SITUATIONIST MARGINS: *THE SITUATIONIST TIMES*, *KING MOB*, *BLACK MASK*, AND *S.NOB* MAGAZINES (1962-1970)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis parts from the premise that avant-garde art collectives produce discourses meant to articulate the opposition to the art/life divide as one that interrelates fields such as aesthetics, politics, philosophy, and even economics. By utilizing a comparative framework, it plays on the complementarity and differences between four 1960s groups that formed very specific organizations directed at challenging society, in one way or another related to the Situationist International: *The Situationist Times* (France), *King Mob Echo* (UK), *Black Mask* and its transformations (US), and *S.NOB* (Mexico). Through the medium of magazines, they intended to reach a mass audience that in the act of reading and looking at their images and texts would be prompted to discern organizations that undermined the world-system. Thus, the Situationist Times attempted to form a (people's) movement that in an applied creativity that rejected the metanarrative of progress would be able to realize the malleability of history. King Mob followed a conspiratorial logic with the idea of a dis-organized mass suddenly acting in concert against states. Black Mask and its transformations played with the idea of a war for territory, the occupation of a 'free zone' by a community in the midst of a dominated world. Finally, S.NOB's idiosyncratic anarchism came from an opposition to the totalizing discursive practices of the Mexican Revolution, giving primacy to fragmentation and an anti-organizational bent; while it had no direct relationship to any of the above groups, it shows how their techniques and theories develop out of an engagement with Surrealism and past avant-gardes. S.NOB provides not a counterpoint but a contextual revelation of the limits of these collectives, in the Bataillean sense that opens all of them up to a 'contamination' with historicity and thought that treats all of them as equal in scope and importance.

To my family

To my friends

To Itzel

To all the young punks

Acknowledgements (+ playlist[1])

This thesis is a mask made out of tens of thousands of words, an elaborate, often baroque shadow dance that for the past few years has mirrored my every movement and my every thought; with a passion I rarely ever showed it weaved together a life of plenty, a life of joy. All the uncertainties and all the precariousness that the world assures us are the essence of reality failed a simple test, and every time I was able, mostly in the shuddering shocks of a machine-like nightmare, to hold on to someone's gaze, to someone's warmth, I was able to see that journey of negation and truth as something lesser than the waste of time: play is a timely outgrowth of a love of life, and no such thing as a one-player game exists. Therefore, this moment, too, will die, and even if we forget many of its meaninglessly beautiful stories we will always carry its kindness with us, the cherished ruin of a self that in the future is now nurturing a strange forest full of wonders and terrors that we never once knew to be more than just our own. If the artists here analyzed taught me anything, it is that vitality is something to be squandered in the name of the coming community, for which our love will twist and turn into a myriad paths, armed to the teeth, ready to face a Minotaur that in the name of Reason keeps us from *belonging*, to ourselves, to each other, to the places in which our playfulness has made its home. After all, anger underlines the willful and meandering rhythms of happiness: sous le pavés, la plage! (Downtown Boys – Wave of History)

I would like to thank my supervisor Dawn Ades, who *cared* for my oft-ambitious and careless ideas with the respect only a truly wise Surrealist would – knowledge as a kind of simultaneously mad and reserved act of sharing between people for whom it is so much more than just work. I learned too much for words to suffice, and I am glad to have been mentored by someone as profoundly knowledgeable as she is. (Grouper – Lighthouse)

Gratitude comprises much less than what I wish I were able to express towards my parents, Héctor and Cristina, both of whom have supported me throughout the years with an unyielding belief that I should do whatever makes me happy. I know it has been hard for them to understand that sometimes that implies a certain sadness I would never wish away, but it is the very same sadness that combusts at the heart of the stars they so love with the particular awe of scientists. (Ólafur Arnalds – Dalur)

I would like to thank my brother Héctor and my sister Paty, who have become bastions of a strength and a process of discovery that I was only vaguely aware of, but that they so passionately revealed as a history of self-care that traced the necessity of doing away with the harmfulness of discipline and virtuosity. Perhaps, and only perhaps, we are finally free. (Lubomyr Melnyk – Ripples In a Water Scene; Shugo Tokumaru – Katachi)

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[1] I have selected music I have listened to in the past four years that is both dedication and memory of the persons listed (in parenthesis) – some have words, others do not, but for the most part their meanings matter little. An adolescent gesture of an aging, yet adolescent man.

of cities and the roaring noise of their ebullience. (Chance the Rapper – Blessings; The Observatory – The Last Grand Infallible Plan; Sky Ferreira – Heavy Metal Heart; Lido Pimienta – La Capacidad; Valgeir Sigurdsson – Draumaland; ANOHNI – Drone Bomb Me; Carla Morrison – Maleza; Dakota Suite – I Recoiled So Violently I Almost Disappeared; Drombeg – The Way Love Emerges; Empress Of – How Do You Do It; Joanna Gruesome – Sugarcrush; Odio París – Camposanto; Ryuichi Sakamoto – Arriving at Fort Kiowa; Sufjan Stevens – Death With Dignity; Teen Daze – Alaska).

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis refers to both the internationalized network of artists, writers, musicians, and architects that the Situationist International (SI[1]) was articulated upon and helped articulate, as well as the more contextual *outside* of its practical and theoretical developments. The SI was an avant-garde group[2] that existed from 1957 to 1972, centred in France. It mixed together earlier

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[1] Throughout the thesis, I have italicized the names only when referring to the magazines themselves.

[2] The definition I will use of the concept of the 'avant-garde' comes primarily from Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987, having had its first edition in 1977). To very briefly summarize, the avant-garde is a relational concept that emerges from the development of both modernity and modernism; Calinescu's definition is traced through the historical *use* of the term instead of a philosophical abstraction, throughout different geographies within the West. The basis of Calinescu's book consists of a distinction between "bourgeois modernity" and "aesthetic modernity", two akin relationships to space, time, and self that nevertheless oppose each other inasmuch as they produce different sets of values. The former corresponds to "the objectified, socially measurable time of capitalist civilization (time as more or less precious commodity, bought and sold on the market)" while the latter to "the personal, subjective, imaginative *durée*, the private time created by the unfolding of the "self". Thus, "aesthetic modernity uncovers some of the reasons for its profound sense of crisis and for its alienation from the other modernity, which, for all its objectivity and rationality, has lacked, after the demise of religion, any compelling moral or metaphysical justification." Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1987, p. 5. The avant-garde constitutes an extreme set of values that entirely rejects the bourgeois modernity and centers the free development of subjectivity as the core element of an attack upon tradition, the configuration of bourgeois society (rationalized as State), and the various relationships that stem from it. Therefore, it projects a simultaneously political and aesthetic demand that involves new connections to the self, to time, and to space. For example, this coincides with the Situationist technique of *dérive* as part of a psychogeographical method, in terms of a development of new relations with an environment with the ultimate aim of challenging completely how that environment is configured by bourgeois modernity in every sense. Calinescu's historical approach is, to me, more adequate than the more widely recognized *Theory of the Avant-Garde* by Peter Bürger (of which the first edition in English appeared in 1984, originally published in German in 1974), whose critical-theoretical framework, despite its deep concern with historicity, holds a narrow view of modernism in terms of geography (its focus is mostly on Germany, occasionally France) and does not allow the concept of the avant-garde any historical flexibility. This last point is best reflected in the criticisms made by authors such as Benjamin Buchloh (1984) and Hal Foster (1996) when it comes to Bürger's complete dismissal of the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s and the characterization of the 1910s/1920s avant-gardes as 'historical'. While the groups overviewed in this thesis fulfill Bürger's theory when it comes to the analysis, critique, and 'revelation' of the institution of art, his theory cannot accommodate certain aspects of their praxis in ways that Calinescu's actually can. For example, the Situationist Times' continual development of the concept of the situation and its many theoretical approximations to the nature of time exceed the scope of the art institution as much as they exceed straightforward political demands. This simply cannot fit Bürger's definition of the avant-garde, while Calinescu's enrichens it by establishing the avant-garde's specific relationship to time (as a distinct futurism) and the values it consequentially builds (in the ST's case, a new connection to time implies a new connection to society, and is therefore underlining a revolutionary project). There is another example in S.NOB's fragmentation of the artistic paradigms of the Revolutionary State in the artists' denial of its very continuity: art as an institution is not only seen generally, almost 'universally' as in Bürger's theory but specifically as an apparatus of power wielded in specific manners that relate directly to the configuration of said State's society. While it is arguable that Bürger's theory is enough to conceptualize S.NOB's revolt, it also leads away from the collective's use of what Calinescu understands as the relation between modernism, the avant-garde itself, decadence, and kitsch. This relationship is far from linear, and the dialectical fashion with which they operate is much more pronounced in groups such as S.NOB and King Mob (in their revalorization of pop culture) than it perhaps was in what Bürger terms the 'historical avant-garde'. However, there is an element from Bürger's theory that I do believe applies to these collectives, and that can be fit into Calinescu's own version: the aim of dissolving the art/life divide, which involves the institution of art and a political demand as

