

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Lives of Texts: Evidence in Textual Production, Transmission and Reception*. Edited by CARLO CARUSO. Introduction by Richard Gameson. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. xiv + 253. 27 illus. 3 indices. Hardback, \$114.00. ISBN: 978-1-350-03905-6.

This is an exciting book about the production, transmission, authorial and editorial interaction and codicological analysis of written materials which traverses time, place and language. Its contributors include Annalisa Cipollone, David Fuller, Barbara Graziosi, Jason Harding, Julian Horton, Richard Gameson, Daniel L. Newman, John O'Brien, Carlo Vecce and Francis Watson. Most of them have connections to Durham University (UK); all are distinguished by their many and important investigations into the history of manuscript and print culture. The volume examines works from a wide range of languages (Arabic, English, French, Greek and Italian) written by authors such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Blake, Boccaccio, Eliot, Montaigne, Homer, Dante, Petrarch and da Vinci. A study of the Bible's material form as well as an examination of the musical textuality of Beethoven's Tempest Sonata, Op. 31, No. 2 are also included. Underlying each piece is Donald Francis McKenzie's concept of the "sociology of the text" which considers the "human motives and interactions" involved at every point of a text's "production, transmission and consumption" (203) and these aspects taken together make every text regardless of format a "complex artefact" (233).

The contents of the volume began formation in 2014 when the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University made "the nature of textual evidence" (from production to transmission and reception, i.e. *Nachleben* to *Nachlässe*) the research topic for the year. With support from a number of institutes and departments at Durham as well as a major Research Fellowship from the Leverholme Trust (2013-2016), the year culminated with a lecture series covering 3,000 years of literary and intellectual history held at the Palace Green Library that was followed by post lecture dinner parties "*inter pocula laeti*" (xii). The volume's magisterial introduction by Richard Gameson brings us back to the importance of the

series topic and sets the stage for the array of articles that follows, which has something of value for every reader.

Carlo Caruso's carefully edited volume offers us vital evidence that books are much more than wallpaper (See Dan Cohen, "The Books of College Libraries Are Turning into Wallpaper," *The Atlantic* (26 May 2019) <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/05/college-students-arent-checking-out-books/590305/>). We may take heart in Yale undergraduate Leland Stange's recent observations ("Base-less Claims," *Yale Daily News* (1 February 2019) <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2019/02/01/stange-bass-less-claims/>) concerning the "crucial relationship of books to education," the value of "serendipitous browsing" in full and open stacks and the roadblocks to a student's ability to "learn to appreciate books" in libraries that are "neglected by its administrators." As Quintilian told us, *nihil in studiis parvum est* (*I.O.* 10.3.31). If you have any doubts, read this book.

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