Drawing Offensive/Offensive Drawing: Toward a Theory of Mariconógraphy

Robb Hernández

University of California, Riverside

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

> I suppose people will use [maricón] in jest. But I don't know if that makes it any less offensive . . . People will say many things in private. People swear. But there is a difference when you display it.
>
> —Michelle Gonzalez (qtd. in Kelly)

On September 15, 2012, Toronto Blue Jays shortstop Yunel Escobar took to the diamond of Rogers Centre armed with all the accoutrements of a professional baseball player facing off against his team's adversaries, the Boston Red Sox: oiled glove in hand, sunglasses to deflect the intrusive stadium lighting, and eye black to withstand the sun's glare. However, inside the covered stadium dome there would be no interfering sunlight, no meddlesome reflective surfaces, and no need to evade natural elements impinging on his sight. Escobar entered the arena facing throngs of spectators, teammates, and sports journalists bearing a brash message written in the greasy smudging beneath his eyes. It read: "*Tú ere[h] maricón* [You are a faggot]" (see Figure 1).[1]

His face inscribed with a defamatory Spanish slur, Escobar became the subject of intense scrutiny for what some defended as a "joke" in poor taste. Social media sports bloggers picked up Escobar's photograph and circulated it widely. Many mainstream news outlets questioned the premeditated nature of the act and whether the anti-gay pictorial statement merited punishment. Major League Baseball investigated and finally suspended the shortstop for three games. At a poorly organized press conference, Escobar apologized and yet explained that *maricón* in his native Cuba could not be accurately translated into English—that it was a "word without meaning" (qtd. in Duque). He explained that the statement was aimless, harmless, and directed at no one in particular.[2] His defense of cultural mistranslation was puzzling; he struggled to clarify its ordinary use among Cubans as a culturally specific turn of phrase that was nevertheless empty of historical, social, or political significance.[3] In the eyes of Escobar, *maricón* meant nothing.

Yet his bodily articulation said otherwise. His facial self-inscription in the visual field marks slippage in body, image, and text. His visibility is contingent

© MELUS: The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States 2014. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States.
All rights reserved. For Permissions, please e-mail: journals.permissions@oup.com.
DOI: 10.1093/melus/mlu020

Figure 1. Tom Szczerbowski, photograph of Yunel Escobar (2012), photograph. Image courtesy: Getty Images.

upon a dialectic of the hypermasculine macho and its oppositional other, the abject maricón. Thus, in order to read Escobar's machista virility, the public had to rely upon a repertoire of unseen images removed from the baseball arena and beyond the bounds of the athlete's photocomposition. His portrait, resonating with broader sports imagery of athletic heroism, redirects our vision to the blind spot of this image, to that "blind field" in Roland Barthes's assessment where our "partial vision" (57) grasps at that which exists beyond the photo frame, "triggered" (55) by the punctum—Escobar's hailing of the invisible figure of the faggot.[4] This raises the question: if he is not a maricón, then who is?

In this essay, I interrogate the "archival sight" of two competing though interrelated image archives of heteronormative Latinidad and Eurocentric gay male visual culture. Drawing on what José Esteban Muñoz calls "race myopias/queer blind spots" (*Disidentifications* 8), in which queer of color subject positions confront and disidentify with shortsighted exclusions in race and sexuality identity discourse, separating one from the other, I call attention to the partial vision engendered by image archives granting racial and sexualized subjects exclusive visibility, yet reinforcing queer racialized blindness. It is necessary to develop a disidentifying visual analytic to read through these manifold blind spots and discern how, in this case, maricón abjection is contested and reclaimed through oppositional rereadings and image productions. The result is a cultural theory of maricón iconography, which I term *mariconógraphy*.[5]

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Embracing the hybrid linguistic nature of Latina/o transcultural and transborder subjectivities through the conjoining of *maricón* and *iconography*, mariconógraphy is a shared sensibility and subversive line of image production that empowers culturally distinct ways of being and seeing maricones. Through recognizing the offensive hostility inlaid with this term, mariconographic visuality answers with an equally combative, unapologetic, and flamboyant set of tactics in self-, social, and collective display embodied in gesture, pose, movement, and varied styling idioms. As Muñoz argues, rather than rejecting the "toxic language of shame," we must find productive uses for "stigmatizing speech permit[ting] us to arrive at an important mapping of the social." As such, mariconógraphy is not solely a corpus of images but also a critical way of rereading, rearticulating, and, as Muñoz posits, "reinhabiting" ("Feeling" 70) the offensive distorting borders of Latino heteropatriarchy and hegemonic forms of Eurocentric gay masculinity searching for other social formations in picture and word. Doing so, we illuminate this abject subject from its pervasive blind spots in the archive guided by a fundamental question: what does a maricón look like?

This essay presents a counterarchive of mariconógraphy through a gallery of maricón pictorials.[6] By critically reengaging with these materials, we can ascertain historic efforts by Latina/o image-makers to render maricón abjection in empowering terms of form, narrative, and aesthetics. A lineage for these images emerges not separate from but within and constitutive of the broader milieu of Latina/o cultural production, gay and lesbian visual culture, feminist art, and in particular, Chicana/o contemporary art and portraiture. While I cite/sight examples of mariconógraphy in literature, performance art, film, painting, photography, and ceramics, this essay foregrounds the formative and collaborative portrait studies of Los Angeles-based Chicano avant-gardists Joey Terrill (1955-present) and Teddy Sandoval (1949-1995). These artists jointly examined the inflammatory maricón image as an idea and impetus for their interventionist work and social activism in the 1970s. They demonstrate that mariconógraphy is not a recent invention but rather an integral means of everyday personal expression, social documentation, and cultural survival. Thus, a theory of mariconógraphy enables one to see how Escobar's self-inscribed display resignifies his body within a broader image archive where the pervasive, incendiary, and reprehensible maricón figure looms, haunting his hypermasculine legibility from archival margins.

Archival Sightseeing

Sight is an inherent condition of the archive. Institutional archives have the authorial power to shape sight with incontrovertible consequence, not only by obscuring, redacting, or de-accessioning papers and manuscripts but also by directing how researchers derive meaning through archival inquiries. Blindness

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

implicitly shapes archive historiographical methods where cultural meaning is contingent upon what the collection cites/sights. Archival sight is frequently the catalyst for counterarchive visual reading strategies contesting ocular discipline. According to Shawn Michelle Smith, "[a]rchives train, support, and disrupt racialized gazes, infusing race into the very structures of how we see and what we know" (11). Those engaged in critical ethnic, feminist, queer, and decolonial theory take up the biases, misinformation, and fraught vision of systematic mainstream archives to interrogate an authorial gaze. Emma Pérez observes:

> While I'll not always find the voices of the subaltern, the women, the queers of color, I will have access to a world of documents rich with ideologies that enforce white, colonial heteronormativity. A white heteronormative imaginary has defined how researchers and historians as well as cultural critics have chosen to ignore or negate the populations who are on the margins. . . . I am arguing for a decolonial queer gaze that allows for different possibilities and interpretations of what exists in the gaps and silences but is often not seen or heard. (129)

Pérez provokes closer consideration of the researcher's eye and the interpretive methods that look blindly at records, neglecting what decolonial queer gazing sees. Her disidentifying axiom to "look beyond white colonial heteronormativity [and] interpret documents differently" (124) echoes Ann Laura Stoler's assertion to look "along the archival grain" into the colonial logics and "evidential paradigms" (91) of systematic archive content and form.

I am moved by Pérez's decolonial queer gaze, even though it remains preoccupied with textual documentation and does not offer a more precise account of archives' image-text multi-sightedness. After all, visual evidence transmits cultural knowledge among media, genre, and form. Drawing on the interstices of race in institutional and vernacular photographic archives, Smith contends, "One recognizes a photograph and deciphers its various meanings by posing it (consciously or not) in relation to other photographs. Each photograph negotiates not only the past of its split-second historical referent but also a photographic past of other images" (10). I contend that archival sight pathways occur not only through the interaction between the researcher and a monolithic "white colonial heteronormative" repository (E. Pérez 124) in accord with Pérez's premise but also through the intersectional sights of image-archive relations. After all, even counterarchives of subjugated subjects are dispersed, scattered, and entangled sights/sites in a melee of collection practices, preservation efforts, display strategies, and memory aids, casting blind spots in different modes of visual documentation. Relationships between counterarchives of "the populations who are on the margins" (E. Pérez 129) obscure cultural contexts and political specificity as they counter discourses of inferiority, criminality, savagery, or perversity. Rather than seek correctives to institutional text-based archives under Pérez's interpretive schema, I take my prompt from Smith by juxtaposing the queer

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

and racialized "past[s] of other images" and argue that we need to understand and make strange the multiple visual grains shaping which sexualities are seen and which are not. It is only then that the blind spots of the maricón are made visible.

