

Book Review by Bruce Scofield

Pinchbeck, Daniel. 2012 *The Return of Quetzalcoatl*. New York: Penguin. 2006.

Daniel Pinchbeck is a good writer and *2012* is a good read in a literary sense – perhaps almost as readable as some of Carlos Castaneda’s writings. It is an articulate storytelling of a personal quest to understand a man’s place in a world where things aren’t what they seem and where mysterious communications come from strange places. It’s a subjective exploratory journey of what seem to be very real anomalies on the edge of the mainstream media, and also a relentless personal introspection. Most of it is fascinating reading. His previous book, *Breaking Open the Head*, sold well and the publishers are betting that this will do as well.

In the introduction Pinchbeck invites readers into his subjective reality and offers his book as a thought experiment – no belief is required. First, we must consider the world as it is today. Civilization seems to be getting busier every year, a process that Terrence McKenna described as time-wave acceleration. No doubt about it, we can all agree that things are moving faster and faster and this in itself raises questions. Are we running off a cliff or is there some meaning to found in this? Pinchbeck suggests a shift of human consciousness is in the works, a change leading to rapid cultural evolution and maybe even the creation of some sort of utopia. This explanation is basically the same one that other authors of 2012 books like those by Arguelles, Calleman and Jenkins are suggesting, the difference being that Pinchbeck is more subjective, less focused on the Mayan calendar, and he writes better.

The subject matter of *2012* is actually quite fascinating. Pinchbeck looks at crop circles in some detail, writes about the effects of the psychedelic drug DMT, considers the UFO abduction stories where humans meet the Grays, and dwells at length on Mesoamerican numbers and the prophecy of Quetzalcoatl. In regard to these and other topics, Pinchbeck refers to relatively reputable sources including Gerald Hawkins, John Mack, William Irwin Thompson, Carl Jung, etc. keeping the discussion interesting, especially for those who know something about their ideas and work. In regard to Mesoamerican culture, Pinchbeck seems to have been drawn deeply into the vision generated by Jose Arguelles, who I don’t think should be placed in the same category as the previously mentioned sources.

In the end, Pinchbeck himself might be placed in a tradition of psychonauts that include Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary, and Terrence McKenna – men who take drugs and write about their visions. In this sense, *2012* is a good read and full of fascinating tidbits and bizarre personal experiences, a collection of stories and observations like those of the early Carlos Castaneda, but drawn from the wider world of modern civilization.