

Shamanism Colonialism And The Wild Man

In a series of intriguing essays ranging over terror, State fetishism, shamanic healing in Latin America, homesickness, and the place of the tactile eye in both magic and modernity, anthropologist Michael Taussig puts into representational practice a curious type of engaged writing. Based on a paranoid vision of social control and its understanding as in a permanent state of emergency leaving no room for contemplation between signs and things, these essays hover between story-telling and high theory and thus create strange new modes of critical discourse. The Nervous System will appeal to writers, scholars, artists, film makers, and readers interested in critical theory, aesthetics, and politics.

"Getting Wrecked provides a rich ethnographic account of women battling addiction as they cycle through jail, prison, and community treatment programs in Massachusetts. Since incarceration has become a predominant American social policy for managing the problem of drug use, including the opioid epidemic, this book examines how prisons and jails have attempted concurrent programs of punishment and treatment to deal with inmates struggling with a diagnosis of substance use disorder. An addiction physician and a medical anthropologist, Kimberly Sue powerfully illustrates the impacts of incarceration on women's lives as they seek well-being and better health while confronting lives marked by structural violence, gender inequity, and ongoing trauma"--Provided by publisher.

In this powerful anthropological study of a Bolivian tin mining town, Nash explores the influence of modern industrialization on the traditional culture of Quechua-and-Aymara-speaking Indians. In Wild Things Jack Halberstam offers an alternative history of sexuality by tracing the ways in

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which wildness has been associated with queerness and queer bodies throughout the twentieth century. Halberstam theorizes the wild as an unbounded and unpredictable space that offers sources of opposition to modernity's orderly impulses. Wildness illuminates the normative taxonomies of sexuality against which radical queer practice and politics operate. Throughout, Halberstam engages with a wide variety of texts, practices, and cultural imaginaries—from zombies, falconry, and M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* to Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* and the career of Irish anticolonial revolutionary Roger Casement—to demonstrate how wildness provides the means to know and to be in ways that transgress Euro-American notions of the modern liberal subject. With *Wild Things*, Halberstam opens new possibilities for queer theory and for wild thinking more broadly.

As a “wild,” drumming thunder shaman, a warrior mounted on her spirit horse, Francisca Kolipi's spirit traveled to other historical times and places, gaining the power and knowledge to conduct spiritual warfare against her community's enemies, including forestry companies and settlers. As a “civilized” shaman, Francisca narrated the Mapuche people's attachment to their local sacred landscapes, which are themselves imbued with shamanic power, and constructed nonlinear histories of intra- and interethnic relations that created a moral order in which Mapuche become history's spiritual victors. *Thunder Shaman* represents an extraordinary collaboration between Francisca Kolipi and anthropologist Ana Mariella Bacigalupo, who became Kolipi's “granddaughter,” trusted helper, and agent in a mission of historical (re)construction and myth-making. The book describes Francisca's life, death, and expected rebirth, and shows how she remade history through multitemporal dreams, visions, and spirit possession, drawing on ancestral beings and forest spirits as historical agents to

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obliterate state ideologies and the colonialist usurpation of indigenous lands. Both an academic text and a powerful ritual object intended to be an agent in shamanic history, Thunder Shaman functions simultaneously as a shamanic “bible,” embodying Francisca’s power, will, and spirit long after her death in 1996, and an insightful study of shamanic historical consciousness, in which biography, spirituality, politics, ecology, and the past, present, and future are inextricably linked. It demonstrates how shamans are constituted by historical-political and ecological events, while they also actively create history itself through shamanic imaginaries and narrative forms.

The great pilgrimage center of southeastern Sri Lanka, Kataragama, has become in recent years the spiritual home of a new class of Hindu-Buddhist religious devotees. These ecstatic priests and priestesses invariably display long locks of matted hair, and they express their devotion to the gods through fire walking, tongue-piercing, hanging on hooks, and trance-induced prophesying. The increasing popularity of these ecstasies poses a challenge not only to orthodox Sinhala Buddhism (the official religion of Sri Lanka) but also, as Gananath Obeyesekere shows, to the traditional anthropological and psychoanalytic theories of symbolism. Focusing initially on one symbol, matted hair, Obeyesekere demonstrates that the conventional distinction between personal and cultural symbols is inadequate and naive. His detailed case studies of ecstasies show that there is always a reciprocity between the personal-psychological dimension of the symbol and its public, culturally sanctioned role. Medusa’s Hair thus makes an important theoretical contribution both to the anthropology of individual experience and to the psychoanalytic understanding of culture. In its analyses of the symbolism of guilt, the adaptational and integrative significance of belief in spirits, and a host of

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related issues concerning possession states and religiosity, this book marks a provocative advance in psychological anthropology.

