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Gastón R. Gordillo. *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 304p.

GRAHAM LYONS  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

In *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco*, Gastón R. Gordillo articulates and contextualizes, in well-formed academic prose, the memories and fears of the western Toba of Argentina's Gran Chaco region. In the process, he also presents a succinct and compelling account of historical and economic struggles in northern Argentina. Peppering his analysis with "ambiguities," "ambivalences," "contradictions," and "processes," Gordillo proceeds from the premise that "places are produced in tension with other geographies and that these tensions are made tangible through the spatialization of memory" (3). This premise leads through a methodology Gordillo calls "the absolute spatialization of practice" (4). While Gordillo's text bears the marks of his discipline—particularly its subject matter, the lived experience of indigenous/colonized people—it is also profoundly interdisciplinary, combining a vast range of critical approaches into a compelling and cohesive model for understanding the complexities of cultural identity and place. More than an ethnography of a people underrepresented in the academy, *Landscapes* serves as a valuable intervention into the practice of critical analysis beyond and beside the strictures of academic departmentalization.

Gordillo opens *Landscapes* with evocative epigraphs from Gramsci, Adorno, and Lukács, establishing his focus on the permutations of dialectical thinking, writing, and producing. Each epigraph establishes a principle of methodology, rather than espousing Marxist precepts. Indeed, in his conclusion, Gordillo characterizes his approach as a "negative dialectic," since it focuses on tensions and contradictions that "are not resolved and hence do not reach closure in a synthesis" (258). Oppositions, in this sense, are productive in that they open the field of understanding rather than close it down. As a point of departure, then, negative dialectics function for Gordillo to prize open rejected approaches to uncover potentialities within—a methodology rather than a politics.

For example, as a literary scholar by trade, I was greatly intrigued by Gordillo's exposition of Toba devil imagery as a metonym for the contradictions of space production within the social processes of an imperialist capitalist economy. Thus, the Tobas' memories of evil "devils in the mountains" above the sugar cane fields reflect the lived conditions of seasonal contract laborers housed in disease-ridden shanty towns, just as the trickster payák (devils) of "the bush" enabled shamanic magic in off-season villages in the Chaco interior. While ostensibly reprising shopworn Jungian anthropology, Gordillo's symbolic interpretations are, in fact, heavily invested

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in a materialist conception of history and power relations. His analysis, focusing on memory as a practice with social consequences, works to counteract (or keep in play) Marx's warning that capitalism would annihilate space by time. Historically conceived through memory, but spatialized, the relative symbolic status of the *payák* in each locale reveals the contradictions and confluences of the Tobas' lived experience in each respective place. As Gordillo embeds memory with historicity and space in this way, this metonymy unfolds the layers of colonial rule and the disenfranchisement of the Chaco through re-territorialization, new productions of space. In this analysis, as with others in Gordillo's text, the literary and the geographical merge with the anthropological into an interdisciplinary hybrid that reveals underlying tensions obscured in other ethnographies of indigenous people.

Through its fecund methodology, *Landscapes* evokes vital questions about the relationship between the uninformed—yet simplistically profound—accounts of indigenous people contrasted with (or matched with) the historically and philosophically grounded reflections of western luminaries like Adorno or Lukács, not to mention the longitudinal historical account that frames Gordillo's analysis as a whole. Each anecdote from a Toba in the text refracts into a profundity of imperialist experience far beyond the basic semantics of his/her statement; each Toba becomes a proto-Lukácsian. One might thus be compelled to ask: through his complex portrayal of historically and materially-grounded spatial contradictions, does Gordillo escape the eurocentrism and academic imperialism that has haunted his discipline (and, of course, others) since its inception? I would contend that Gordillo manages to strike a balance, or maintain a tension, between (impossible) anthropological objectivity and (unavoidable) political investment because he spatializes the implications of memory, signification, and experience. If space is produced, and is subject to de/re-territorialization, the Tobas' memories function as contingent repositories for this process, and Gordillo's role is to articulate and speak for the experiences therein. Gordillo, in this sense, dwells both within and without the Chaco, juggling an affinity for the indigenous people he spent ten years studying with an acknowledgement of their complicity in producing and maintaining their subordination. As a whole, and beyond the specificity of its subject matter, Gordillo's foray into disciplinary cross-pollination poses questions central to knowledge production in any field and, more significantly, endeavors to answer them honestly, rigorously, and productively. ✱