Ethnographic practice, theory, writing, and experimentation

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INTERVIEWER

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Interview with Michael Taussig

The following interview took place on March 11th, 2020, in New York city. On the previous day, president Donald Trump had recognized the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the United States, and officially claimed its status as a pandemic. Meanwhile, I was finalizing my ten-month intellectual exchange at Columbia University (from May 2019 to March 2020), financed by Fapesp and supervised by Professor Michael Taussig[1]. The idea for this interview stems from a confluence of factors, but mainly from the open channel of communication established with Professor Taussig during the previous months.

The impetus to go to Columbia University (and to the Institute of Latin American Studies — ILAS) stemmed from my fascination with Taussig's work. His insights regarding violence and terror have accompanied me for a few years, with special emphasis for what he called, in *Xamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, the "culture of terror" and the "space of death". These two concepts became fundamental for the analysis I carried out regarding my understanding of the public and private forms of violence in *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Taussig's work also fascinated me for other reasons. I would like to call attention, above all, to the inventiveness and the transgressive character of his project, which provides important theoretical and methodological insights. Mainly, Taussig challenges us to experiment ethnographically, while simultaneously demonstrating the importance of dense theoretical discussions. I have always read his work as being filled with, as described in the interview, "love and deference for anthropological curiosity".

Based on his invitation, I participated, from September to December 2019, in his course "Taboo and Transgression", a discipline offered in the Anthropology Department at Columbia University. The experience of attending his lectures made the effort of execute his proposals even more exciting and was something that guided

1 | Class of 1933 Professor of Anthropology - Columbia University in the City of New York.

the development of this interview, as will become clear in the following text. With, and through, Taussig, I was able to revisit classic authors such as Walter Benjamin, Georges Bataille (and I must call attention to the fact that he is an excellent reader of them both), Marcel Mauss, Jane Gallop, and Angela Carter; as well as discovered new references such as Maggie Nelson, Daniella Gandolfo, and Leo Steinberg. After each weekly session, I left class with my mind full of ideas, challenged by so many questions. In addition, the end of every class was dedicated to collective corporal experiments, in which we discovered our bodies and the movements it made possible (what Taussig claimed was a way to "stimulate alternative forms of writing, exploring style, 'voice', rhythm, and form"). Dance was a form of "writing" and as "interpretation"; a way to challenge and transgress the formal and canonical boundaries of the discipline and of classroom space. For me, at least, this was one of the greatest learning experiences, and an invitation to constantly experiment, challenge, and transgress.

Therefore, this interview[2] is the result of my reading of Taussig's work, as well as the exchanges and conversations established. The attempt was to map out themes that appear in his writing, as well as discuss his new book, published in July 2020. My aim was to connect and set the questions in such a way as to present the extent of his writing, based on the questions that arise from the reading of his work. Amongst the themes I address, I call attention to ethnographic writing and practice (and possible experimentations), the challenge of dealing with violence, the idea of "mastery of non-mastery", and concepts such as the nervous system, mimesis, and transgression.

I am extremely thankful to Professor Taussig for the generosity of receiving me as a visiting scholar at Columbia University, and for, even during the early stages of the pandemic, having accepted to partake in this interview. My gratitude and admiration are endless. I hope that this interview is as challenging and instructive to its readers as it was for me. May it be, above all, an invitation to experiment during our research and academic activities, as Taussig has so masterfully done throughout the years.

1 – As I see it, you are always trying to put in question the ethnographic practice and the ethnographical writing. In your texts you raise a wide range of references, in addition to experiment with the writing. In Walter Benjamin's Grave, for example, you confess your love for storytelling ("a muted and defective storytelling" as you put it) and defend this storytelling as a form of analysis. In so doing, I think you urge us to go beyond classical definitions of anthropology, and, at the same time, I feel like it is always a homage, a love for anthropological curiosity, for the making of ethnography. Can you tell us more about this love?

