Literary Folios and Ideas of the Book in Early Modern England.
Francis X. Connor.
History of Text Technologies. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. xii +
236 pp. $95.

The back cover of Francis Connor's monograph articulates his central narrative
succinctly: the folio "played a more fundamental role in book history by
encapsulating the unstable negotiation between commerce, cultural prestige, and the
fundamental nature of the printed book." Connor commences by discussing Thomas
Bodley's ideological "refurbish[ment]" of the Bodleian Library in the early seventeenth
century: he "exclude[d] 'Almanacks, plaies, & proclamcions . . . daily printed, of very
vnworthy matters & handling.'" Such "baggage books" were commonly published in
quarto or octavo; Bodley preferred larger format books — folio and large quarto —
which better suited his "refined, continental tastes" (1). Hence, for Bodley, the folio's
materiality signified the quality of its content: its "size suggest[ed] a completeness and
authority" (2). However, the link between materiality and content in the literary
marketplace was not so distinct, but more tenuous and complex. Connor's selection of
literary folios published between 1590 and 1650 not only supports this argument, but
also "most engage[s] with thinking about ideas of the book" (13). From this, readers
observe how the progression from coterie manuscript publication to print mirrored, and
was integral to, the development of ideas of the book in early modern England.

Connor's first chapter, "'Ungentle Hoarders': From Manuscript to Print in Sidney's
*Arcadia*s?," discusses coterie manuscript publication in the 1590s. Folios were
distributed in exclusive, enclosed groups and considered "communal, unfixed, and
authorially collaborative" (24). A fascinating "social textuality" emerged. Connor
acknowledges recent scholarship's argument, by Arthur Marotti and others, that print
publication was considered an "inferior medium" in the 1590s owing to its "potential as
a stabilizing and authorizing force" (27). However, through his bibliographic analyses of
John Harrington's 1591 translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Mary Sidney's
1593 edition of her brother Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (including the 1598 edition), he
demonstrates that while print publication was stabilizing, the folios' design was perceived

to improve on the originals and did not impede their collaborative potential. Rather, the inclusion of devices such as footnotes and marginalia furthered collaboration between the book and its readers. The book trade became "an extension of the practices of literary coteries" (47).

The second and third chapters, "Samuel Daniel's *Works* and the History and Theory of the Book" and "Ben Jonson's *Workes* and Bibliographic Integrity," manifest how these folios epitomize a theoretical divide from the 1600s. For Daniel, *The Workes of Samuel Daniel* (1601) was materially complete upon publication; however, it was not culturally complete until used by readers — it reveals a collaborative, reader-centered approach. Moreover, the printing press was an "instrument of human progress," "beneficial but flawed" (71), that extended the folio but did not perfect it. In contrast, Jonson regarded his *Workes* (1616) as the culmination of his labor, through which he established his literary authority — a "rigid top-down model" of reception (107). Print was a perfecting technology that enabled bibliographic integrity — it was a finished product; however, Jonson intended his folio to become a corrective model for readers and the commercial book trade. It would educate the former on how to become "extraordinary" readers (106), and represented the "ideal" of textual production for the latter (111).

The final chapter, "'Whatever you do, buy': Literary Folios and the Marketplace in Shakespeare, Taylor, and Beaumont and Fletcher," examines the commodification of literary folios from the 1610s, how "cultural esteem was valueless without success in the market to support them" (138). Shakespeare's *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (1623) served to sustain Shakespeare's popularity in the theater and print: purchasing the folio incited readers to attend live performances and vice versa. Its success depended on readers' "pocketbook" (146). A compilation of pamphlets, John Taylor's *All the Workes* (1630) reinforced his origins: the folio itself was a potentially erroneous, always-transient object that housed his ephemera. The print and the commercial book trade therefore represented the means "for developing and maintaining [his] celebrity" (148). Finally, while Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher appeared on the title page of *Comedies and Tragedies* (1647) and authored three of the publication's plays, they did not create the remainder. Their names became the brand for marketing. Hence, these folios in their physicality placed their authors within the literary marketplace. The marketing of their authorial brand afforded their cultural prestige and longevity — quality of content was not an overriding consideration.

Francis Connor's detailed and well-researched monograph therefore charts the publication of literary folios from the private, elite coteries to the public, commercial sphere; through this progression, ideas of the book evolved and were negotiated in early modern England — indeed, the chapter divisions reflect this. The narrative would have benefited from the inclusion of figures to visually accompany and support his bibliographic analyses; and no bibliography is featured as end matter. Nonetheless, while Connor's monograph adds to the significant corpus of book-history research, his resides alone for its singular attention to literary folios.

JOCELYN HARGRAVE, *Monash University*