In this essay, I adopt a mariconographic resistant reading strategy to look through the archival sight and reciprocal blindness between the visual archives of gay men and Chicana/o culture in order to see and interrogate gay Eurocentric and Latino heteromasculinist ocular authority. I do so with a particular interest in the visual discourses permeating art production in the late 1960s and 1970s. As the cultural arm of the Chicana/o *movimiento*, the Chicana/o art movement grew from the convergence of social protest, labor demonstrations, and student mobilizations in the streets of el barrio, fields of the farmworkers, and classrooms of educational disenfranchisement. Cultural workers challenged invisibility through the production of images and words that contest social marginalization and repugnant media depictions. According to Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "the initial phase of the Chicano cultural project (circa the mid-1960s) was seminal in validating emancipatory communal practices and codifying the symbols and images that would be forcefully deployed in adversarial counter-representations" (134). In this moment, historic revisionist and mythic images proliferated, with a reverence for pre-Columbian and indigenous iconography, revolutionary idolatry, social realism, and communal forms of public address, including murals, prints, posters, and political ephemera.

An additional strand of visual investigation emerged in dialogue with European avant-garde movements and sensibilities that infused Dada anti-art, Surrealist fantasy, and Fluxus-inspired "event" interventions with street protest, correspondence art poetics, and political performance. For example, the East LA conceptualist art collective Asco (Spanish for "nausea") formed by Harry Gamboa, Jr., Gronk, Willie Herrón, and Patssi Valdez in 1972 sought the "performative subversion of the historical process that has produced Chicano/as as the categorical blind spot . . . of dominant media as well as political and cultural institutions" (Chavoya 227). Though opposing Anglo dominant culture, these "counterrepresentations" (Ybarra-Frausto 134) were contingent upon unseen facets of queer marginality. Amelia Jones recognizes this ocular shortfall in the Asco record. Jones says that looking carefully at Robert "Cyclona" Legorreta's counterarchival photo album of early mariconographic performance art collaborations with Gronk "shifted [her] attitude about the Asco works such as *Walking Mural*, making it seem vastly more queer" (134). Jones's comment is pivotal, illustrating how heteronormative visual discourses in image archives can obscure and structure the vision of Asco's performance history. Despite subversive art practices in figurative and more experimental components of Chicana/o art production, counterarchives opposing racial hostility can reinforce a blindness for non-heterosexual subjects.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Revisiting the visual grains of the Chicana/o art movement, one is reminded of how cultural discourses propagated a salient Chicana/o body politic—a set of gendered articulations that symbolically and ideologically reiterated heteronormative, masculinist, and familial legibility in a restrictive and dual sex-gender system. The figurative, narrative, and urban cues of cultural workers at this time perpetuated a particular repertoire of Chicana/o imagery—modeling ways of seeing barrio masculinity around the political dicta of the *movimiento*, farmworker struggle, revolution, and paramilitary style codes. This can be discerned by the muscularity and athletic prowess of East LA mural production, and in particular its visual narratives.

Wayne Alaniz Healy painted *Ghosts of the Barrio* in 1974 at Ramona Gardens, a housing project in East Los Angeles (see Figure 2). Presenting a pantheon of Chicano hypermasculine heroes and legends—the Spanish conquistador, the Aztec warrior, and the Mexican revolutionary—the mural signals the colonial, imperial, and punitive past haunting the contemporary Chicana/o urban experience. Their spectral presence is a metaphorical condition that Chicano photographer and conceptualist Gamboa, Jr., likened to a "phantom culture" in the city. Armed with an arsenal to defend or protect land and home, these ghosts compose a symbolic frame for present-day Chicana/os standing guard at the footsteps of el barrio. The young men watch and survey the urban environment, structuring looking relations that ultimately privilege the eye of heteromasculine authority.

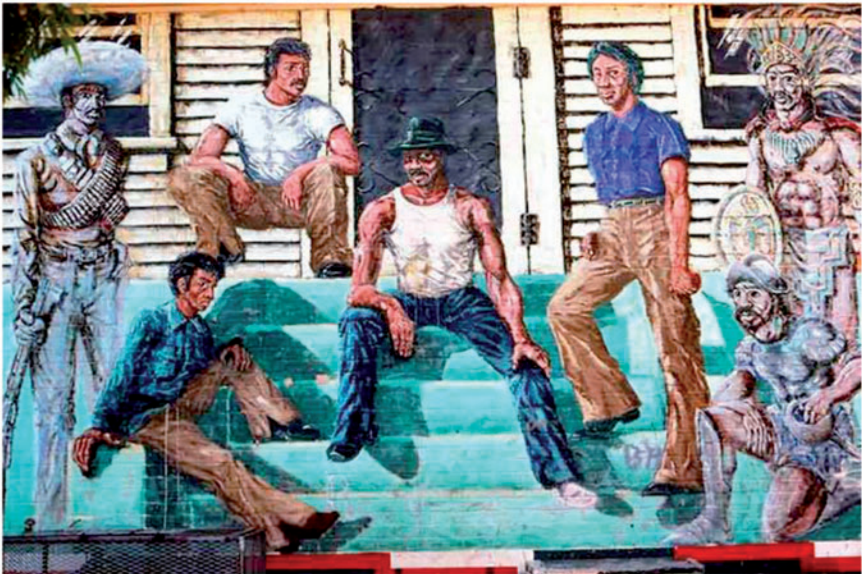

Figure 2. Wayne Alaniz Healy, *Ghosts of the Barrio* (1974), mural. Image reproduced with permission of the artist.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Such fraternal reverence undergirds the image archive of Chicana/o art, structuring a self- and community-affirming iconography. As Shifra M. Goldman concludes, “[T]here are to be found considerable numbers of images that have become leitmotifs of Chicano art. In their ubiquity, these motifs demonstrate that the Chicano phase of Mexican-American art . . . was nationally dispersed, shared certain common philosophies, and established a network that promoted a hitherto nonexistent cohesion. In other words, it was a *movement*.” And yet, what Goldman calls “nonexistent cohesion” overlooks another “common philosoph[y]” (167) dispensed in these leitmotifs: the castigation of the queer other outside its field of vision. If the prevailing heteromasculinist visual discourse of Chicana/o art production is what the archive makes visible, then it is of paramount importance to make the cultural authority of the archive transparent in the present moment by attending to those troubling images it sought to delay, subordinate, or hide: the iconography of the maricón.

Performing the Mariconographic Landscape

Based on Escobar’s muddled explanation, defining maricón is a difficult undertaking. The meaning derives from a culturally specific slippage of social, geographic, linguistic, and historical contexts that offer inconsistent but related associations with emasculation, effeminacy, penetrability, and homosexual inferiority.[7] According to Jaime Manrique, “maricón is a person not to be taken seriously, an object of derision. Without exception, *maricón* is used as a way to dismiss a gay man as an incomplete and worthless kind of person” (112). As a slur, *maricón* evokes a vehement rejection of same-sex desire and in particular the humiliating vulnerabilities of the penetrated sexual subject. As a rhetorical term, it partakes in a broader misogynistic project of eradicating male fragility, delicacy, and a perceived predisposition for exaggerated feminine mannerisms, behaviors, and preferences.

Together, these varied meanings undergird what Daniel Enrique Pérez calls the “maricón paradigm” (143), the reciprocal dialectics of Latino cultural machismo and mariconismo. According to Pérez, “all Chicanos embody some elements of machismo irrespective of their sexual identity. A direct correlative would be that all Chicanos also embody some elements of mariconismo” (143). A visual study of this paradigm is merited, as it underscores the seen/unseen relationship across these poles of masculinity. The interdependency of this couplet provides the basis from which mariconógraphy proceeds. At its foundation, mariconógraphy understands this fulcrum and implicitly empowers maricón imagery by asserting and exploiting its preeminent threat to a fragile image system of Latino heteromasculinist visibility.

Evidence of this threat is clearly shown in visual and performance sights/sites from Latina/o literary texts. With exaggerated bodily movement, gesture,

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

or facial affectation, maricones can disorient the heteronormative vision of the urban landscape in a manner that assaults the eye. The character Amalia Gomez provides an instructional example in John Rechy's *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gomez* (1991). As she sojourns along Hollywood Boulevard, her experience of the heteronormative LA environment is disturbed by a vision of flamboyant bodily utterances: "Walking toward her fluttering, was a flurry of young men. Two were blond, bleached blond, another was Mexican, the fourth black—all wore make-up. *Maricónes!* Amalia thought. Some young men whistled derisively at them from a passing car. The effeminate young men exaggerated the movements of their hips. Amalia turned away from them" (128).

Amalia's visual revulsion is similarly rehearsed in Piri Thomas's gritty Nuyorican memoir, *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). Anticipating a visit to the "maricones' pad" (55) where hypermasculine sexual mastery was shown through the defilement, penetration, and violent assault of a lisping Puerto Rican "faggot," Piri and his boys sit on a Harlem apartment stoop surveying the barrio where "the talk turned way out, on faggots and their asses which, swinging from side to side, could make a girl look ridiculous like she wasn't moving" (54).[8] Though Rechy's and Thomas's literary portraits arguably support the definition of the maricón as abject through repugnant presentations, they also project powerful images of maricones that nonetheless share a predisposition for exaggerated movement, startling appearance, and visual disruption. The movement of a maricón's hips is enough to menace, stun, and jolt Latina/o heteronormative vision away from banal barrio happenings and spatial order. Through a resistant reading of maricónography, it is possible to reclaim the shocking charge of this sight and discern how daring, risky, brazen, and confrontational images threaten and challenge. In the face of subordinated cultural invisibility, public hostility, and daily encounters of harassment and violence, "maricones," as Manrique reminds us, "can be the fiercest people" (114).

