

disappointed by the weak annotations, insufficient subject indexing, and limited chronological span, as well as the absence of writings in languages other than English. As a result, most researchers will continue to rely on Meadows as their primary jazz bibliography, and only libraries with very ambitious collecting missions in the area of jazz should feel it necessary to purchase *Jazz Books in the 1990s*.

Ultimately, it may just be that the publication of this bibliography was premature, leaving any evaluation of it unduly tilted toward the negative. Despite the above critique, Greenberg has proven to have the research skills and dedication necessary for authoring an in-depth reference tool, and with this book she has made a valid contribution—or at least the beginning of one. In her introduction, as well as in series editor Ed Berger's foreword, there are intimations that this volume is the first of more to come. If indeed the bibliography keeps growing, thus creating a much more complete inventory of jazz books and establishing a broader context for the publications compiled so far, *Jazz Books in the 1990s* can be understood less for its limitations and more for its potential. While it is hoped that the criticisms stated here will be regarded in future iterations, it is clear that Greenberg is on the right track; and, with continued pursuit, this project could become significant in jazz bibliography's developing history.—D.J. Hoek, *Northwestern University*.

Owen Davies. *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2009. x, 368p. \$29.95 (ISBN 9780199204519). LC2009-924589.

In *Grimoires*, Owen Davies (social history, University of Hertfordshire) continues the work begun in his previous books, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736–1951*; *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*; and *Cunning-folk: Popular Magic in English History*. Davies places this current effort within the framework of the history of the book, the history of ideas, and, most especially,

the powers (whether perceived or real) that people throughout history have bestowed on writing, words, and the physical book.

The epigraph to *Grimoires* quotes an episode from *Don Quixote* in which a character, standing at the gates of hell, observes a dozen or so devils, playing tennis with rackets of fire—but rather than using tennis balls, their implements were books, “apparently full of wind and rubbish.” While Davies never specifically says that grimoires are trash-filled tennis balls,⁷ his entire book is filled with examples of charlatans, cunning-men, and those who are duped by them and their magical books. The introduction defines grimoires as “books of conjurations and charms, providing instructions on how to make magical objects such as protective amulets and talismans. They are repositories of knowledge that arm people against evil spirits and witches, heal their illnesses, fulfill their sexual desires, divine and alter their destiny, and much else besides.” The author is careful to distinguish between grimoires and other types of magic books, which might be used to uncover the secrets of the natural world—early predecessors of scientific texts. Conjuring up spirits, using the right words and prescribing rituals are all essential to the content of grimoires. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word itself is probably derived from the Old French word “gramaire,” which, in the Middle Ages, meant the knowledge or study of Latin, and was often synonymous with learning in general, including magic, astrology, and the occult sciences. The history of grimoires, claims Davies, can help us “understand the spread of Christianity and Islam, the development of early science, the cultural influence of print, [and] the growth of literacy” Most decidedly, in this book Davies has illustrated the talismanic power of words on paper—even in this digital age, the book serves as a kind of totem, much as it did in eras in which literacy was not as widespread.

Davies' book traces the history of grimoires from ancient and classical times to the present day, and shows their amazing

consistency: their content has evolved somewhat, but the same titles that circulated in the Middle Ages remain available in recognizable form today. While Davies' arrangement of material is chronological, his method is inductive, based on hundreds of case studies from around the world, from Britain and France to Chicago, Pennsylvania, and Haiti. His voluminous footnotes (accompanied by a list for further reading) demonstrate a broad acquaintance with both the primary and secondary literature in English, German, French, and Spanish.

Chapter 1 introduces the notion that words and books can be ritual objects; the line between books and magic books, and between miracles and sorcery, was a blurred one. Moses's contest with the Pharaoh over the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and his reception of the Torah placed him among the first "magicians." Variations on the supposed magical eight books of Moses have been discovered in archaeological digs from the fourth century CE, and the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* circulated in eighteenth-century Germany and became newly available in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s; Amazon lists over fifty editions of the title. The other Old Testament figure who became associated with the grimoire was King Solomon. First-century historian Josephus reports that Solomon had authored over 3,000 books, including those containing incantations and exorcisms. The *Testament of Solomon*, written in Greek sometime in the first five centuries CE, recalled Solomon's ability to call forth demons and to vanquish them by having them write down certain magical words. The insertion of these traditional biblical figures (including Jesus Christ, whose New Testament miracles might easily be regarded as magic), into the grimoire tradition made them ripe for censorship by Roman magistrates, leaders of the Inquisition, and the Catholic Church. Grimoires were banned, censored, and burned. But even saints and popes became associated with grimoires. Manuscripts, and later

printed books with prayers and incantations attributed to Saint Cyprian of Antioch, Popes Honorius III, Boniface VIII (among others), circulated widely and, during the Reformation, provided useful ammunition for Protestant reformers.

