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Book Review

– *Barter and social regeneration in the Argentinean Andes*, by Olivia Angé. Berghahn Books, 2018

As online retail giants and supermarket home deliveries seem to take over our most mundane economic affairs, barter continues to define twenty-first century transactions in important yet understudied ways. Referring to the non-monetary exchange of goods or services, barter practices tend to be portrayed as the primitive prelude to capitalist exchange, a mere variation on commodity trade, or a romantic response to economic breakdown. By offering a theoretically thorough and ethnographically rich analysis of a diversity of transactions performed at Andean fairs, Olivia Angé's *Barter and Social Regeneration* resolutely undercuts the myths of barter. Grounded in long-term fieldwork in and around the Andean community of Chalguamayoc, the book unpacks barter as an economic as well as a social performance.

While *trueque* usually serves as the common denominator of a variety of barter practices, Angé focuses on one specific modality of barter. *Cambio* constitutes an essential form of transaction at Northern Argentinian fairs that bring together lowland farmers and highland herders. Angé identifies *cambio* as a "peasant" and non-monetary form of exchange aimed to fulfil consumption needs through the acquisition of agricultural products from complementary ecological zones. Taking the fairs as main site of analysis, she develops an ethnography of the "social fabric" of barter. Throughout the book, she critically and consistently cross-checks empirical observations with a wide range of scholarship in economic anthropology and Andean ethnohistory. The result is rare insight into the complexities of barter and a strong theoretical argument that defies still prevalent and morally loaded incompatibilities underlying orthodox economic thinking.

The book opens by addressing the semantic fuzziness and dominant oppositions that persist in the analysis of diverse transaction modalities. Angé proposes to "conceptually distinguish barter from commodity exchange and the reciprocation of gifts" (p. 12). In chapter 4, she explains in more detail how *cambio* differentiates from both *negocio*, which relies on monetary transactions for the acquisition of industrial goods and quantitative profit, and *invitación*,

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which is a form of gift to friends, kin, unknown people and deities, without the obligation to return. The distinction is not only practical, but also moral. Angé's detailed reconstruction of emic categories of exchange does not serve the purpose of a classic taxonomy. On the contrary, she teases out subtle instances of "transactional confusion" and hybridity. Moreover, the book aims to question the dichotomous character of transaction typologies by interrogating "the ritualization of nonetheless instrumental transactions" (p. 19). Andean barter fairs are usually embedded in Catholic celebrations, such as the Yavi Easter fair studied in detail in chapter 3, revealing *cambio*'s constitutive role in both fairs and religious rituals. In attending to the multiplicity and interfaces of transaction modalities, Angé's analysis evidences the possibility of negotiation across assumed boundaries between commodity and gift, generosity and personal interest, the ceremonial and the utilitarian, the collective and the individual, and between rational and irrational behaviour.

Through a cautious delineation of barter's regime of value and its related social performativity, Angé argues that *cambio* produces not only use value but also socio-cosmological values. *Cambio* practices enable barter partners to operate within a social framework of trust and to develop spatiotemporal relations with deities and ancestors. Particularly interesting is how her analysis expands the usual exclusive focus on goods to consider qualitative relationships. *Cambio* reifies both the duality and complementarity of cross-border highland herders and valley farmer relations. Yet *cambio* implies intimate relationships beyond human interaction, between producers and their crops and herds, which are – different from commodities – endowed with virtues, energy and agency. Angé emphasizes the importance of *criar* (to cultivate) the vitality of a diversity of living beings that sustain human life as a precondition for prosperous barter relations. Without necessarily using this wording, this approach extends the notion of a "moral economy" crucially to a "more-than-human economy". By describing barter in terms of an inter-species transmission of affect, signs, sounds and *fuerza*, Angé argues that non-humans collaborate in *cambio*, "thereby participating in the reproduction of the cosmological order" (p. 15).

Angé understands fairs as historically shaped phenomena, as she exposes in chapter 2, but also demonstrates how historical change is mediated at fairs, as she analyses in chapter 5. Her attention to "structural nostalgia" is particularly revealing. Peasants invoke a mythical "ahistorical time" to lament the contemporary erosion of ancestral economic solidarities. Rather than impeding peasants to participate actively in commodity trade, this idealisation of barter serves to confirm a shared social belonging. Interestingly, the state- and NGO-sponsored heritagisation of fairs similarly invokes a pristine Indigenous past, yet with the effect of justifying the institutional "rescue" of traditions while ignoring long-term Andean economic continuities.

While at times theoretically dense, *Barter and social regeneration* revitalizes and unites important debates about economic and ritual practices in the Andes. This pluralist approach demonstrates that these remote, seemingly irra-

tional Andean fairs hold pertinent lessons for modern commodified societies. Particularly in a context of pandemic crisis, the twenty-first century "revival" of diverse forms of non-monetary transaction (p. 5) tends to be framed as a response to crisis and marginalisation. By demythologizing barter practices, Angé firmly invalidates polarizing perspectives on past and contemporary economic behaviour in the Andes and adds to current calls to pluralize mainstream economic thinking. *Barter and social regeneration* will be of great interest to scholars in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Anthropology, History, Sociology, and Environmental Humanities who study economic practices, particularly in relation to indigenous and peasant societies.

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