

Activity 17.8 - John Evelyn's Diary & The Publick Intelligencer

The language of diaries

The style of a text is closely related to its function. A diary is a private document (though there are some whose authors perhaps intended their diaries to be published at a later date), and is often compiled in note form rather than in formal prose. Thus, many of the function words (pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs and the verb *be*) in a grammatically complete sentence may be omitted without obscuring the sense of the text.. Here are two examples:

1 - from Samuel Pepys' Diary

April 22nd 1667. Up pretty betimes, my throat better, and so drest me, and to White Hall to see Sir W. Coventry, returned from Portsmouth. So walked to the Old Swan and drank at Michell's, and then to White Hall and over the Park to St. James's to Sir W Coventry, where well received, and good discourse. I to Deptford, and there scolded with a master for his ship's not being gone, and so home to the office and did business till my eyes are sore again, and so home to sing, and then to bed, my eyes failing me mightily.

2 - from Dorothy Wordsworth's journals, 1800

October 13th. Monday. A grey day. Mists on the hills. We did not walk in the morning. I copied poems on the Naming of Places. A fair in Ambleside. Walked in the Black Quarter. At night.

Dec 6th. Tuesday. I dined at Lloyd's. Wm. drank tea. Walked home. A pleasant starlight frosty evening. Reached home at one o'clock. Wm. finished his poem today.

These are short extracts, typical of days when nothing much happened. When an important event occurs, then a diarist may well use the full, normal prose of a letter or article. But recording a few daily events does not need this, so the personal pronoun *I* is omitted, and commonplace verbs like *be*, *was*, *went*, *got* :

I got up pretty betimes (= quite early), my throat *was* better, and so *I* drest me, and *went* to White Hall ...

Words may also be abbreviated to save time and space - *Wm.* for *William*. Clauses tend to be simple, and are either punctuated as sentences, or else linked together with *and* .

Evelyn's Diary

Text 139 is printed below in a linear form, with deleted items which would not be normally omitted in prose in **bold italics**: We need to distinguish between deletion as a normal feature of the grammar - part of the cohesion of a text - and the kind of deletion which is a stylistic feature of a diary.

<i>MCl</i>	I went with my Wife &c: (<i>?and servants?</i>) to Lond(<i>on</i>);
<i>NonfCl (purpose)</i>	to celebrate Christmas day.
<i>2MCl</i>	Mr. Gunning <i>was</i> preaching in Excester Chapell on 7: Micha 2.
<i>AdvCl-1 (time)</i>	When the Sermon <i>was</i> Ended,
<i>AdvCl-2 (time)</i>	as he was giving us the holy Sacrament,
<i>MCl</i>	The Chapell was surrounded with Souldiers:
<i>MCl</i>	All the Communicants and Assembly <i>were</i> surpriz'd,
<i>Vbless Cl</i>	& kept Prisoners by them,
	<i>and</i> others carried away:
<i>MCl</i>	It fell to my share to be confined to a roome in the house,
<i>RelCl</i>	where yet were permitted to Dine with the master of it, the Countesse of Dorset,
	Lady Hatton & some others of quality,
<i>RelCl</i>	who invited me:
<i>MCl-1</i>	In the afternoone came Collonel Whaly, Goffe & others from Whitehall,
<i>NonfCl (purpose)</i>	to examine us one by one,
<i>MCl-2</i>	& they committed some to the Martial, some to Prison,
<i>MCl-3</i>	<i>and</i> some <i>were</i> Committed: (<i>?by them:</i>)
<i>AdvCl (time)</i>	When I came before them,
<i>MCl-1</i>	they tooke my name & aboad,
<i>MCl-2</i>	<i>and</i> examind me,
<i>NonfCl (reporting)</i>	<i>asking</i>
<i>NCl-1 (reported)</i>	why contrary to an Ordinance made, I durst offend,
<i>NCl (apposition)</i> that none should any longer observe the superstitious time of the Nativity,
<i>NonfCl</i>	so esteem'd by them,
<i>NCl-2 (reported)</i>	& particularly be at Common prayers,
<i>RelCl</i>	which [they told me] was but the Masse in English,
<i>NCl-3 (reported)</i>	& particularly pray for Charles stuard,
<i>RelCl</i>	for which we had no Scripture:
<i>MCl (reporting)</i>	I told them,
<i>NCl (reported)</i>	we did not pray for Cha: Steward but for all Christian Kings, Princes & Governors:
<i>MCl-1 (reporting)</i>	They replied,
<i>NonfCl</i>	in so doing,
<i>NCl (reported)</i>	we praied for the K. of Spaine too,
<i>RelCl</i>	who was their Enemie, & a Papist,
<i>MCl-1 (contd)</i> with other frivolous & insnaring questions, with much threatening,
<i>NonfCl</i>	& finding no colour to detain me longer,
<i>MCl-2</i>	with much pittie of my Ignorance, they dismiss'd me:
<i>MCl-1</i>	These were men of high flight, and above Ordinances:
<i>MCl-2</i>	& spake spitefull things of our B(<i>lessed</i>): Lords nativity:
<i>MCl</i>	so I got home late the next day blessed be God:

