Falsa calma
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Falsa calma (False calm)

*In this book, part novel part documentary, the author takes us on a trip through five Patagonian towns: Cañadon Seco, El Caín, El Cuy, Maquinachao and Las Heras. Cristoff introduces us to the people who live there and tells their stories, which are, by turn, both moving and disturbing.*

*This book has many elements in common with the travel writing of the nineteenth century in its descriptions of Patagonia's vastness, its isolation and untamed nature. The twist here is that the author takes this historical narrative – based the Europe-centric imperialist, expansionist dogma of the time where the preoccupation was on the exploitation of nature and imposing "civilization" – and shows us the lasting traces of these ideas in the people who live there. This author shows us Patagonia not as legendary wilderness to be discovered but as the emotional landscape of the people who live there.*

*The author invites us to see beyond the Patagonia presented as the pristine wilderness ripe for exploitation either for its mineral wealth or as, nowadays, a tourist destination. This is what the title alludes to - the vast tundra that is Patagonia appears serene in its emptiness and invites a sense of calm. However, this serenity is illusory since the struggle to survive in this landscape is far from calm. The Patagonia which Christoff shows us is a place of extremes, both enchanting and dangerous. On one hand its emptiness is attractive – peaceful and majestic but on the other it is cruel in its unrelenting isolation – it's somewhere that you can disappear without a trace.*

*while there are some autobiographical details from the author, this is not an exercise in nostalgia, but an excellent piece of journalism written with substantial literary flair. The overall effect makes for a very compelling read.*

*Every chapter is a gem in itself and some do seem to be almost self-contained novellas…*

*This book shows Patagonia in a way that it is rarely seen, bringing its people and their lives into the foreground. It combines journalism, biography and philosophy in a way that makes for a very intriguing read. Many of the stories Christoff tells have the reader on the edge of their seat while others astound or provoke. This book will appeal to those readers looking for a good story and also those looking to be informed. It is a breath of fresh air in terms of factual writing.*

*From the reader´s report by*