

**Book Review/ Kitap Tanıtımı**

**Loveman, Kate. The Strange History of Samuel Pepys's Diary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025**

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Kate Loveman is Professor of Early Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Leicester, UK. Her book, *The Strange History of Samuel Pepys's Diary*, deals with the creation of the journal, the publication of it, and the effect it has had on British culture since then. Loveman's main argument is that the diary's meaning has never been static; rather, it has been continuously shaped, reshaped, and repurposed by successive generations of readers, editors, and scholars.

The book has a chronological structure starting with the creation of the diary. First, Loveman inspects Pepys's intentions for keeping a highly

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intimate diary in coded shorthand while also emphasising the risks he took documenting his personal and professional life in such detail. She then traces the journal's journey from concealment in Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge, to its rediscovery and first publication in the 19th century.

### **Chapter 1: Writing the Diary**

In this chapter, Loveman examines Pepys's motivations behind writing a diary that includes many details, including even the most scandalous ones. She also questions who the intended audience was. To answer these questions, Loveman gives an account of the purpose of diary writing at that time in history and concludes that Pepys wrote the diary for his prospective future self.

### **Chapter 2: Shorthand and Secrecy**

The second chapter focuses on Pepys's use of shorthand in his diary and his secrecy. Contrary to common belief, Loveman argues that the shorthand text is the original one. Therefore, she clarifies that understanding the shorthand text is crucial. She further mentions that Pepys had other means of keeping the diary private than just using shorthand. For example, he would use languages such as French and Spanish, especially for the scandalous details.

### **Chapter 3: Saving the Diary**

In the third chapter, Loveman discusses the risks that Pepys, a man obsessed with his reputation, took when deciding to preserve his rather scandalous diary. Nevertheless, in 1703, four years after completing the diary, Pepys mentioned that he intended the diary to be discovered by future readers.

### **Chapter 4: First Publication**

The fourth chapter begins by stating that the first publication of the diary in 1825 was extremely different from the original. Only a quarter of the diary was published to be read by the public. This first publication is titled "Memoirs of Samuel Pepys" and, as Loveman explains, has led to beliefs about Pepys, especially those regarding his contribution to history, which are still widespread today.

### **Chapter 5: Victorian Pepys**

In this chapter Loveman describes Pepys's reputation in the Victorian period and the many editions of his diary. Loveman mentions three big editions, each becoming less and less censored: Braybrook's New Editions (1848-1849 and 1854), Bright's Edition (1875-1879) and Wheatley's Edition (1893-1899). Wheatley's was the least censored version, and there were deliberations regarding its publication. At the end of the Victorian period, Pepys's diary had become accepted as a classic work in English history.

### **Chapter 6: War and the Diary**

Loveman opens the chapter by saying that in the early twentieth century Pepys's fame rose considerably. He now became commercial, and he was used to advertise brands such as Johnnie Walker's whisky. Pepys was also beginning to be seen as "the ordinary man". In both World Wars, diary keeping increased, and this could be linked to multiple publications of historical diaries such as Pepys's.

### **Chapter 7: 'Every Last Obscenity': Complete and Online**

In this chapter, Loveman talks about publication laws such as the Obscene Publication Act of 1857, which hindered the publication of Pepys's whole diary, and how some publishers found loopholes around the said act. She also mentions that Latham and Matthews's eleven-volume complete text, published in the 1980s, is the most relevant edition of the diary to this day. However, this edition has a digital rival: [Pepysdiary.com](http://Pepysdiary.com), which was started on 1 January 2003. What makes this website special, according to Loveman, is that a diary entry from Pepys's diary was released every day for nine years and five months so that the readers of the website could watch Pepys's life unfold day by day. The website got more traction in 2020 when COVID-19 broke out. This was because, as explained by Loveman, people used their personal experience to interpret the diary.

### **Chapter 8: Reading against the Grain**

The last chapter tackles the lives of people like women and black people, to both of whom Pepys often talks about dismissively. Loveman remarks that the way we engage with Pepys's diary today is heavily

influenced by popular traditions of reception and that the expectation that Pepys's diary to be funny and naughty impedes people from wholly recognizing the information and insight the diary offers. Loveman concludes by saying Pepys's accounts should be treated with a degree of scepticism.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Kate Loveman's book offers a fresh and engaging look at how Samuel Pepys's diary has been read and understood over time. She shows that the diary is not only a historical document, but also a living, dynamic text that has meant different things to different people in different times. By exploring how it was written, hidden, published, and received, Loveman helps us see why Pepys's diary is still relevant today. Her work reminds us that even personal stories can shape culture and history in powerful ways.