



Kate Loveman. *Samuel Pepys and His Books: Reading, Newsgathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703*

Kate Loveman. *Samuel Pepys and His Books: Reading, Newsgathering, and Sociability, 1660-1703*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xviii, 318p., ill. ISBN 9780198732686. £60 (hardback).

The main title of Kate Loveman's book suggests that it must surely be another study of Samuel Pepys's personal collection, resting today in his own bookcases at the Pepys Library at Magdalene College in Cambridge. Not at all; it's the subtitle that tells us what Loveman is really interested in: the information network within which Pepys's enthusiastic book-collecting and reading took place, and his use of his reading to rise in status from son of a London tailor to Secretary of the Admiralty. His nearly 3000 books, housed in their own room at Magdalene, are the end product of a lifetime's reading and re-reading, borrowing, buying books and selectively disposing of them. Loveman has much to say about all of these, but it's her acknowledgement of Pepys's broad range of contacts, and his wily exploitation of them to increase his knowledge both of literature and current affairs, that distinguishes her book. In the best sense of the word, she's writing about gossip, a factor in seventeenth-century London, indeed European, life that any student of the period is wise not to ignore.

In just under 300 pages, Loveman investigates and maps (quite literally - there's a useful map at the beginning) the patterns of reading revealed by the great *Diary*, and how Pepys educated himself for climbing the ladder of rank. Loveman's meticulous inquiry begins with an account of Pepys's career and the four principal groups of sources on his life-long reading: the *Diary*, letters official and personal, the Rawlinson papers in the Bodleian, and the library itself at Magdalene. Her approach is interdisciplinary, "organized to take account of the ways seventeenth-century readers and booksellers thought about genres and the ways they associated different kinds of text" (17). She attends to places of reading (and their status), shared reading (important for Pepys, with his eye problem), literacy as a social construction, the need to justify book-buying as "good use," and the disconnect between modern generic classifications and seventeenth-century ones. We learn about Pepys's student reading at Cambridge, and (a continuing theme in all the chapters) politic conduct and the role of reading and books in social advancement. Restoration news media play their role: printed *Gazettes* (which Pepys collected), manuscript newsletters and the "economy of obligation and information" (87) they invoked, and the oral news that made him one of the best-informed men in London. The chapter on history and politics shows how Pepys's reading strategies were shaped by the well-read friends he conversed with in taverns, coffeehouses,



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and privately. He also read novels and romances, but so did women like Elizabeth Pepys and Mary North who might entertain others with stories memorized from currently popular romances. Loveman describes the high-end booksellers whose shops were also a place for meetings and the exchange of information: choosing a book, shop layout, making and closing a sale, and the market for illicit publications. We see Pepys's striving for advancement when we meet with his circle, with its carefully calibrated etiquette of gift-exchange, books due and services rendered, and in Loveman's account of the scholarly and governmental networks of prime importance to his work at the Admiralty. Pepys made conscientious efforts to examine his religious position, covered in a chapter employing neglected manuscript evidence. Finally, "Libraries and Closets" describes the politic arrangement of books in libraries and closets such as Pepys's that were intended as spaces for display.

The riches of Loveman's book will be evident to anyone studying Pepys, and particularly anyone—a student, a scholar from another field—encountering seventeenth-century book history for the first time. I have only two reservations: the book has its longueurs; there is almost too much material, and in seeking comprehensiveness Loveman sometimes drives a point past the boundaries of reasonable explanation. The second is the narrowness of its perspective on Pepys. No one familiar with life among the upper echelons of Restoration society can possibly deny how fiercely its members competed for advancement. But in focusing entirely on that competition Loveman needs to remind us of the almost novelistic way in which Pepys sees himself, and how much that unself-conscious self-portrayal is a vital aspect of his vaulting ambition.

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