

ongoing fight for legitimacy. The contributors to *Fiction, Invention and Hyper-reality* successfully demonstrate that these “phenomena have real life consequences.”

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*Scientology in Popular Culture: Influences and Struggles for Legitimacy*. Edited by Stephen A. Kent and Susan Raine. Praeger, 2017. 373 pages. \$58.00 cloth; ebook available.

More academic work on Scientology and Scientologists has been published in the last ten years than in the preceding five decades combined. Prominent examples include James R. Lewis’ anthology *Scientology* (Oxford, 2009), Hugh B. Urban’s monograph *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (Princeton, 2011), James R. Lewis and Kjersti Hellestø’s edited *Handbook of Scientology* (Brill, 2017), and special issues of *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* (6, no. 1), *Numen* (63, no. 1), and *Nova Religio* (20, no. 4).

Coedited by Stephen A. Kent and Susan Raine, *Scientology in Popular Culture* is the latest anthology to appear on the scene. Rather than provide a history of Scientology or overview of the life of L. Ron Hubbard, Canadian sociologists Kent and Raine take a topical approach and focus on the reciprocal relationship between Scientology and manifestations of popular culture. This perspective is quite useful and allows for a springboard based on previous scholarship in the area, such as journal articles by James R. Lewis, Carole M. Cusack, and Bernard Doherty. The introduction, authored by Raine, acknowledges the ambiguous and diverse meanings of *popular culture* and establishes the book’s goal—to incorporate “a wide array of components and subcomponents of popular culture” (xi), including the manner in which Scientology has been depicted in the media and “Hubbard’s or Scientology’s *attempts* to gain entry into popular culture domains” (x). The anthology is humble in scope and Raine recognizes an abundance of open areas and hopes that “research continues to flourish in this fascinating area” (xxv).

The first chapter, from Raine, examines continuities between Hubbard’s science fiction career and Scientology’s space opera-inspired pursuit of empire, colonialism, and masculinity. Historian Hugh B. Urban deftly examines some of the origins of Scientology theology through Hubbard’s fiction and the creative process of writing itself, especially as displayed in *Typewriter in the Sky* (1940) and the “Ole Doc Methuselah” stories from *Astounding Science Fiction* (1947–1950). Stefano Bigliardi offers a superb analysis of *Battlefield Earth* (1982) and the *Mission Earth* “dekalogy” (1985–1987) through the lenses of knowledge, technology, and power. The philosopher and historian,

admirably, read these eleven volumes and offers plot overviews and abundant resources in the notes.

The next three chapters, authored by Kent, focus on celebrities in the Church of Scientology. They include discussions of Hubbard's so-called "recruitment policies"; the influence of celebrities as spokespersons, "opinion leaders," and advocates for legitimization; and a sociological and historical survey of "celebrity apostates," focusing especially on William S. Burroughs, Jason Beghe, Paul Haggis, and Leah Remini. These chapters, and others throughout the volume, benefited from use of Kent's impressive archival collection at the University of Alberta.

The next four chapters concern the depiction of Scientologists in the media—in particular film, television, newspapers, and on the internet. Sociologist Tami M. Bereska, for instance, examines television programs that have featured interviews with church officials and famous Scientologists—including Heber Jentzsch, David Miscavige, Tom Cruise, Beck (Hansen), and John Travolta—and rightly notes adaptations in the strategies used over the years by interviewers *and* interviewees in their attempts to better report on or promote the religion. The chapter on Scientology and the internet, from public policy and political science researcher Max Halupka, surveys the church's tumultuous relationship with the 'net and the issue of copyright infringement in the digital age, including the church's skirmishes with discussion boards, Wikipedia, YouTube, Google, and WikiLeaks.

The final two chapters shift away from the earlier and more familiar subjects of science fiction, celebrities, and the media. Chapter 11, coauthored by Raine and George Shaw (the pseudonym of an "independent writer and former Scientologist" [354]), takes up the subject of artwork featured on the cover of Scientology books, especially during Hubbard's lifetime. The coauthors focus on Hubbard's project to promote "whole track" (space opera-themed) book covers in the late 1960s and 1970s on the basis of subliminal messaging theory. The esoteric goal was to elicit visceral reactions from viewers in order to support proselytization and improved public and legal relations.

Music and communications expert Mark Evans authored the final chapter, "L. Ron Hubbard's Foray into the World of Music." Evans offers a largely negative appraisal of Hubbard's musical contributions such as: the Apollo Stars band affiliated with the Sea Org during the *Apollo* years that produced the largely-forgotten album *The Power of Source* (1974); and the albums *Space Jazz* (1982), *The Road to Freedom* (1986), and posthumous *The Joy of Creating* (2001), developed with help from a number of leading musicians, including Chick Corea, Isaac Hayes, and Karen Black.

