



Forum Neuzeit
Sommersemester

19. Juni 2018

Conspiratorial Thinking: Narratives in Modern History

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The Suspicious Mind: Apparitions of Conspiracy in Nineteenth-Century Enquiry

With its contrarian account of the world's true nature, the conspiracy theory has features in common with revisionist history, scientific discovery, and types of literary analysis (what Paul Ricoeur described as “the hermeneutics of suspicion”). This talk will examine how the reordered disciplines of knowledge in the nineteenth century pursued secrets and complexity behind appearances in ways that were productive of conspiratorial thought and narratives. Evolutionary theory and astronomy were both amenable to narratives of invasion (as H.G. Wells showed), and also posed alternative scales of historical interpretation. Archival historical research revealed political secrets to Isaac D’Israeli and Karl Marx. Modern conspiratorial thinking emerges from these speculative tendencies of nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft*.

Dr. Ben Carver (Ph.D., University of Exeter, English, 2013) is an Associate Lecturer in English at Falmouth University, UK. His research interests are devoted to literature, technology, media and intellectual history of the nineteenth century. His most recent publication was the study, *Alternate histories and nineteenth-century literature: Untimely meditations in Britain, France, and America*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.