

Satan and his World of Darkness (TRRS6020)

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3. The Devil in Latin America today

- “The devil was brought by European imperialism to the New World, where he blended with pagan deities and the metaphysical systems represented by those deities. Yet those systems were as unlinked from the European as were the indigenous socioeconomic systems. ...



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- ... Under these circumstances, the image of the devil and the mythology of redemption came to mediate the dialectal tensions embodied in conquest and the history of imperialism.” (Taussig, p. xi)



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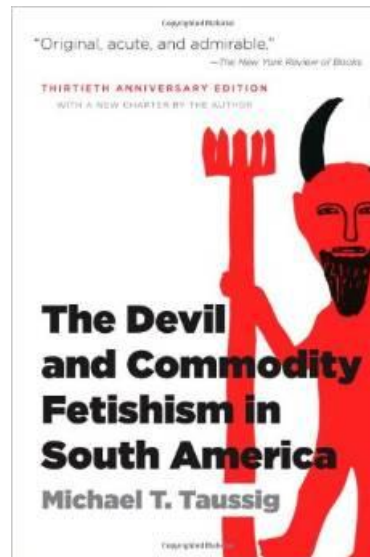
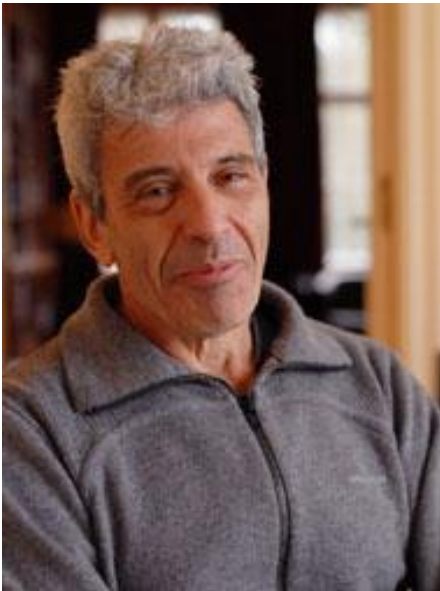
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Case one: Marxist critique of capitalism

- the image of the devil mediates the conflict between precapitalist and capitalist modes of objectifying the human condition
- -> Taussig aims to explain the symbolic logic behind pacts with the devil and other practices

Michael Taussig



- Professor of anthropology at Columbia University in New York City



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Pact with the Devil

- two case studies: sugarcane plantation workers in Colombia and tin miners in Bolivia
- Pact with the devil is made in order to increase 'wage-labour productivity' (-> to earn more money). However, this person is said to die early and painfully.
- -> to increase wealth is at the expense of nature

Bolivian images of the Devil



The devil called
with the nickname
Tio (uncle) by
miners in Bolivia



The devil as popular
figure at carnival and
other festivals

- According to Taussig they are not doing it as peasants working their own land.

“It is only when they are proletarianized that the devil enters the scene in this way. While the imagery of God and good, or the spirits of Nature and of ancestors dominate the ethic of labour in the peasant mode of production, the devil and evil permeate the local metaphysics associated with the capitalist mode of production.”(Taussig, 1977, p. 136)

- Historically these practices draw on traditional beliefs, specially the system of symbolic inversions in which the devil became a richly ambivalent ideological response to Christianity linked to the Spanish oppression
- This belief in the devil becomes now a critique against capitalism (according to Taussig)

Case 2: Exorcism the devil as divine healing

- demonization of the pantheon of African Brazilian deities as form of healing with conversion as ultimate salvation
- According to Andrew Chesnut it 'strikes a resonant chord in Brazilian popular religiosity' (p. 179)



- “Miracles!!! A cockroach! A spider! A lock of hair! Vomited up by a woman! A work of *macumberia* [witchcraft], came out of a man’s foot! Power of God” (1994).
- Photo by Andrew Chesnut (p. 180)

Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (UCKG)

- Neo-Pentecostalism
- founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1977 by Edir Macedo Bezerra
- Nowadays spread all over the world, including the UK



UCKG theology

- Satan and the demons are responsible for all the misery and evil in the world
- -> Afro-Brazilian religions are responsible for bringing demons into this world
- Solution: Liberation ceremony (=exorcism) and conversion to UCKG

The devil today

- Common aspects of both interpretation:
 - belief in the devil is historically wide spread in Latin America due to the Spanish oppression
 - People are familiar with the ambivalent figure, seen not as subordinate to God but as opposite power, able to help as well as harm

El Diabolito (=little devil)

