Piper, Andrew. *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age.* **Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009 (pp xv+303). ISBN 9780226669724.**

Andrew Piper's ambitious study re-conceptualizes the history of the book "not as a narrative of rise and fall but precisely as a series of social, historical, and technological negotiations" (236). In this way, Piper re-evaluates our relationship to the book and widens the scope of what is possible in the Humanities.

Dreaming in Books is framed by six key concepts: Networking, Copying, Processing, Sharing, Overhearing and Adapting. In Chapter One, "Networking," Piper uses Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*, which represents "the entirety of the early-nineteenth-century print system" (23), as a case study to reposition the novel as a complex network of production and reception. Piper complicates the perceived stability of the Weimer edition of Goethe's work by examining its various forms, stages, and spaces of publication, ultimately establishing reading as a "polyfocal" activity. Throughout Piper emphasizes "the material distributedness and connectivity of literary work" (26).

The second chapter examines the ways collected editions tried to stabilize "literature in an age of too much literature" (54). The Romantic culture of the copy, Piper stresses, gave rise to new possibilities for communication and creativity. Sensitive to inherent dichotomies in nineteenth-century print culture, Piper demonstrates both how collected editions could materially manifest a stable image of authorial status, and, through his treatment of E.T.A Hoffmann's novella collection *The Serapion Brothers*, how a poetics of return and reproducibility ruptured such stability.

In "Processing," Piper reconsiders the role of editors throughout the nineteenth century, arguing that editors (and author-editors in particular) "functioned as an essential source of literary innovation," particularly by collecting, editing, and presenting ballads, folk songs and fairy tales (85-86). Piper traces the shifting image and work of editors in presenting texts and authors to the reading public through the developing textual apparatus of the critical edition. In his close readings of Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, Piper is concerned not with national borders, but rather textual borders. Although many researchers have overlooked "the ballad's bookishness," he argues, "the ballad was a key object in early-nineteenth-century editorial debates" (99). Such practices, Piper argues, mirror our current projects of digitization and its implications in shaping the hierarchy of institutional power.

The fourth chapter examines how Romantic miscellany created and sustained reading communities and determined the reception of writers such as

Washington Irving. These critically marginalized texts marked "the transition from the cyclicality to the seriality of culture production that would become a hallmark of both nineteenth-century literature and twentieth-century mass media more generally" (123). Piper focuses on the ways miscellanies were simultaneously owned and shared between readers, raising questions about common rights versus copyrights. This chapter shows that the miscellany fulfilled readers' social needs and it brings domestic readerly activities, such as the "commonality" created by inscription and handwriting, to the forefront of Romantic bibliographic culture.

Chapter Five, "Overhearing," focuses on the commercialism and professionalization of women writers in the period. Through their work as translators in particular, women writers, such as Sophie Mereau and Hedwig Hülle, negotiated an inherent "dialectic of the book: the way the openness of the printed book constituted both a fundamental contribution as well as a basic challenge to any personal or political order" (181).

The final chapter, "Adapting," examines the proliferation and impact of illustrated books, suggesting that text and image shaped one another. Piper's analysis pivots around "the line." While this recalls the Laocoön's serpentine line, Piper engages with the concept in a number of unique ways: Goethe's lily and its bibliographic heritage; Alexander von Humboldt's isotherm maps; and the bifocal perspective of the line in Balzac's "Unknown Masterpiece" and *The Wild Ass's Skin*. Piper closes the chapter by juxtaposing Stendhal's parallel lines of the self with the vanishing points found in Sebald's work, arguing that the serpentine line had become a modern "sign of extinction." Piper suggests that if such a point marks the end of the Romantic bibliographic imagination, then it also propels us "to search out the otherwise invisible intermedial interactions that take place beyond the boundaries of the book with *other* media" (233).

Rather than viewing the "growing marginality" of the book as a signal for "the waning power of the humanities to socialize individuals" (235), Piper envisions the new humanist as one who studies the history of "performative spaces" across mediums (240). For such a scholar, the computer does not replace the book, but becomes another medium for conveying meaning, as do radio plays (Beckett's *Embers*) and podcasts. This timely study provides useful ways to engage with "the historical interactions between language and media" (241). *Dreaming in Books* will benefit scholars working across the Humanities.

Maureen McCue
Bangor University, UK