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avant-garde thought (Dada, Surrealism) with a particular strain of revolutionary Marxism as well as, in principle, an operative anarchism when it came to its organization. However, it underwent a series of ruptures and exclusions across its history, through which divergent groups emerged and established a similarly revolutionary-minded set of theories and practices (together understood as praxis). This thesis will explore the journals produced by some of these groups, specifically the *Situationist Times* (France, 1962-1967), *King Mob Echo* (UK, 1968-1969), and Black Mask (US, with transformations that made it last from 1966 to 1970). The Mexican journal *S.NOB* (1962) is unrelated to any of these groups, but will present, as will be reiterated below, the possibility of loosening the SI's historiographical dominance over revolutionary avant-gardes of the period. With this in mind, the concept of the margin alluded to in the title is not meant here to establish a core-periphery relationship, but to move exactly in the opposite direction, to stress, in a particularly Bataillean way, the very limits of the SI, opening it to historical connections that do not necessarily turn into addendums of a narrative of origins that begins with the collective's foundation in 1957. This latter approach is already available in histories of the SI written by authors such as McKenzie Wark (2011, 2013), Frances Stacey (2014), Sadie Plant (1992), Greil Marcus (1989), among others. This historiography acknowledges the place of para- or alternative Situationist projects in the various ruptures, exclusions, and resignations that the group underwent throughout its existence up until 1972 (fig. I1), but in my view it does not fully recognize the contributions these groups made to a wider Situationist discourse that does not strictly *belong* to the SI, nor does it present them as comparable projects with the same kind of all-encompassing avant-garde formulations, and rarely does it accommodate contextual placement in which 'the last avant-garde of the 20th century', as Mario Perniola called the SI[3], is perhaps only the last of many.

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much as it involves the rejection of the rationalized pretension of objectivity that according to Calinescu configures bourgeois modernity. This aim is openly stated by the SI in their analysis of Surrealism and Dada; the ST never did proclaim it, but as will be seen, the revolutionary rhetoric underpinning it and its conceptions of play and time point towards it; King Mob's direct precedent in the English Section of the SI also makes that claim in their own version of the aforementioned analysis; Black Mask and UAWMF engage it from the angle of 'creative man' deploying successfully his theory into practice; S.NOB is perhaps the most elusive in this respect, but it could be argued that if the art/life divide had been closed by the Revolutionary avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s as the everyday life of the Revolutionary citizen, the task was to reveal exactly how such a closure had been an illusion objectified into the political aesthetics of the State.

[3] Mario Perniola, *Los Situacionistas: Historia crítica de la última vanguardia del siglo XX*. Madrid, Acuarela & A. Machado, 2008. Stewart Home's *Assault on Culture* does a good job of positioning the SI as one avant-garde among many, but his efforts have not produced, so far, any more contextualizing work by other researchers.

Work on this levelling process has recently begun, with Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen's translations of the SI's Scandinavian section's texts and analyses of its activities after the exclusions of 1962-1963, contained in two anthologies: the primary-source based *Cosmonauts of the Future* (2015) and a secondary-source one titled *Expect Anything, Fear Nothing* (2011). Another avenue has been recently opened by Sam Cooper's overview of the SI's English section and its roots in British Surrealism in his book *The Situationist International in Britain* (2016). My thesis will attempt to push further these efforts by means of an outward spiral movement that begins with what is perhaps the most intimately related outgrowth of the SI, the *Situationist Times* (ST), based in Paris, France. Born in the midst of the internal conflict between the SI's Central Council (CC) and the German Gruppe SPUR, of which the aforementioned expulsion of the Scandinavians (and Germans) was the outcome, the ST effected a critical distancing from the SI that exploited its basic concepts' possibilities in order to try and establish a wider, much more flexible organization. The ST is practically a new area of study – beyond the facsimile overview of the Boo-Hooray Gallery (2011) and an article by Asger Jorn scholar Karen Kurczynski (included in the 2011 Rasmussen & Jakobsen anthology) there is almost no secondary literature, which is why my own contribution will hopefully be viewed as a point from which to open new lines of research. The ST's disappearance from the early histories of the SI and its minor relevance in the latest ones could be attributed to a historiographical trap first laid by the SI itself, in the sense in which it framed the 1962 split as one between those who would betray it by continuing to work within aesthetics and those who would follow it by turning fully towards the political. This trap is best exemplified by Peter Wollen's assertion (in 1989, seventeen years after the SI's demise) that the 1962 split "can be characterized as a split between 'artists' and 'political theorists' (or 'revolutionaries')", thus creating a 1957-1962 periodization he calls the "'art-oriented' phase of the SI"[4]. This merely repeats what Stewart Home wrote one year earlier in *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War*, exactly in those terms: "when the Situationist International split into two rival factions in 1962, one faction became known as *artists* and the

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[4] Peter Wollen, "The Situationist International", in *New Left Review,* vol. 1, no. 174, March-April 1989, p. 69. Wollen was one of the first English-language academics to engage fully with the SI as a subject of academic study, and his 1989 texts on the SI were accompanied by the first retrospective exhibition of the SI at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston that same year, entitled "On the Passage of a Few People Through a Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International, 1957-1972". The texts surrounding the exhibition, such as *Endless Pas* (edited by Iwona Blazwick) follow Wollen's periodization, which remained a staple of studies on the SI.

other as political *theorists*."[5] Nevertheless, there are antecedents for this line of thought in works as early as that of Mario Perniola's 1972 book *I situazionisti*, in which he states that "the tendency incarnated by Jörgen Nash – defined by the situationists precisely as "nashism" – is resolved into a falling back upon the artistic perspective whose supersession was the original and fundamental exigency of the SI"[6]. The polarization between artists and revolutionaries was a commonplace in the historiography on the SI that only until very recently has been starting to be reconsidered; even more philosophical works with a highly historical approach such as Sadie Plant's *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (1992) maintained that projects such as the *ST* "returned to the situationists' artistic roots", as if the SI had turned away from them. Plant is subtler than Wollen or Home, stating that "after this split […] the situationists developed a coherent critique of the society of the spectacle and adopted a more recognisable political stance, but artistic intervention continued to characterise the practices of the movement"[7], but then her text proceeds to omit the work of situationists outside of those approved by the SI. The discussion about this periodization and the characterizations it implies were summarized and thoroughly critiqued by (ex-SI, ex-King Mob members) T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson-Smith in their *October* article "Why Art Can't Kill the Situationist International" (1995); newer tendencies in historical interpretation tend to reject this periodization, well represented by McKenzie Wark's *The Beach Beneath the Street* (2011). In this book, Wark surveys the split with a much more nuanced approach that makes space for the analysis of the ST as part of the wider history of the SI, but the significance of the SI's own periodization, perpetuated by Perniola, Wollen, Home, *et al*, has an importance marked by the need from even the most recent scholarship, such as Stacey's *Constructed Situations*, to explicitly reject it. Still, books like Wark's and Stacey's are still inscribed in the historiographical current in which analysis of the SI mostly focuses on the French

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[5] Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War*. London, AK Press, 1991, p. 104.