A modern nation in a state of total disorder, Colombia is an international flashpoint—wracked by more than half a century of civil war, political conflict, and drug-trade related violence—despite a multibillion dollar American commitment that makes it the third-largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid. *Law in a Lawless Land* offers a rare and penetrating insight into the nature of Colombia's present peril. In a nuanced account of the human consequences of a disintegrating state, anthropologist Michael Taussig chronicles two weeks in a small town in Colombia's Cauca Valley taken over by paramilitaries that brazenly assassinate adolescent gang members.

Armed with automatic weapons and computer-generated lists of names and photographs, the paramilitaries have the tacit support of the police and even many of the desperate townspeople, who are seeking any solution to the crushing uncertainty of violence in their lives. Concentrating on everyday experience, Taussig forces readers to confront a kind of terror to which they have become numb and complacent. "If you want to know what it is like to live in a country where the state has disintegrated, this moving book by an anthropologist well known for his writings on murderous Colombia will tell you."—Eric Hobsbawm

Set in the enchanted mountain of a spirit-queen presiding over an unnamed, postcolonial country, this ethnographic work of ficto-criticism recreates in written form the shrines by which the dead--notably the fetishized forms of Europe's Others, Indians and Blacks--generate the magical powers of the modern state.

"For a long time, we humans have excelled in mimicking nature with the goal of

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exploiting it. Now, with the existential threat of global climate change on the horizon, the ever-provocative Michael Taussig asks what it would take to change ourselves so as to save our world. Acknowledging the possibility of collapse and our all-too-human impotence in the face of accelerating disaster, this book is not solely a reflection on our tragic condition but also a theoretical effort to reckon with those human faculties that have fed our ambition for dominance over nature. At stake is an ultimate undoing of our sense of control--a "mastery of non-mastery." Animated by the urgency of a planet approaching meltdown, Taussig captures our moment, and all its attendant mythologies, with luminescent clarity"--

Just one generation ago, the Sora tribe in India lived in a world populated by the spirits of their dead, who spoke to them through shamans in trance. Every day, they negotiated their wellbeing in heated arguments or in quiet reflections on their feelings of love, anger, and guilt. Today, young Sora are rejecting the worldview of their ancestors and switching their allegiance to warring sects of fundamentalist Christianity or Hinduism. Communion with ancestors is banned as sacred sites are demolished, female shamans are replaced by male priests, and debate with the dead gives way to prayer to gods. For some, this shift means liberation from jungle spirits through literacy, employment, and democratic politics; others despair for fear of being forgotten after death. How can a society abandon one understanding of reality so suddenly and see the world in a totally different way? Over forty years, anthropologist Piers Vitebsky has

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shared the lives of shamans, pastors, ancestors, gods, policemen, missionaries, and alphabet worshippers, seeking explanations from social theory, psychoanalysis, and theology. Living without the Dead lays bare today's crisis of indigenous religions and shows how historical reform can bring new fulfillments—but also new torments and uncertainties. Vitebsky explores the loss of the Sora tradition as one for greater humanity: just as we have been losing our wildernesses, so we have been losing a diverse range of cultural and spiritual possibilities, tribe by tribe. From the award-winning author of *The Reindeer People*, this is a heartbreaking story of cultural change and the extinction of an irreplaceable world, even while new religious forms come into being to take its place.

“It is the contemporary elixir from which all manner of being emerges, the metamorphic sublime, an alchemist's dream.” So begins *Palma Africana*, the latest attempt by anthropologist Michael Taussig to make sense of the contemporary moment. But to what elixir does he refer? Palm oil. Saturating everything from potato chips to nail polish, palm oil has made its way into half of the packaged goods in our supermarkets. By 2020, world production will be double what it was in 2000. In Colombia, palm oil plantations are covering over one-time cornucopias of animal, bird, and plant life. Over time, they threaten indigenous livelihoods and give rise to abusive labor conditions and major human rights violations. The list of entwined horrors—climatic, biological, social—is long. But Taussig takes no comfort in our usual labels: “habitat loss,” “human rights

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abuses,” “climate change.” The shock of these words has passed; nowadays it is all a blur. Hence, Taussig’s keen attention to words and writing throughout this work. He takes cues from precursors’ ruminations: Roland Barthes’s suggestion that trees form an alphabet in which the palm tree is the loveliest; William Burroughs’s retort to critics that for him words are alive like animals and don’t like to be kept in pages—cut them and the words are let free. Steeped in a lifetime of philosophical and ethnographic exploration, *Palma Africana* undercuts the banality of the destruction taking place all around us and offers a penetrating vision of the global condition. Richly illustrated and written with experimental verve, this book is Taussig’s *Tristes Tropiques* for the twenty-first century.

