book alone, Miller presents a strong foundation for institutions contemplating the use of volunteers in such a capacity or simply training their existing workforce to take on these new responsibilities. What sets *Books Will Speak Plain* apart from other binding texts is not only the preservation-oriented approach that Miller takes but also that she does not focus her efforts on the presumption that every reader will be working with collections of luxury bindings. In doing so, she makes this book relevant for a much wider audience than those that simply focus on the loveliest examples binding history has to offer. —Jennifer K. Sheehan, Ph.D., Curator, Rare Books, University of North Texas Libraries

Kathleen P. Whitley. *The Gilded Page: The History and Technique of Manuscript Gilding*. New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press; London: The British Library, 2010. xv, 233p. ISBN (USA; hardcover) 978-1-58456-239-9; (USA; paperback) 978-1-58456-241-2; (UK; paperback) 978-0-7123-5066-2. \$49.95; \$34.95

Kathleen Whitley's *The Gilded Page* is a mixture of excellent and wretched, satisfying and frustrating.

Let's look at the excellent first. The content is amazing, filled with an abundance of information on the history and technique of gilding, coming from an experienced gilder. In 1969, D.F. McKenzie wrote his landmark essay "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices"¹ in which he talks about "the need for what might be called 'scientific' investigation in bibliography" which comes from "a strict regard for certain fixed bounds of physical fact" (p. 1). Among many other things this article preaches is that scholars should not write about things of which they are ignorant. For instance, he cites those who make claims about how much a printer could have produced in a day as careless scholars who have never printed.

It is refreshing, then, and reassuring to have a book about gilding written by an expert in the craft. When she is talking about gilding, Whitley is a reliable witness, a practitioner whose descriptions of techniques, materials, and tools are trustworthy.

But as a historian, she is much less an expert, and though the volume is filled with information about the history of books and gilding, she needs some basic coaching on the rules and conventions of scholarly writing.

In many places, she exhibits the same problems that many students show: a careless disregard for sources. Page after page of information is presented with only a cursory, inadequate parenthetical citation now and then to a source. These citations

1. D.F. McKenzie, "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices," *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 1–75.

do not show how much of what precedes them come from the sources and how much comes from the author herself. One example will suffice, though the book is filled with such lapses. From the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 39 to near the bottom of page 41, we are presented with a hoard of information that comes from somewhere. A single parenthetical citation to a volume listed at the end of the chapter does not tell us where all of that information comes from. Does the citation refer to the sentence to which it is attached, the whole paragraph at the end of which it appears, or all of the paragraphs that precede it back to the previous citation?

Another maddening thing is that when there is a citation, it is only to the text as a whole, not to the specific page or pages from which Whitley supposedly got the information. So in looking at her statements about papyrus that come from Frederick G. Kilgour's *The Evolution of the Book*,² we get only a citation of the book, not to the pages she is citing.

Writing instructors constantly exhort their students to cite sources such that every idea or piece of information that comes from another writer is clearly delineated as coming from that source. A good portion of this text borders on plagiarism, and it is surprising that editors at the two publishers did not catch this and insist that the writer be more responsible.

I will not delineate any of the three dozen typographical errors in this text, nor will I show any of the dozens of grammatical mistakes here. It looks as if this book were not proofread by anyone before going to press. Likewise, there are many typographical inconsistencies, in bibliographical styling and plain old typography. For instance, the paragraphs on pages 127–128 are set unjustified, while the rest of the book is set justified. In some bibliographical entries, no first names are given; only initials. In some, the first names are given. There are a few widows in the text. Oak Knoll and the British Library could surely have come up with *someone* to have carefully read this before it went into the world.

A few of the substantive parts of the book are weak, as well. The author knows little about papyrus. Her description of its manufacture (pp. 21f.) is grossly incorrect. She says:

Although Pliny attributed adhesive properties to the Nile water which made the strips of pith adhere into a sheet, many scholars now believe that the Egyptians used some kind of starch glue or sizing. The first

2. Frederick G. Kilgour, *The Evolution of the Book* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

layer was trimmed of any ragged edges, and a second layer was laid at right angles across the first, then pressed or pounded into a single laminated sheet which was dried. A modern and fairly successful attempt at reproducing the manufacturing technique required pounding the layers of pith for one to two hours between two layers of cloth, before they could be dried. (pp. 21–22)

For this poor explanation, Whitley cites Kilgour, but she neglects to say that he is citing another source here. Further, this is definitely *not* how papyrus is made. No scholars would presume that any kind of adhesive is used to adhere the papyrus strips to one another. And they were not pounded. This would separate all of the long fibers and ruin the final sheet. (Kilgour was as ignorant of the process as is Whitley. This was definitely not the source to draw from. Just the fact that Kilgour uses the term “papyrus paper”³ should have been a warning.)

Whitley also mentions an “early twelfth century treatise” by Theophilus in which he talks about “(s)heets of linen paper” that were used to prepare gold leaf (p. 67). Where did the goldbeaters get this paper? The earliest paper known in the West was in Spain in the middle of the 12th century. And she says, “We see the Renaissance as a rebirth of learning” (p. 198). Does this mean there was no learning in the Middle Ages?

This kind of carelessness mars this book. Equally frustrating are the many black-and-white illustrations, some of which are poorly reproduced (fig. 2.4 on p. 61, for instance, is murky at best). This text describes numerous illustrations, some of which are not shown (so describing them in detail serves little purpose), and some of which are shown in black and white, thus not depicting the things the author speaks about since her topics are colors and gold. (And why did the designer choose to print the captions in what looks like 5-point italic type?) The color plates are much better.

When it comes to the techniques of gilding, despite the weak prose, the typos, and the shaky grammar, this book shines. Whitley knows her gilding, and for this alone we should be grateful to have this book. She is an artist and gilder, and, as I have said, her practical experience comes through in describing the techniques and materials of the craft. I applaud her for the clarity of her text on what is really a difficult thing to describe and also for the extent to which she has researched this practical aspect of gilding. It is a shame that her publishers let her down at the proofreading end and that they did not get an expert to read the text for some of the scholarly weaknesses it exhibits. —*Sidney Berger, The Ann C. Pingree Director, The Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum*

3. Kilgour, 28–29.