Traces of these audacious and fierce self-articulations can be found in the early experimental performance art of Legorreta and Mundo Meza from East Los Angeles, 1969-1972. Using found materials, barrio detritus, luminous fabrics, and women's clothing to fabricate what Julia Bryan-Wilson calls a "queer handmade aesthetic" (91), they ruptured the mundane happenings of the barrio, provoking urban residents into a frenzy. As Legorreta recalls in an interview, "I was in junior high, around fourteen years old. I met Mundo right about that time and became a team, me and Mundo, running up and down Whittier Boulevard in this semidrag to open people's minds. Of course, there was an element of our society at that time that couldn't dig it. We had knives and guns pulled on us at parties. I almost got killed" (481).

Seizing the streets, parks, mercados, and schools of East Los Angeles, their outrageous embodiments tested and "liberated" the bounds of Chicano gender and sexual conformity. The infamous *Caca-Roaches Have No Friends*

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

performance at Belvedere Park on November 20, 1969 provides an important case in point (Hernandez 6). Written by a reclusive young artist known only as Gronk, this experimental show correlates the *cockroach*, an insidious racialized discourse of Mexicans as LA's unwanted pests with *Caca*, Spanish for human excrement. The performance positions East LA spectators in the filth, confronted by the socially repulsive and pressed against the symbolic asshole of the fraught Chicano cultural condition.

Emerging from this scatological waste was Legorreta dressed as Cyclona, who marshaled the Caca-Roaches attired in black lingerie, fur, and white face paint. An aggressive red lipstick bloodied his mouth. The same crimson color was found on his fingernails. Photo-documentation from this show reveals Cyclona teasing the public. He raises his skirt provocatively, showing his furry thigh. In another snapshot, he exposes his odorous armpit defiantly in what Legorreta called, "a protest against gerontocracy" (Personal). A crowd of unsuspecting barrio residents was shocked to witness Legorreta and Meza stage a simulated orgy and public castration in the infamous "cock scene" (Hernandez 8). The outrage caused by these salacious actions demonstrates how mariconographic tactics challenged complicit Latino heteromasculine ocular authority and undermined the spatialization of heteronormativity in the LA barrio landscape. That is, Legorreta and Meza's interventionist counter-appearances destabilized the social reproduction of masculine space in a reversal of machista self-image that pervaded murals like Healy's. "I always say East L.A. was like a giant rubber," Legorreta told Elston Carr from *LA Weekly* in 1994. "[It] was ready to explode" (qtd. in Carr 18).

A similarly uninhibited mediation of barrio space enacted through tactics of self-fashioning and public display was evoked in John C. Goss's classic docudrama *Wild Life* (1985), also set in East Los Angeles. The film, ironically released in the same year as Meza's death from AIDS-related causes, sets a symbolic punctuation mark in the broader register of mariconographic imagery, portending the devastation to come. AIDS is not mentioned in the film and remains a shadow not yet realized in the lives of 15-year-old Chicanos César and Carlos. Goss's documentary blends sound stage interviews and personal testimony with a semi-ethnographic strategy.[9] Staged for the benefit of Goss as well as the viewer, the young men reenact vignettes modeling "wild life" in a tutorial of the language, fashion, facial affectations, consumer behaviors, and dramatic flair that similarly defined mariconographic performance in the 1970s.

In the film, Goss's camera advances from the shallow confines of the studio to the preferred "wilds" of East LA. He composes an expansive cultural geography for César and Carlos. Dislocated from the more commonly found domesticating environments for teens—the home or school—these queer adolescents take their fashion show to the streets, sharing a more profound relationship with various elements of the barrio cultural landscape: bus stops, alleyways, urban furniture, deteriorated car parts, vacuous doorways, and voids between buildings.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Fashioning a look that escapes the private domain, Gabriel Gomez observes that "wild style is a public issue not only in the boys' clothes themselves, but also in the process of changing into them. These two boys are aware of dominant culture's prohibitions. They transgress its codes to express themselves as oppositional and further as self-defined. . . . Their self-presentation hinges on the sexuality expressed in the act" (86).

In one instance, the young men explain how Carlos cannot wear his "wild" clothes at home under the conservative conditions established by his Mexican mother who refuses his efforts to dress like César because "it looks too feminine" (*Wild*). As a result, he is forced to disrobe in the streets, seeking refuge in the dark recess of a building, threatened by imposing LA sunlight. Goss's camera takes a stationary position, at first carefully distanced, granting cautious discretion to Carlos's state of undress. The wide shot foregrounds the mise-en-scène. The barrio becomes his dressing room.

As a "wild life" style authority, César helps Carlos dress. He tenderly attends to Carlos's hair, shaping it, molding it. Finished, he displays a look of great satisfaction. Much as Meza painted Legorreta's face with technical precision, César partakes in a similar intimate labor of image creation. This is further punctuated at the close of the film. Goss returns César to the sound stage, which is lit by the iridescent glow of black light. In the dark silence, César paints his face, contouring its surface. The strokes of fluorescent paint reshape his facial plane, applying designs of his queer Chicano self across one half of his epidermal canvas. This final scene is paired with Carlos's poetic recitation, "love is knowing you'll never be lonely again," in a correlating act of self-image expression drawn against Goss's juxtaposed edit (*Wild*). To construct an image, to look "wild," and to be a maricón, constitute a creative system of self-display, visual innovation, and social collaboration.

Crossing a spatial threshold that limits the sights and mobility of transgressive Chicana/o sexuality and gender through ocular discipline and threats of violence, Legorreta/Meza and César/Carlos reinvest barrio public space, activating it with liberating ends. Mariconógraphy is imbued with these acts of spatial resistance, making places for maricones through tactical self-image work. A similar sensibility instructs Ecuadorian/Nuyorican spoken-word poet Emanuel Xavier. In "Mariconcito" (2012), he reappropriates the Spanish term for "Little Faggot," disclosing the torment he endured in his domestic space from an alcoholic stepfather, a violent mother, and a sexually abusive cousin: "Mariconcito learned to exist in a fantasy world and was smart enough to survive, sure that someday a real man would save him from stupidity. He just smiled aware that one day the joke would be on them" (2). "Learn[ing] to exist" in fantasy, Xavier's tactical position contests his familial and environmental conditions, performing in a manner reminiscent of the "wild life." He shares a lived experience that contests and challenges spatial arrest and ocular scrutiny through self-image conveyance.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Like César's and Carlos's fantasized reenactments on a sound stage, living "wild" through flashy dress, fashionable gloss, and fierce bravado, Xavier echoes a related desire by reimagining his circumstances and appearance. With a playful nod, he suggests that even a mariconcito knows that his survival is not only possible but also imminent. Xavier's poetic self-reflection challenges his environmental confines by evoking a self-image that powerfully foresees "the joke would be on them."

Maricones in the Portrait Gallery

While performance is a constituent part of mariconógraphy, portraiture also participates in the collaborative impulse from which the maricón self-image is reclaimed and reexamined. Portraits are critical discursive sights/sites through which personal and social narratives are pictured, contested, and staged. As Ernst Van Alphen reminds us, "Not only does [the portrait] give authority to the self portrayed, but also to the mimetic conception of artistic representation that produces that increase of authority. Since no pictorial genre depends as much on mimetic referentiality as the traditional portrait, it becomes the emblem of that conception." For contemporary artists the link among the portraitist, bodily form, and the sitter's accurate depiction is deconstructed. Such art practices often undermine "the mode of representation which makes us believe that signifier and signified form a unity" (241).

In the context of the Chicana/o art movement, image-makers revived the genre, finding renewed interest in conveying, depicting, and recording a corpus of individual heroes, historical figures, and iconic myths seldom found in the elite annals of European portrait galleries and institutional art museums. In fact, the catalogue from the historic *Chicanismo en el Arte* exhibition at the LA County Museum of Art (May 6-25, 1975) highlights portraiture among the most popular genres represented in the show. The curators explain:

> [F]or several artists, portraiture offers a strong means of communication.... Manuel Samaniego (California State University, Fullerton) employs some of the vocabulary of the illustrator to portray both the virility and the disadvantage of the Chicano male. Yet the pictorial integrity and emotive conviction of these single and group portraits place them beyond illustration. (*Chicanismo* 1-2)

In their evaluation of the work of Samaniego, the curators reconstitute discursively the ways in which portraiture permits "communication," surpasses mimetic illustration, and performs masculinist narrative. Clearly, this fraternal ideology was an undeniable element of the genre and instructive to the formative visual vocabulary of early career male artists. In mariconographic terms, the genre's conflation with Chicano heteromasculinist visual discourse informs the

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

context for deft visual tactics and interventions. With bodily articulation, self-imagery, staged subjectivities, and tactical poses, these subversive images of the maricón undermine the portrait's authorial field of vision and heteronormative vocabulary. The collaborative portrait productions of LA-based Chicano artists Terrill and Sandoval further demonstrate this.