Naming the Witch explores the recent series of witchcraft accusations and killings in East Java, which spread as the Suharto regime slipped into crisis and then fell. After many years of ethnographic work focusing on the origins and nature of violence in Indonesia, Siegel came to the conclusion that previous anthropological explanations of witchcraft and magic, mostly based on sociological conceptions but also including the work of E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Claude Lévi-Strauss, were simply inadequate to the task of providing a full understanding of the phenomena associated with sorcery, and particularly with the ideas of power connected with it. Previous explanations have tended to see witchcraft in simple opposition to modernism and modernity (enchantment vs. disenchantment). The author sees witchcraft as an effect of culture,

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when the latter is incapable of dealing with accident, death, and the fear of the disintegration of social and political relations. He shows how and why modernization and witchcraft can often be companions, as people strive to name what has hitherto been unnameable.

First written by Marcel Mauss and Henri Humbert in 1902, *A General Theory of Magic* gained a wide new readership when republished by Mauss in 1950. As a study of magic in 'primitive' societies and its survival today in our thoughts and social actions, it represents what Claude Lévi-Strauss called, in an introduction to that edition, the astonishing modernity of the mind of one of the century's greatest thinkers. The book offers a fascinating snapshot of magic throughout various cultures as well as deep sociological and religious insights still very much relevant today. At a period when art, magic and science appear to be crossing paths once again, *A General Theory of Magic* presents itself as a classic for our times.

Award-winning Peruvian author Cesar Calvo takes us on a quest through the mysterious, dreamlike world of powerful Amazonian sorcerers.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy referred to the Papuans as “living, as it were, in the Stone Age.” For the most part, politicians and scholars have since learned not to call people “primitive,” but when it comes to the Papuans, the Stone-Age stain persists and for decades has been used to justify denying their basic rights. Why has this fantasy held such a tight grip on the imagination of journalists, policy-makers, and the public at

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large? Living in the Stone Age answers this question by following the adventures of officials sent to the New Guinea highlands in the 1930s to establish a foothold for Dutch colonialism. These officials became deeply dependent on the good graces of their would-be Papuan subjects, who were their hosts, guides, and, in some cases, friends. Danilyn Rutherford shows how, to preserve their sense of racial superiority, these officials imagined that they were traveling in the Stone Age—a parallel reality where their own impotence was a reasonable response to otherworldly conditions rather than a sign of ignorance or weakness. Thus, Rutherford shows, was born a colonialist ideology. Living in the Stone Age is a call to write the history of colonialism differently, as a tale of weakness not strength. It will change the way readers think about cultural contact, colonial fantasies of domination, and the role of anthropology in the postcolonial world.

Annotation "An outstanding and innovative study on hunting, gardening, and love magic among the Aguaruna. . . . [It is] both highly useful ethnographically and an important contribution to the understanding of how a primitive culture conceptualizes its transactions with nature. The book touches on cosmology and religion as well as the ethnoecology of hunting and agriculture--with an interlude on sex." --American Ethnologist

Shamanism A Study in Colonialism, and Terror and the Wild Man Healing Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man A Study in Terror and Healing

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Keuze uit het werk van de Franse filosoof (1897-1962).

Religion: Material Dynamics is a lively resource for thinking about religious materiality and the material study of religion. Deconstructing and reconstructing religion as material categories, social formations, and mobile circulations, the book explores the making, ordering, and circulating of religious things. The book is divided into three sections: Part One revitalizes basic categories—animism and sacred, space and time—by situating them in their material production and testing their analytical viability. Part Two examines religious formations as configurations of power that operate in material cultures and cultural economies and are most clearly shown in the power relations of colonialism and imperialism. Part Three explores the material dynamics of circulation through case studies of religious mobility, change, and diffusion as intimate as the body and as vast as the oceans. Each chapter offers insightful orientations and surprising possibilities for studying material religion. Exploring the material dynamics of religion from poetics to politics, David Chidester provides an entry into the study of material religion that will be welcomed by students and specialists in religious studies, anthropology, and history.