MT | Absolutely! It's strange, isn't it? In a way it sounds almost schizophrenic. On one hand it is sort of a challenge, a critique, and at the same time, an endorsement of so much of what anthropologists do. If we compare anthropology and journalism, both focus on the intimate small-scale events, small-scale

2 | Technically, I would like to draw attention to the challenge of translating Taussig's words to Portuguese. To this end, I relied on the invaluable collaboration of Juliana Valente (from the CUNY Graduate Center) and revisions and transcriptions by Renata Ferreira.

features of events that are either large or small. But Anthropology always has another eye, cocked to focus on questions of social theory and philosophy, and so forth, which of course, journalists cannot do, not extensively, in their writing. Anthropology is sort of caught in a good place, I think, between the intimate and the philosophical, and that is what I like. There've been many fights or problems raised in my lifetime about Anthropology concerning itself too much with theory or too much with fact. Looking back on it, this is to be expected because there is conflict always between fieldwork experience and a love for theory about how society came to be.

2 – My next question concerns content, form, and style. In many of your texts, we find words like healing, redemption, ornament, fetish, mimesis, and (my favorite) transgression. All of them relate not only to the ethnographical data, but to ethnography itself. Thinking about your books we have experiments like publishing a fieldwork diary (Law in a Lawless Land), your drawings during fieldwork (The Magic of State, I swear I saw this, The Corn Wolf), and many pictures in My Cocaine Museum. And, in your writing, there is not only a theoretical rigor (like true lectures about Benjamin, Marx, Bataille, Artaud, Nietzche, Freud, Wittgenstein, for example), but a constant questioning, and a tone that is sarcastic and humorous at the same time. How do you see these three axes – content, form and style – intertwining?

MT | Well, you've described, I think, very well what I tried to do. I think people don't talk much about the humor or the attempted humor, and to me that is something I always genuinely try to do. So, I am so glad you've picked up on that. The keywords that you mentioned are, I guess a pretty constant... I think I probably overdo it a bit. But I am always so impressed by the way in which we talk about societies, groups, human beings, as informed by subliminal force; and that subliminal force seems to me something very close to what is genuinely referred to as magic. So I would see that writing on my part is a conversation with that subliminal level, with that magic, and is positioned on a counter magic. So, that will lead to my interest in style, interest in aesthetics, which I see as the aspect of power anywhere and anytime, as crucial but genuinely completely overlooked by most of our Social Sciences. So, that is one thing I feel very strongly about. I talk about art versus art. By that I mean that we practice an art that can meet the art of the status quo, that is to say, arguments about the good life, arguments about equality, arguments justifying hierarchy, and authority, and mastery seem to me to work because they have an aesthetic force, they have a mythic and symbolic force. So, the task for me as an anthropologist is to provide another art, another culture if you like, against that, but the two are locked together. And that is why I have this phrase, art versus art, rather than say economics versus ideology, or ideology one versus ideology two. No. I think what transcends all that is one form of aesthetic, one aesthetic versus another aesthetic. I've been reading this huge biography that came out a few months back about Susan Sontag. I am very interested to see that this is pretty much her position: the aesthetic, the central political importance of the aesthetic.

3 – As I told you before, if I had to pick an issue in your work it would be the idea of transgression, because I think you transgress when concerning methodology, concerning writing, and as a theoretical matter. As I understand it, Bataille is the main reference for you in this discussion about transgression with his associated idea of "sacred sociology". And sacred for him is related to sacrifice or the consecration of what is destroyed. Do you think it is possible to think of a sacred sociology today? How can we translate transgression in a contemporary world of new (or not that new) forms of terror and violence?