[6] Mario Perniola, *op cit*, p. 37. Another early text on the SI, David Jacobs' *At Dusk: The Situationist Movement in Historical Perspective* from 1975, acknowledges the SI's artistic fundaments, but does so in order to reinforce the sense that they were not *political* enough: "even in spite of its absolute break with all artistic forms and "illusions," the SI always remained a cultural movement in the narrow sense of the term." David Jacobs, *At Dusk: The Situationist Movement in Historical Perspective*. Berkeley, Perspective, 1975, p. 55.

[7] Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 85.

side of the organization, leaving the rest of what de Jong called the Situationist movement[8] aside. The complete lack of studies about the United States section of the SI, however small and short-lived it might have been, is a symptom of this historiographical problem in which the SI is limited and circumscribed to the French, with the rest of the sections as merely satellites.

The next step further away in the spiral will be with King Mob (KM), based in London, UK, which also came to be as the result of the conflict between the CC and the English section in 1967 over support of the membership of the next group in the spiral, Black Mask (BM), which was from the US. King Mob was based upon the theory developed by the English section of the SI, and so is the closest to it in terms of praxis and the language used to conceptualize their avant-garde revolt. However, because the English section changed some very fundamental aspects of the Marxist apparatus deployed by the SI, King Mob turned into a looser, more threatening kind of organization, especially after it started to interpret and adopt techniques from their counterpart in the US. The group has also remained little studied, although work exists by Spanish publisher La Felguera (2010), anthologies of texts by Tom Vague (2008), and a few mentions here and there in histories of the punk band Sex Pistols by authors such as Greil Marcus and Jon Savage (1991).

Beginning as Black Mask, the US collective, based in New York City, flirted with the SI for a while in 1966, but never fully acquired (or even wanted) membership. In contrast to the French, BM was less concerned with theory, and its anarchist ethos led it to a path focused instead on performance, action, community-building, and violence. Out of all the collectives in this thesis besides the SI, it transformed the most, turning into Up Against the Wall Motherfucker! (UAWMF) by 1968 and ultimately into the International Werewolf Conspiracy (IWWC) in 1969. Instead of attempting to articulate a total critique of their times, they focused on grassroots mobilizations and an avant-garde re-deployment of anarchist, Marxist, Surrealist, and particularly Futurist concepts into various forms of war-like activity and organization specific to New York. The secondary literature on these groups is just as scarce as with the others, so most of my approach

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[8] Even though Jacobs identified a 'Situationist movement' in 1975, he mostly referred to the events of 1968 as point of articulation and detonation. As will be seen, de Jong will ground the 'movement' upon the techniques and principles of the early SI, giving the word a different character.

relies on primary sources; however, thanks to articles by Gavin Grindon (2015) and an exhibition by the Boo-Hooray Gallery (2014) the research on them seems to be growing. A further note on this particular sequence must be made: after (even during) UAWMF, several smaller groups took up their revolutionary mantle (such as Winos for Freedom[9]), but I chose the IWWC for two reasons. First, Ben Morea features prominently on all three, while not necessarily so on the others, and second, because there is a straightforward relationship between it and King Mob, who, in writing a short history of their American counterparts, find a basic rhetorical continuity between UAWMF and IWWC. Additionally, in the fragmentation of the UAWMF after 1968, the IWWC provides perhaps the clearest response to the deepening crisis being suffered by its 'parent group', leading ultimately to its disappearance (well represented by Morea's own distancing from New York for over three decades). The response, as will be seen, consists of a transformation of the militant politics of the UAWMF into something altogether sinister, much further *underground*.

The engagement with a particular context takes me to the outermost step in the spiral movement: the group that coalesced around Mexican magazine *S.NOB*. Completely unrelated to the SI, the inclusion of this group in the thesis is my own effort to push the contextual comparison, and therefore the SI's very limits, as far as possible. S.NOB created a discourse not only comparable to that of the SI or any other group here mentioned, it also did so while being the shortest-lived of them all. What interests me for the comparison is that S.NOB uses many of the same techniques, with the same intent, as these collectives, which hints at a multiplicity of pathways through the labyrinth of avant-garde history (Dada, Futurism, Surrealism) that in the 1960s takes similar shape in very different, unrelated contexts. Another historical element that, to me, makes the comparison even more interesting, is that S.NOB grows within the ongoing institutionalization processes of the Mexican Revolution, which is to say is the product of a revolutionary movement of the kind that the other collectives desired to detonate. Studies of this magazine are also somewhat scarce, although the 2014 exhibition *Desafío a la estabilidad* in the UNAM's Museum of Contemporary Art provided articles by Elva Peniche, Esteban King, and others. An article by Claudia Albarrán

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[9] Gavin Grindon, "Poetry Written in Gasoline: Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker," in *Art History*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2015, p 21.

(2005), as well as a BA thesis by Elizabeth Cervantes (2010) provide very useful research on the context and the magazine's format.

In any case, S.NOB opens the possibility of breaking the historiographical grip the SI currently has on radical avant-gardes of the 1960s, not in order to lessen its importance but to raise that of other, "smaller" groups that shared its revolutionary commitment; furthermore, it allows a reconsideration of the SI itself in terms of its discursive limits, which is to say the very point of tension at which the SI ceases to encompass everything that is 'Situationist' and permits contamination with elements previously unthinkable as such. Of course, my intent is not to prod the identity of what is or is not Situationist into a new totalizing redefinition, but to show how its elements are not necessarily fixed or petrified – it is not a terminal whole (a mythology) but a possible process of continual engagement and fragmentation (a myth). S.NOB also throws the thesis immediately back into Surrealism: its revolutionary implications, which the SI and all the other collectives are indebted to in one way or another, find in S.NOB a more evident relationship with the equally revolutionary avant-gardes of the 1920s.

Organization, mentioned above, is to me the key to understand this process. Each collective, following an avant-garde tradition, created a magazine to *press* its ideas against the body politic, an *organ* meant to divulge concepts as much as to contaminate the social with them. Even if they had different approaches to collective production -- for example, *Situationist Times* and *S.NOB* had editorial boards – I consider these four groups collectives in the sense that the magazines are the core of a common project undertaken by a few identifiable individuals that often comes to include temporary participation from different artists. Since these projects have very specific (practically niche) aesthetic and political outlooks, I consider the recurrence of certain participants, as well as the context of more casual ones, to be representative of the high level of commitment required. These groups are collectives in different manners: whether at a very personal level such as S.NOB, in which most (if not all) of the participants were friends, or at a more abstractly collaborative level such as in ST, which nevertheless relied on personal connections and commitments for its content.

In order to better conceptualize the interactions between these journals and the society they attack, I decided to frame them in terms of discourses; by looking at the texts and images these groups produced as a set of possible practices meant to mould the context that contains them, the concept of discourse, as fielded by analysts in the academic current of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, allows an open-ended approach that does not depart from an essential separation of concepts and actions. Therefore, the interactions between constructs (magazine vs. society) can be seen as flowing out beyond the realm of the aesthetic, or the political, or the economic, which is to say, along with the avant-garde, that the concept of discourse as proposed by these analysts does not presuppose a division between art and life. This very *avant-gardism* of Laclau and Mouffe's concept of discourse complements the vanguard's proclamations across the first six decades of the 20th century as an approach that does not oppose analysis to interpretation, which I found immensely helpful in my historicist-leaning research methods. By this I mean that I give primacy to the texts and images of the collectives, as well as to their own sources, ideally in their own contexts, avoiding as much as possible the imposition of (later) wide theoretical systematizations. By allowing an interplay between analysis and interpretation, discourse provokes a certain dynamism between primary and secondary sources that focuses on the possibility of outlining a contingent coherence in the earlier without having to appeal to the latter for *making sense* out of it all.