As literary critics and historians of the book have shown in other contexts, the advent of print did not mean the end of manuscript production. But print did allow for what Davies calls the "democratization of high magic"; increases in literacy rates, especially among the professional classes, meant grimoires were available for use by ordinary citizens. The Catholic/Protestant religious divide was even mirrored in the controversies over grimoires. The conjuration of spirits, calling upon the devil, and Catholic exorcisms were all regarded with suspicion by Protestant churches. Reginald Scot, in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), intended to attack magic and witchcraft, but he reprinted charms, Catholic prayers, rituals, and spells from his source material. Ironically, as with other polemical works of the sixteenth century, Scot's readers could use his work for their own purposes. It is one reason that Davies calls Scot's work the first grimoire printed in English.

The European witch trials of the seventeenth century did not, for the most part, involve grimoires, since the women who were frequent targets of such accusation were illiterate. Interestingly, however, grimoires were used as evidence against supposed witches in 134 cases in Iceland, a highly literate country. Many of the victims of the Salem witch trials in New England confessed to signing the "Devil's book," whose appearance was often likened to business ledgers and almanacs. (Ben Franklin might be shocked to learn that his famous almanac, intended as a satire on a 1685 astrological guide printed in Pennsylvania, now has imitators that are regularly published at the beginning of the new year.)

The Enlightenment did little to stop either the spread of grimoires or people's belief in their power. The colporteurs of

France carried grimoires, which were reproduced in the popular *Bibliothèque bleue* series. The *Grand Albert* and *Petit Albert* began to appear in the eighteenth century and, like the apocryphal Mosaic and Solomonic works, continue to be published. These works assisted the reader with such sundry tasks as controlling women, taking away fevers or bad breath, or becoming invisible. Related to the grimoires were *gacetas*, or gazeteers, which provided maps for locating buried treasure. In Germany, the Faust legend and *märchen* were linked to grimoires, and the first scholarly compilation of magical works was printed at Mainz between 1821 and 1826.

In the United States, Germantown, Pennsylvania, became home to various Protestant groups with mystical leanings; these settlers immersed themselves in alchemy, the occult, and astrology. Private and subscription libraries in Pennsylvania, New York, and San Francisco held magical and mystical books. In New York State, the Mormon Church was attacked for its supposed magical activities, while the mix of European, African, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the Caribbean provided a cultural mix that nourished a particular form of magical belief. As late as 1904, a ritual murder, influenced by the *Petit Albert*, took place in Haiti.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, belief in spiritualism and mesmerism fed the hunger for grimoires. Countering these trends was the beginning of modern scholarly inquiry in the fields of archaeology, the history of religions, and folklore. But the scholars seem to have had little influence on the general population: Pennsylvania had to pass a law forbidding fortune-telling, while the 1880 census reported the existence of six astrologers in the United States! Newspapers proved to be valuable outlets for advertising American versions of grimoires: practitioners of magic, fortune-tellers, and astrologists could advertise both their services and their books, as well as paraphernalia

such as candles, incense, medicines, and herbs. The *Chicago Defender* included ads portraying African-Americans dressed in African garb, illustrating the common belief that Africa, and Egypt in particular, was a repository of wisdom for practitioners of the mystical arts. Cheap paperback editions of grimoires were abundant and available across the country. The publishing houses of Delaurence, Scott and Company, the Sun-Worshiper Publishing Company, and the Mazdaznan Publishing Company, all founded in Chicago, produced occult books; the Delaurence Company was so successful that Davies remarks that it "masterminded an American cultural export revolution," using commercial techniques that rivaled (and preceded) those of beverage giant Coca-Cola. The effects of Delaurence's publications were considered so deleterious that, in Jamaica, its publications are still banned from importation.

Davies closes his book with some musings on the relationship between the popularity of grimoires and the desire for knowledge and the "impulse to restrict and control it" (278). The rise of feminism, the birth of Wicca, the proliferation of television shows and movies about the occult—one would expect more, rather than less, skepticism about such matters among a literate, educated population. Perhaps the grimoire and its contents are ways people can control an apparently chaotic world.

This fascinating history of magic books is recommended for both public and academic library collections that focus on the history of the book, popular culture, and folklore. The illustrations and black-and-white plates give the reader a nice taste of the changing modes of grimoire publication, and the paper the book is printed on made it a pleasure to page through. My only criticism is of the index: a more thorough treatment of the concepts discussed in the book would have been welcome. — Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Independent Scholar, Bloomington, Indiana*.