The work of Sandoval was a major influence on Terrill's aesthetic. Terrill first encountered Sandoval's work at the "Chicanarte" show at the City of LA Municipal Gallery at Barnsdall Art Park in 1975.[10] Terrill was stirred by Sandoval's intaglio color print of an erect penis, which exposed a natural and unapologetic regard between homoerotic and Chicana/o artistic expression. Though the print titled *Dear Ted* (n.d.) was one of many pieces displayed among the grand scale Brown Power fists, United Farm Worker Flags, and Aztec pyramids, it expressed an artistic daring and rebellious disposition that likely stimulated Terrill, an art student at Immaculate Heart College and graduate of Cathedral Catholic High School in Lincoln Heights. According to Terrill, the name "Ted Sandoval" from California State University, Long Beach left a critical impression (2010).

Terrill's museum experience was soon followed by his coincidental introduction to Sandoval at Las Escandolosas, an experimental Chicana/o artist salon held at the home of Richard Nieblas. Their connection was quick and instantaneous. Both Terrill and Sandoval were fueled by a number of philosophical and political ideas on race, art, and sex. Whereas Sandoval would reference Native American spiritual belief, citing its mystical explanation of two-spirit people, Terrill's approach resonated with feminist art, lesbian representation, and in particular, the self-portraits of American expatriate lesbian painter Romaine Brooks (Terrill, Interview 2010). Terrill's aesthetic affinity for Brooks was not unfounded, given the art-historical influence of feminist image production permeating facets of LA contemporary art at the time. His work adopted the feminist movement mantra "the personal is political." We can read his art practices alongside the radical ways in which Judy Chicago, Sherry Brody, Miriam Schapiro, and Faith Wilding reworked craft or "femmage"—including needlepoint, quilting, crochet, and scrapbooking—for political ends (Schapiro and Meyer 151-54).[11] In particular, the book art form and feminist collage appealed to Terrill, culminating in a piece he called *30 Lesbian Photos* (1975).

Promising the reader "Explicit!" photographs of lesbians, the propagandistic quality of the cover art emboldens public fantasy (see Figure 3). Rather than reconstitute patriarchal and anti-lesbian discourses, Terrill reverses a misogynist visual logic disguising a covert feminist project behind the book cover. Asking several lesbian friends and family members to participate in *30 Lesbian Photos*, Terrill constructed a personal archive through lesbian self-representation and image-making. Instead of a sensationalist exposé, we find photographic self-portraits of lesbian everyday life: attending college, resting at home, or

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Figure 3. Joey Terrill, *30 Lesbian Photos* (1975), book art. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill.

partying with friends. Minimalist in design, each page layout centers on the woman's individual photographic submission. The only text on the page is her handwritten name. The photo album of lesbian snapshots reflects each woman's artistic contribution to the collection, self-documentary record, and ultimately, control over her visual depiction. By subverting the patriarchal gaze, Terrill's book, a rare yet significant artistic statement for a homosexual Chicano male artist of the period, challenges the exploitative and objectifying conditions undergirding lesbian representation in American popular culture. Furthermore, it demonstrates participatory art-making between a Chicana/o image-maker and his social network of lesbian friends, colleagues, and family.

Through these exchanges of art, politics, and ideology, Terrill and Sandoval sought a name for Chicana/o homosexuality. A racialized homosexual subjectivity could not be pictured fully within the limited and reductive taxonomy of identity categories that included only "homosexual," "gay," or "sissy," in which race is visually irreconcilable with sexuality. Together, they proposed an image-text strategy "to see" a Chicana/o homosexual subject. The perceptual and intuitive knowledge of "seeing" sexual difference stayed with Terrill as it was evidenced for him as a young man. Homosexuals were Anglo men sometimes glimpsed from his aunt's house, which was located just across the street from Tyke's, a gay bar in Highland Park. These men were "types" and as he would learn from his cousin,

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

they could be detected in the local laundromat by narrowing decryptions to tidy appearances and clean fingernails alone (Terrill, Interview 2010).

Nameless, unseen, and unknown, Chicana/o homosexuality was a cultural nonentity, indiscernible from Terrill's barrio reference point. Provided the heteromasculinist limitations of Chicana/o iconography and nationalist political discourse in the *movimiento*, it was something that could not be fully pictured or crystallized. The term *maricón*, however, provided Terrill and Sandoval with a visual strategy to reclaim the vile Spanish slur, opening up a range of artistic expressions much in the same way "Chicano," "Black," "Nuyorican," or "Cunt" art also sought liberation through language and cultural intervention. As a self-naming visual statement, the Mexican hostility and stigma of the "faggot" could be reinvested with empowering possibilities and resistant rereadings.

Anti-maricón sentiment was not only a hazard that young Terrill faced in the hallways of Cathedral Catholic High School but also a repugnant visual discourse prevalent in caricatures, mocking illustrations, and reviled photojournalist exploits in Mexican visual, literary, and print culture. The historical antecedents of maricón iconography might be traced to the November 17, 1901 event that *El Diario del Hogar* reported as the "Baile de Sólo Hombres" ("Men Only Ball"). A massive police raid in Mexico City at a private home led to the arrests of forty-one men, nineteen of whom were reportedly clothed in satin gowns, jeweled earrings, silk fabrics, and corsets (Irwin 169).

Nearly seventy years to the day before *Caca-Roaches Have No Friends*, the critical introduction of Chicana/o avant-garde performance art in East Los Angeles, the 1901 police invasion marked homosexuality not as an experimental behavior but as a socially organized reality. According to Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Nasser, the "clandestine transvestite ball" was not an unusual discovery under the shifting economic, technological, and social conditions of Mexico under the Porfiriato ("Introduction" 1). The notorious scandal, called "Los 41," concretized the modern Mexican homosexual subject (6). Sensationalist reports persisted for three weeks after the incident.

As a result, the Mexican print media constituted the "maricón" subject in both newspaper copy and pictures. Four vivid illustrations by revered Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada accompanied stories in *El Diario del Hogar*, creating the visual substitutes for a curious public (Irwin 174). His most incendiary lithograph, *Los 41 Maricones* (1901), is a caricatured portrait of Mexico City's homosexual underground (see Figure 4). Caballeros dressed in elegant attire lead their jubilant damas across the wood panel floor. Ball gowns swing and agile fabrics blow in choreographies of exquisite movement. At the center of the frame, a couple dances, focusing the visual composition. The dama is braced by her partner's arm; her left hand is flaccid and daintily rests in his. She is wistful and unencumbered. Her smile is accented by the thick handlebar moustache, a symbol of Mexican virility, that adorns the face of each subject throughout the lithograph.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Figure 4. José Guadalupe Posada, *Los 41 Maricones* (1901), cover of broadside. Image courtesy: Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

For Posada, the maricón is a clash of gendered signifiers—exaggerated silhouettes, voluminous hips, bulging breasts, garish mustaches, wide brows, and shorn hair. *Los 41 Maricones* is a sight to mock, a laughable portrait of Mexican male effeminates and buffoons.

Though Irwin acknowledges Posada's "schizophrenic" and "ridiculed" vision of maricones, he also sees these images "promot[ing] them affectionately not as detestable criminals but as sympathetic rakes and naughty rascals" (174). What

he fails to interrogate are the pictorial strategies Posada employs to typify the maricón image. What Posada and Irwin present as affection is actually an overly romantic notion of exploitative visual discourses. Maricones need not be depicted as "detestable criminals" to compose contemptible portraits of gender and sexual transgression. A mariconographic reading strategy demands a closer study of the visual vocabularies used to define maricón abjection and thus distinguish how the heteronormative discourse in a Mexican image archive cites/sights sexual difference. After all, Posada's pictorial imaginings had great consequence for early twentieth-century Mexican print culture, especially on "what constituted inappropriate male behavior" (McCaughan 102). As McCaughan notes, Posada's caricatured vocabulary was influential, even impacting José Clemente Orozco's contemptible illustrations of maricones as "effeminate, sexually provocative, and objects of derisive humor" (103) in the Socialist newspaper *El Machete*, and I might add, *El Ahuizote*.

Posada's maricón depiction is indicative of a more expansive visual repertoire beyond Mexico and better understood in the context of homosexuality in turn-of-the-century Latin America. Sylvia Molloy argues that "in order to defuse its transgressive and, at the very least, homoerotic charge—[posing] is usually reduced through caricature or dismissed as 'mere imitation'" (147). A mariconographic reading intensifies the exaggerated poses, movements, and posturing employed by Posada. His print works were not "affectionate" (Irwin 174) but rather a "defus[ing]" (Molloy 147) visual and literary device of the period. In these lithographs, maricones are obedient, frivolous, docile, and ultimately contained by heteromasculinist authority and a machista disciplining gaze. In a Foucauldian sense, Irwin argues that this censuring discourse contradictorily produced public curiosity about Mexican homosexuality rather than repressing it (174). In particular, Posada's reliance on the imitative pose is of note here as it served as a greater allegory for maricón sexual containment and disarmed same-sex desire.