Following this current of thought, I chose 'organization' as the nodal point at the heart of these collectives' discourse, simply because their revolutionary intents were always geared toward a negation of the 'world system' of the capitalist State(s). Unlike other art movements, they are not only opposing a certain aesthetic, or a certain political situation, or a certain form of economics; by opposing the very constitution of the world, they develop a wide variety of discursive elements that I found to be best articulated through organizational principles that serve to counter *everything*[10]. In this sense, all the techniques and theories that they developed cannot be reduced

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[10] The SI, based on the writings of Henri Lefebvre, developed the concept of the totality to mean exactly this kind of *complete* engagement with reality, and I believe it could be retroactively applied to the intent of avant-garde movements like Dada, Futurism, or Surrealism, which certainly never fantasized with utopias and had very strong political undercurrents.

to the fields of, say, art, literature, philosophy, or political theory, and should be seen as acting in multiple directions at once. The praxis that each magazine discursively suggests is not limited by academic disciplinary constraints, which is the kind of anti-specialization that these groups developed their concepts under.

The most important of these techniques, pertaining to the *form* the organizations would take, is that of appropriation, or détournement in the SI's own terms. From Cubist collages to Surrealist objects, appropriation is an avant-garde mainstay that in this thesis works as one of the principal connecting currents between groups. Throughout the thesis I will make a distinction between appropriation and détournement which hinges upon the definition first given by the SI in 1958 as the "integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu"[11]. Détournement came to be practiced as the *pillaging* of spectacular images to modify them in ways that set them against the context that produced them. The "superior construction" of the first definition is the synthesis of a critique that, for example, pulls a revolutionary text and a pornographic picture together: meant for a certain pacification of desire, the image comes to be associated with a reversal that *inflames* desire into a lust for revolution that would also be a lust for life. The various implications of détournement, and its relationship to appropriation, will be better laid out across the thesis, but suffice to say that just like appropriation can be applied to almost anything, so can détournement be introduced into very different fields of action: "from within old cultural spheres [détournement] is a form of propaganda, which lays witness to the depletion and waning importance of these spheres."[12] Thus, the main difference between appropriation and détournement in the uses that I give these terms throughout the thesis is a philosophical one in which the latter pre-supposes historical materialism in its application (the "superior construction" and its connotations of progress), and it fundamentally negates the logic of the object used ("there cannot be situationist painting, or music, but a situationist use of this media"). In other words, in principle, an appropriated painting retains its fundamental properties

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[11] "Definitions", in *Internationale Situationniste #1*, 1958. Translated from French by Ken Knabb. Available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html; accessed November 18, 2016.
[12] One of the more interesting precedents of attempting to *reverse* the workings of something non-artistic was Georges Bataille and André Breton's anti-fascist collective Contre-Attaque, in which they attempted to appropriate the vitalist impulses of fascism in order to, so to speak, beat it at its own game through a heretic form of communism.

as such (which do not necessarily change its relationship to its environment), whereas a détourned painting becomes a device for situationist thought ("propaganda") that sustains a different, opposing relationship to the context that produced it.

Another technique that will make its appearance variously throughout the thesis as perhaps the *work* of the organization is the dérive, which the SI meant to be the practice for pyschogeographical knowledge. The dérive was first defined as "a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiences"[13]. Unlike détournement, the dérive did not stray too far away from this initial delimitation, and it reflects a fundamental concern with *place*. It is another kind of subject-object relationship that also implicitly accepts its porosity, in the sense that its purpose is to allow a non-alienated form of interaction between a person or group and its environment. The relation's porosity leads to a degree of malleability of both the subject and the object, which the SI sought to exploit in the development of what they called 'unitary urbanism'. This urbanism would challenge the logics of ordering that underlie capitalism and its extension into States, breaking apart the structuring of the environment enmeshed in a history of private property and other economic relations that directly impact its politics as well as its aesthetics. It would unleash play instead, a continual affirmation of contingency undetermined by society; the relevance of dérive to the entire thesis is hinged upon this affirmation and the way it affects places, whether in the theoretical approximations of the ST's topology, the forceful sculpting of reality in the UAWMF's *martial art*, King Mob's conspiratorial plan to re-kindle London's fiery revolutionary potential, or S.NOB's vision of Mexico City as a hellish baroque landscape.

Another important concept that will recur throughout the thesis is that of 'totality'. It has a long, definite history within Marxism at large, overviewed by historian Martin Jay in 1984 in his book *Marxism and Totality*, but the use I will give to it in this thesis is defined by the sense that the SI gave it throughout the years. The SI seemingly adopted the concept from the philosophical richness

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[13] "Definitions", in *Internationale Situationniste #1*.

of Surrealism, taking its cues from Hegel as much as Marx[14]. The use given by the SI to the concept reveals a certain ambivalence, in the sense that it is as much a critical tool as it is an ideal – a concrete utopia, a possible present state. Thus, totality is to be understood as the unmediated whole of objective reality, as the true end-point of history where humanity's creativity, freedom, and desires would perfectly coincide and connect across any and all contexts in equal measures: the realization of life in full view of its every aspect, as against its current reduction and fragmentation into political, economic, or social units of activity.

Two final aspects to touch upon before moving on to the collectives themselves are the concept of the spectacle as well as another notion developed by Guy Debord in his 1967 book *The Society of the Spectacle,* the 'style of negation'. While commonly associated with the book, the concept of spectacle is present in Situationist writings ever since its foundation in 1957, and while it did not have the sophisticated philosophical form that Debord gave it ten years later, it works in a fundamentally similar manner by referring primarily to alienation based on 'non-intervention'. In its early form, the concept was used to refer to the paralysis produced by the non-coincidence of experience and reality, in the sense that capitalism's commodity logic comes to replace imagination with a specific kind of imaginary aimed at the reproduction of its conditions of existence, beginning not with a relation to production but to the very relation between any subject and any object. Using all kinds of images, often mass-produced but not necessarily so, it constitutes the spectacle as a pre-emptive strike against the possibility of any action by subjects (and the objects they relate to). Because it has seemingly colonized the entire horizon of possibilities, it leads to an inner, naturalized rejection of 'intervention' in any relation or in the environment that contains them[15]. The avant-garde's position against the spectacle is of primary importance: as

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[14] "If the Surrealists' concept of totality (or unity, as Camus would have it) differed from Hegel's and that of the more rationalist Hegelian Marxists, so too did their understanding of the process of totalization. Instead of a dialectical interplay of mediations culminating in a final synthesis (Aufhebung) of contradictions, the Surrealists argued for an unmediated juxtaposition of seemingly discordant elements. Through such an unexpected converge of the dissimilar, they argued, a new whole, what Breton called the "marvellous," would be revealed. In the manner of Lautreamont's celebrated "chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table," an image they frequently evoked with admiration, the surrealists wanted to disrupt the conventional expectations of bourgeois consciousness." Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept From Lukács to Habermas.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, p. 287.

[15] Because society comes to be constituted by images under this theory (since social relations are replaced by images), the organization as a nodal point becomes even more relevant to articulate these groups' discourses, since they are meant to destroy spectacularity, and therefore society itself, in order to hint at something else. The SI dreamt that

breakers of tradition, as the first to step directly into the unknown thanks to an artistic capacity to question the subject-object relation, the vanguard can articulate an all-encompassing revolt of equal (or greater) scope to the unified totality of the spectacle. By developing a praxis to rival this historical circumstance, the SI's objective was to create and deploy tools that could work against it.