One criticism I have of the volume is that at times—though not fatally—some contributors take for granted negative accounts about Scientology and its practices that have been put forward by former members and journalists without counterbalancing them with

perspectives from Hubbard, the church, or Scientologists themselves. Some of the more conspicuous and uncritical examples include the following items. First, making reference to confidential scriptures and space opera theology as if they are common knowledge among Scientologists (Raine, 10–13), when in fact most members find themselves on the lower half of the “Bridge to Total Freedom” before the OT levels. Next, there are lopsided descriptions of the Sea Org’s Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF) as a “forced labor contingent of members” and possible “brainwashing facility,” which “in either case grossly violates human rights” (Kent, 89). Third, we find what can only be called fat-shaming of Kirstie Alley, based on the tabloid *Star* magazine, in support of “poor judgment regarding her weight gain” (Kent, 114, n. 94). Then there are generalizations about “the secretive nature of Scientology” and “Scientology’s [ . . . ] take-over of Clearwater, Florida” (Manca, 241). Fifth includes the flippant, and supposedly self-evident, mention of Hubbard’s “unpredictability, egocentrism, delusion, and greed” (Evans, 335). Finally, the allegation appears, based upon an anti-Scientology online article, that a Sea Org member, Ann Tidman (1956–2011), “died alone, basically imprisoned in a Scientology compound” after a battle with lung cancer (Evans, 336, n. 10).

On the whole, however, this work is rigorous, original, well-documented, well-organized, and contributes to the increasingly sophisticated academic study of Scientology. Surely one of the volume’s strengths is that it brings together an international and interdisciplinary set of scholars. It is encouraging that the authors avoided the historically and theologically loaded word “cult” in their preference for value-neutral descriptors such as “alternative religions” (xiii), “NRMs” (195), and “fledgling faith” (280). Certainly, as Raine writes in the introduction, a number of open areas remain for further and fuller work on Scientology, society, and culture. For instance, it was Hubbard’s publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (1950) that ignited the popular self-help movement that transformed itself into the philosophy/religion of Scientology and led to the incorporation of churches (1953–1954).

Looking to the contemporary scene, the church’s own media efforts deserve more attention. One example came in 2016 with the grand opening of the Scientology Media Productions facility based in Los Angeles. The church and its parishioners appear more eager to engage society via social media platforms as well, as evidenced by the proliferation of blog articles published by the Scientologists Taking Action Against Discrimination (STAND) League (STANDLeague.org). Researchers should also investigate the relationship between Scientology and popular culture in more non-English speaking contexts (for example, France, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Denmark, and Italy) as well as the “independent” or “squirrel” Scientologists who practice

outside church approval and often risk legal and extra-legal church action. These and other topics might also serve to humanize Scientology and Scientologists beyond the usual discussions about celebrity and ecclesiastical stakeholders.

As this new religion continues to evolve in the twenty-first century, researchers and students would do well to consult Kent and Raine's anthology and other recent scholarship to piece together the diversity and complexity of Scientology.

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*Vexed with Devils: Manhood and Witchcraft in Old and New England.* By Erika Gasser. New York University Press, 2017. 272 pages. \$35.00 cloth; ebook available.

Most people accused of witchcraft in the transatlantic Anglophone world of the seventeenth century were women, but as Erika Gasser argues in *Vexed with Devils*, "to restrict witchcraft-possession analytically to 'something female' obscures some of the ways these cases functioned" (174). Her book therefore examines the role played by men and notions of masculinity in seventeenth-century culture.

Witchcraft accusers were powerful men from the ranks of the educated elite: ministers, magistrates, and businessmen. They reflected deeply-rooted notions about masculinity both in England and New England. Ideally, men had credit, meaning they were reliable and trustworthy. Without good credit, a man was vulnerable to many charges, including witchcraft. Manliness also conveyed a sense of strength, both physical and intellectual. A strong man was capable of supporting his family economically. More importantly for witchcraft accusations, a strong man was rational, in contrast to women, understood to be hysterical by nature, and thus mentally weak and more susceptible to the temptations of Satan than men. As many studies have shown, women accused of witchcraft were often on the margins of social acceptability: widows, teenage girls, and others with little economic power or agency. When accused, these females temporarily enjoyed power to influence men in their communities. In particular, they could persuade their accusers that certain men in their midst were consorting with the Devil. But eventually patriarchy won: powerful men made witchcraft charges stick, and many accused women, and some men, were executed.

To uncover these pervasive gender dynamics, Gasser analyzes key documents from witchcraft cases on both sides of the Atlantic. They include published sermons, court testimony, pamphlets, and books. Some were written by well-known figures of this time period, like