

Segundo Corral, 2008

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: A journey in the Andes between Argentina and Chile

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High in the Andes,
in the spaces between national borders,
left outside and around the lines faded by time
and forgotten details; spaces now left to *gauchos* and *huasos*,
we encounter *Segundo Corral*.

(We were not the first people there,
and of course there were some who called it home.
In fact it smacks of fiction, to me as well
that it could ever be discovered,
that it couldn't be eternal.)

We crossed a river below on our way,
gentle and green, like the flavour of emerald fruit,
like a current of fern.
Our little boat moved as though it
were made of its own muscles,
softly flexing its oars over the water
without the need to touch the surface.

On the other side, we followed a track filled with mud
past the football pitch nearby, proud at such heights.
On the summit, horses stood on the grass
runway of an old one room airport, out of use,
while the sun, slow and diluted by sky and mountain air,
drops of condensation on its very rays,
grazed on the snow along the peaks.

From inside the village,
every time we tried to leave
we were led back to the same point.
No directions could bring any clarity.
The locals soon left, all on horseback
to travel six hours to the next *pueblo*
for that weekend's game of football.

At these altitudes, without even enough oxygen
for some force to bewitch us, surely,
and in a full gathering of forest, where there's no place
for any *gaulicho* to stand out, to bring us harm,

we journeyed through our own labyrinths,
through another crossing of liberation,
that hundreds of years later remains as though radiation in these mountains,
absorbed into their core, by the trees, by the stones,
all of them diverging from that moment onwards,

we broke free of the straight, passing line of seconds, itself fading;
gravity reformed and resettled around us,
time changed all around us,
and we became citizens of its new world.