One of the main sources for these tools was a particular line of critical theorists that had turned Marxism away from dogmatic interpretations, and that were either outright unpopular or simply did not enjoy the widespread recognition that, for example, the Frankfurt School did – György Lukács, Henri Lefebvre, and the Socialisme ou Barbarie group[16]. The SI further détourned Marxism (from various sources such as Lenin and Trotsky), joining an intellectual current that was hostile to both the reductive interpretations of Marxism from the USSR and its affiliated parties around the world as well as the US dogma that equated Marxism with the suppression of freedom. The coincidence with the emergence of the New Left in the US and the counter-culture at large in the West is not anomalous, and it indicates how the key question of anti-systemic movements in the post-war period was to break away from the narrowness of institutionalized promises of equality, liberty, and fraternity. The Cold War looms over these collectives' productions and/or creations, in the sense that already in the 1960s they are rebelling against the idea that 'there is no alternative' – capitalism and the communism practiced by the USSR and official communist parties across the world were, essentially, co-dependent, or often just one and the same thing. Critical theory was picked up by the SI just like it once was by the Surrealists: to give an effective materialist and non-utopian bent to their revolt. "Critical theory must *communicate itself* in its own

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eventually everyone would be a Situationist; each group, in turn, offered political alternatives to the problem of how to build something new from the ashes of the old.

[16] More specifically, Lukács pre-socialist realism phase, in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923); Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (first volume, 1947); the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* journal that ran from 1948 till 1967 and in which Debord participated in 1960-1961. Critical theory is meant here in its original definition by the Frankfurt School's Max Horkheimer, who in 1937 defined it as a social theory oriented towards social engagement and therefore change, in opposition to traditional theory, which he defined as one oriented towards explanation and understanding. Lukács does not necessarily fit this definition, but does hold a certain precedential relationship to it; in contrast, Lefebvre and the Socialisme ou Barbarie group can be squared rightly into it, although their theorizations deviate from the Frankfurt School's in significant ways that are beyond the scope of this thesis. In any case, the SI can be seen as continuing this parallel tradition of critical theory, as Debord himself would acknowledge in *The Society of the Spectacle*, but as is also easily seen in the terms with which the SI appropriates Marxism and anarchism not as frameworks for explanation but for social modification.

language", wrote Debord in 1967, "the language of contradiction, which must be dialectical in both form and content. It must be an all-inclusive critique, and it must be grounded in history. It is not a "zero degree of writing", but its opposite. It is not a negation of style, but the style of negation."[17] He continued: "the very style of dialectical theory is a scandal and abomination to the prevailing standards […] because while it makes concrete use of existing concepts it simultaneously recognizes their *fluidity* and their inevitable destruction."[18] The *progressive* self-destruction in dialectics is held by Debord to be the most adequate framework for the avant-garde enterprise of what Herbert Marcuse termed the 'Great Refusal' in 1964[19]: it is a reason that constantly challenges not only the other but also itself, and so is less prone to revert to domination[20]. The conception of its 'style', which is to say its performance, will recur throughout this thesis as the manners in which negation takes place as one of the constitutive cores of the various collectives' discourses. I believe that the retroactive, semi-ahistorical use of the term[21] in a few cases is justified by its capacity to synthesize some of the organizational characteristics present in each group, allowing for the opening of the Situationist adventure to a more diffuse

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[17] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle.* Translated from the French by Ken Knabb. Canberra, Treason Press, 2002, p. 53.

[18] *Ibidem*

[19] This concept will be touched upon later in the thesis, particularly when it comes to the US collectives. I would like to advance, in any case, Marcuse's description of it, which is worth quoting at length, particularly because art is crucial for it in *One-Dimensional Man*: "Whether ritualized or not, art contains the rationality of negation. In its advanced positions, it is the Great Refusal – the protest against that which is. The modes in which man and things are made to appear, to sing and sound and speak, are modes of refuting, breaking, and recreating their factual existence. But these modes of negation pay tribute to the antagonistic society to which they are linked. Separated from the sphere of labor where society reproduces itself and its miery, the world of art which they create remains, with all its truth, a privilege and an illusion. In this form it continues, in spiate of all democratization and popularization, through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The "high culture" in which this alienation is celebrated has its own rites and its own style. The salon, the concert, the opera, theatre are designed to create and invoke another dimension of reality. Their attendance requires festive-like preparation; they cut off and transcend everyday experience. Now this essential gap between the arts and the order of the day, kept open in the artistic alienation, is progressively closed by the advancing technological society. And with its closing, the Great Refusal is in turn refused; the "other dimension" is absorbed into the prevailing state of affairs. The works of alienation are themselves incorporated into this society and circulate as part and parcel of the equipment which adorns and psychoanalyzes the prevailing state of affairs. Thus they become commercials – they sell, comfort, or excite." Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 66-67.

[20] As will be seen, this particular logic of the dialectic would be challenged by Asger Jorn and Jacqueline de Jong, who would sustain that, actually, the dialectic *always keeps domination in place*, the domination of the idea of progress.

[21] I say semi-ahistorical because, after all, these magazines belong to the same general context. What I will do with the 1967 term is, for example, apply it to the 1962 collectivity of S.NOB. I would argue that this use is not entirely ahistorical, but it is not strictly historical either.

understanding that wrestles (perhaps détourns) the SI's core principles away from its heavily totalizing historiographical presence.

FIG I1: SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL TIMELINE

1957:
Situationist
International
is formed.

ca. 1965:
Formation
of English
section.

1967:
Exclusion
of English
section.

1962:
Exclusion
of the
German
section
(Gruppe
SPUR).

Exclusion
of most of
the
Scandinavian
section.

Publication
of
*Situationist
Times*.

1966:
Contact
with Ben
Morea and
Alan
Hoffman,
from Black
Mask.

1968:
Publication
of *King
Mob Echo*.
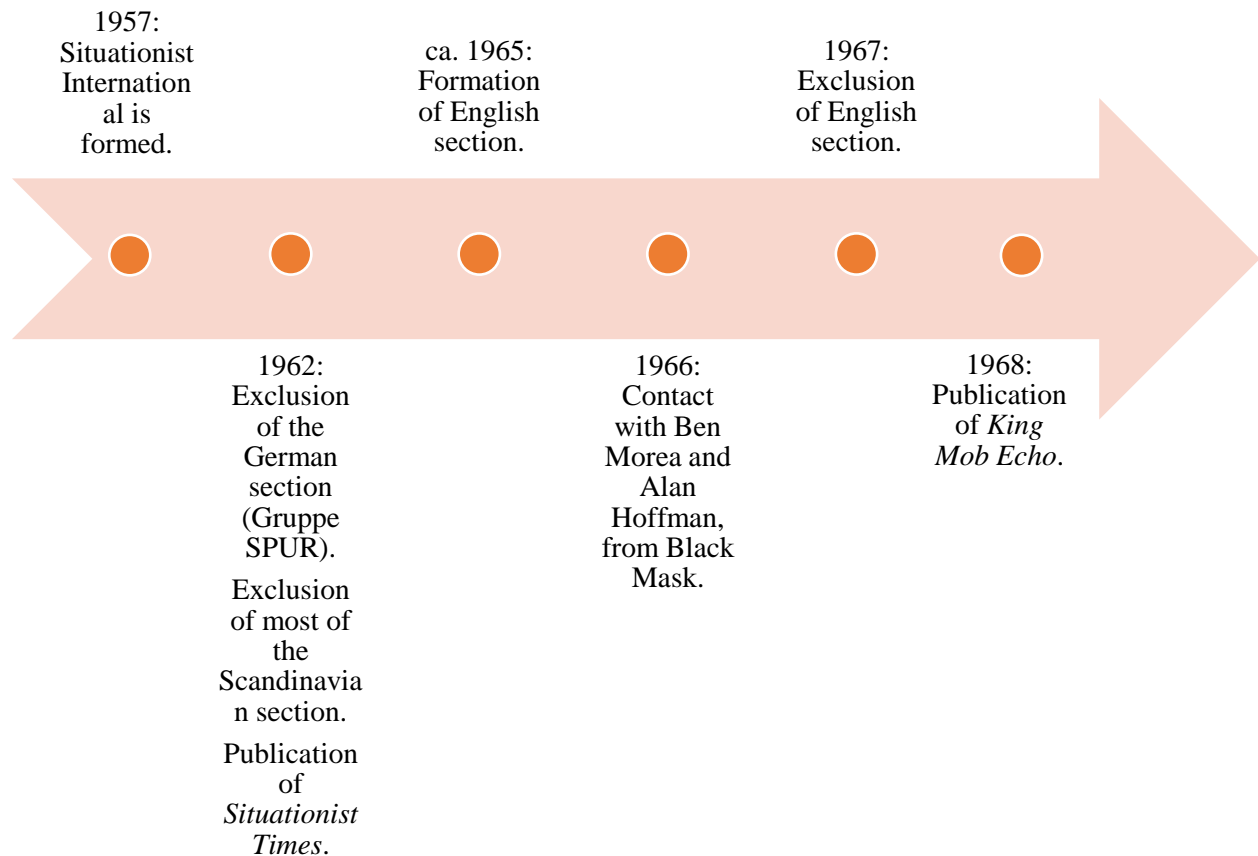
NOTE: This timeline refers only to events that are relevant to this thesis, and does not include other SI ruptures such as that with the original Dutch section, individual members like Ralph Rumney, and so on.