MT | That is a big question! Bataille was really part of a group. So, it is not just Bataille. There is his companion Laure, who died very young, there is Michel Leiris, and there is the brilliant Roger Caillois, just to begin with. If you look at the contributors of the Collège de Sociologie, you see many people involved in those years: 1937 to 1939. So, I think that is important to recall. What would be a sacred sociology today? I think that is the key question you are asking. Well, I first started thinking about this when I read Jacobo Timerman's book, about his imprisonment in Argentina. In English the title of the book is *Prisoner without a name, cell without a number*. That seems to me a very concrete assessment, a very concrete statement about the place of the sacred in political repression. The military regime, its fetishes about communism and homosexuality and the Jews, for instance. Secondly, reading that book you have to come to grips with the role of torture. And when you start thinking about torture in high school students, women, in particular in Argentina, so you can't stop thinking about torture throughout Latin America, throughout the world. And it gets bigger and bigger with George Bush's war in Iraq, or post- 9/11, the CIA clandestine prisons in several parts of the world. The debate about torture in this country, which got pushed even more by Trump who is in favor of torture. So, the questions to me were: is torture done to enact, to get information, as it is usually described? Or is it done for some sort of psychological pleasure, some sort of sadistic pleasure? Or, and/or, does it have its own sort of religious ritual sacred quality? Now, this third question was easily the most innovative, and easily the one never asked, or least asked. A lot has been written about and talked about the other questions. It seems to me that sure, now and again there may be some valuable information, but it is enormously exaggerated. Torture is really done for some other set of motives. And these motives have to do with cleansing, cleansing the world of the devil, cleansing the world of pestilence, cleansing the world of communism, homosexuality, sexuality in general, and so on. That is, so in the negative sense, that is the role, that is the insight of sacred sociology. Sacred sociology, as it was coined by the Collège, was an attempt to think through lessons from the study of religion in primitive societies. Witchcraft for example, fetishism as applied to modern society, as the Nazi movement increased in vigor, as the Nazis rolled into France, as the bulk of the French population became collaborators. Later on, France says they ruled the resistance but that is a lie. Even these forces, the anti-Semitism, the exaltation of the primitive by the Nazis, here again we sort of have an "art against art". The Collège de Sociologie tries to, using Durkheim in particular, come up with a response to this massive force, which I think you see in Brazil, we see in much of the world with the hostility to migrants in Europe (all going to get worse because of the coronavirus). So, the forces that are unleashed by crises, by coup d'états, what we see in the US, particularly on the Mexican border and the campaign against Muslims, has to do with invoking, I would believe, sacred sociology. It is like the government is using sacred sociology (laughs). Therefore, we do too, or I do too. Sacred sociology is also important in another way, and that is to do with the heteronormative, the heterogeneous versus the homogenous and so on. It is a different view of what societies in groups consist of. It emphasizes the fragmented nature, if you like, of reality and of power. Benjamin in *Theses on the philosophy of History* has some important things to say about the heterogeneous versus the homogenous when he talks about the view of history in which the heterogeneous surfaces and displaces the homogenous. I would say that's also an example of sacred sociology. Benjamin, you know, attended some of the meetings of the Collège, and according to one observer, was pretty mystified. And his friend and colleague, Adorno, was very suspicious, actually, of the Collège. He sits on a board with fascists, particularly Caillois. That is the danger. Once you get involved, once you endorse this question of sacredness and sociology you walk in this thin line between the fascists and the anti-fascists.

4 – Literature is one of your main influences. We have a myriad of authors from literature that you use to discuss anthropology. In the 80's, there were many questions about issues such as representation, ethnographic authority, ethnographic writing. George Marcus and James Clifford named this "the poetics and politics of ethnography". I believe we can find both in your work – poetics and politics -, but in a different way. Can you comment on that? Do you agree with that? I think your work is more experimental than most of the people that were writing at the same time.

MT | They proclaimed it, and I did it. They still kept faith in the academic enterprise, whereas I guess I didn't. If they hadn't broken the ice where would people like me be? We probably wouldn't have gotten published. So, this is very, very crucial. The work that they did is sophisticated and requires wide reading. Clifford has two essays[3] in particular, the one on ethnographic authority and the one on ethnographic surrealism, I mean, they are absolute masterpieces. They will last forever.

But for you all these experimentations were always intentional? Is this a project for you? The experimentation, try different things, put all these things together, is it intentional or is it just the way you write for example?

MT | Cannot answer, I mean, it is a bit of both. I think of it as honesty. Honesty to the situation, particularly... It is a triad. I think Said talks about it in his book *The World, the Text and the Critic*, you know: there is the world, there is the author, and there is the reader, and being honest about that situation.

5 – It's funny because you mentioned Timerman and Timerman was a reference that I read because of Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man. I remember you saying during your "Taboo and Transgression" seminar that when writing about violence we only have one chance. Right after, you talked about Timerman, about torture and dictatorship in Argentina and how in torture, we can find sadism, and not only the official State statement of discovering the "truth" or establishing and guaranteeing order. I remember the feeling I experienced reading Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: how I could feel the atrocities and cruelty that you describe using accounts like the one in Timmerman or in "The Casement Report[4]". At that point you gave us two concepts: "space of death" and "culture of terror". We can see these things again when you describe the "limpieza" in Colombia (in Law in a Lawless Land) many years later, for example. Or when you talk about New York Police in "NYPD Blues[5]". What do you mean by this one chance when writing about violence? How can we frame violence and terror today, particularly if we think that terror requires an order to work?

