

and so she considers an extensive literature on Argentina's trade unions as well as the ideals of Peronism. This leads Lazar to a discussion of the state. The two unions that she studied brought together state employees. Militancy and containment not only describe the political life of these organizations, but also are processes that manage what could be considered the most bureaucratic form of the nation-state. It is interesting to consider both the social and institutional fabric of the state and the particularities of a union whose interlocutor is the state. Are unions for, against, or part of the state?

Another of the many merits of the book is that analysis of people's ethical and political subjectivities allows us to comprehend how *militantes* live and to understand their actions. Through analysing the everyday life of *militantes*, the book explores an important issue regarding unions: the production of hierarchies and decision-making. Although from the outside hierarchies can be seen as fixed and impossible to question, Lazar shows the way personal relations produce negotiations. At the same time, seeing politics and *militancia* as ethical projects allows us to appreciate the importance of actors within these hierarchies.

In sum, *The social life of politics* considers the way in which ethics and forms of subjectivization can vary according to ways of seeing the world, of feeling, of understanding commitment, militancy, care, and agency, all of which lead to politically different forms of *militancia* and *contención*. Lazar's book is valuable for two reasons: it is a detailed ethnography of Argentinean unions and an important contribution to our understanding of the social life of social movements.

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Theory and method

BAKKE, GRETCHEN & MARINA PETERSON (eds). *Between matter and method: encounters in anthropology and art*. xviii, 226 pp., illus., bibliogr. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. £24.99 (paper)

A while ago now, some artists began to take 'the fieldwork turn', to make the social dimensions of their work a central component of their practice. This trend continues to grow: 'No sign of abatement', British arts bureaucrats tell me. Waves of this move have reached anthropologists, who have chosen to swim with the tide. The borderlines of art and anthropology

were indistinct in late Victorian times. Why not blur them again?

Gretchen Bakke and Marina Peterson's edited *Between matter and method* is the latest in an intriguing series of recent editions presenting contemporary activity in this fertile zone. Unlike its predecessors, which focused on artists dissolving this divide, this book concentrates on anthropologists' incursions into that variously mapped area. The contributors follow artistic practice, valuing process more than product.

In the editors' terms, contributors 'embrace the inchoate, . . . resisting both form and container' (p. xiv). With nods towards 'the ontological turn', they consider novel assemblies of objects, events, and bodies which may, or may not, make sense at first glance. This method is called 'mattering' (p. 230), its careful adjustments 'attuning' (p. 77): any outcomes are suggestive, not definitive. Bakke and Peterson wish to discern 'an otherworldliness already present in this world' (p. 14). Contributors attend to neglected aspects of human life which, although already studied by a few, have yet to gain mainstream purchase: especially, the need to rethink conventional divisions of the sensorium, and the phenomena we start to perceive when we do. Overall, the key tone of the contributions is one of collaborative, playful improvisation, where any criteria of 'success' or 'failure' are left to the reader.

Rather than plod my way through each chapter, I highlight those which struck me most. Stewart (chap. 2) gives an evocative, well-written piece on the verbal styles of West Virginians facing the butt-end of their work-battered lives in a region of no employment, where 'running their mouths' appears a locutionary act against the meaningless chaos they've been left in. Is the emerging anthropology of ruins an ethnographic future for our neoliberal days?

Greene (chap. 3) writes of the late punk artist GG Allin, flinger of faeces at small but paying audiences. His performative logic, however, was more emotional than excremental: reviewing Allin's non-ironic, unhappy commentaries about the human condition makes Greene wonder if hate is not a neglected collective phenomenon.

Of all the contributors, Dumit (chap. 4) is most aware that too many aesthetic experiments can easily be branded depoliticized 'micro-utopias'. He skirts that trap by dwelling on political dimensions of improvisation. He argues that Afro-Americans were and are forced to improvise in order to appear non-threatening to whites. Dumit writes his contribution as an inspiring set of unsettling games, demonstrating the emancipatory power of improvisation: perfect

for pre-fieldwork research students, and many of us professional academics as well.

Murphy (chap. 6) queries contemporary ethical codes, worrying what 'harm' and 'intervention' might mean. These are important lessons for students, and a central reason why collaborative forms of fieldwork have to be thoroughgoing, not merely one-off payments of lip service.