CHAPTER 1: THE SITUATIONIST TIMES

1. Introduction: Jacqueline de Jong, Asger Jorn, and the Concept of the Situation

The *Situationist Times* (ST) (see fig. A for timeline) magazine emerged from the 1962 exclusion of most of the Scandinavian and the German sections of the Situationist International (SI). The central question to this event – the role the organization would play in society -- has cemented the historiographical commonplace that the SI expelled 'the artists' from its midst in order to concentrate more fully on its political theorizations. As Frances Stacey maintains in *Constructed Situations*, however, this commonplace is a vast reduction of the process the SI underwent as an organization, producing an image of it as a purely political entity from 1962 onward. This reduction obscures the SI's continual engagement with aesthetics as/and politics, from the more obviously 'artistic' approach of the *Destruktion af RSG-6* exhibition in 1963[22], or the 1968 graffiti and slogans, to the fundamental aesthetic elements of the concept of the spectacle as developed by Guy Debord in 1967's *Society of the Spectacle*. Stacey has managed to disarticulate this image with care, but it serves as a useful parting point to equally complicate its *other* in the form of the artists expelled by the SI. This chapter will overview the ST as part of the results of this exclusion, following the development of the ST's discourse as an artistic construct that never left politics behind. Its membership, while loose and changing, had a few regular members, beginning with its main editor, Jacqueline de Jong. The first two numbers of the magazine included Nöel Arnaud as an editor and Gruppe SPUR as contributors; artists Max Bucaille, Asger Jorn, Gordon Fazakerley, and composer Peter Schat were consistent participants across the whole run of the journal. Irregular contributors (meaning one or two pieces at most) included ex-members of the SI such as Piero Simondo and various members of what once was the Scandinavian section, architect Aldo Van Eyck, Gaston Bachelard, writer Edward Mazman, and journalist Virtus Schade. It was published somewhat regularly from 1962 to 1964, with its last number appearing in 1967.

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[22] The *Destruktion af RSG-6* exhibition was held at the Galerie EXI in Odense, Denmark, in June 1963. "It was the first and last collective exhibition of so-called 'Situationist' works within a gallery context. And, crucially, its date dispels the commonplace assumption that after the group split in 1962 […]." Frances Stacey, *Constructed Situations*, London, Pluto Press, 2014, p. 44. The exhibition was introduced by a Guy Debord text entitled "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art", and it can be viewed as a response to the 1962 split in the sense that the SI was showing the expelled artists that it did not simply want to focus on politics, but that its practices were different from theirs.

The aforementioned exclusion could be traced back to a discussion during the Fourth SI Conference in London in September 1960, where the German Gruppe SPUR argued for a dismissal of the proletariat as the primary agent of revolutionary activity, favouring artists instead, on the basis of a sense of deep fascistic tendencies in German culture, which the group saw as having strong roots even in the working class. The concept of the proletariat as the motor of history became central to the SI's theoretical developments, and it is important to mention that it is at this conference where the Central Committee was formed, structuring the organization in the manner of a vanguard party[23]. Nonetheless, in the first few texts of the SI, such as the foundational "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action" from 1957, they basically stated, as Stacey deftly summarized, "that they should not be understood as a model of revolutionary organization as such, with dogmas, leaders and disciples, but rather as a specific organization, made up of a loose association of autonomous individuals committed to a shared revolutionary perspective and precise tasks."[24] This revolutionary perspective would become the most important fact of membership; in the London Conference, Asger Jorn, who would resign in 1961, noted that "movements of social groups are determined by the character of their desires. We can accept other social movements only to the extent that they are *turning* in our direction […]. We should act with other organizations that seek the same path" [emphasis mine].[25] As the SI collectively developed a series of majority agreements about fundamental theoretical elements such as the primary agent of revolutionary action, 'the same path' trumped the extent of the recognition of 'the character of desires', playing out a materialist/idealist opposition that made the artistic activities of Jorn, the Germans, and shortly after the Scandinavians, seem complicit in merely producing new artistic forms and media "without a […] commitment to a revolutionary politics aimed at overturning capitalism."[26] The dialectic was forcefully resolved by the SI in favour of its materialist side, by unwillingness or by

[23] "La quatrième conférence de L'I.S. a Londres", in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 5, 1960, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 21-22.
[24] Frances Stacey, *op cit*, p. 3.
[25] "Les mouvements des groupes sociaux sont déterminés par le caractère de leurs désirs. Nous ne pouvons accepter d'autres mouvements sociaux que dans la mesure où ils tournent dans notre sens. […] pour agir avec les autres organisations qui, en dehors de nous, cherchent la même voie.", in "La quatrième conférence…", p. 20. Translated by Ken Knabb and Reuben Keehan, with a single revision by myself. See "The Fourth SI Conference in London", available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/london.html, accessed November 4, 2016.
[26] Frances Stacey, *op cit*, p. 2.

rigor formulating an outright rejection of a praxis perhaps even more heretical-Marxist than its own. Soon enough, the initial anti-organizational impulse of the SI as seen in texts like the aforementioned "Report on the Construction of Situations" gave way to an organization that constantly struggled with definitions, identity, and membership. The expelled groups of 1962 went on to practice politics in different avenues to those perhaps proscribed by the constitution of the SI as an avant-garde party-like conspiracy, and those collectives have been recently studied by scholars such as Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jakob Jakobsen, and others[27].

The ST, as founded by Jacqueline de Jong, was perhaps the fullest, most elaborate response to both that struggle and the initial stance that led to it. De Jong had proposed the creation of an English-language journal to the SI before being expelled, the resulting project of which was the ST magazine itself. As the name indicates, it is a claim to the Situationist *movement* that *détourns* common English press journal titles that seemingly pretend to capture the present through the lens of a zeitgeist. Claiming the mantle of the Situationist movement, it began with de Jong's show of support for Gruppe SPUR, which was undergoing a judicial trial for blasphemy in Munich, as well as with her text-drawing "Critique of the Political Practice of Détournement" (fig. 1.1). Through