MT | My feeling was that writing about violence, writing against violence is dangerous because it encourages, stimulates the violence within the writer as well as the violence within the reader, and a certain degree of stimulation like that I think is necessary to engage with violence in an oppositional way, but it is a force that is likely to be self-defeating. It is a force which is likely to overtake the critique. The content, if you like, overtakes the critique. I felt this was not something to be prolonged; one shot was more than enough. That is what I felt. I have, however, disobeyed my own rule a couple of times and I don't know what to say about that. Combining the stimulation of violence within the critique is an idea of mine, perhaps eccentric, that topics, things, facts like violence stimulate the mimetic function of language and that is why they are so dangerous because

3 | The texts mentioned are "On ethnographic authority", published in 1983 at the journal *Representations*; and "On ethnographic surrealism", published in 1981 at the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.

4 | Report presented by Roger Casement to the British Foreign Service in 1913. Also called the Putumayo Report, this document is one of the bases used by Taussig in the early part of Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man to describe the atrocities committed against the indigenous of Putumayo amid colonial rubber exploitation.

5 | TAUSSIG, M. NYPD Blues. In: *Walter Benjamin's Grave*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

they stimulate words; and phrases become one with what they are describing. So one doesn't just write about violence as if it is something, an object out there. The object becomes animated, the object becomes a subject, it confronts the subject who is doing the writing and it all occupies the consciousness of the reader. It is because of this ability of violence to blur, to blend words with what the words are about. That is how I think this functions, and that engages something very important. Also, a third point might be that I could see violence becoming a trendy topic, an academic topic, something to build a career on, and I didn't want to get involved in that. I wanted to take a step away from that, at the same time, not wanting to endorse a notion that one should be silent. You know the famous reference to Adorno after Auschwitz; "no poetry" sort of idea. That seems to me quite wrong and that book on Auschwitz makes that point. Of course, his text is a very special text. There is no one who can come close to it. I am sure there is someone, but I don't know who. If I think of something like that it's Darwish[6], the Palestinian poet, his account of the siege, the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982. These are people who are not saying you have to be silent, or it is better to be silent, right? So, these are works of very high caliber, these are works with very high standards, you know. Darwish is a poet. Primo Levi was a fact-oriented chemist who really has this poetic soul and was able to pull off this tremendously effective work. Going back to the first point that I tried to make about writing about violence. Mostly, talking about violence, dishonest violence, cheapens violence, and it is very very difficult not to do that. You make any appeal or reference to pity, functionless. So, I think on pragmatic grounds, debatable.

6 | Taussig is referring to the poet Mahmoud Darwish.

6 – I want to go back to the discussion about the act of writing and reading. My impression is that you are emphasizing them as ritualistic practices (or as you beautifully said "words as links to the viscerality, thingness of things connected in chains of being"). At the same time, you remind us about the instability of meaning and, of course, of interpretation. You talk about the nervous system, the masquerade and secrecy, and bring us a comparison that still amazes me: reality is a shell game, it is disorder of the order, it is, once again, transgression. How can we understand these things together? Is there a strategy or a path to make our readers understand that we are there (doing research, doing fieldwork) and, at the same time, read a text written in the third person? And I must say again that I think you master this process and make us feel in many ways what you are describing. And I remember the way you begin The Corn Wolf: "no one told her or him (1) how to do fieldwork or (2) that writing is nearly always the hardest part of the deal". So how do you see these things: reality is a shell game and the process of writing and reading?

MT | Well, I feel happy talking about the last part of your statement and that is, the absence of focus on writing combined with the absence of focus on fieldwork.

