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of rhetorical discourse, that devoted to peace, that receives relatively little scholarly attention. The book is also helpful in suggesting the interconnections between the various causes to which these women devoted their energies. While peace is a unifying theme, the reader can also see how a commitment to peace grows out of and complements their activism in civil liberties, woman suffrage, minority rights, and globalism. The reader is left with a profound respect for these women, rich and poor, famous and relatively unknown, who chose to speak for the larger cause of all humanity. Because of its strengths, the book would, I think, be a useful supplementary text in courses on women's rhetoric, peace studies, and social movements.

Martha Solomon Watson *University of Nevada Las Vegas*

Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America. Edited by Peter Knight. New York: New York University Press, 2002; pp vii + 278. $18.50 paper.

If asked to reduce Peter Knight's edited collection to an implied coherence, one might say that it boils down to a conversation with Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and, by extension, Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984). Organized into four sections—"Theories of Conspiracy Theory" (chapters 1 through 3), which challenges some popular academic theories of conspiracy, "Alien Nation" (chapters 4 and 5), which analyzes alien abduction narratives, "The Enemy Within" (chapters 6 through 8), which focuses on internal conspiracies and elements of popular culture, and "The Ends of Conspiracy" (chapters 9 through 11), which examines the positive potentials of conspiracy as a theoretical and narrative idiom—almost every author attempts to articulate the relationship between the conspiratorial imagination and postmodernity. Understood as either a gradual globalism and post-Fordist stage of trans/multinational capitalism on the one hand, or as a radical break from modernity in terms of an "incredulity toward metanarratives" on the other (Lyotard, xxiv), almost every chapter situates the postmodern condition as a bewildering experience that is best captured by the concept of paranoia.

In the second chapter Fran Mason challenges Jameson's dismissal of conspiracy theory as a "poor man's cognitive mapping," which obscures ideological and structural causation. In response to Jameson's call for a rationalistic understanding of cognitive mapping as the best means of contending with the realities of postmodernity (see Jameson, 38–54), Mason argues that the conspiratorial narratives inspired by paranoid thought are perhaps the only kind of cartography possible. Conspiracy comes the closest to fulfilling the promise of cognitive mapping—living outside of ideology—in terms of offering the true believer "a position of independence and authenticity outside of the domain of the conspiracy and its world of ignorance, control, and inauthenticity" (50). Also in conversation with Jameson, in

his chapter concerning the literature of Pynchon and DeLillo (chapter 11), John A. McClure suggests that one might need to "forget conspiracy" so that one can "draw energies away from its 'cognitive mapping' . . . in order to resist it" (263).

In distinction, in "If Anything is Possible" (chapter 4), Jodi Dean argues that conspiracies are not the kind of coherent metanarratives designed to return the subject to a sense of order and control in the wake of crises, but quite the opposite: "in the information age, at the interface of modernity and postmodernity, the defining characteristic of conspiracy theory is suspicion. It emphasizes that *something* has been withheld, that all the facts aren't known, that what we see isn't all there is. . . . All we know are bits and pieces without a plot" (92). For Dean, conspiracy theory in the age of "global technoculture" or "cyberia" functions to configure "agency through links, doubts, and information," providing "a window to the ideological supports of networked technoculture" (103).

Given Dean's optimistic suggestion that conspiracy theories function as Lyotardian "*petits récits*" or "little narratives"—localized language games that cannot be absorbed by meta-principles or totalities—one might be led to reduce Knight's collection to an argument with Freud, one of many "invisible masters," to borrow a phrase from Zizek, whose grand narrative, psychoanalysis, inconspicuously haunts this collection. In his chapter "Agency Panic and the Culture of Conspiracy" (chapter 3), for example, Timothy Melley argues that because they make "diverse social and technological systems enemies of 'the self,' . . . conspiratorial views function less as a defense of some *clear* political position than as a defense of individualism, abstractly conceived" (61). Because Freudian psychoanalysis attempts to stabilize the analysand "by relocating motive from the unitary consciousness of an *intending* subject to a shadowy agent (the unconscious) whose deliberations are veiled and not easily subject to interrogation," the method "bears a striking resemblance to conspiracy theory" (71).