Posada's illustrations and the maricón persecution they sanctioned anticipate the *mujercito* phenomenon in *nota roja* Mexican print culture. The groundbreaking archival work of Susana Vargas Cervantes identified 286 stories in *¡Alarma!* between 1963 and 1986 picturing "mujercitos," deceitful male-to-female cross-dressers, abhorred as they prey on "unknowing" machos through disguise, trickery, and convincing female illusion. Predicated upon ideas of criminality, exploitation, and sexual anxiety, these portrait-texts represent visual discourses making maricones silent. More specifically, *¡Alarma!* was influential to these artists discernible from Terrill's shared penchant for scandal in *30 Lesbian Photos* and Sandoval's correspondence art practices. As Rita Gonzalez notes, Sandoval's collage titled *Valle de Lágrimas* quotes *¡Alarma!*'s design aesthetic, even imitating the tabloid's logo in his faux magazine cover (322). Hence, Posada's caricatured maricones and *¡Alarma!*'s sensationalist mujercitos offer

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

insight into a Mexican image archive that mariconographic image-makers such as Terrill and Sandoval countered through a similar reappropriation of the portrait and, more importantly, a reclamation of the allegorical pose.

At Terrill's apartment in 1975, he and Sandoval used photography to execute portraits he called *The Maricón Series* (see Figures 5 and 6). In Figure 5, we see Terrill direct and determined in appearance. He fills the composition, standing face-forward. His heavy dark brow, moustache, and slicked-back hair convey a racialized masculinity, one that indexes a familiar impenetrable, virile, and athletic male embodiment. Displaying an urban style resonant among young Chicano men in the 1970s, he demands legibility within the broader vicissitudes of Mexican American masculinity and the barrio. This is further reiterated through the composition of the photograph and its reference to the criminal mug shot as well as the "gang portrait," drawing on the coterminous frontal stare, confrontational posturing, and reappropriation of photographic technology to surveil, control, and police.

In his provocative discussion of Chicana/o gang photography, Richard T. Rodríguez examines the potential danger and risk inherent in the gang portrait. As the subject circulates through the disciplinary powers of the mass media, police enforcement, and the camera lens itself, he or she has the potential to be seen as both subject and suspect. Rodríguez argues, "the goal is to seize the criminal in an attempt to control his/her purportedly inherent defiant nature. Not surprisingly,

Figure 5. Teddy Sandoval with Joey Terrill, portrait from *The Maricón Series* [photograph of Joey Terrill] (1975), black and white photograph. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill and Paul Polubinskas.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

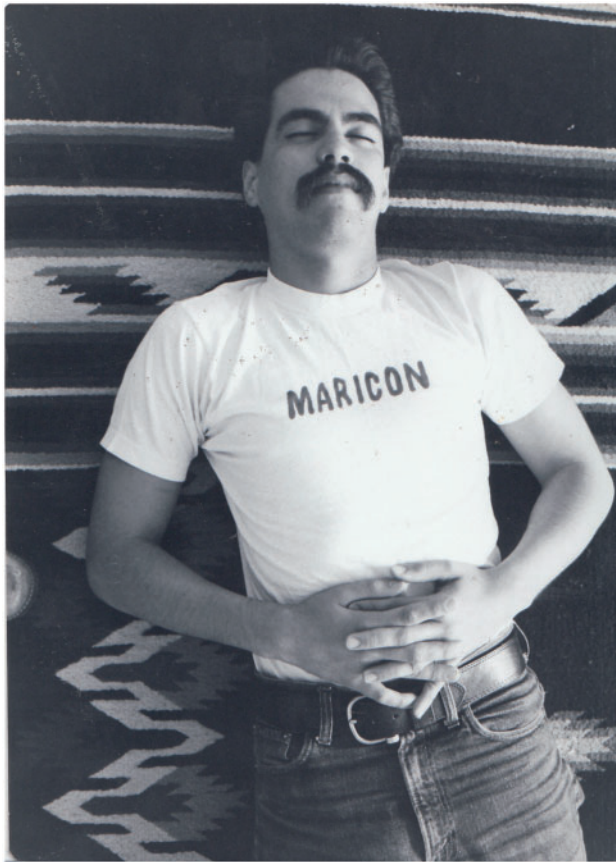

Figure 6. Teddy Sandoval with Joey Terrill, portrait from *The Maricón Series* [photograph of Joey Terrill] (1975), black and white photograph. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill and Paul Polubinskas.

photographs have been used to identify the criminal and to pin down the alleged suspect/subject of gang activity" ("On" 139). In the visual field of the portrait, Terrill and Sandoval borrow from the mug shot and Chicana/o gang vocabulary, crafting intelligibility through related inferences of defiance, social disobedience, and hypermasculine aggression.

However, the mariconographic photocomposition also undermines these conventions through the textual self-descriptor "maricon" branded across Terrill's chest. His facial affectation and bodily presentation in the portrait signal police surveillance on multiple levels, as a pseudo-mug shot of the inherent criminality of LA's barrio youth under Rodríguez's premise, as well as the imagined perversion of the "sexual outlaw" lurking in the dark corners of the sexual underground (Rechy, *Sexual*). Los Angeles in the 1970s was a site of police entrapment, harassment, and bar raids for homosexuals—something that Terrill and Sandoval were likely to have experienced, observed, or known.[12]

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

This sensibility is made clear in Figure 5. By resisting any inviting facial cues, Terrill is made to seem hard and foreboding. His clenched mouth, protruding jaw line, and direct, pointed gaze intimidate the viewer, exteriorizing a public image that upsets the flaccid delicacy of Posada's maricón buffoons. Terrill's active posturing is not merely legible among signifiers of barrio masculinity but also reads as a sexual self-descriptor. In this instance, he prefers to be seen as the aggressor in the dalliance of male cruising. As he stands against the shallow space of one of his abstract paintings, the portrait indexes his identity as Chicano artist within his pictured self-expression. The self-documentary portrait conjoins mariconógraphy with the visual possibilities of his own artistic repertoire, situating this self-image articulation among his affinities for Chicana/o art and American abstraction.

Whereas recent critical attention to Terrill's oeuvre, and in particular his T-shirt production, has brought attention to the queer exponents of Chicana/o avant-gardism in East Los Angeles in the 1970s, few regard this image work within the growing camera culture, contemporary art theory, and portraiture practices in Chicana/o conceptualism of the time. Further, the image itself is often interpreted without taking into account its explicit relationship to a broader series of Terrill and Sandoval portrait studies and mariconographic visual exercises and negotiations. For example, in Figure 6, we see a revised portrait from the same photo shoot. Posed supine, Terrill rests his folded hands on his torso. Whereas his aggressive gaze in Figure 5 appropriates the criminalizing vocabulary of the mug shot and gang photograph, here his eyes are closed in passive reflection. No longer demanding self-recognition through an unapologetic glare, his internal retreat solicits and invites. The stagey attributes of the photograph foreground a self-objectifying and alluring display. His is a receptive body to be looked at, a motionless pose that subverts the intimidating surface typical of Chicano hypermasculine bravado and, in turn, entices voyeuristic consumption. This tension undergirds the portrait as it pictures a solid masculine body positioned in a fragile repose.

Within the visual frame, Terrill has replaced the abstract painting in Figure 5 with a Mexican zarape or folk blanket, a culturally specific prop on which he lies. Bearing the marking of the maricón on his body, his self-display is a collision of racialized, gendered, and sexualized signifiers. The image collapses a Chicano masculine virility with a culturally and linguistically specific slur, and the zarape itself is offset by its homoerotic possibility. That is, Terrill returns to the allegorical use of the maricón pose prevalent in Posada's and Orozco's reprehensible drawings. Defying homoerotic containment and literalizing his same-sex desire, he physically has turned his back to the heteronormative dicta and procreative logics of Mexican and Chicana/o nationalism in favor of lurid sexual behaviors, behaviors lurking just beneath the still surface of the machista in waiting.

In both portrait studies, we face the word "maricon" stretched across Terrill's chest. In each frame, his fit athletic body practices a posture externalizing a

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

pejorative slur in a range of self-image articulations that confront the hostility and vulgarity of the term. As we read this badge of pride across the text of his body, Terrill and Sandoval ask us to ponder: is this what a maricón looks like? Mariconographic portraiture, in this way, is defiant and unapologetic. As a practice of visual expression, it ruptures the flamboyant caricatures in Posada's illustrations and seeks to empower not only through its pictorial modes of representation and presentations of self but also in its forthright citation of a sequestered subjectivity within Chicana/o visual culture. Here, Terrill and Sandoval create a portrait that is not only salient as Chicano *and* homosexual, but that also stands in for a more extensive communal identity.

Aspects of a socially grounded visual analytic can be seen in a collection of Terrill's acrylic paintings from the early-1980s known as the "clone" series. These figurative social portraits were an important documentary exercise in his burgeoning aesthetic rejecting a masculine archetype of gay clones: cowboys, brawny lumberjacks, leather bikers, and Lacoste-wearing party boys. According to journalist Michael Joseph Gross, this self-image formed after Stonewall: "Gay stereotypes got butch: out went the queens and in came the clones—hypermasculine, moustachioed men whose big muscles, Levis, and work boots became premium symbols of gay identity."

