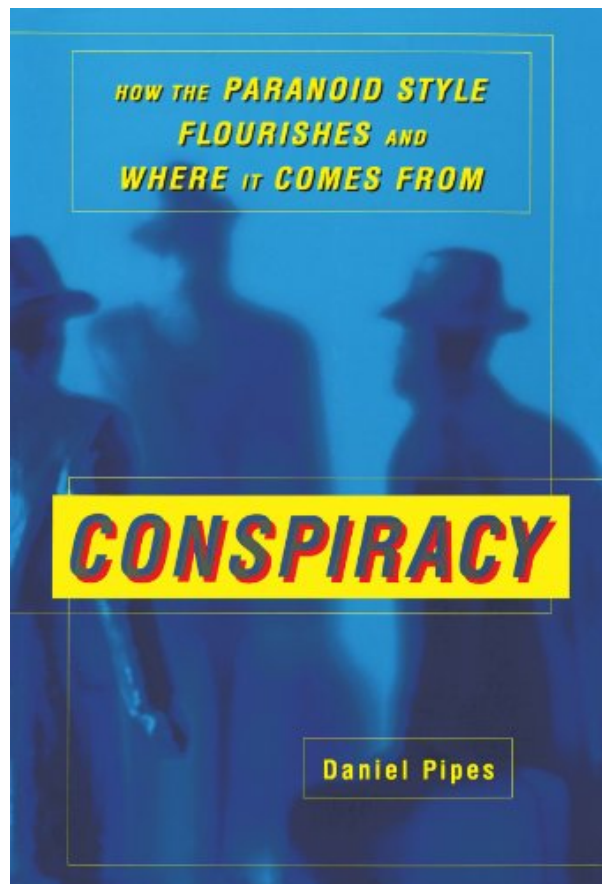
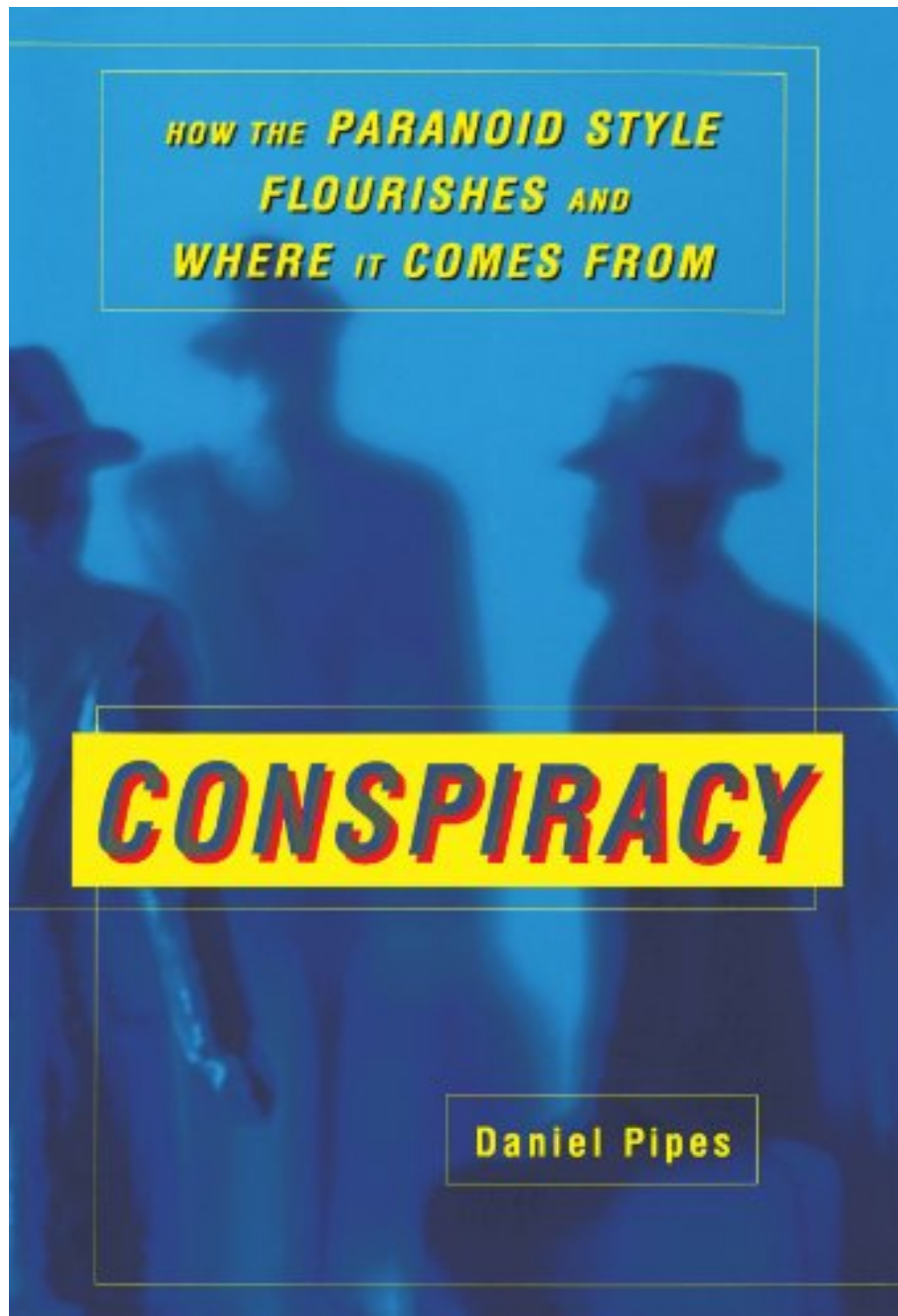