Defacement asks what happens when something precious is despoiled. In specifying the human face as the ideal type for thinking through such violation, this book raises the issue of secrecy as the depth that seems to surface with the tearing of surface.

In the 1980s, George Marcus spearheaded a major critique of cultural anthropology,

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expressed most clearly in the landmark book *Writing Culture*, which he coedited with James Clifford. *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* updates and advances that critique for the late 1990s. Marcus presents a series of penetrating and provocative essays on the changes that continue to sweep across anthropology. He examines, in particular, how the discipline's central practice of ethnography has been changed by "multi-sited" approaches to anthropology and how new research patterns are transforming anthropologists' careers. Marcus rejects the view, often expressed, that these changes are undermining anthropology. The combination of traditional ethnography with scholarly experimentation, he argues, will only make the discipline more lively and diverse. The book is divided into three main parts. In the first, Marcus shows how ethnographers' tradition of defining fieldwork in terms of peoples and places is now being challenged by the need to study culture by exploring connections, parallels, and contrasts among a variety of often seemingly incommensurate sites. The second part illustrates this emergent multi-sited condition of research by reflecting it in some of Marcus's own past research on Tongan elites and dynastic American fortunes. In the final section, which includes the previously unpublished essay "Sticking with *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*," Marcus examines the evolving professional culture of anthropology and the predicaments of its new scholars. He shows how students have increasingly been drawn to the field as much by such powerful interdisciplinary movements as feminism, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies as

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by anthropology's own traditions. He also considers the impact of demographic changes within the discipline--in particular the fact that anthropologists are no longer almost exclusively Euro-Americans studying non-Euro-Americans. These changes raise new issues about the identities of anthropologists in relation to those they study, and indeed, about what is to define standards of ethnographic scholarship. Filled with keen and highly illuminating observations, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* will stimulate fresh debate about the past, present, and future of a discipline undergoing profound transformations.

Looks at the interaction between civilized and primitive people in Colombia, examines the role of the shaman, and discusses healing practices in the jungle

This 1987 volume brought together for the first time a range of essays on the anthropology of food in Oceania and Southeast Asia. The essays reflect research in the field, primarily that undertaken by Australian scholars. The volume focuses on four main concerns: factors that influence the production of food and dietary behaviour; the way in which people think and speak about diet and nutrition, including concepts of hunger and the classification of foods; infant feeding practice, including the promotion of bottle feeding; and the roles of government agencies and multinational corporations. The regional focus of the volume also allows for discussion of common trends, especially those that have arisen as a result of societies in the region having been incorporated into the world economy. Applicable elsewhere in the world, the volume offers a basis for a comparative analysis of food in culture and society.

The collapse of socialism at the end of the twentieth century brought devastating changes to

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Mongolia. Economic shock therapy—an immediate liberalization of trade and privatization of publicly owned assets—quickly led to impoverishment, especially in rural parts of the country, where *Tragic Spirits* takes place. Following the travels of the nomadic Buryats, Manduhai Buyandelger tells a story not only of economic devastation but also a remarkable Buryat response to it—the revival of shamanic practices after decades of socialist suppression. Attributing their current misfortunes to returning ancestral spirits who are vengeful over being abandoned under socialism, the Buryats are now at once trying to appease their ancestors and recover the history of their people through shamanic practice. Thoroughly documenting this process, Buyandelger situates it as part of a global phenomenon, comparing the rise of shamanism in liberalized Mongolia to its similar rise in Africa and Indonesia. In doing so, she offers a sophisticated analysis of the way economics, politics, gender, and other factors influence the spirit world and the crucial workings of cultural memory.

Collecting a decade of work from iconic anthropologist and writer Michael Taussig, *The Corn Wolf* pinpoints a moment of intellectual development for the master stylist, exemplifying the “nervous system” approach to writing and truth that has characterized his trajectory. Pressured by the permanent state of emergency that imbues our times, this approach marries storytelling with theory, thickening spiraling analysis with ethnography and putting the study of so-called primitive societies back on the anthropological agenda as a way of better understanding the sacred in everyday life. The leading figure of these projects is the corn wolf, whom Wittgenstein used in his fierce polemic on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*. For just as the corn wolf slips through the magic of language in fields of danger and disaster, so we are emboldened to take on the widespread culture of academic—or what he deems

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“agribusiness”—writing, which strips ethnography from its capacity to surprise and connect with other worlds, whether peasant farmers in Colombia, Palestinians in Israel, protestors in Zuccotti Park, or eccentric yet fundamental aspects of our condition such as animism, humming, or the acceleration of time. A glance at the chapter titles—such as “The Stories Things Tell” or “Iconoclasm Dictionary”—along with his zany drawings, testifies to the resonant sensibility of these works, which lope like the corn wolf through the boundaries of writing and understanding.