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[27] For example, some of the 'purely artistic' members of Gruppe SPUR such as Dieter Kunzelmann would later directly impact the formation of the Red Army Faction through post-Situationist texts such as "When Will Berlin's Department Stores Burn?" (1967). See Charity Scribner, "Buildings on Fire: The Situationist International and the Red Army Faction", in *Grey Room*, no. 26, 2007, pp. 30-55.
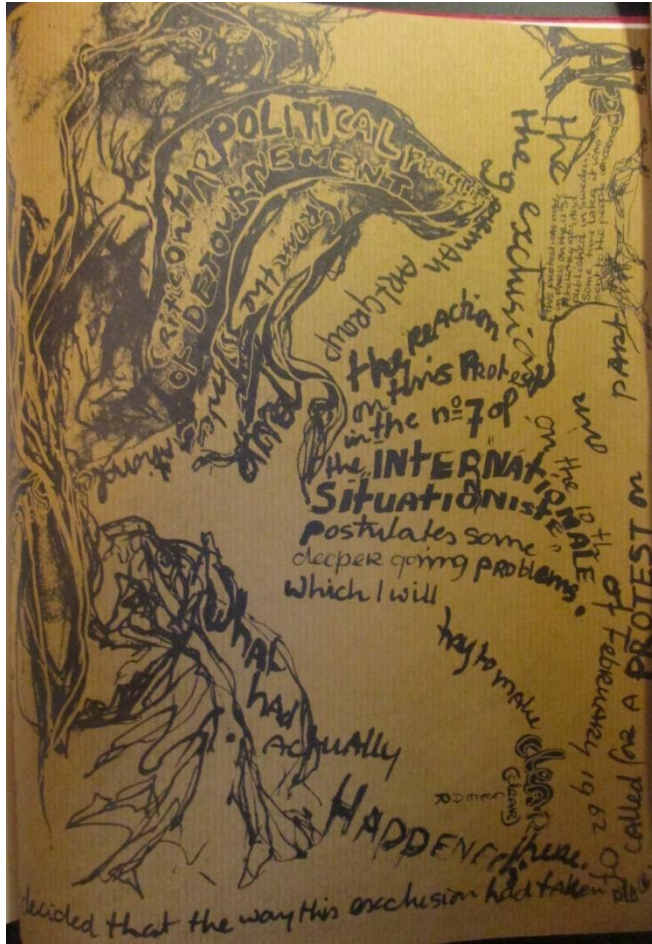
Fig. 1.1. "Critique of the Political Practice of Détournement", *The Situationist Times #1*, 1962. National Art Library, London

it, de Jong affirmed the multiplicity of the Situationists and rejected the SI's expulsions as an act of *law[28]*, an *ordered* approach that set limits not only to the possibility of interpretive diversity but also to the very use and abuse of techniques that the SI had until then developed as weapons in the fight against capitalism and its history. By asserting the fundamental openness of the Situationist texts about organization until 1962, de Jong's critique also effected a dissociation of terms and techniques from the International, not in a strong sense that left them emptied of significance but in a low-key manner that simply marked the possibility, even the desirability, of alternative currents of aesthetic-political thought that could still be called Situationist.

Throughout this chapter I will attempt to trace and detail the development of these currents initiated by de Jong. In order to do that, it is first necessary to identify the main concept around which the claim to the furthering of the movement's philosophical engagements revolved: the situation. The ST approached it in a manner that Jorn, whose ideas also form a solid thread across the whole

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[28] During the course of the SI's internal divisions circa 1962, Debord, and by extension the rest of the organization, started to refer to the Scandinavians as the "Nashist gang". See Guy Debord letter to Attila Kotanyi and Raoul Vaneigem, 16 October 1962, available at: http://www.notbored.org/debord-16October1962.html, accessed October 27, 2016. Jacqueline de Jong's answer was clear: "I'm proud you call us gangsters, nevertheless you are wrong. We are worse, we are SITUATIONISTS." Jacqueline de Jong, "Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 1, National Art Library: X930220, 1962. The original text is in English, but given its difficult spiral form a transcription was used. Taken from the transcription by Howard Slater, in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jakob Jakobsen (eds.), *Cosmonauts of the Future: Texts from the Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, Copenhagen, Nebula, 2015, p. 83. Hereafter referred to as *Cosmonauts*.

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existence of the magazine[29], would call 'experimental', presenting a complex corpus of texts and images that granted the initially vague yet simple concept a multitude of significant elements articulated in a discourse that contained as many scientific reflections as it did aesthetic and political ones. Thus, the ST came to be constituted by the myriad relationships between various concepts, articulating an imagination that *seems* reductively artistic but that is, in fact, deeply committed to the Situationist revolutionary cause by means that are less identifiable as conventionally political. As will be explored later in the chapter, the main difference between the SI and the ST in this regard is that for the ST the revolution is not an *action* but a *process*, which draws the concept of the situation along an altogether different path.

Commenting on the Scandinavians' formation of a Second Situationist International (SSI) after the 1962 split, de Jong stated that "the [SSI] didn't exist. […] There was not a First Situationist International, so there can't be a second, there's just a Situationist Movement."[30] If the revolution as action is, for the moment, understood as a Romantic, wilful modification of historical circumstances by an individual or collective of any kind, the revolution as process suggests, as will be explored in the third part of this chapter, a wider view of subjectivity that cannot be pinned down to an individual or collective; a movement offers in this case a representation of the ample population of conceptual relationships that ST produced, a looseness and a variety in need of articulation. My interpretation will argue that such an articulation was found not in (Marxist or anarchist) political philosophy but in a hybrid, parallel systematization: the mythical. This form of articulation, along with the anti-organizational stance that de Jong adhered to, would eventually lead to a dissolution of what she termed 'the Situationist movement', similarly to what would later happen to the English group King Mob's idea of a latent conspiracy against all states, as will be explored in Chapter 2.

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[29] Jorn's ideas are often notoriously difficult, possibly because of the density of his writing, but also because the way he connects arguments and concepts often relies on intuitive logical leaps that come to make sense later. This delay in understanding will probably be reflected in the section on myth later in this chapter.

[30] Jacqueline de Jong in "DRAKABYGGET: A Situationist Utopia or Meeting Place for Displaced Persons: Gordon Fazakerley and Jacqueline de Jong in conversation with Jakob Jakobsen", in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jakob Jakobsen (eds.), *Expect Anything Fear Nothing: The Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, Copenhagen, Nebula, 2011, p. 120. Hereafter referred to as *Expect Anything*.

The ST's openness, in any case, did imply an attempt at *grounding* Situationist theory in a generally philosophical sense: "The Situationistic notion cannot be on art, it is an ideological and elaborative development. Everybody who develops theoretically or practically this new unity is automatically a member of the Situationist International and, from this perspective, *The Situationist Times* is made."[31] The notion at stake is that of the situation, and its comprehensiveness was a core part of the early SI, which de Jong was keen on further developing "across the institutionalized specialties of art, maths, science, ethnology, mythography, and urbanism."[32] However, this was not an altogether new point of view, and de Jong was taking a fundamentalist approach that allowed her to appropriate positions that the SI itself held to be of primary importance up until around 1962[33], later giving the concept a different, more subdued set of characteristics. By the time de Jong began a new line of thought about the situation, its main components were connected with two artistic techniques that functioned as the instruments that permitted its 'construction': détournement and dérive. The situation is the starting point of the critique against the spectacle, or what the SI would much later call the spectacular society; while by 1962 the concept of spectacle had not yet reached the clarity and complexity that Debord gave it in his book, the basis of it being a colonization of (commodity) images upon everyday life was present in the use it was given throughout the 1957-1962 period of the magazine[34] by linking it to alienation and the paralysis of life. The "Report on the Construction of Situations", for example, states that "the construction of situations begins beyond the ruins of the modern spectacle. It is easy to see how much the very principle of the spectacle – nonintervention – is linked to the alienation of the old world."[35] The situation, as a platform for action, for the *mobilization* of life, needed to be preceded by détournement as a weapon to counter spectacular images, as well as by

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[31] Jacqueline de Jong, "Critique on the Political Practice of Détournement", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 1, National Art Library: X930220, 1962. Taken from transcription in *Cosmonauts*, p. 84.

[32] Karen Kurczynski, "Red Herrings: Eccentric Morphologies in *The Situationist Times*", *Expect Anything,* p. 141. Hereafter referred to as "Red Herrings".

[33] The centrality of 'the situation' was expressed as far back as 1952 by Guy Debord's film *Hurlements en Faveur de Sade:* "a science of situations is to be created, which will borrow elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism, and ethics. These elements have to run together to an absolutely new conclusion: the conscious creation of situations" Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 8.

[34] Importantly, 'spectacle' was not among the words in need of "Définitions" in *Internationale Situationniste* #1, 1958, which presents the possibility of it being entirely unnecessary to define, in the sense that its meaning was evident not only to the SI members themselves but also to their readers.

