

Julia Miller, with contributions by Pablo Alvarez and Kyle Clark. *Tradition and Individuality: Bindings from the University of Michigan Greek Manuscript Collection*. Ann Arbor, MI: The Legacy Press, 2021. 661 pp. \$110.00. Illus. (ISBN 9781953421012).

Reviewed by Francisco H. Trujillo

Julia Miller's contributions to the study of bookbindings continue to create new pathways of inquiry. She has authored two previous monographs, *Books Will Speak Plain: A Handbook for Identifying and Describing Historical Bindings* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Legacy Press, 2014) and *Meeting by Accident: Selected Historical Bindings* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Legacy Press, 2018). *Books Will Speak Plain* established her philosophical approach to understanding, appreciating, and, most importantly, recording the physical characteristics of bookbindings. The volume was a *cri de cœur* for the preservation of historical bookbinding structures through thorough descriptions. *Meeting by Accident* narrowed her focus to a few different types of historic bindings and a discussion of what makes a binding important. It included an in-depth study of the Nag Hammadi codices and the value of creating binding models to engage with and understand historic bindings.

Tradition and Individuality: Bindings from the University of Michigan Greek Manuscript Collection, with contributions by Pablo Alvarez and Kyle Clark, combines the lessons of Miller's previous volumes and distills them through deep exploration of a single collection. It should come as little surprise that Miller focuses on a collection at the University of Michigan; she was for many years a book conservator at the university's library. Since her retirement, her work as a historian of bindings has further enhanced the preservation and study of the university's collections. *Tradition*

and *Individuality* includes one hundred entries based on a collection of fourth- to nineteenth-century Greek manuscripts, the largest collection of its kind in America. The entries expand on brief descriptions of the bookbindings in Nadezhda Kavrus-Hoffmann's 2021 *Catalogue of Greek Manuscripts at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press). In his introduction, Alvarez provides an enlightening overview of the history and provenance of the manuscripts that gives the reader a sense of the complex manner in which a university builds its collections. The aim of *Tradition and Individuality* is the "comprehensive description of the material, structure, and decoration of each of the bindings of the collection of Greek manuscripts at the University of Michigan Library" (1).

Miller prefaces the descriptions of the bindings with a general overview of Near Eastern binding traditions including Coptic, Ethiopian, Syriac, Greek, Georgian, Arabic/Islamic, Slavic, and Armenian. The fact that she can provide a list of and discern between similar, yet different, binding styles is a testament to her depth of knowledge of binding traditions and the importance she places on differentiating them from each other. She discusses the problems of what to call bindings from Greek manuscripts. The terminology has shifted over the years from "Byzantine bindings" to "Greek-style bindings," mainly due to the adoption of terms from the *Language of Bindings Thesaurus* (<https://www.ligatus>

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.org.uk/lob/alphabetical). The terminology from the thesaurus is based on the Ligatus project's survey of Greek and other bindings at St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai, Egypt. Miller incorporates and explains the terms "genuine Greek-style bindings," "Greek-style bindings," and "hybrid Greek-style bindings" (14). She admits the terms can be confusing, so simplifies the categories into "Greek binding" and "hybrid Greek-style binding" (14). The difference between categories thus becomes identifiably Greek versus a "binding made outside of Greece, made with a nod to traditional features, but usually bearing some Western binding element" (14–15).

The descriptive terms used for the binding descriptions are detailed, and the terms applied to the one hundred bindings are comprehensive. The outline used to describe each binding is first a preliminary synopsis to define its general category, Greek or non-Greek, followed by boards; sewing, spine linings, endbands; covers; cover decoration; edge decoration; cover furniture; cover fastenings; and titling, inscriptions, markers, and inclusions. Each category has a further set of descriptive terms that Miller defines. Cover fastenings, for example, can consist of edge pegs, side pegs, bolsters, tangs, and right-to-left fastenings. Having established the context of Greek bindings and the outline to be followed to describe the bindings at the University of Michigan in the first chapter, Miller then minutely analyzes each binding in chapters 2 to 5.

