

ruthless north star
sardine tins/plastic bags
morning several hours away by foot

old wagon trails/hiking paths
water stations
hoy
infrared sensors/sound detectors
me
voy

■
Near Douglas,
on a gabacho's rancho,
he found
a scarecrow
decked out
in the uniform of
a border agent.
Using blood
and papel
he made a note
that he hung
around its neck
that read: *Pancho*
Was Here.

■
Qué chido his chistes. Qué
chido his tocayo. Qué
chido his peso-colored balas. Qué
chido his mandas. Qué
chido his snakeskin botas. Qué
chido his guitarra. Qué
chido his rolas. Qué
chido his Chalino t-shirts. Qué
chido his botellas. Qué
chido his lust for tetas. Qué

→

chido his puros. Qué
chido his carcajadas. Qué
chido his golfas. Qué
chido his reloj de plata. Qué
chido his groserías. Qué
chido his copitas de mezcal. Qué
chido his billetes. Qué
chido his puñetadas. Qué
chido his bigote. Qué
chido his cuerno de chivo. Qué
chido his piropos. Qué
chido his tarjetas telefónicas. Qué
chido his pachangas. Qué
chido his antojos. Qué
chido his pasitos Duranguense. Qué
chido his gallos. Qué
chido his rompecabezas. Qué
chido his grito.

■

Marooned in salmon-
morning colored sand, surrounded
and keep on going by desert marigolds
and never turn back and sotol, a rusty '68 Impala:
and blackness a wetback's motel.
ahead
The sun rising
in the rearview mirror. Bucket
morning
seats torn out. In the trunk, on a pile
and keep on going of tattered jackets,
and never turn back an acoustic guitar
and blackness like a mischievous girl lifting

→

ahead

her dress.

■

Hoy enterraron al Monchie.
El Mero Mero de Durango. Mister
No Contaron con Mi Astucia.

His brothers
carried his black caja
through las calles
of Orizaba.

They dressed him
in a Dodgers jersey,
necklaces de oro,
snakeskin botas.

Before digging
under a mulberry,
his cuates poured
caguamas

on the ground
to loosen the earth.
His caja was lowered slowly
into the dark.

Instead of dirt
his jefe tossed
a fistful of silver bullets
on the caja.

■

porque no quiero olvidar me voy me voy

(the trumpet cries)

a Los Angeles porque no quiero olvidar

me voy a Los Angeles me voy

(the accordion moans)

a Los Angeles porque no quiero olvidar

mi México

(the trumpet wails)

Notes

“El Louie” is José Montoya’s most famous poem. An elegy for a pachuco and Korean War veteran who lived in Central California, it is noted for seamlessly weaving English, Spanish, and caló into an unvarnished portrait of a man battling addiction and assimilation.

This poem borrows lines from Robert Hayden’s “Runagate Runagate” and lyrics from two corridos (border songs), “El Crudo” and “El Deportado.”