Before they were largely decimated and dispersed by the effects of European colonization, Arawak-speaking peoples were the most widespread language family in Latin America and the Caribbean, and they were the first people Columbus encountered in the Americas.

Comparative Arawakan Histories, in paperback for the first time, examines social structures, political hierarchies, rituals, religious movements, gender relations, and linguistic variations through historical perspectives to document sociocultural diversity across the diffused Arawakan diaspora.

This anthology brings together classic perspectives on violence, putting into productive conversation the thought of well-known theorists and activists, including Hannah Arendt, Karl Marx, G. W. F. Hegel, Osama bin Laden, Sigmund Freud, Frantz Fanon, Thomas Hobbes, and Pierre Bourdieu. The volume proceeds from the editors’ contention that violence is always historically contingent; it must be contextualized to be understood. They argue that violence is a process rather than a discrete product. It is intrinsic to the human condition, an inescapable fact of life that can be channeled and reckoned with but never completely suppressed. Above all, they seek to illuminate the relationship between action and knowledge about violence, and

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to examine how one might speak about violence without replicating or perpetuating it. *On Violence* is divided into five sections. Underscoring the connection between violence and economic world orders, the first section explores the dialectical relationship between domination and subordination. The second section brings together pieces by political actors who spoke about the tension between violence and nonviolence—Gandhi, Hitler, and Malcolm X—and by critics who have commented on that tension. The third grouping examines institutional faces of violence—familial, legal, and religious—while the fourth reflects on state violence. With a focus on issues of representation, the final section includes pieces on the relationship between violence and art, stories, and the media. The editors' introduction to each section highlights the significant theoretical points raised and the interconnections between the essays. Brief introductions to individual selections provide information about the authors and their particular contributions to theories of violence. With selections by: Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Osama bin Laden, Pierre Bourdieu, André Breton, James Cone, Robert M. Cover, Gilles Deleuze, Friedrich Engels, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Mohandas Gandhi, René Girard, Linda Gordon, Antonio Gramsci, Félix Guattari, G. W. F. Hegel, Adolf Hitler, Thomas Hobbes, Bruce B. Lawrence, Elliott Leyton, Catharine MacKinnon, Malcolm X, Dorothy Martin, Karl Marx, Chandra Muzaffar, James C. Scott, Kristine Stiles, Michael Taussig, Leon Trotsky, Simone Weil, Sharon Welch, Raymond Williams

Every California schoolchild's first interaction with history begins with the missions and Indians. It is the pastoralist image, of course, and it is a lasting one. Children in elementary school hear how Father Serra and the priests brought civilization to the groveling, lizard- and acorn-eating Indians of such communities as Yang-na, now Los Angeles. So edified by history, many of

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those children drag their parents to as many missions as they can. Then there is the other side of the missions, one that a mural decorating a savings and loan office in the San Fernando Valley first showed to me as a child. On it a kindly priest holds a large cross over a kneeling Indian. For some reason, though, the padre apparently aims not to bless the Indian but rather to bludgeon him with the emblem of Christianity. This portrait, too, clings to the memory, capturing the critical view of the missionization of California's indigenous inhabitants. I carried the two childhood images with me both when I went to libraries as I researched the missions and when I revisited several missions thirty years after those family trips. In this work I proceed neither to dubunk nor to reconcile these contrary notions of the missions and Indians but to present a new and, I hope, deeper understanding of the complex interaction of the two antithetical cultures.

Piers Vitebsky's study of religion and psychology in tribal India focuses upon a unique form of dialogue between the living and the dead which is conducted through the medium of a shaman in trance. The dead sometimes nurture their living descendants, yet at the same time they inflict upon them the very illnesses from which they themselves have died. Through intimate dialogue, the Sora use the occasion of death to explore their closest emotional attachments in all their ambivalence. Dr Vitebsky analyses the actors' words and relationships over several years and develops a typology of moods among the dead and kinds of memory among the living. In comparing Sora shamanism with the treatment of bereavement in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, he highlights a contrast in their assumptions which has far-reaching consequences for the social and professional scope of the two kinds of practice.

