

DANIEL ELIAS GALICIA

Border Cantos

—after Richard Misrach and Guillermo Galindo

1 Efigie | Effigy

What road brought you here?

*It was straight but curved
like a moon half-covered by shadow.*

Did shadows haunt you
as you crossed the desert?

*Their footsteps shift rocks
the way wind shifts leaves.*

Pain—I imagine too much

pain: *wind hollering
through silence.*

What draws you on?

Coyotes & coyotes.

Do the ghosts of the desert speak?

*Their breath wheezes
on plastic Gatorade bottles.*

How much pain?

*Broken jawbones.
Scars on rocks.
Bullets in a soccer ball.
Abandoned clothes
on an effigy with
outstretched arms.*

All the dead in the desert

like all the dead in the sea.

The earth swallows bodies

back into itself.

20 days in the desert,

20 years to get home.

Family sounds like

*wind chimes
on a breezy
front porch.*

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What do they look like?

*Faceless bodies
white as moonlight.*

What is your name?

*My name's scattered
on pages torn
from a Bible.*

Pain—*hollering wind*

Family—*wind chimes*

Ghosts—*the moonlight reflected
(remember me)
on the desert's
un-remembering sea.*

2 Cucarachas | Cockroaches

Wings. Thorax. Antenna.

The sun scurries
across the sky,

scratches
our skin
red as sand.

Heat like fire ants
on the ripped
carcass
of a rabbit.

No water,
only wind
& the rocks

shattered
like bones.

We stitch
our clothes
with cactus thorns.

Our sand-whipped
heels burn.

The sun
like a cockroach
nicks
the backs
of our necks.

3 Cosas de niños | Children's Things

Aluminum ladders
 can be toys
 like soccer balls
 can be water jugs

 once your coyote's
 stabbed holes in them.

How children play:

 picking music
 from broken teeth
 of a hairbrush.

Twisted sheets of metal,
 the original toy fence.

A toothbrush
 can be a toy like gum
 can be money.

Stay focused! he yells.

& hunger is as necessary
as tampons.

 Next day, we find scorpions
red as blood
 in a trash can riddled
 with bullets. How little

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imagination
children need

picking scorpions from
their teeth
with tweezers.