

The Grimoire of Grimalkin

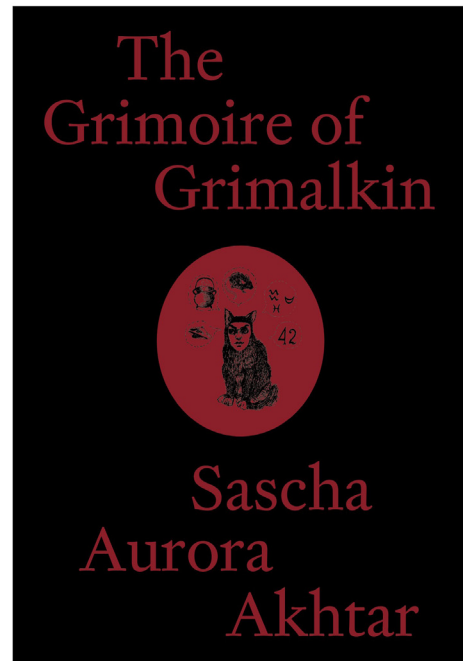
Sascha Aurora Akhtar

‘Besides an inveterate love of language which makes you write “her malachite décolletage,” whatever else you need to be a good poet is here.’

– Bernadette Mayer

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– Sylvia Legris



The Grimoire of Grimalkin by Sascha Aurora Akhtar is a poetry collection concerned with language as an energetic force. Akhtar invokes the form of the grimoire, spellbooks written by occultists in the 16th century, to explore the relationship of personal myth-making to the wider macrocosm in which we exist, through colonial and gendered trauma; a grimalkin was a derogatory term used for the elder women seen as a ‘witch’: spiteful and mean, but also a shape-shifter, a cat.

Akhtar’s writing deftly weaves obsolete or ‘dead’ words with dialect, slang – a lashing of esoteric vocabularies to create a language that too shifts shapes, and through its rage wields the power to leave the patriarchy for dead. The poet holds no prisoners.

Akhtar’s debut when it was originally published in 2007, *The Grimoire of Grimalkin* is a primordial work of contemporary Gothic from one of the most exciting and daring poets working in the UK today. This new edition includes a preface by Ágnes Lehóczky and an afterword by the author.



Sascha Aurora Akhtar has published seven collections of poetry. Her first short story collection, *Of Necessity And Wanting*, was shortlisted for the UBL Prize for Literary Excellence in 2023. Akhtar translated *Belles-Lettres: Writings of Hijab Imtiaz Ali*, the first translation of Ali’s ‘Adab-e-Zareen’, which was published by Oxford University Press in 2023. *Belles-Lettres* received an Honourable Mention for the 2024 A.K. Ramanujan Prize for book translations from South Asian languages into English, awarded by the Association for Asian Studies. A third-generation psychic in the Lancashire lineage, Akhtar studied in Pakistan and at Bennington College, Vermont, and University of Amherst, Massachusetts. Akhtar performs internationally, with recent highlights including the Emirates Festival of Literature, Poetry Wales and Rotterdam Poetry Festival.

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PRAISE FOR *THE GRIMOIRE OF GRIMALKIN*

‘The sign of visionary poetics is that the vision remains ever-prescient, practically omniscient, no matter when. *The Grimoire of Grimalkin* again reminds us that each word’s unending algal mitosis coincides with a grand carnival to which everyone’s invited, thus requiring a poet who can trim and tie back the dark wood and hand-remove pests one by one, so buds can reform on branches over a doorway unseen until right then. Sascha Aurora Akhtar’s book is timelessspace. Her voices were near to us, nearer now with this new release – le femmine balbe, le serene, who speak over those epic men attempting to mime them or chime with them. Akhtar’s voices say: Eat your heart out, it’s mine, anyway, my dear reader, dearie me, mon frère, ma soeur, why don’t you come in.’

– Kimberly Campanello

‘*The Grimoire of Grimalkin* reads like a weave of lexical magic. So much corpsing rising and falling. A sly evil turning on the head of a charged intonal hex. Herein lies a poetry as precipitous as it is substantial, movement and cathexis. Ultimately leaving language to become orphaned from its sign. Casted beyond the reaches of any linguistic mastery over its braided, interpolated symbolism under the generative idiom of Sacha Ahkhtar’s inexhaustible poetic registers giving weight and force to the inexpressible.’

– James Goodwin

‘Sascha Akhtar repels ghosts with this text and liberates the word from the burden of meaning. These poems are spells and sonorous soundings that have the power to frighten, seduce or enchant. Akhtar aspires to magic. This is a timeless and vital collection from a poet willing to transcend the liminal.’

– Anthony Joseph

‘On reading *The Grimoire of Grimalkin*, it’s clear that Sascha Aurora Akhtar is a language-diviner, her poems conjured from “the galaxy of lingual acrobatics.” Akhtar’s poems, which are like nobody else’s, are gobsmacking, magical. This work casts a wild, incantatory music that beguiles both ear and tongue.’

– Sylvia Legris

‘Besides an inveterate love of language which makes you write “her malachite décolletage,” whatever else you need to be a good poet is here. It could be sounds. Come right in; don’t step gently then.’

– Bernadette Mayer

‘We read rage here – a necessary catalyst for transforming and preserving Akhtar’s geographies of otherness, both in the body and in society. Such rage extends to environmental concerns, as she critiques the destruction and toxicity of our worlds. *The Grimoire of Grimalkin* becomes a reflection of Akhtar’s anger with both inner and outer environmental degradation, transcending specific locations to encompass a universal critique of human, animal, and plant conditions.’

– Ghazal Mosadeq

