

The Droplet

Circled by the peaks of the Altiplano
outside the old city walls of Cuzco,
I walked out along an old country road
on a moonlit night to watch the black vultures
congregate on the branches of the leafless
trees, wings outstretched like avian acolytes
awaiting the onset of an arboreal black mass,
when I saw a gleam glinting from a droplet
hanging upside down from the crossbar of
a campesino's gate so I knelt down and gripped
the crossbar, gave it a shake, then looked in
through the elastic meniscus of dull skin
holding the eye of liquid tight to the underside
of the old gate and my thoughts, like two dogs
straining on a lead after picking up a scent,
pulled me on and into that snowy landscape
that lay just beyond, and they pulled me in
back through the years, burials, the midnight
voice in the receiver, across the wasteground,
up the old cracked path and in through the back
door that isn't there anymore, my feet drumming
on wooden floors where the carpet was lifted
to make way for a subway under the highway
they built after we sold up and moved away
but the dogs drag me on up the uncovered stairs
and over the landing to my old bedroom window
to look out across the carpark where the bonfires
were lit every August when the night sky glowed
with the flames of burning buses and the air vibrated
with the hum of rotor blades as they propelled
the helicopters that prowled through the night sky
while shining one roving orange eye down upon
all this world that has vanished, gone underground,
and when I look down to my feet, the two dogs
who led me here are gone, and I'm back kneeling
on a country road in the Andes grasping the crossbar
of the farmer's gate, trying to look into the droplet
but it has clouded over, so I stood up and joined
the congregation of black vultures in the leafless trees,
raised my arms and faced the blind eye of the moon.