Now, in doctoral programs in Anthropology, students are meant to look after themselves. I know there are exceptions. Different departments at different times may talk a lot about fieldwork, about doing fieldwork in inventive ways. But in my experience, I never got taught anything about fieldwork and I always like Laura Bohannan remarks when she lived in Oxford, she was told to wear sand shoes because they would let the water out, or "don't sleep with native men" or something[7]. They probably didn't say that, that's the other piece of advice, but you basically remain to figure it out yourself. And I find the combination of not having the high focus on writing, and not having the focus on fieldwork, the two together, these are the most important aspects of an anthropologist and strikes me as really strange... Now, you don't have to "teach" teach... I don't think you can teach writing; I don't think you can teach fieldwork. Every situation is different and so on. But you can have wonderful discussions about them. You can engage just with writing for writing sake, right? So, there was the gist, there was the beginning of the questions that led to the essay on the *Corn Wolf*. But you preceded that with questions about the shell game and reality, and I think that grew out of my interest in writing - it is part of reality and reality is a great deal of performance and pretense. And one realizes this, but realizes also that you can't really change it, you can't really change the rules of the game, mid-stream. So, how do we put this... there is a double consciousness that we are playing in this language game, we are all playing this pretend game. We are performing this reality in our writing, in our discussions. But then we cannot actually shift the roles when we realize, we get hyper conscious, you might say, or the other side of consciousness, that this is a game and we let that intrude, and that would be the shell game, you shift the item under the shell, and then you go back again. In *The nervous system*, which was written very early on, around 1988-1989, the trope that I used was "a system that was nervous", hence the nervous system, and I was claiming that a system that is nervous, a "nervously nervous nervous system" is also hysterical and dangerous because it is on a point of collapse and, therefore, strange energy is at work in a "nervously nervous nervous system". The components that I selected were order and disorder, that our job as anthropologists, social scientists in particular, was to find reasons, to give explanations, to put heterogeneous facts into some sort of homogenous order. But as soon as you do that, you should have the self-awareness, you should have the intelligence to realize that this is an arbitrary sort of thing and can collapse into disorder. But then, as soon as you welcome the disorder, you say: that is the nature of reality, that is the nature of the world, that is the nature of history. Then the world will speak to you and say 'no, I tricked you, that world actually has an order',it might be God, might be the economy, whatever, and so you skedaddle back to

7 | The story mentioned by Taussig is in the book *Return to Laughter*, by Eleonore Smith Bowen (pseudonym of Laura Bohannan).

the pole of order, only to then hit the extreme and be bounced back, and then say: 'no, there is no order, that is a pretense, it is all disorder'. And so, one also weights in some perhaps pathetic, perhaps amusing way between these two poles. That, I think, sums up the shell game.

7 – Another thing I would like to discuss is how you play with words and how well you deal with ambiguities, oppositions and contradictions (order and disorder to use your words now). The first one is terror and healing, but we can find something similar in the ambiguous word limpieza (as violence and as spiritual healing). Sometimes I feel like you are like the bricoleur of Levi-Strauss, playing with the science and magic of words (though I think you would prefer to be compared with Benjamin's collector), creating in this process a museum of words and meanings, producing, in fact, a non-canonical museum (similar to what you do in My Cocaine Museum). As you said quoting Wittgenstein, "a whole mythology is deposited in our language". So what is your mythology and how does this connect with your anthropological project?

MT | Well put! That would be a a better figure for me to be compared to, more than Benjamin. Although Benjamin was very involved with the mysticism of language and his series of translations. But that is a more congenial figure, I think, in this regard. So, what would be my mythology? My mythology is, I think, stated clearly in the foreword to my book *Mimesis and Alterity*, particularly towards the end where I say "try to imagine a world in which science were natural, and try to imagine a world in which science were all unnatural or unmotivated", as Saussure says. Both would be actually impossible to imagine. Both self-destruct after some meditation on these extremes. That is where I thought that mimetic faculty and also the shell game started to become fascinating and something that one wants to practice oneself in one's writing. So, my mythology would be this: what I call mimetic faculty. Which is, if you like, once ancient magic gets involved. So that is the mythology for you: getting involved in post-structuralist series of language.

8 – Shamanism, Colonialism and The Wild Man is the reason I came to New York. I think your propositions about "culture of terror" and "space of death" are invitations to interpret social life today, in a moment that we talk about new forms of genocide, necropolitics, and neo-fascism. When we read the first part of Shamanism – that you called Terror – it is almost like there is no way out, like Kurtz expresses in Heart of Darkness: "the horror, the horror". But then, there is the second part, the healing (and with healing comes hope, I guess), there are contradictions in the system. Can we think about writing as a process of healing?

