book incident.

<sup>7</sup> See *Literary Fat Ladies*, 8-35.

<sup>8</sup> The glossary in Volume IX explains that "main" means "chief purpose or object."

<sup>9</sup> Pepys garbles the names of body parts here, rather than using *lingua franca* for the entire incident. Of course, the "English" of Pepys's diary is encrypted using shorthand.



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Samuel Pepys enjoys literary fame because of the diary he kept between 1660 and 1669. Pepys's encrypted diary lay undecoded and unread until the early nineteenth century. Scholars have debated whether the author anticipated future readers, or if he intended the diary for his eyes alone. Pepys's motivation for writing has rhetorical implications for readers that make the question of intention especially important for his diary. Textual and rhetorical evidence supports the idea that Pepys wrote the diary for a future audience to decode and find after his death. Pepys had no specific reader in mind, but he anticipated a humanistic audience similar to what he found in the Royal Society. The diary represents a literary vivisection of Pepys's life, and finding the external audience in Pepys highlights the diary as a seventeenth-century literary innovation that helped define the later course of literature.

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