Deconstructing this repetitious and arcane archetype, Terrill's paintings, including *Nine Clones and a Hula T-Shirt, Clone on a Bicycle, Summer Became an Endless Round of Parties Said the Clone,* and *Clones Eating Taquitos* (c. early 1980s), interrogated a model of gay manhood through visual sarcasm and stinging parody (see Figure 7). Clone social portraiture provided Terrill with a method of analysis that exposed the absurdity of these image conventions and illuminated the ways that racialized signification was a troubling subject in this world of nondescript gay drones. The series is purposeful and self-referential, perhaps quoting the visual lessons he learned in a Highland Park laundromat as a young man taught to eye homosexual difference, or in this case, homogeneity.

According to Terrill, he exhibited the series at least twice at A Different Light, a historic gay and lesbian bookstore in Silver Lake. His paintings were not always met with the satirical humor he had intended:

> I remember that the proprietors . . . loved that I was sort of parodying within the gay community and there were a couple of people who actually came up to me and said they were offended or criticized, 'why are you making fun of the clone?' Well think about it? What's the whole concept of being a clone? What about being an individual? We're subjugating our individuality to become a part of a group. (Interview 2010)

The clone paintings offer instructional examples of the period, demonstrating how young Chicana/o artists countered this era of gay self-replication with scrutiny of conformist modes of self-display, selective measures of male beauty, and

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Figure 7. Joey Terrill, *Clones Eating Taquitos* (c. early 1980s), acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill.

the reiteration of image "types." This critique and its diaristic notes show how the communal elements of his portrait collaborations with Sandoval shaped his later painterly expressions, which grew more reliant on photorealism, autobiographical narrative, and social documentation. In fact, his clone visual commentary was critically informed by the next iteration of mariconographic portrait photography, which more directly positioned barrio queer sexualities against a Eurocentric clone tableau.

Terrill and Sandoval's mariconographic portrait exercises resonated with several friends and acquaintances also seeking ways to display Chicana/o homosexual cultural expression and political identity. By 1976, Terrill produced another series of maricón T-shirts and, for his Chicana lesbian counterparts, malflora companion pieces. Literally translated as "bad flower," *malflora* is a stigmatizing euphemism for Latinas without the "proper" attributes of feminine fragility and delicacy. Such characteristics are conveyed in Helena María Viramontes's *Their Dogs Came with Them* (2007), a novel set in East LA, where Turtle is viciously attacked for "behaving like some unholy malflora" (25) because she refuses to wear breast-defining accoutrements. In this way, Terrill extended the mariconographic visual project to the malflora, something anticipated by his formative participatory art projects such as *30 Lesbian Photos*. In his second generation of T-shirts, Terrill foregrounds a uniform yellow façade embellished with different lettering. Pointedly adopting a blend of graffiti and Old English typography, he made a tactical decision to situate his image work with the calligraphic

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

type popularized in the barrio vernacular (see Figure 8). According to Chicano graffiti artist Chaz Bojórquez, "cholo writing" manipulates the affluent, esteemed, and official authority of the font-text and applies it as an officially sanctioned signature. Thus, the *placa* ("tag") demarcates a social and communal signatory inscription upon the barrio. Bojórquez reminds us, "Cholo is much more than just graffiti. It's a lifestyle. . . . This style of graffiti is written by the neighborhood for the neighborhood" (6).

By literally drawing on this traditional barrio typography in his second iteration of the portrait-texts, Terrill employs the Chicano hypermasculine connotations of the typesetting for the unifying ends of maricón/malflora community. In his assessment of Terrill's work, Rodríguez examines the wide dissemination of maricón and malflora T-shirts as "performative politics" ("Being" 476) but understates the significance of the alternate typographies between different cycles of T-shirt production in 1975-76, especially in relationship to the larger context of contemporary art practice and Terrill and Sandoval's collaborative oeuvre. In 1975, Terrill and Sandoval's initial mariconographic portraits conveyed racialized and sexualized signification without an overt appeal to barrio graffiti. Instead, they relied upon a mélange of camera positions and visual cues including self-display, bodily gesture, props, and, particularly, posing.

Terrill's later introduction of cholo writing ushered in a more expansive repertoire of performance expression for the wearer of the T-shirt, not only in

Figure 8. Joey Terrill, *Louis Vela in Maricón T-Shirt* (1976), detail of black and white photograph. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

gay and lesbian pride parades, as Rodríguez has noted, but also in varied spatial contexts and portrait practices. Maricón and malflora self-image articulations stake different claims, allowing a range of performative possibilities to happen through the interaction of maricones/malfloras, LA cultural landscape, and group portrait photography—performances that advance Terrill and Sandoval's mariconographic visual expression on a wider scale. By encoding their bodies with "cholo writing," they draw racial and sexual legibility through the very barrio vernacular and typographical design that otherwise disavows them. Embodying the placa, their bodies mutually inscribe a territorial marker of collective self, displaying a maricón/malflora signature that irrefutably belongs to the urban environment.

Photographed by Terrill in 1976, Figure 9 documents an ephemeral intervention I call "corporeal tagging," wherein a collective group performance trespasses and "writes" the maricón and malflora social body against settings in which queer racialized subjects disrupt the spatial-ocular order of the landscape (see Figure 9). Daring both a Eurocentric gay and heteropatriarchal Chicano visual regime to look, see, and know the maricón/malflora figure, the resistant "body-placa" of the photograph is a pictorial challenge to those archival blind spots that refuse to cite/sight the cultural reality of maricones/malfloras in their midst. Indeed, at this time exhibiting these shirts at pride parades, gay bars, demonstrations, and gay-in rallies was a radical and political declaration. However, the broader

Figure 9. Joey Terrill, *Maricón/Malflora Group Portrait* (1976), color photograph. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

aims of Terrill and Sandoval's mariconographic portrait studies brings the conceptualist art theory of Joseph Beuys's "social sculpture" to bear on Bojórquez's spatial aesthetics of the placa. Drawing new relational structures through the reterritorializing power of the barrio signature, Terrill and Sandoval's T-shirt enterprise sculpted a social body tactically negotiating ways to name, affirm, and picture Chicana/o sexual difference. Their pictorial corpus is an audacious statement that reappropriates the pervasive invisibilities of maricón abjection as the material forms from which to empower, "mold[,] and shape the world in which we live" (Beuys).

This foundational visual vocabulary in portraiture generated other artistic proposals. For Sandoval, this meant combining his training in ceramics with mariconographic image-texts. Sandoval returned to a familiar register, drawing upon Terrill's photographic image. According to Terrill, they shared a truly collaborative relationship, frequently sitting for each other in life drawing exercises and studies of the Chicano male form (Interview 2007). In 1976, Sandoval produced a ceramic mug indexing the Terrill image on its surface. Reducing the literal translation of the sitter's likeness to basic elements of line, shape, and form, Terrill is emptied of mimetic signifiers. The drawing explores his figuration through negative space. He is a nondescript body, an abstract stand-in for the maricón subject.

On the mug, lines shape Terrill's silhouette, tracing his jaw, expressionless face, and moustache, correlating the blank form with motifs of Mexican masculine virility and homosexual clone culture (see Figure 10). The shared visual symbol of the moustache redraws racial and sexual signifiers and cultural parallels. Might the Mexican machista and the macho clone share predilections for hypermasculine self-display? As Shaun Cole notes,

> clones wore their garments in a self-consciously tight manner in order to enhance their physical attractiveness. They kept their hair short, beards and moustaches clipped, and clothing fitted and matched. The clothes worn by the clones have a quite different meaning from the clothes' original meaning. . . . [T]hey "infuse[d] the style with a new meaning of eroticism and overt sexuality." (95)

Depicting the maricón in a chest-baring shirt, Sandoval evokes a similarly suggestive tone in dress. Punctuated by the moustache, this expressionless form is resignified. The figure conveys a penchant for Mexican masculinity and homoerotic anonymity. Whereas earlier mariconographic portrait studies emphasized the disruptive power of the maricón's sight, Sandoval's portrait-text moves closer to a visual obscurity evinced by his omitted eyes. This piece tells us we need not bother with extraneous details, likeness, or personal identification in the manner that dominated Chicana/o portraiture and generic conventions at the time. The mariconographic male form is enough. Like a lingering shadow in an unpredictable dance of cruising, he is a looming erotic memory made manifest.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Figure 10. Teddy Sandoval, *Untitled* (1976), color photograph. Image courtesy: Joey Terrill and Paul Polubinskas.

Through the tactile utility of the decorative art medium, Sandoval's intervention shows the maricón as a bodily trace, visually experienced from the suggestive ceramic surface, glimpsed by his silhouette, and tasted through the sensory swallow of his contents. In this way, the mariconographic articulation is an allusive yet empowering sight/site of racialized same-sex desire. In their portrait-text analyses, Terrill and Sandoval's varied proposals ruptured insidious maricón visual discourses, inserting risky and unapologetic pictures of Chicana/o sexual transgression in their own way and on their own terms.