MT | Oh yeah, definitely. Absolutely! That is why I write so much. A constant process of therapy, of self-healing. The songs that shamans sings, or the music that the shamans make with the throat and chest would also fall into this category. You could say it is invoking spirits, if you want to, and so forth. But I think that healing is more than good enough. Writing is an engagement of the voice or voices we have in our heads that speak for themselves, through us. And that is a shamanic idea, if you like, that there is a force outside of you. You could call it social facts, history, tradition, and so forth, which the writer gives, channels to in the face of a particular problem or challenge. The beauty is that that is therapeutic. I wouldn't want to emphasize too much the therapeutic aspect however, partly because I believe it is very true and shouldn't be tempted with. I think it is fragile and can be, once one is aware of it, it can become a problem. I would want to emphasize very much the love of invention, the love of making. Like making theater, like making music, like making a painting, just creating something in itself is an important part of what constitutes... I don't know, I was going to say humanity, but that is too big a word. Different people at different times in history. If I remember correctly, the end of that part one of the *Shamanism* book, really ends on a point of mystery and of obfuscation, because I take up the anthropological challenge, which is the natives' point of view. You must always have the native's point of view. It is the great authoritarian trope in anthropology, that you have found out the native's point of view. There's a lot to be criticized in that phrase but in the *Shamanism* book, it turns out that the only evidence I had about the natives' point of view, of the people that have been tortured, were from two anthropologists who told me that the indigenous people in question said, challenged them, 'why do you want to know about the atrocities? Only sorcerers want to know this, and with that they do evil'. And so, I was like, ok, you want to know the native's point of view, the native's point of view is 'don't go there' and that was to me a tremendous shock on all sorts of levels. One in particular, I think I might have described to you earlier, has to do with this, going back to your question about you only have one shot at writing on violence. There was a point of view here, almost an order, a command, not to enquire into some sorts of things. And that seemed to me so against the grain of the enlightenment, which is the great academic conceit that everything and anything can be examined and talked about. And certainly, this barrier was being put up, and I thought for very plausible reasons. When dueled with that reason, one does not undermine it, the reason itself. You can't go there because that is what sorcerers do. I think that is a much better way of answering your question about the delicacy of digging into questions of how nasty humans can be to each other.

9 – To conclude, I want to explore the idea of your upcoming book. Of course, I haven't read it yet, but the title is something to think about: Mastery of Non-mastery In the Age of Meltdown[8]. If I recall correctly you use this idea for the first time in

8 | The book was released on July 2020.

"Walter Benjamin's Grave", relating it to the concept of sovereignty in Bataille (in what Bataille catches from Nietzsche). In a manuscript from 2017, you invite us to reflect upon the exploitation of nature and of ourselves, calling for mutuality (and not exploitation) in a context of global meltdown. The recent facts (and we are now experiencing one of them, with the coronavirus pandemic) attest to this meltdown. In your argument we saw, once again, some of the ideas that guide your work: mimesis (or the mimetic faculty), space of death, nature not as colony and victim but fighting back (as we see in Palma Africana[9] for example). With this in mind, and the inspiration you draw from Nietzsche – "knowing what not to know", how can we understand the mastery of non-mastery?

MT | Oh, it is too much (laughter). The "knowing what not to know" is a curious formulation, of course, a tempting question. I would interpret it right now, in conversation with you, as leaving certain things unconscious. If we go back to the issue of the anthropologist talking to the old indigenous people about torture in the Putumayo and they say, 'don't go there, they are sorceresses only, why do you want to know?', the unconscious overlaps that. They knew 'what not to know', I mean, and knowing 'what not to know' itself is intensely paradoxical, because in one sense you know what not to know. You go crazy! It is a bit like the mastery of non-mastery, I mean, you turn yourself in nuts. So, the task of mutuality, no domination of nature, involves this sort of wonderful mental gymnastics, visceral gymnastics of knowing what not to know, mastery of non-mastery, as a call to the unconscious of nature, and the unconscious of humankind to develop and create the habitual knowledge, that is sort of like second nature, that you do without consciously thinking. How do you go from consciousness to that type of state of affairs? That is a whole another huge, huge issue. This obviously involves what today is called anti-colonialism, the racial and gender qualities of history and the present set up. It would seem to me that these human histories, human relationships are in many ways at the center of what is required for environmental confrontation, you know. And that is not something that is obvious in what we've said, but it should be.

9 | TAUSSIG, M. *Palma africana*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

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