In chapter 9, Peterson explores the cultural constitution of 'sound' and 'noise pollution', and the physical dimensions – air density, fog – which can affect our understanding of both. This chapter counterpoints with Dibs's (chap. 11) performance-orientated piece. She reworked field recordings of a park into 'compositions', then broadcast the result back into the park while the audience tested twigs, rocks, cones, for their resonances. The interaction of the audience and sounds situated each other, creating a sense of 'being in'.

Between matter and method is a deliberately experimental collection, with most contributors eschewing conventional modes of exposition: in particular 'Another world in this world', a mid-book series of innovative one-page pieces by individual contributors originally produced through the more interactive sessions of the workshop on which this collection is based. All these pieces are invitations to rethink our ways of working, both methods and outcomes. The play continues elsewhere with talk of whales, bloating, and fat, and a flick-book, at the bottom-right of all odd pages, of a breaching whale against a gloomy cityscape.

The contributions are short. There might be teasing, but no padding. The participants in this fun project set themselves a tough task: how to urge others to be playful without being overly directive in the process. There is much mention of bodily processes, mainly the usually overlooked ones. But farting remains oddly neglected. Isn't there yet a place for reports of backchat? For aren't we all gasbags, producers of hot air?

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RYAN, MICHAEL J. (foreword by Thomas A. Green). *Venezuelan stick fighting: the civilizing process in martial arts*. xxi, 162 pp., fig., illus., bibliogr. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2016. \$80.00 (cloth)

Michael J. Ryan's *Venezuelan stick fighting* is a survey of Venezuelan fighting methods (*garrote*) using the stick, knife, and machete, conducted through interviews in multiple sites for seven

months in 2005, and six weeks in 2013 (p. 15). Ryan's opening pages co-opt the language of Elias in *The civilizing process* (1939). Describing himself as a veteran martial artist in his introduction, Ryan says, 'I have been beaten down, stomped on, and body slammed more times than I care to remember' (p. 16). At Los Angeles punk rock shows he 'would regularly get drunk and high and get into a number of fights' (p. 16). Thus in chapter 1, 'This is garrote', Ryan avows a 'phenomenological approach' (p. 26), and then describes the creolized origins of garrote as an amalgamation of martial techniques adapted from (mostly) Iberian and (some) English sword fencing, through the African slave trade, maroon diaspora, and the Canary Islands.

Chapter 2, 'The civilizing of a nation', iterates a brief history of Venezuela from 1499 to the 1950s. Regarding methods, chapter 3, 'Sites and pedagogies of garrote', introduces *vista* (awareness) and the *palo por palo* (blow for blow) response to slights, insults, and attacks (p. 52). Ryan complains that he was taught an unworkable version of the Siete Lineas style, bemoaning a divide between genuine fighting skill and fake 'performance', where real skills are concealed from outsiders, to instead reveal *la batalla*: 'the folkloric, performance-oriented [ritual, theatrical, dance] mode of garrote' (p. 59). Chapter 4, 'Secrecy and deception in garrote', expresses Ryan's exasperation with 'stonewalling' (p. 69), and his shift to a different style of garrote. His discussion of deception and disambiguation here unfortunately neglects the arguments in James C. Scott's *Weapons of the weak* (1987).

'Belonging and the role of honor' (chap. 5) announces yet another apprenticeship. Since Ryan 'trained with a number of different teachers', he was advised 'to train only one lineage a day as not to be confused how to move' (p. 84). Acknowledging his difficulties, Ryan remains optimistic: 'In the long and intimate disciplined training, the teacher/student relationship often transforms into a deep and lasting friendship' (p. 85). Yet hopping from place to place in order to learn, Ryan manages to recount only basic levels of training in awareness and footwork (p. 82). It seems the author struggled to belong, to achieve depth in his social relationships, and profundity in the training.

Just as he hops about from style to style, he also skips through anthropological themes: masculinity, joking, and honour. Chapter 6, 'Forging the warrior habitus', reads like pop anthropology. The author claims of his training that 'a high level of neuro-programming [induces] an alternate state of consciousness, where, while