Theorizing Mariconógraphy

Mariconógraphy describes a line of artistic inquiries that strive to picture and rearticulate the provocative maricón figure in particular historical, political, and cultural contexts. As a resistant mode of critical reading, it also discerns ways of seeing and being maricón against the restrictive ideologies and imposing archival blindness of the Chicana/o art movement and Eurocentric gay clone typing. Neither formal art movement nor aesthetic, mariconographic expressions share a sensibility, daring to trick, tease, and overthrow a delicate image system of Latino heteronormativity and white gay racial superiority by reclaiming and exploiting the maricón's challenge to spatial domination and ocular authority.

Mariconógraphy should not be acknowledged in a manner that perpetuates reductive arguments of canonical inclusion, nor should it be arbitrarily assigned to the equally problematic "gay Latino art" nomenclature. To be clear, mariconógraphy is not solely interested in gay male Latino art, and as such, it is less inclined to consider image-text productions attributed to gay Latino men on these terms. Rather, as a set of subversive images and resistant rereadings unified in

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

their attitude and sensibility, mariconógraphy chooses the collaborative processes of visual expression and the profound image statements, performances, and self-displays drawn from queer Latina/o everyday strategies of cultural survival. As the portrait gallery I have presented surely attests, elements of mariconographic image production are found in the shared defiance, flamboyant daring, and brazen embellishments of its practitioners and the provocative tactics they deploy across diverse generic and interdisciplinary media. Critically attending to these pictorial imaginings of maricón images, texts, and visual precepts through the intersectional blind spots of archival sight is also to practice mariconographic ways of reading.

We must acknowledge the complex ways that the maricón has been a historic subject of visual analysis, cultural theorization, and resistant reinterpretation. Mariconógraphy is not a recent phenomenon reducible to the influx of Queer Studies and its related influence in cultural studies, contemporary art history, and museum curatorial trends in the 1990s. As my case studies have shown, *gay* and *lesbian* were inadequate descriptors to convey mariconismo in its racialized, linguistic, geographic, and transnational complexities. Mariconógraphy more closely utilizes what Roderick A. Ferguson calls "queer of color critique" (3) to reflect on visual knowledge as it establishes queer genealogies for Latino image production beyond Eurocentric intellectual histories and colonial antecedents and "attempts to disturb the idea that racial and national formations are obviously disconnected" (4). Mariconographic visual productions of Legorreta/Meza, César/Carlos, and Terrill/Sandoval happened not separate from, but in tandem with, the very barrios constituting the political landscape so revered in Chicana/o cultural studies about the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, mariconógraphy retrieves these artistic interventions from archival obscurity and redefines the place of maricones in the formative visual language of gay and lesbian liberation and, in particular, the Chicana/o art movement.

The participatory, relational, and collaborative elements of mariconógraphy blur finite lines between identity-based art and political movements, especially those taking place in Los Angeles at this time. By rereading maricón sensibility and its tactical modes of cultural expression, mariconógraphy demonstrates that, as Michael Hames-García poignantly argues, "we have been there all along" (28), theorizing the intersections of racialized queerness, collapsing seemingly inseparable image relations, contesting grains of archival sight, and proposing other visual vocabularies that permeate Chicana/o art ideologies, contemporary art theories, feminist art practices, and gay and lesbian social protest actions. A theory of mariconógraphy brings to light the restorative purpose of this counterarchive and intensifies the ways that the maricón is simultaneously subject and object of audacious image-making, provocative visual discourse, and pervasive blindness.

Returning to Escobar's assertion that *maricón* is a "word without meaning," it is clear that despite the shortstop's pronouncements, the word does mean

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

something, particularly for those Latinos audacious in their self-display and fierce in their step. As we read "*Tú ere[h] maricón* [You are a faggot]" across his face, we partake in an Althusserian hailing, interpellated as maricones and in turn, demeaned and taunted (Althusser 162-63). In short, we are maricones, and it is Escobar who makes transparent the hypermasculine ideology that escapes us. However, by seeking self-definition through the humiliation of the machista's other, not only does he measure the maricón against himself, but also he participates in a line of mariconographic image productions that uses facial contouring and bodily reinscription to reimagine the self, constructing brazen presentations and commanding sexual legibility. His visual practice signifies through drawing, marking, and painting the intimate surfaces of his body, writing so that even his Caribbean Spanish dialect grew visible, exteriorizing his *Cubanidad*. As Escobar literally draws machista definition, his face unknowingly enters a comparative mariconographic visual field that brings him closer to the blind spot, to that unseen vestige of the maricón. Together, they interface. Like the body-placa that directs heteronormative visions to see, he partakes in a resonant cultural sign of mariconógraphy. The lines and words he uses to separate these oppositional sexualities and masculinities converge and fail him. Thus, it is impossible to claim that *maricón* is a "word without meaning." In fact, Escobar's very visibility is contingent upon the maricón image, and mariconógraphy makes that visual paradox apparent.

Notes

The author would like to recognize the generous readings of editors Shawn Michelle Smith, Martha J. Cutter, Maria Seger, and blind reviewers. My gratitude to Armando García, Covadonga Lamar Prieto, Tatiana Reinoza, Luis Vargas-Santiago, and, in particular, Wayne Alaniz Healy, Joey Terrill, and Paul Polubinskas for inspiring conversations, deft insights, and art reproduction assistance.

1. In an effort to correct Yunel Escobar's grammar and to convey his tone, I emphasize "*Tú ere*[*h*] *maricón*" over the more accurate "*Tú ere*[*s*] *maricón*," preserving both his Cuban dialect and Caribbean vernacular.
2. See Anthony McCarron.
3. This was hardly the first Cuban controversy surrounding the use of the word. In 2003, Miami-based shock jocks Enrique Santos and Joe Ferrero successfully played a prank on Fidel Castro by posing as Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, using digitally altered sound bites to create a contrived scenario of political urgency on the phone. The DJs, whose hoax provoked Castro to insult the DJs and the whole of the Cuban exilic listening audience, calling them "*mariconson*" ("huge faggot"), answered his slur with laughter and in-studio applause ("US Radio," "Translated"). Broadcast live on Spanish language morning radio, their exhilaration mirrored a rallying cry, a cry queerly mediated

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

through Castro's disdain for the faggot figure. Thus, Escobar's defense of the term as a common saying in Cuba is precarious at best. If *mariconson* is not only a derogatory word but also an allegory for a particular Cuban political subjectivity, a euphemism for those who left the island, how then does Escobar, who fled Cuba for the United States in 2004, maintain its everyday use and unoffending connotations? Moreover, I want to think through the exulting emotion happening through the maricón discursive field in which Castro's belittling slur resignifies the mariconson as a marker of subterfuge, trickery, and political resistance.

4. For more about this notion of "interpellation" or "hailing," see Louis Althusser (162-63).
5. Throughout this essay, I use *mariconógraphy*, a combination of *maricón* and *iconography* in a Chicana/o literary and cultural tradition that foregrounds the founding of hybridic words—words with competing linguistic, cultural, and racial codes. At root, they shape our trans-border identities, literatures, and languages. The respective code-switching this term performs is intentional and honors the "Spanglish" barrio vernacular spoken in a place like East Los Angeles. In keeping with this spatial context, I employ *mariconógraphy* consciously, though at a later point I examine the equally provocative *mariconografía* within a Spanish cultural and literary formation.
6. My thoughts on the counterarchive are deeply indebted to Shawn Michelle Smith's elucidations of the term in relationship to W. E. B. Du Bois's Georgia Negro albums, which she says offer "a place from which a counter-history can be imagined and narrated, and, as a counterarchive . . . underscore the ways in which both identity and history are founded, at least partially, through representation" (9).
7. I would be remiss not to acknowledge that *maricón* is a historically specific and culturally varied term. While much of this essay foregrounds its visual imaginings from a Mexican and Mexican American standpoint, in no way is it representative of the image's rich cultural antecedents in different Latin American contexts. *Mariposa*, *marica*, *pato*, and *joto* are among several other linguistic vernaculars and pseudonyms that have constituted this abject figure of Latino heteromasculine derision. Each of these terms evokes a grander visual archive and cultural history that deserves additional study in relationship to national, political, and social formations. In Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes's inspiring analysis of the *pato*/*pata* image, he notes, "In Puerto Rico and at other locations in the Greater Hispanic Caribbean (and in its diaspora), to be called *pato* [male duck] or *pata* [female duck], far from being a sign of affection, is rather a quite disconcerting and at times traumatic event, for it is to be marked as queer, strange, different, sexually or gender non-compliant, or simply marginal. I have always been fascinated and disturbed [that] . . . neutral words can have such charged associations and provoke such strong emotions" (194).

