



the role of the “Yogi” was played out in front of a Western early twentieth-century audience in the case of Yogananda. To this end, she juxtaposes the representations of the yogi in their Indian and Western contexts, and outlines the development of scientific concepts involving a universal subtle medium (most notably *ākāśa*, *prāṇa*, ether, and energy)—the rationale behind the extraordinary powers allegedly obtainable through yogic practice. On this basis, she moves on to discuss Yogananda’s life, teachings, and *Autobiography* in light of his American audience’s Orientalist expectations as well as the metaphysical interests shaped by Mesmerism, Theosophy, Christian Science, and New Thought. The monograph is carefully edited, includes an index, and offers a thorough introduction. Scholars of modern yoga, metaphysical religion, and therapeutic spirituality will find Foxen’s study to be a valuable resource for further research.

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“CULT WARS” IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: NEW AND MINORITY RELIGIONS. Edited by Eugene V. Gallagher. Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements. London: Routledge, 2017. Pp. x + 178. Hardback, \$160.00; e-book, \$57.95.

Gallagher (b. 1950), the Rosemary Park Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Connecticut College, belongs to a pool of pioneering scholars in NRM (New Religious Movement) Studies. The volume (with one exception) brings together selected contributions from INFORM’s 25th Anniversary Conference in 2014, titled “Minority Religions: Contemplating the Past and Anticipating the Future.” Next to a brief editor’s introduction, the volume is divided into two parts. Part 1 comprises of scattered short contributions by NRM scholars; Part 2 includes insider perspectives on recent developments in four well-known NRMs. INFORM’s foundress and Honorary Acting Director, Eileen Barker, reviews the history and the context of the tense relationship between NRM Studies and the cult-awareness movement (CAM). Next, Massimo Introvigne provides an autobiographically informed history of his Turin-based *Centro studi sulle nuove religioni* (Center for Studies on New Religions or, in short, CESNUR). Timothy Miller traces highlights of the “cult conflicts” of the 1970s–1990s, concluding that “the conflict seems to have died down somewhat, but it is still with us, and certainly no one can so far claim victory.” George D. Chryssides outlines the history of NRM Studies, while Benjamin Zeller looks specifically at the (institutional) history and current situation of the discipline in the United States. James T. Richardson offers a “descriptive presentation of developing patterns of jurisprudence in Europe and America.” Finally, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov and Ankica Marinović, in a case study, explore the emergence of CAM groups in Croatia. The following contributions give instructive accounts focusing on 1) the transformation of The Family International (TFI, formerly Children of God), penned

by a former TFI spokesperson as well as a former TFI director of international public affairs; 2) the more recent corroding developments within the Unification Movement penned by a former British rank and file member and long-time missionary; 3) the CAM-ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) relationship penned by the ISKCON minister of communications; and 4) the evolution of (Scientology) Freezone and the perceived “success story” of mainline Scientology, penned by a key actor of the Freezone community and the current president of the Union of the Churches of Scientology in France, respectively.

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UFOS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND THE NEW AGE: MILLENNIAL CONSPIRACISM. By David G. Robertson. Bloomsbury Advances in Religious Studies. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. viii+250. Hardback, \$120.00; Paperback, \$42.95; E-Book, \$35.95.

David G. Robertson (b. 1975) is a Lecturer in Religious Studies at the Open University, UK, and the co-editor (alongside Asbjørn Dyrendal and Egil Asprem) of the “Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religion” (Brill, 2018). The book is based on his doctoral thesis entitled “Conspiracism: UFOs as Discursive Unit between Millennial and Conspiracist Fields” (2014), supervised by Steven Sutcliffe and submitted at Edinburgh University’s Department of Religious Studies. The book’s subject is “millennial conspiracism,” which he defines as an amalgamation of “conspiracy narratives concerning the machinations of hidden agencies” and “popular millennial [i.e., New Age] discourses concerning imminent global transformation.” Robertson argues that the UFO narrative serves as a unifying thread between the two areas, which being fused together would provide to believers a “theodicy of the dispossessed,” that is, a *raison d’être* for the socio-economic and spiritual captivation of most of humanity. Drawing upon discourse analysis as well as ethnographic research, three case studies are subsequently marshaled—Whitley Strieber (b. 1945) and his abductee narrative, David Icke (1952) and his reptilian thesis, and David Wilcock (b. 1973) and his 2012 millennial vision. Robertson convincingly shows how they employ various “counter-epistemic strategies”—namely, tradition, science, experience, synthesis, channeling—which produce “epistemic capital,” creating discursive authority within the millennial conspiracist community. Ultimately, he posits, it is the possession of knowledge of truth held back by malevolent forces, gained through the epistemic capital that renders the millennial conspiracist community a veritable “counter-elite.” This fascinating book is an important contribution and a delight to read.

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