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Samuel Pepys and his Books: Reading, Newsgathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703

Kate Loveman

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Samuel Pepys and his Books: Reading, Newsgathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703 Kate Loveman Samuel Pepys was a great collector of books, news, and gossip. This study uses his surviving papers to examine reading practices, collecting, and the exchange of information in the late seventeenth century. Offering the first extensive history of reading during the Restoration, it traces developments in the book trade and news transmission at a time when England was the scene of dramatic political and religious upheavals. The investigation goes beyond Pepys's famous diary of the 1660s, employing a variety of sources to explore the role that reading played in Pepys's life and in the lives of his contemporaries. It begins by examining what it meant to be a reader in Restoration London: the skills, the people, and the places involved. Pepys's wide-ranging interests serve as starting points for considering news exchange and the reception of major literary genres in the Restoration. Particular attention is given to conduct books, histories, religious works, and recreational reading (romances, drama, and novels). The appeal that these works held for readers was not always what we might expect -or, indeed, what the authors and publishers had expected. Additional chapters explore the social interactions surrounding information gathering: the ways people acquired oral and written news in London; the experience of book-buying; and the acquisition of manuscript and print through social networks. Analysed alongside other records, Pepys's papers provide unrivalled insights into literary and cultural developments in the second half of the seventeenth century.

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