

Voodoo Histories - The role of the conspiracy theory in shaping
modern history by David Aaronovitch.
Jonathan Cape 2009.

I have never been one of those people for whom conspiracy theories are grist to the mill; I have never seen the need to find a more complex explanation for an event of earth-shaking importance that seems inexplicable other than the arbitrary nature of life, but I am well aware that there are plenty of people who believe that 'they' are behind everything and that nothing is as it seems.

In Voodoo Histories David Aaronovitch enjoys a polemical romp through some of the biggest conspiracy theories of all, demolishing them as he goes with well-argued refutations and necessary ridicule, and any fellow devotee of the theory of William of Ockam will devour its pages, as did I, with the greatest relish.

Starting and ending with the enduring myth of Jewish world domination, Aaronovitch takes in, inter alia, Stalinist show trials, and McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee, the assassination of Jack Kennedy and the deaths of Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana, the pseudo-scholarship of Holy Blood, Holy Grail authors Richard Leigh and Michael Baigent, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the United States of America.

Magnificently, convincingly, painstakingly and roundly David Aaronovitch tells the stories, recounts the conspiratorial myth-making and demolishes the theories one by one producing a book that is a joy to read.

One concludes Voodoo Histories with a sense of despair at the gullibility and stupidity of large swathes of the human race, and at the same time a sanguine realisation that devotees of the conspiracy theory are unlikely to have their opinions changed by anything, let alone a book like this one, any time soon.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh