

David Vichnar, PhD  
OPPONENT'S REPORT:

re "*A Critical Reading of David Icke's Superconspiracy Construct*"  
by Vít Bohal  
(MA dissertation, 2015)

Generally well-written and following a clearly structured line of argument, Mr. Bohal's M.A. thesis achieves what it sets out to do: "to identify the workings" of what Mr. Bohal calls "a conspiracist view of global events" in light of "the work of some thinkers of the post-structuralist tradition of critical theory" (5). The prime (almost sole) example of this view is David Icke's *The Biggest Secret*, which propounds the (in)famous "superconspiracy" theory of our world as governed by Reptiles (so-called "Reptoid" hypothesis). Mr. Bohal reads Icke's theory in light of (post-) Marxist thought (Herbert Marcuse, Guy Debord), contemporary New Leftist critiques of capitalism (Nick Land's Accelerationism) and most importantly and interestingly, in the context of Lacanian psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan himself & Slavoj Žižek).

It is in the psychoanalytic exposition of Lacan's & Žižek's conception of the Big Other that Mr. Bohal's critique of Icke and the conspiracy mind-set is at its finest, showing how the conspiracy narrative, while seemingly critical and subversive of the status quo, endow the political real with a phantasmatic status of "the big Other as a surrogate for a tenuous freedom" (45). Equally intriguing is Mr. Bohal's attempt at psychoanalysing the author himself – the conspiracy theorist as a mad scientist of sorts, "who didn't make the cut in this capitalist world" and so they "compensate this lack of political agency by an even more fervent criticizing of the system which shuns them" (41). This could lead to potentially fruitful implications for the post-1960s fiction, which might be added to Mr. Bohal's "Considerations for further study."

It is not until this later, psychoanalytic stage of the thesis that the objective itself becomes fully justified, as one has to wonder throughout about the value and sense of applying these various critical theories to Icke's text, repeatedly described as "wilfully distanc[ing] itself from more rigorous theoretical traditions" (26). Nothing wrong, of course, with applying a theoretical framework to non-theoretical material, but this reader wasn't particularly convinced that Mr. Bohal managed to show that "the vision embodied in Icke's texts can *most effectively* be approached as a type of variation on Marxist, and, more specifically, New Left critical theory" (19, my emphasis). Three questions have emerged from this opponent's reading:

1. Why pick Icke in particular (and in such detail), and why apply specifically Marxist thought to what is repeatedly referred to as "a mythical narrative" (35),

whilst offering no clear definition or proposing a rethinking of how “myth” is to be understood? (Especially if many of the other terms, “conspiracy” first and foremost, receive an OED definition which is immediately challenged as insufficient, and “myth” is a term charged with multiple meanings.)

2. Why, if conspiracy theory is repeatedly viewed as “narrative,” does Mr. Bohal choose to bypass the obvious (and necessary) aspect of Icke’s text as *fiction*, as a story told from a particular viewpoint and utilising specific narrative techniques? Mr. Bohal speaks often of Icke’s “failure” to engage theoretically with his material, but why lose track of the other half of the equation and fail to look at how Icke’s superconspiracy fares when viewed as e.g. a possible-world narrative?

3. Conversely, why does this (rather short, it must be said) thesis fail to make the one obvious leap toward/connection with the US fiction of the so-called “postmodern” period? This fiction ever so often employs conspiracy as a narrative driving force and paranoia as a metaphor for the entire reading/decoding process (Pynchon, of course, but also DeLillo, Sorrentino, Acker, Barth, et al.) and it would make great sense for Mr. Bohal’s thesis to incorporate this as part of the “conspiracist view” examined. Especially in light of his “compensation” theory quoted above: is post-1960 fiction’s obsession with conspiracy a symptom of its “lack of political agency” and its attempt to compensate for this by (mock) intervention in the historical-socio-political “real”? What is the ideology behind this process?

If Mr. Bohal can address and redress these three chief lacks in his thesis at the defence, my recommendation is that this thesis be graded very good.

David Vichnar, PhD  
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