



Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons

John Carter , Robert Anton Wilson (Introduction) , Jack Whiteside Parsons (Quoted) , Aleister Crowley (Quoted) , Phyllis Seckler (Quoted) , Frank J. Malina (Quoted)

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This remarkable true story about the co-founder of Jet Propulsion Laboratory. By day, Parsons' unorthodox genius created a solid rocket fuel that helped the Allies win World War II. By night, Parsons called himself The Antichrist. "One of the best books of the year."—*The Anomalist*

Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons Details

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Author : John Carter , Robert Anton Wilson (Introduction) , Jack Whiteside Parsons (Quoted) , Aleister Crowley (Quoted) , Phyllis Seckler (Quoted) , Frank J. Malina (Quoted)

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From Reader Review Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons for online ebook

Patrick Santana says

A painful, unpleasant, difficult read. The writing is haphazard and a structural mess. More like a sloppy first draft doctoral thesis than an edited biography. What could be such interesting material is, instead, just a string of esoteric bits giving the reader NO INSIGHT into Parsons, as a person. This book also suffers from the plague of "fandom." That is: authors so enamored of their subject that they just fawn and gush, piling laudatory inferences on top of themselves. None of it written in a way that is clear nor interesting to read. Really just so garbled and bad. Had to force myself to finish since this book was a gift from my brother. Avoid it, if you can.

Peter Morris says

Jack Parson's role in the forming of modern occult history is often under-stated but in Sex and Rockets, author John Carter sets the record straight with a fascinating examination of a man who lived life on the very edge.

This is a very well written and thoroughly engaging book which all occultists will enjoy.

Richard Biddle says

Overall the story of Jack Parsons is an interesting one. However this book is simply dreadful. It is poorly edited, full of errors and the author's style is dull to say the least. I didn't read this book so much as trudge through it.

Jönathan says

A great bio of Jack. Enjoyed enormously. Also read "Wormwood Star" for Marjorie Cameron's life after Jack.

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

This is a somewhat workmanlike biography of Parsons, but it is a good look at one of the stranger characters I've heard of. Carter tries to make a case that Parsons' contributions to the two worlds he inhabited - rocket science and occult magic - have been wrongly assessed. Rather than being a brilliant magician who made minor contributions to science, Parsons was actually a scientific (or at least technical) pioneer but a failed magician. It's hard to see how the latter could be otherwise, at least from my perspective as skeptic. Perhaps the most fascinating idea encountered in this book is that Parsons may have got the inspiration for his personal magical undertaking, or Black Pilgrimage, from the M.R. James short story, 'Count Magnus'.

Paige Ellen Stone says

Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons (Paperback)

The inviting retro 50's sci-fi look cover earns this book the one star. I know a lot about Aleister Crowley and I know a good bit of the history of NASA and JPL. This book adds NOTHING of value to that body of knowledge. It's printed on rather nice paper, so I feel bad for the trees that gave up their lives for this disaster of a book. So Jack Parsons was a genius and a tad whacked.... this matters why????????? Author John Carter needs to emulate his literary namesake and head for Mars. If you have trouble sleeping, get a used copy; you'll be out in seconds. That's the best I can say about this waste of paper and ink. I'm sure Feral Press can do better.

Bill Telfer says

Okay, here it is in a nutshell: fascinating subject in the hands of someone who didn't know how to write, let alone write a decent biography. I know there is at least one other biography of the ill-fated Jack Parsons, but, quite frankly, after struggling through this mess, I am sick of the whole subject. And that's a shame because I let myself wait over a decade to read this. The two stars I give this book (which is also nightmarishly edited) is based on the subject matter alone, otherwise I would give it one star. P. U.

Niall O'Conghaile says

A reasonably entertaining read, this book acts less as a thorough biography of Parson's life (there seemed to be gaps in the chronology) but actually serves as a solid introduction to the concept of Enochian magick, which seems to have been Parson's favoured form of magick to practice (which he did alongside some guy called L Ron something). To paraphrase Crowley, and this appears somewhere near the end of the book, Parsons was actually a mediocre magician and a much more successful with his engineering work.

Pogue says

When I heard about this book I was very excited because I like the stories of peoples lives. Who they are and what makes them tick, and while this was an informative book it was missing that human touch that binds a story together. This was more like reading the facts of a case, something that would be prepared for a court session. The emotion of Jack Parsons was missing. Did I like it no, did I find it interesting yes.

Lanie says

They say that truth is stranger than fiction. This is probably true in the age of Jack Parsons. If you made it up, no one would believe it.

Rocket scientist and ceremonial magician, Parsons is a nexus through which all connections flow.

If you wish to find a link between Crowley, Scientology, communism, NASA, the dark side of the moon, Dennis Hopper, Science Fiction fandom, and a myriad of other things; Parsons is the conduit.

However, the book was dull. Even with an intro by Robert Anton Wilson it was dull.

It got far too bogged down in detail. I really don't want to know that much about the intricacies of making rocket fuel, and all the pages of description just went over my head.

Nor do I want or need to know that much about magical hierarchies and ceremonies. Parsons may have done Enochian magic in the desert, but there is no need to transcribe pages and pages of utter codswallop. If I want to know the Enochian calls I can look them up. However, I really don't want a visit from Choronzon (or whoever), so I won't.

