

Along the Beaten Path

a poem for
El Camino Real

by Carlos Contreras

Maybe that's why they call us...

New,

Connected to the

Old,

like: Veins

like: Bridges

like: Roads...

Mexico to Santa Fe

the missions different,

but missions maintain

Colonial implications

a cackle of colloquialisms in the desert, where

nothing rests,

contrary to popular cuentos,

Some 400 years to recount,

to chronicle,

category:

undefined,

unbroken,

The cycle identifiable

even if indefinable.

Pero,

como el camino,

we are long,

in the tooth...

Photograph by Jack Parsons

Silver lined sinew

That connects a nesting of
rosary beads—
monuments along the
body of land
a ribcage of stories
of breath yet to be expelled
It's spelled

R-E-A-L

Meaning Royal,
a road,
forged and reforged

for different reasons,
cultures colliding like
hummingbirds and rain,
the need to survive paramount,
of which

we are the product.

Fast forward,
North to South
Corridor:

captured corridos
confrontations

Two sides
of a cultural coin
taxation, exploration.

And when the conversation became
common,
this nineteenth-century
tributary

was dammed up by box cars

and railroad tracks...

A mouth filled with different teeth
begging to say something.

whispering names:

Arriba

Abajo

La Bajada

and the names of those
sacrificed in the climb.

Mesilla to Fort Marcy
preservation the intent,
preservation of the unexplainable
inseparable products of conquest,

Detours

along the same beaten path.

A trail defined by the
stories left behind

And new stories to be told,
artifacts to be left alone,
so that they can be stumbled upon, indefinitely.