The collection's bindings are in various states of disrepair. Some have missing boards, some have missing sewing or board attachments, but this state of incompleteness is, to the bookbinding historian, a welcome situation. A complete binding would obscure its constituent parts, whereas a broken-down binding can reveal sewing structures, spine linings, and endbanding methods. The long-term preservation of collection material is paramount to any conservator, but Miller is at the vanguard of accepting bookbindings as they exist

and recording the details they reveal. This practice is another form of preservation.

The descriptions are enhanced by 771 photographs and illustrations throughout the volume. Miller credits Randal Stegmeyer for the majority of the beautiful images and J. Wayne Jones for images of two of the bindings. The photographs provide the reader with a visual understanding of the complexity and appeal of Greek bindings, as each binding has images of the front covers and back covers (if they exist). Additional detail images are helpful to understanding the written narrative, as in the detail of the tailband of Mich. Ms. 31 showing a rolled-cloth core that is clearly depicted as separate from the spine lining (147).

Miller's appreciation of the bindings is clear throughout the volume. It is also clear that she is a generous collaborator with fellow bookbinding historians. When faced with a puzzling binding that does not appear to be Greek, Mich. Ms. 96, she enlists the advice of Sylvie Merian and Georgios Boudalis, experts in Armenian bookbindings and bindings of the Mediterranean basin, respectively. Miller includes excerpts from email exchanges that highlight the consideration and erudition each participant possesses in determining that the binding is Armenian, although the style of the endband remains unresolved. The consideration of Mich. Ms. 96 is emblematic of the meaning of the book's title, *Tradition and Individuality*. Miller establishes and defines the traditions of Greek bindings in the Michigan collection, yet repeatedly finds within each binding small bits of information that individualize them. It is through Miller's method of close looking that one comes to know that binding traditions are not static and monolithic, but kinetic and diverse.

Miller advocates making book models to understand historic bookbinding structures, and the University of Michigan is the beneficiary of her book model collection. Kyle Clark's contribution to *Tradition and Individuality* flows directly from

Miller's approach to recording binding structures and making models to understand them. Clark is a bookbinder and conservation professional in the conservation laboratory at the University of Michigan library. Clark wrote "Unraveling Mysteries: The Binding of Mich. Ms. 79" as an appendix to the volume. It is a wonderful, technically lyrical addition and the most comprehensive account I have read of the intellectual and practical questions one asks in the process of making book models.

The last chapter of *Tradition and Innovation* is titled "Interpreting the Evidence." It is a welcome synopsis, with photographs, of the copious amount of information in the one hundred binding descriptions, broken down by type or category. There are a few additional areas of the volume that could be clarified and elaborated. The section "Examples of traditional Greek endbands" lacks a descriptive paragraph explaining what links the chosen examples. Graphs of compiled data are certainly not as much fun as perambulating through historical bindings, but overall, the volume would ben-

efit from some graphic representation of the quantitative data. The reader should also be forewarned that many references and footnotes are attributed to illustrations and information in works by Szirmai, Rege-morter, and others. It is helpful to have the referenced material on hand to experience the whole of Miller's information.

Tradition and Innovation is an erudite, comprehensive, and enjoyable addition to Julia Miller's ongoing efforts to emphasize the importance of describing and recording historic bookbindings. The Legacy Press's publication of this volume and Miller's previous work is central to the success of her efforts. This publication exemplifies the potential of historic bookbinding information to be recovered from collections everywhere. One hopes that there are additional collections at the University of Michigan and beyond that Miller can explore and explain. *Tradition and Innovation* provides an exemplar which other bookbinding historians can use in their efforts to describe the material, structure, and decoration of their own collections.

Sarah Neville. *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade: English Stationers and the Commodification of Botany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 290 pp. Illus. \$99.99. Hardcover (ISBN: 9781316515990). An open-access edition is available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009031615>.

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In *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade: English Stationers and the Commodification of Botany*, Sarah Neville argues that herbals were products created by stationers, rather than simply the work

of notable herbalists who took up their pens out of a desire to share their knowledge about botany and medicine with the reading public. Thus, she contends, the financial motivations of stationers and the

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