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Sommario/riassunto	The Perreaus and Mrs. Rudd tells the remarkable story of a complex forgery uncovered in London in 1775. Like the trials of Martin Guerre and O.J. Simpson, the Perreau-Rudd case-filled with scandal, deceit, and mystery-preoccupied a public hungry for sensationalism. Peopled with such familiar figures as John Wilkes, King George III, Lord Mansfield, and James Boswell, this story reveals the deep anxieties of this period of English capitalism. The case acts as a prism that reveals the hopes, fears, and prejudices of that society. Above all, this episode presents a parable of the 1770's, when London was the center of European finance and national politics, of fashionable life and tell-all journalism, of empire achieved and empire lost. The crime, a hanging

offense, came to light with the arrest of identical twin brothers, Robert and Daniel Perreau, after the former was detained trying to negotiate a forged bond. At their arraignment they both accused Daniel's mistress, Margaret Caroline Rudd, of being responsible for the crime. The brothers' trials coincided with the first reports of bloodshed in the American colonies at Lexington and Concord and successfully competed for space in the newspapers. From March until the following January, people could talk of little other than the fate of the Perreau's and the impending trial of Mrs. Rudd. The participants told wildly different tales and offered strikingly different portraits of themselves. The press was filled with letters from concerned or angry correspondents. The public, deeply divided over who was guilty, was troubled by evidence that suggested not only that fair might be foul, but that it might not be possible to decide which was which. While the decade of the 1770's has most frequently been studied in relation to imperial concerns and their impact upon the political institutions of the day, this book draws a different portrait of the period, making a cause célèbre its point of entry. Exhaustively researched and brilliantly presented, it offers both a vivid panorama of London and a gauge for tracking the shifting social currents of the period.

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