In this ambitious and accomplished work, Taussig explores the complex and interwoven

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concepts of mimesis, the practice of imitation, and alterity, the opposition of Self and Other. The book moves from the nineteenth-century invention of mimetically capacious machines, such as the camera, to the fable of colonial 'first contact' and the alleged mimetic power of 'primitives'. Twenty years after the original publication, Taussig revisits the work in a new preface which contextualises the impact of Mimesis and Alterity. Drawing on the ideas of Benjamin, Adorno and Horckheimer and ethnographic accounts of the Cuna, Taussig demonstrates how the history of mimesis is deeply tied to colonialism and the idea of alterity has become increasingly unstable. Vigorous and unorthodox, this cross-cultural discussion continues to deepen our understanding of the relationship between ethnography, racism and society.

In a penetrating account of the evolution of British intelligence gathering in India, C. A. Bayly shows how networks of Indian spies were recruited by the British to secure military, political and social information about their subjects. He also examines the social and intellectual origins of these 'native informants', and considers how the colonial authorities interpreted and often misinterpreted the information they supplied. It was such misunderstandings which ultimately contributed to the failure of the British to anticipate the rebellions of 1857. The author argues, however, that even before this, complex systems of debate and communication were challenging the political and intellectual dominance of the European rulers.

Shamanism, humanity's most ancient spiritual practice, has achieved a dramatic modern resurgence. The foundations and appeal of shamanism are rooted in human nature, the psychobiology of consciousness, and archetypal structures of the brain and mind. The classic shamanic motif of death and rebirth represents the development of self through the symbolic

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death of the old self to permit the emergence and integration of a higher order self.

Discusses the inexpressibility of physical pain and analyzes the philosophical and cultural aspects of pain, torture, and war

In this book, a make-believe cocaine museum becomes a vantage point from which to assess the lives of Afro-Colombian gold miners drawn into the dangerous world of cocaine production in the rain forest of Colombia's Pacific Coast. Although modeled on the famous Gold Museum in Colombia's central bank, the Banco de la República, Taussig's museum is also a parody aimed at the museum's failure to acknowledge the African slaves who mined the country's wealth for almost four hundred years. Combining natural history with political history in a filmic, montage style, Taussig deploys the show-and-tell modality of a museum to engage with the inner life of heat, rain, stone, and swamp, no less than with the life of gold and cocaine. This effort to find a poetry of words becoming things is brought to a head by the explosive qualities of those sublime fetishes of evil beauty, gold and cocaine. At its core, Taussig's museum is about the lure of forbidden things, charged substances that transgress moral codes, the distinctions we use to make sense of the world, and above all the conventional way we write stories.

In September 1940, Walter Benjamin committed suicide in Port Bou on the Spanish-French border when it appeared that he and his travelling partners would be denied passage into Spain in their attempt to escape the Nazis. In 2002, one of anthropology's—and indeed today's—most distinctive writers, Michael Taussig, visited Benjamin's grave in Port Bou. The result is "Walter Benjamin's Grave," a moving essay about the cemetery, eyewitness accounts of Benjamin's border travails, and the circumstances of his demise. It is the most

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recent of eight revelatory essays collected in this volume of the same name. “Looking over these essays written over the past decade,” writes Taussig, “I think what they share is a love of muted and defective storytelling as a form of analysis. Strange love indeed; love of the wound, love of the last gasp.” Although thematically these essays run the gamut—covering the monument and graveyard at Port Bou, discussions of peasant poetry in Colombia, a pact with the devil, the peculiarities of a shaman’s body, transgression, the disappearance of the sea, New York City cops, and the relationship between flowers and violence—each shares Taussig’s highly individual brand of storytelling, one that depends on a deep appreciation of objects and things as a way to retrieve even deeper philosophical and anthropological meanings. Whether he finds himself in Australia, Colombia, Manhattan, or Spain, in the midst of a book or a beach, whether talking to friends or staring at a monument, Taussig makes clear through these marvelous essays that materialist knowledge offers a crucial alternative to the increasingly abstract, globalized, homogenized, and digitized world we inhabit. Pursuing an adventure that is part ethnography, part autobiography, and part cultural criticism refracted through the object that is Walter Benjamin’s grave, Taussig, with this collection, provides his own literary memorial to the twentieth century’s greatest cultural critic.

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