But it seems that Parsons did. Apparently he and L Ron Hubbard (acting as scribe and seer) summoned up an elemental woman to be Parsons' lover. In fact she was a real woman, and the idea that these men somehow manifested her seems somewhat ridiculous.

(Hubbard had a different tale to tell about the whole thing. In his version he was the hero who stopped the Pasadena sex perverts in their tracks. I feel the need to say that in case the scientologists sue me. Two sides to every story, etc.)

Most people grow out of this stuff eventually, Parsons never did, he blew himself up instead.

My main conclusions regarding this book are as follows.

If you want the scientific community to take you seriously, get a degree.

Crowley was a hypocrite. Apparently the whole of the law is 'do what Crowley tells you to do'.

Magicians always write really bad poetry.

Spelling magic with a k is pretentious.

Be careful around explosives.

Margaret says

Surprisingly dry text, though it's always entertaining to hear L. Ron Hubbard called a confidence man.

Chris says

A fine and easily read biography of Jack Parsons (1914-1952). The author progresses in a workmanlike fashion with little flair or style, merely trotting out fact after fact, usually chronologically but sometimes in a more confusing fashion, with diversions which could have been cleaned up. After the brilliant introduction

by the late Robert Anton Wilson (and the lamentation in realizing that there is a finite amount of R.A.W.'s writing which I have not yet read, which can never increase), Carter's tale of Parsons begins and is quite engrossing, despite its above mentioned flaws.

I was largely ignorant of both the American OTO, the history of rocket research in CalTech and J.P.L (Jet Propulsion Lab, or Jack Parson's Laboratory? Or Jack Parson Lives!) and the early history of rocket research in the US (Parsons met Robert Goddard, and possibly even Werner Von Braun after the war), and I had previously thought that Parsons was merely interested in Crowley. Actually, they had a large correspondence, Parsons sent THE BEAST money, and Crowley was interested in Parson's life and work. Crowley was disappointed when Parsons was swindled out of thousands of dollars by none other than L. Ron Hubbard himself, whom THE BEAST 666 calls a 'confidence man'!

Actually, that L. Ron Hubbard, a scheisty sci-fi pulp author and neophyte magickal adept, would steal a high ranking thelemic magician's money (which Parsons got from cashing out of Aerojet Inc, which still services NASA) and his girlfriend, buy a yacht with it, and run the risk of magickal retribution is pretty crazy in and of itself. I was happy to see the linkages between all these interesting 20th century personages (Crowley, Parsons, L.Ron Hubbard, Lovecraft, Von Braun, Goddard, Phillip K Dick even), which kept me reading straight through, finishing the book in about 10 hours total. Also interesting were the diversions into the 19th century history of the OTO, and mini-biographies of Dr. John Dee, court magician to Queen Elizabeth I, and Edward Kelley, his partner in what could only be described as spooky medieval Enochian shenanigans.

Trivialities:

- Line 4, page XIV of the introduction by R.A.W. contains a spelling error: 'fundamtlalists'.
 - In a footnote, Carter mentions that a Master Mason knocks three times to be admitted to the lodge for initiation. This is wrong as only a candidate for 1? is 'initiated', whereas a Master Mason 3? has been 'raised' to the sublime degree of Master Mason and would not need to knock for admittance, unless he is outside the lodge after it has been opened.
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Scot says

I have become fascinated with this character, Jack "Marvel" Parsons rocketeer, magician and proto-libertarian. His life story is fascinating and worth the effort. I came at this when I discovered the connection between Aleister Crowley and L. Ron Hubbard. The vision of these post war individuals and particularly Jack as they push the envelope into space inner and outer. It was written with the pseudonym of John Carter, who is obviously a magician that wishes to be anonymous. It is clear that the author is well versed in the rituals and literature of western magic and goes to great length to describe the most famous of Jack Parson's extended rituals the "Babalon Working" in extended detail. Some later gnostics have conjectured that this magical action is that ended up generating the tide of liberation theology and "hippidom" To me, the uninitiated, it was tedious and tragic. For some reason I found myself thinking of Eugene O'Neil's father James and his failed attempts to remake American theater, finally being type cast as the Count of Monte Cristo and eventually taking his whole family on the "Long Days Journey into Night" There are many interesting details about the nascent science of rocketry and the wild spirit of west that had a sort of freedom that we can only dream of. It collapsed around him and the writer is so caught up in finding an explanation for his own beliefs that the poignancy of the damage is lost.

Mer says

Fascinating biography of a person who was on the forefront of rocket science; a founding member of Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Reminds me of Moon: The Life and Death of a Rock Legend, the biography of Keith Moon of The Who, in how the subject is part of a close group and as life moves on and changes, the subject slowly separates/is separated from the group.

Cwn_annwn_13 says

This was a good read but I get the feeling that the full story of Parsons will never be known. Parsons was a rocket scientist who was one of the pioneers in the field. He was heavily into the occult, a protege of Aleister Crowley as well as L. Ron Hubbard. Hubbard later went on to swindle Parsons out of a large sum of money but not before he and Parsons conducted the infamous "Babylon Working" ceremonial magic rituals. Parsons died by blowing himself up at his home laboratory which was ruled an accident but considering Parsons was the worlds greatest authority on rocket fuel at the time of his death many believe that he was set up and murdered. Most people really have no clue as to how much overlap there has always been between the space program, the occult and science fiction. This book is one to dig into if you want to explore those connections.
