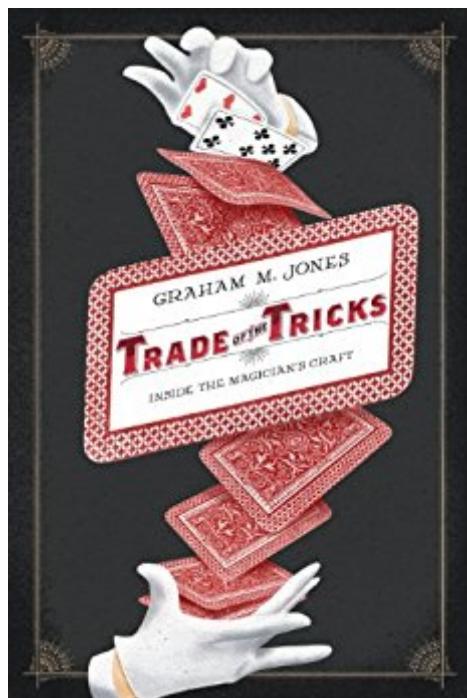


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Trade Of The Tricks: Inside The Magician's Craft



Synopsis

From risqué cabaret performances to engrossing after-hours shop talk, *Trade of the Tricks* offers an unprecedented look inside the secretive subculture of modern magicians. Entering the flourishing Paris magic scene as an apprentice, Graham M. Jones gives a firsthand account of how magicians learn to perform their astonishing deceptions. He follows the day-to-day lives of some of France's most renowned performers, revealing not only how secrets are created and shared, but also how they are stolen and destroyed. In a book brimming with humor and surprise, Jones shows how today's magicians marshal creativity and passion in striving to elevate their amazing skill into high art. The book's lively cast of characters includes female and queer performers whose work is changing the face of a historically masculine genre.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Entertaining and interesting for people interested in magic performance and entertainment. Not the usual book of tricks, but entertaining as a memoir of a particular individual and his encounters with various magicians and an unexpected bureaucracy amongst magicians. Quite informative on

deeper subjects such as perception and misdirection.

Don't bother paying more if you want the durability of a hard bound dust jacketed copy. Seems like a cheap POD binding job: lightly laminated blank board covers. Is THIS what UC Press has sunk to? If you buy this title you may want the paper edition. A Trade of the Tricks: Inside the Magician's CraftNote that much of the text deals with the sociological interplay between French magicians. Regrettably, it seems that a form of Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle has come into play here: the mere fact that a sociologist was observing the interaction CHANGED the behavior he observed. It's a fault that far- too-often affects these social studies; the sociologist falls prey to the image the subjects project. And, It is particularly true of those whose lives revolve around deception - whether amateur or professional! I have found, through many years in the field, the true situation often differs greatly from that recounted by the author, apparently new to magicdom. Particularly in France ... and I am quite familiar with most of the people who appear in this study. Like other books dealing with deceptive actors, the ego-stroking of the examiner by the subjects may be subtle, but the result is undeniably productive: false impressions by the reader. As well, I must wonder if the author has assessed the validity of the sources he cites in his bibliography. Many are thoroughly unreliable, or fictive, not factual at all. Others are bizarre Stalinist/conspiracist-style propaganda designed for particular purposes, yet pitifully transparent to the well-informed critical reader or historian. Others, far more important than many cited, are missing. Some non-bibliographical sources are known dissemblers, citing opinions differing from facts. Thus, this is not a paragon of either reliability or trustworthiness. Still, worth a read, but beware: like Stebbins and others in their earlier, later, and current works, the tricksters are at play in full force, doing what comes naturally.

This is a book about the magicians of Paris (as you've probably figured out by now). It is both a substantial scholarly contribution and a pleasure to read, an unusual and gratifying combination in academic prose. Jones takes a linguistic anthropological perspective, considering the "speech communities" of Parisian magicians. An even more pressing concern is the transmission of knowledge and skill among members of group when such knowledge and skill is by definition secret. Jones tacks seamlessly between anthropological theory and the field - evenings spent in magic clubs like the "Illegal" and his own training as a magician, which proceeds from faltering routines of levitating baguettes to the being initiated into a fraternity of French magicians. (Don't miss the online material that supplements the text!) Along the way, he traces the rich history of French magic and its current status as betwixt and between "entertainment" and "art." I would have

liked more discussion of belief, particularly experiences of "willful suspension of disbelief" that are at the heart of the audiences' experience of magic. Such a discussion could bring this work into fruitful conversation with the anthropology of religion and imagination. Still, this is but a small detraction from a truly enjoyable and enriching book. I'm an anthropologist but I would not hesitate to give this book to friends outside of academia. You can't say that about terribly many ethnographies - not too many desk copies can double as birthday presents! I read this with a graduate seminar where it was well-received. I think undergraduates would also connect well with this book: Jones does a very nice job elucidating complex theoretical arguments elegantly - dare I say making them magically appear - so that they delight rather than confound. I will definitely include it in future syllabi. Trade of the Tricks is an erudite and enchanting book, don't miss it!

I have never read such a well written book on magicians! Well done! I never knew about the backstage society behind the performance!

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