<i>MCl</i>	These wretched miscreants, held their muskets against us
<i>AdvCl (time)</i>	as we came up to receive the Sacred Elements,
<i>AdvCl (manner)</i>	as if they would have shot us at the Altar,
<i>NonfCl</i>	but yet suffering us to finish the Office of Communion,
<i>AdvCl (reason)</i>	as perhaps <i>it was</i> not in their Instructions
<i>NCl</i>	what they should do
<i>AdvCl (contingent)</i>	in case they found us in that Action:

This extract from Evelyn's *Diary* reads much more like a narrative than an abbreviated entry, because he is recording an important event in his life at some length. In fact, there are relatively few deletions and abbreviations, and though the structure of some of the sentences is complex, this is through the use of reporting-reported interchanges and everyday kinds of adverbial clause.

The language of *The Publick Intelligencer*

It is clear that the style we associate with press reporting today - paragraphed columns with one or at most two sentences per paragraph - was not the style of the 1650s. *The Publick Intelligencer* text reads like a proclamation, and its grammar is complex, with many subordinate clauses, the embedding of clauses as post-modifiers within phrases, and the coordination of phrases.

Notice the delayed main clauses [*MCl*] in the first sentence and the succession of nonfinite clauses [*NonfCl*] and relative clauses [*RelCl*] which are a feature of a complex structure. There are three sentences only, punctuated with semi-colons or colons (there are no full-stops).

Clauses are marked with square brackets [], and some of the phrases with round brackets (). Coordinated elements are marked with caret brackets < >. The complexity of the grammar is then visually demonstrated by the number and position of the brackets.

<i>NonfCl-1</i>	[This being (the day [<i>NonfCl</i> commonly called <i>Christmas</i> ,])] and
<i>NonfCl-2</i>	[divers of the old Clergy-men being assembled [<i>PrepCl</i> with people of their own congregating in private]]]
<i>NonfCl-3 (purpose)</i>	[to uphold a superstitious observation of the day, contrary to (Ordinances of Parliament [<i>NonfCl</i> abolishing the observation of <that and other the like Festivals>)], and (against an express Order of <his Highness and his Privy- Council>, [<i>NonfCl</i> made this last week]]];
<i>MCl-1</i>	[for this cause, ... as also (in regard of the ill Consequences [<i>RelCl-1</i> that may extend to the Publick (by the Assemblings of ill-affected persons) (at this season of the year) [<i>RelCl-2</i> wherein disorderly people are wont to assume unto themselves too great a liberty]), ... it was judged necessary [<i>NCl</i> to suppress the said meetings]], and [it was accordingly performed by some of the Soldiery [<i>NonfCl</i> employed to that end]]];
<i>MCl-1 (contd)</i>	
<i>MCl-2</i>	
<i>RelCl</i>	[who at <i>Westminster</i> apprehended one Mr <i>This cross</i> ,
<i>NonfCl</i>	[he being with divers people [<i>NonfCl</i> met together in private]]];
<i>MCl-1</i>	[In <i>Fleet street</i> they found another meeting of the same nature],
<i>RelCl</i>	[where one Dr <i>Wilde</i> was Preacher];
<i>MCl-2</i>	And [at <i>Exeter-house</i> in the Strand they found the grand Assembly],

<i>RelCl</i>	[which some (for the magnitude of it) have been pleased to term <i>the Church of England</i> ;
<i>NonfCl</i>	[it being [<i>AdvCl</i> as they say] to be found no where else in <so great and so compact> a Body],
<i>RelCl</i>	[of which Congregation one Mr <i>Gunning</i> was the principal Preacher],
<i>RelCl</i>	[who (together with <Dr <i>Wilde</i> , and divers other persons>), were secured],
<i>NonfCl (purpose)</i>	[to give an account of their doings]:
<i>MCl-1</i>	[Some have since been released],
<i>MCl-2</i>	[the rest remain in custody at the White-Hart in the Strand,
<i>AdvCl (time)</i>	[till it shall be known [<i>NCl</i> who they are]]]:
