



Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture

By Mark Fenster



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JFK, Karl Marx, the Pope, Aristotle Onassis, Howard Hughes, Fox Mulder, Bill Clinton, both George Bushes—all have been linked to vastly complicated global (or even galactic) intrigues. Two years after Mark Fenster first published *Conspiracy Theories*, the attacks of 9/11 stirred the imaginations of a new generation of believers. Before the black box from United 93 had even been found, there were theories put forth from the implausible to the offensive and outrageous.

In this new edition of the landmark work, and the first in-depth look at the conspiracy communities that formed to debunk the 9/11 Commission Report, Fenster shows that conspiracy theories play an important role in U.S. democracy. Examining how and why they circulate through mass culture, he contends, helps us better understand society as a whole. Ranging from *The Da Vinci Code* to the intellectual history of Richard Hofstadter, he argues that dismissing conspiracy theories as pathological or marginal flattens contemporary politics and culture because they are—contrary to popular portrayal—an intense articulation of populism and, at their essence, are strident calls for a better, more transparent government. Fenster has demonstrated once again that the people who claim someone's after us are, at least, worth hearing.



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