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AN ASTROLOGICAL BINDING BY ROGER PAYNE

THE BINDING ILLUSTRATED in the accompanying plate is found on a copy of John Lilly, *Christian astrology*, the second edition, 4°, London 1659 (Wing L2216), in the State Library of Victoria.¹ A descriptive note, unfortunately incomplete, pasted to the front flyleaf, is in the handwriting of Roger Payne, the most celebrated English binder of the eighteenth century, and reveals that the book was bound by him. The binding is of diced russia, tooled in gilt, and measures 200 x 148 x 50 mm. The acorn which is the most conspicuous feature of the outer border in the four corners is a common Payne tool, and the crescent moon in the inner frame also occurs on several other published Payne bindings, though not always with any thematic bearing on the contents, such as it has here. At the corners of this frame the astrological symbol for Capricorn is seen, set within a circle, and in the centre is the symbol for Saturn, surrounded by a constellation of seven stars. The spine is of six panels, three of them lettered, the others tooled with a pattern of acorns, stars, Capricorn, and the Saturn sign centred, and there are doublures of russia with green morocco joints, tooled in gilt with acorns, moons, drawer-handles, etc., with purple end-papers.

Though the binder has used tools appropriate to the book's subject, there is no evidence of an astrologically significant design. Capricorn is conventionally regarded as the night mansion of Saturn, so there is some appropriateness in the use of these two symbols along with the moon tool; but this may well be accidental, since there are many other possible combinations Payne might have used and has not. The disposition of moons in the inner frame — seven down and three across — is clearly dictated by the shape of the book and has no arcane meaning.²

Payne's semi-literate descriptions of his own work are well known; they usually form part of a bill, and often seek strenuously to justify the price charged. The one in this book may be quoted (though it is also printed in Davenport, p.73):

Bound in the very best manner in the very best Russia of y^e true Native Colour Sew'd with Silk in y^e very best Manner on Bands Strong & Neat. The Back Lined with thin Morrocco to make it open very easy & strong Finished in the most Magnificent Manner with Broad Borders of small Tool Work insides & Morrocco Joints. The outsides Finished in the highest Taste with Ornamental Corners of Oak Leaves and Small Tool

The book has a distinguished provenance. From a note on the front flyleaf we learn that Payne bound the book for Dr Benjamin Moseley (1742-1819), the medical writer who was also Payne's own physician. The relations between the two men have recently been described by Mirjam M. Foot, who also lists several other books bound by Payne for Moseley.³ Only two of these (Heydon, *Harmony of the world*, 1662 and Coley, *Clavis astrologiae elimata*, 1697) appear in the 1814 sale catalogue of Moseley's library, which however lists a considerable

number of other books, almost all of them on astrological subjects, bound for him by Payne.⁴ It would be interesting to know whether the same astrological tools were used on these; I have not seen any of them, or illustrations of them, but the bill for one, *The harmony of the world*, describes it as 'finished in the Rosie-Crucian taste'.⁵ Moseley's copy of *Christian astrology* is not listed in the sale catalogue but passed, perhaps after his death, to the bibliophile George Hibbert. When most of Hibbert's collection was dispersed by auction in 1829 the book was bought by the writer of the provenance note, who signs 'PH' and seems to have been Moseley's nephew or niece. Later it belonged to another celebrated collector, Lord Amherst (whose label it bears), and was resold at Sotheby's among the second portion of his library in 1909.⁶ It came to its present home from Quaritch in 1946.

Curiously enough Payne bound another copy of *Christian astrology* for some other patron, and disentangling the provenances of the two is a tricky matter. The other copy was in the library of the Grolier Club in New York in 1892, when William Loring Andrews described it,⁷ and Payne's descriptive bill for that binding makes it clear that it is a different copy from the one now in Melbourne, though it is possible that the same tools were used on both.

Trevor Mills,
State Library of Victoria.

¹ A small line-drawing of the binding is reproduced in Cyril Davenport, *Roger Payne* (Chicago, 1929), p.58 (fig.25).

² For assurance on these points I am very grateful to Dr. J.C.Eade of the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University.

³ *The Henry Davis Gift: a collection of bookbindings. V.1: Studies in the history of book-binding* (London, 1978), p.107-108.

⁴ *A catalogue of a valuable, curious, and scarce, library... which will be sold by auction, by Mr. Stewart... March 16th, 1814* (London, 1814).

⁵ Quoted in Dibdin, *Bibliographical Decameron* (London, 1817), v.2, p.514, and in Stephen Collet, *Relics of literature* (London, 1823), p.211. Dibdin prints several other Payne-Moseley bills.

⁶ Sotheby's, 27 March 1909, lot 554. Amherst had loaned it to the Burlington Fine Arts Club bookbindings exhibition in 1891; see *Burlington Fine Arts Club. Exhibition of bookbindings* (London, 1891), p.95, no.Q.2.

⁷ *Roger Payne and his art* (New York, 1892), p.30. Foot (p.112, n.130) cites Andrews and also Davenport, p.73, but she does not seem to have noticed that the bills are different and that there are therefore two Payne bindings of this book in existence.

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