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

8. The visual threat of the maricón appearance is intensified in the text when Piri's drug-induced dream is disturbed by the vision of Concha performing fellatio on him: "I looked down in time to see my pee-pee disappear into Concha's mouth. I felt the roughness of his tongue as it both scared and pleased me" (61). Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé's analysis of *Down These Mean Streets* has profound implications for the looking relations structuring the intimations between the young men and maricones; through the intermediation of the macho and maricón they conjoin into a "single entwined body" (144), something that Cruz-Malavé argues "conjure[s] up the terrifying image of his possible fixation in that state" (143). Implicitly, this illuminates not only the delicate system of masculine signification at play here, but also the maricón's shape-shifting prowess. Through sexual performance, maricones contest bodily relations and disorder ocular-spatial boundaries for the machos, driving some to close their eyes in fright, and for Piri producing a paralyzing sight: "If I didn't like the scene, my pee-pee did," he states. "I couldn't move" (Thomas 61).
9. For a discussion of the collaborative underpinnings among John C. Goss, César, and Carlos, see Gabriel Gomez.
10. This statewide California art show boasted over one hundred artists, becoming one of the first all-Chicana/o juried art exhibitions of its size and type (Comité). This exhibition preceded *Chicanismo en el Arte*, which was smaller in scale and centrally featured thirty-one emergent Chicana/o artists from twelve regional art schools (*Chicanismo*). Both shows foreground a Chicana/o museum culture emerging in Los Angeles in 1975, and both included art submissions by Teddy Sandoval.
11. See also Paula Harper.
12. For more on the climate of anti-homosexual harassment, brutality, and policing in Los Angeles, see Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons. An additional historic account of federal government-sanctioned surveillance of the so-called homosexual menace can be found in David K. Johnson.

Works Cited

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review, 1971. 121-80. Print.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill, 1981. Print.

Beuys, Joseph. "Introduction." *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America: Writings by and Interviews with the Artist*. Comp. Carin Kuoni. New York: Four Walls, 1990. 19. Print.

Bojórquez, Chaz. "Stroke as Identity." *Cholo Writing: Latino Gang Graffiti in Los Angeles*. Ed. François Chastanet. Arsta: Dokument, 2009. 6-7. Print.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Bryan-Wilson, Julia. "Handmade Genders: Queer Costuming in San Francisco circa 1970." *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977*. Ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012. 77-94. Print.

Carr, Elston. "Just Another Painter from East L.A." *LA Weekly* 18 Mar. 1994: 16-21. Print.

Chavoya, C. Ondine. "Orphans of Modernism: The Performance Art of Asco." *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*. Ed. Coco Fusco. London: Routledge, 2000. 218-40. Print.

Chicanismo en el Arte, May 6-25, 1975, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Leo S. Bing Center—First Level. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1975. Print.

Cole, Shaun. *'Don We Now Our Gay Apparel': Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Berg, 2000. Print.

Comité Chicanarte. *Chicanarte: An Exhibition Organized by the Comité Chicanarte with the Cooperation of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Park, September 14-October 12, 1975*. Los Angeles: Comité Chicanarte, 1976. Print.

Cruz-Malavé, Arnaldo. "'What a Tangled Web!' Masculinity, Abjection, and the Foundations of Puerto Rican Literature in the United States." *differences* 8.1 (1996): 132-51. Print.

Duque, Andrés. "Can Yunel Escobar Blame Comment on Cultural Differences?" *Fox News Latino*. Fox News Network, LLC, 19 Sept. 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.

Faderman, Lillian, and Stuart Timmons. *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians*. New York: Basic, 2006. Print.

Ferguson, Roderick A. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003. Print.

Gamboa, Harry, Jr. "No Phantoms." *High Performance* Summer 1981: 15. Print.

Goldman, Shifra M. "The Iconography of Chicano Self-Determination: Race, Ethnicity, and Class." *Art Journal* 49.2 (1990): 167-73. Print.

Gomez, Gabriel. "*Wild Life*: Collaborative Process and Gay Identity." *Jump Cut* 37 (1992): 82-87. Print.

Gonzalez, Rita. "Frida, Homeboys, and the Butch Gardens School of Fine Art." *Asco: Elite of the Obscure: A Retrospective, 1972-1987*. Ed. C. Ondine Chavoya and Gonzalez. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011. 318-25. Print.

Gross, Michael Joseph. "The Queen Is Dead." *The Atlantic Monthly* Aug. 2000: 62-70. Print.

Hames-García, Michael. "Queer Theory Revisited." Hames-García and Martínez 19–45.

Hames-García, Michael, and Ernesto Javier Martínez, eds. *Gay Latino Studies: A Critical Reader*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

Harper, Paula. "The First Feminist Art Program: A View from the 1980s." *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists*. Ed. Jill Fields. New York: Routledge, 2012. 87-100. Print.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Hernández, Robb. *The Fire of Life: The Robert Legorreta-Cyclona Collection*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center P, 2009. Print.

Irwin, Robert McKee. "The Centenary of the Famous 41." Irwin, McCaughan, and Nasser 169-89.

Irwin, Robert McKee, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Nasser, eds. *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901*. New York: Palgrave, 2003. Print.

—. "Introduction: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901." Irwin, McCaughan, and Nasser 1-18.

Johnson, David K. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004. Print.

Jones, Amelia. "Lost Bodies: Early 1970s Los Angeles Performance Art in Art History." *Live Art in LA: Performance in Southern California, 1970-1983*. Ed. Peggy Phelan. New York: Routledge, 2012. 115-84. Print.

Kelly, Cathal. "Yunel Escobar's Explanation Defies Logic: Kelly." *Toronto Star*. Toronto Star Newspapers, 19 Sept. 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.

La Fountain-Stokes, Lawrence. "Queer Ducks, Puerto Rican *Patos*, and Jewish-American *Feygelekh*: Birds and the Cultural Representation of Homosexuality." *CENTRO Journal* 19.1 (2007): 192-229. Print.

Legorreta, Robert. "Cyclona and Early Chicano Performance Art: An Interview with Robert Legorreta." Interview by Jennifer Flores Sternad. *GLQ* 12.3 (2006): 475-90. Print.

—. Personal Interview. 15 Sept. 2004.

Manrique, Jaime. *Eminent Maricones: Arenas, Lorca, Puig, and Me*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1999. Print.

McCarron, Anthony. "Toronto Blue Jays Suspend Yunel Escobar Three Games without Pay over Homophobic Slur." *NYDailyNews.com*. NYDailyNews.com, 18 Sept. 2012. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.

McCaughan, Edward J. "Gender, Sexuality, and Nation in the Art of Mexican Social Movements." *Nepantla: Views from South* 3.1 (2002): 99-143. Print.

Molloy, Sylvia. "The Poetics of Posing." *Hispanisms and Homosexualities*. Ed. Molloy and Robert McKee Irwin. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. 141-60. Print.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999. Print.

—. "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs)*." *Theatre Journal* 52.1 (2000): 67-79. Print.

Pérez, Daniel Enrique. "Entre Machos y Maricones: (Re)Covering Chicano Gay Male (Hi)Stories." Hames-García and Martínez 141-46.

Pérez, Emma. "Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard." *Frontiers* 24.2-3 (2003): 122-31. Print.

Rechy, John. *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*. New York: Grove, 1991. Print.

—. *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary*. New York: Dell, 1977. Print.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014

Rodríguez, Richard T. "Being and Belonging: Joey Terrill's Performance of Politics." *Biography* 34.3 (2011): 467-91. Print.

—. "On the Subject of Gang Photography." *Aztlán* 25.1 (2000): 109-47. Print.

Schapiro, Miriam, and Melissa Meyer. "Waste Not Want Not: An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled—FEMMAGE (1977-78)." 1977-78. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*. Ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996. 151-54. Print.

Smith, Shawn Michelle. *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

Stoler, Ann Laura. "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance." *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87-109. Print.

Terrill, Joey. Personal Interview. 28 Aug. 2010.

—. Personal Interview. 23 Aug. 2007.

Thomas, Piri. *Down These Mean Streets*. 1967. New York: Vintage, 1997. Print.

"Translated Transcript of the Conversation between Fidel Castro and Two Miami DJs." Trans. Antonio Rafael de la Cova. *Latin American Studies*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.

"US Radio Station Fined for Castro Prank Call." *ABC*. Australian Broadcasting Company, 26 Apr. 2004. Web. 25 Apr. 2014.

Van Alphen, Ernst. "The Portrait's Dispersal: Concepts of Representation and Subjectivity in Contemporary Portraiture." *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*. Ed. Joanna Woodall. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997. 239-56. Print.

Vargas Cervantes, Susana. " ¡Qué lio, no se sabe si es mujer u hombre! 'Mujercitos' in Nota Roja in Mexico." / Synchronicity / Contacts and Divergences in Latin American and U.S. Latino Art (19th Century to the Present). Center for Latin American Visual Studies. University of Texas, Austin. 27 Oct. 2012. Lecture.

Viramontes, Helena María. *Their Dogs Came with Them: A Novel*. New York: Atria, 2007. Print.

Wild Life. Dir. John C. Goss. 1985. Videocassette.

Xavier, Emanuel. "Mariconcito." *Americano: Growing Up Gay and Latino in the USA*. Bar Harbor: Queer Mojo, 2012. 1-2. Print.

Ybarra-Frausto, Tomás. "The Chicano Movement/The Movement of Chicano Art." *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington: Smithsonian Inst. P, 1991. 128-50. Print.

Downloaded from http://melus.oxfordjournals.org/ at University of Texas at Austin on June 13, 2014