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FLOURISHES AND WHERE IT COMES
FROM BY DANIEL PIPES**



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And yet, Pipes's view of conspiracy thinking as essentially profane obscures its historical scope and, I believe, its actual heritage. When Pipes describes this material as largely debased, he is certainly right. But is it pornography?

Make no mistake, though: Pipes's is a valuable and much-needed book. Scholars usually shy away from these kinds of subjects despite their tremendous and continuing influence. -- Reason, Charles Paul Freund

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In this brilliant and provocative work, Daniel Pipes offers a fascinating analysis of conspiracy theories in the West and the terrible impact they have had. He shows how, beginning with the Crusades, Europe developed two strands of conspiracism. One took the form of secret societies from the Knights Templar through the Freemasons to the Council on Foreign Relations. A second insisted that "international Jewry" runs the world. Pipes delineates the fear that one or the other of these agents engineered the French and Russian revolutions, two world wars, and all other key events of modern history. He shows the staggering consequences of conspiracy theories in the era when Hitler and Stalin reached power and then, in the aftermath of 1945, the migration of this way of thinking from the halls of power in the West to the political and geographic margins. To anyone who has ever heard a friend or relative say, "Don't believe what you read in the papers," Conspiracy offers a spellbinding survey - and a wakeup call.

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A garbage book by a conspirator who is partially responsible for ...

By SULAI

A garbage book by a conspirator who is partially responsible for a blacklist website run by the Canary Project that tries to defame and criminalize human rights activism if it is critical of Israel.

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The smaller the mind, the larger the conspiracy...

By Stephen A. Skubinna

Mr. Pipes follows the history of conspiracism and determines that it has two separate and distinct main threads: anti-Semitism; and secret societies. There is occasional overlap and crossover between the two, but in general they have remained apart. While his research appears sparse at points, that may be due to the huge

scope of his view, and to the very real difficulty in researching the essentially unresearchable (for example, how far can one study a "secret society" before losing oneself in the contradictions of myth, fact, and most revealing, myths accepted as facts?). At times the thread pursued by the author seems tenuous, but he does make a telling case in support of his thesis of these two dominant strains of conspiracism. Most chilling of all is his discussions of nations where conspiracism has become official state policy, specifically Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. I would have liked more indepth study of postwar American conspiracy theories, such as UFOs, the UN, and connections, if any, with various New Age beliefs, but that's my own particular interest. Mr. Pipes is mainly concerned with a broader historical picture.

While Mr. Pipes follows these twin paths of conspiracism, he demolishes the most widely accepted belief of the conspiracy theorists, that there are continuous sects and societies behind everything, and that all we see is simply the outward manifestation of their centuries long struggle for dominance. Make no mistake - the postulation of a continuous thread of conspiracism is not the same as accepting the existence of the conspiracies spanning generations and continents. While this book can not claim to be the definitive word on the subject (unless and until the Illuminati, the Elders of Zion, the Trilateral Commission, and the Rosicrucians open their archives), it does provide an interesting overview of conspiracism and demonstrates that the weirder paranoids among us have a long, if not distinguished lineage.

His encouraging conclusion that conspiracism has been increasingly marginalized (at least in the West) since the Second World War is offset somewhat by real world examples of collision between these conspiracists and the rest of society, e.g. Waco, Ruby Ridge, and Oklahoma City. Perhaps the greatest danger of modern day conspiracism is the extent to which preventive or corrective measures may backfire - how many of us are uncomfortable with the government's handling of the three cited cases, and of those, how many will be moved to align themselves with extremist groups?

22 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

Very good book, concise and illuminating

By A Customer

I found this book to be an excellent survey of the various different strands of conspiracy theories. Pipes goes through the long historical pedigree (if such a word is appropriate) of conspiracy theories, and he sets out a pretty good model for how to tell the difference between a nutty conspiracy theorist and a person with a healthy critical skepticism of the motives and actions of the government and other groups. While he is sometimes a bit too dismissive of those who agree with some conspiracy theories, his book is a useful antidote to the pseudo-intellectual quackery that many conspiracy theorists arm themselves with, and he shows the very real danger that these theories, when unchecked, can cause (e.g.: antisemitic theories and Nazism, antigovernment theories and the Oklahoma City Bombing). He also does a pretty decent job of putting the theories and theorists into a larger cultural and political context. However, for a good primer of conspiracies, real and imagined (I think, largely imagined), I'd also recommend reading "The 60 Greatest Conspiracies of All Time" by Jonathan Vankin and Ed Whalen (I think that is their names). Both of these books will keep you riveted, and introduce you to some fascinating and little-known facts.

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