Andy Kesson and Emma Smith, eds. *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England*.
Material Readings in Early Modern Culture. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013. xiii + 270 pp. $114.95. ISBN: 978-1-4094-4029-1.

By its short title *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England* makes a jaunty bid for attention; the subtitle and introduction proffer a thematic collection at the intersection of literary studies and book history. Early modern English literary studies has long benefited from the major bibliographic achievements of the twentieth century: the short title catalogues of English language printed books before 1800 and the extraordinary analytic attention devoted to the surviving texts of Shakespeare's plays. The synergy between bibliography and literary criticism was especially productive for the period before 1640 (the terminus of Pollard and Redgrave's *Short Title Catalogue*) as the focus on Shakespeare increased attention to other writers and writing-related practices of the period. Bibliography per se languished in most graduate departments of the late twentieth century, displaced by the so-called linguistic turn and replaced by historicist criticism. Book history cannot replace bibliography because the two are genealogically entwined, but it is a distinct disciplinary, indeed transdisciplinary, formation. Because *The Elizabethan Top Ten* revisits the corpus of material worked on by earlier bibliographers and critics, it affords an occasion for disciplinary reflection.

The *Elizabethan Top Ten* is framed as a two-part inquiry into the problem of defining print popularity: four methodological chapters followed by ten shorter case-study chapters. With the exception of Alan Farmer and Zachary Lesser's essay on the structures of popularity in the book trade, the methodological essays also tend toward case study. The case studies of part 2 take one of two forms: a concise and often lively survey of a given topic or a rich focalized discussion of a single exemplar, such as Lori Ferrell's discussion of a single Henry Smith sermon or Juliet Fleming's investigation of the archive on damask paper. Almanacs, the Book of Common Prayer, the Psalm Book, news pamphlets, household manuals, and *Mucedorus* are among the topics of case study. There are some excellent essays of scholarly import, but the volume as a whole has an introductory feel as it circles around the question of popularity, which the editors initially introduce via the protocols of the *New York Times* best-seller list and its encounter with *Harry Potter*. The editors foreground their decision to use Shakespeare rather than John Lyly as the case study in the essay on canonization "because the stakes are so high for our own contemporary disciplinary practice" (2), and they invite disagreement. One might disagree on any number of grounds. Perhaps the most charming counter to the premise is Andy Kesson's own research interview about Lyly for Shakespearean London Theatres (http://shalt.dmu.ac.uk/films.html), available on YouTube.

How indeed is print popularity in early modern England to be defined, given that England does not become majority literate until the end of the eighteenth century? Farmer and Lesser's work on the structures of popularity provides a multivariable model for thinking about the book trade and the market for new

titles or editions. The consolidation of the short title catalogues into one database, The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), easily allows work that crosses the arbitrary divide of 1640, and the Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450–1700 (CLEM) does the same for the medial boundary between print and manuscript. The legacy of twentieth-century bibliography, remediated digitally, enables renewed, subtler investigation of many empirical questions and the exploration of thematic groupings made possible by the analysis of data fields. But these are limited sorts of questions to pose at the intersection of literary studies and book history. Given the legacy of twentieth-century bibliography (and biography) and the work on manuscript circulation, scholars working on the literature of the last decades of the sixteenth and first decades of the seventeenth century in England are in a position to map the literary field synchronically, diachronically, and across media types, and thus to open it up to theoretical, linguistic, poetic, and rhetorical questions. It is time to bring literary studies to the history of the book. Paying attention to the arc of Lyly's popularity or the longer arc of Thomas Deloney's and to their respective prose styles and narrative investments would be, at this disciplinary moment, more revealing than revisiting the case of Shakespeare's canonicity. If *The Elizabethan Top Ten* is somewhat of a missed opportunity, it is nonetheless a valuable complement to *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, *Volume 1: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, published in 2011. Together they challenge us to think about print, literacy, and the literary without assuming the received canonical tradition.

ALEXANDRA HALASZ
Dartmouth College