In fact, because of its tendency to pathologize paranoia, a number of essays in the volume are situated against the psychological as a misguided, modernist conceit. In this respect Richard Hofstadter's highly influential essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" (1965), takes some abuse for its dismissal of paranoid thinking as diseased fantasizing. In his analysis of an article from *Covert Action Quarterly* on AIDS conspiracy theories (chapter 6), for example, Jack Bratich argues that the psychologization of conspiratorial "knowledge-claims" wrongly extracts them from a political field as a means of discreditation. Bratich forwards articulation theory as informing an alternate method of analysis that avoids facile normative judgments in favor of a cartography of the "forms of rationality and politics that lead us to be concerned" with conspiracy narratives in the first place. Similarly, in the tenth chapter Clare Birchall takes Elaine Showalter's *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (1997) to task for pathologizing and dismissing the conspiratorial. The commodification of conspiracy into television shows like *The X-Files,* she

argues, helps us to better detect an "epistemology" that is remarkably similar to academic theorizing—especially Showalter's.

It is not surprising, then, that Bratich resists the reduction of conspiracy theories to "texts" to be read, or that Birchall's subtle argument really concerns "the arrogation of power in certain 'legitimate' [academic] discourses and an inherent anxiety over interpretation" (234). Insofar as conspiracy as such betokens interpretive anxiety, one might be led to reduce Knight's collection to an interrogation of Paul Ricoeur, who famously suggested that interpretation has long been understood—at least in the last two centuries—as a hermeneutic of suspicion (*Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation,* 1970). For many of the authors in Knight's collection, the suspicion of interpretation implied by treating a given conspiracy as a surface with a hidden depth is part of the (academic) problem. Although some authors argue for treating conspiracy as a narrative logic, others argue for treating it as a paranoid performativity homologous to the postmodern condition. In other words, it is precisely because there is no consensus on critical procedure that anxiety of interpretation emerges as a predominant theme.

My discussion of the theoretical issues motivating the collection should not, however, eclipse the more "traditional" critical work found in it. Bridget Brown's essay, "'My Body Is Not My Own': Alien Abduction and the Struggle for Self-Control" (chapter 5), brilliantly examines the similarities between anxiety concerning medical practice and the experience of those abducted by aliens from the 1940s to present. One of Brown's most fascinating insights is that the central logic of the abduction narrative—the reproductive governance of women—has been "appropriated by men. In alien abduction, men too find themselves objects of the technological gaze, and are equally subject to intimate, bodily violations" (114). Similarly, Ingrid Walker Field's chapter on *The Turner Diaries* and *Hunter* (chapter 7), Douglas Kellner's chapter on *The X-Files* (chapter 9), and Eithne Quinn's chapter on the "paranoid style" of Tupac Shakur (chapter 10) contain the kind of sustained analyses most familiar to readers of this journal.

Nevertheless, the authors Knight has assembled here are most concerned with theory, with how to understand better the relationship between paranoia and conspiracy theory, with how to better situate conspiracy as a discourse worthy of study, with how to better use conspiracy and paranoia as idioms of the postmodern, and with how to better deploy paranoia as a metaphor for criticism and critique. *Conspiracy Nation* is thus better read as an introduction to theory about conspiracy theory, better read as a network of seemingly heterogeneous concerns and anxieties that are conspicuously and often secretly linked by so many academic masters (Jameson, Lyotard, Freud, Lacan, Zizek, Ricoeur). Of course, it is fitting that the most masterful of the invisible masters haunting this book goes completely without mention: Georges Battaille.

Joshua Gunn *Louisiana State University*