[35] Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendencies of Organization and Action", 1957, translated by Ken Knabb, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html, accessed October 28, 2016. Hereafter referred to as "Report". Few original copies of this text exist, and I was not able to access any.

dérive as a practice to dislocate the effects that the historical logic of those images imprinted upon the "lived" environment. Since the particularities of the situation's precedents are explored by Stacey[36], my intention here is to approach it more abstractly, so that de Jong's later modifications of it become clearer. To outline its most basic elements in a sketch: first and foremost, the situation, as the best tool against the repetitive nature of the spectacle, is an experiment, demanding an everyday praxis that cannot predict the results in advance; it is necessarily a collective event that rejects the Romantic individual, since its goal is to change life everywhere; it requires theorizing after the fact in order to better understand the possible realization of its ultimate revolutionary consequences[37]; finally, it is not an *action* but a *process*[38]. "The constructed situation exists only as a lived experience, a living nexus, through which an alternative, non-spectacular world may, or may not, emerge."[39]

How this "living nexus" is produced is perhaps the central idea running throughout the whole of *ST*, and it is here where de Jong's critique points at a route entirely different from the one the SI veered into, simply because it parts from a different conception of the task of the Situationist avant-garde. At this point Jorn's writings are reflected most prominently, since they go directly against "the opinion of the [SI], [for which] theory had superseded art as the critical weapon of the avant-garde"[40], presenting an entire set of alternative positions about what Situationist praxis is or might lead to. Jorn "conceived the true avant-garde not as a set of professional specialists, but as a collective social force made up of amateurs seeking new ideas and techniques through constant experimentation"[41], an idea that perfectly pairs up with de Jong's principle of acceptance of any

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[36] The author contends that it is an appropriation of multiple sources – which would be recognized by Jorn – as much as a reductive reading against Jean Paul Sartre's own formulation of the situation. See Frances Stacey, *op cit*, p. 13.

[37] "Revolution is not limited to determining the level of industrial production, or even to determining who is to be the master of such production. It must abolish the exploitation of humanity, but also the passions, compensations and habits which that exploitation has engendered." Guy Debord, "Report", translated by Ken Knabb, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html, accessed October 28, 2016.

[38] "The SI […] sets in motion an endless looping of action, reflection, action, etc. In other words, revolutionary theory can only propagate itself 'through a new practice', in the form of a permanent, ongoing process of revolutionary becoming." Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 14.

[39] *Ibid,* p. 14.

[40] Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, "The Situationist International, Surrealism, and the Difficult Fusion of Art and Politics", in *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2004, p. 380.

[41] Karen Kurczynski, *The Art and Politics of Asger Jorn: The Avant-* , Surrey, Ashgate Publishing, 2014, p. 5. Hereafter referred to as *Art and Politics*.

and all works sent to the ST[42]. Jorn's writings enacted this amateurship as a profoundly philosophical endeavour, inasmuch as there were no limitations to what an artist (or anyone else) could think about, producing an oeuvre that attempts to come to grips with what the Situationists understood as the *totality* from an equally general, diffuse perspective.

By 1962, he was perhaps the only Situationist still trying to further develop the concept of the situation outside of the scope of unitary urbanism. Like de Jong, he follows a certain strand of thought for which "situationist action is not based on the abstract idea of rationalist progress […] but on the practice of arranging the environment that conditions us"[43], understanding such a basis not in terms of a straightforward political conclusion but of a different relationship to (historical) time. Therefore, to Jorn a situation is "the living instant in immediate contact with past and future, with what I *know*, is the only acceptable reality, the artistic and the intelligent reality and the realistic and intelligent art."[44] To put it in Situationist language, (true) life necessitates the abolition of time, under the conditions of spectacular capitalism understood simply as *dead* time. A situation becomes therefore an actuality in which the relations that make life possible are laid out, relations founded both in rationality and irrationality that in the above quote are formulated in a tripartite fashion (art-intelligence-reality). This presupposes an ontological distinction of 'in itself' and 'for itself' in which the situation functions not as a bridge between them but as the fully conscious construction of the latter: "we do not see or sense what is at all, but what happens […]. Our senses do not perceive things, only changes of a quite specific limited kind or form."[45] In other words, a situation is dependent on perception inasmuch as both reflect upon processes, a becoming instead of a being. This "living nexus" is then constituted by multiplicity, by histories that repudiate the

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[42] "There were some artists that didn't want to be in it, which is another thing, but I never refused any artists." Jacqueline de Jong in "A Maximum of Openness: Jacqueline de Jong in conversation with Karen Kurczynski", in *Expect Anything*, p. 196.

[43] "Une action situationniste ne se fonde pas sur l'idée abstraite du progress rationaliste […] mais sur une pratique de l'arrangement du milieu qui nous conditionne.", in "Le sens du dépérissement de l'art", *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 3, 1959, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 3. Translation by John Shepley, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/decay.html, accessed October 28, 2016.

[44] Asger Jorn, "The Natural Order", translated from Danish by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts,* p. 146. This article appeared first as a short book of the same name in 1962.

[45] *Ibid,* p. 162.

History of progress by virtue of their fragmentation. Jorn is developing a conception first put forward by Guy Debord in the "Report":

> Situationist theory resolutely supports a noncontinuous conception of life. The notion of unity must cease to be seen as applying to the whole of one's life (where it serves as a reactionary mystification based on the belief in an immortal soul and, in the final analysis, on the division of labor); instead, it should apply to the construction of each particular moment of life through the unitary use of situationist methods. In a classless society there will no longer be "painters", but only situationists who, among other things, sometimes paint.[46]

'Unity', as part of either unitary urbanism or later on the notion of the totality as used by groups like King Mob, becomes lost in the ST perhaps largely due to the way in which Jorn, and by extension de Jong, become uninterested in it as a useful term; as the suggestion that the situation is primarily a relationship with/to time would indicate, what becomes much more relevant is the "noncontinuous conception of life", the tensions of which would be built into the ST's adventures into the field of topology. Such fragmentation would appear subtly in the "Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation" from *Internationale Situationniste* #1 as "the confused appearance of new desires whose material root will precisely be the *new reality* constituted by situationist constructions"[47], the prerequisite of which was the articulation of situations into a field of activity. In different terms, this work of individuation and collectivization was to be capable of changing the very structure of any and all environments. As will be explored in the second and third parts of this chapter, the tension inherent to said work leads to several important realizations that turn the non-détourned creation of images, artistic or otherwise, into a potential weapon against the spectacle, granting the ST a stance that welcomes artistry in favour of its ultimate negation[48]. The acceptance of the image or the imaginary as a primary site of struggle in the definition of reality prompted de Jong and Jorn towards what might be a more complex, vague and contradictory relationship to them than that of the SI, in the sense that the latter came to view representations with distrust (as illusions that obscured *the* truth) while the ST came to view them as the sole

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[46] Guy Debord, "Report", translated by Ken Knabb, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html, accessed October 28, 2016.
[47] "l'apparition confuse de nouveaux désirs dont la racine matérielle sera précisément la *nouvelle réalité* constituée par les constructions situationnistes.", in "Problèmes préliminaires à la construction d'une situation", *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 1, 1958, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 11. Translation mine.
[48] Whereas the SI operates on the other side of this same dialectic, rejecting artistry in favour of its ultimate negation.

source from which to remake the world (positive illusions of myriad contingent, essentially relative truths).

In this regard, the single most important Jorn piece that, according to de Jong herself[49], informed the ST, was the 1957 book

(*Golden Horn and Wheel of Fortune*). It was an exploration of the visual morphologies of Nordic culture, and the text was secondary to the reproduction of images of items and symbols that for Jorn belonged to the anonymous sociality of a communal everyday expression of life. According to Karen Kurczynski,

> it […] demonstrated in its very format a new artistic method consisting of the collection of images, rather than making them from scratch. Jorn called this the "possibility of interpretation as an artistic method in itself, an artistic methodology of cultic use". The Golden Horns […] were […] emblems of Jorn's theory that images do not have inherent meanings, but rather are attributed meaning by the observer's active interpretation.[50]

This "cultic use" and the theory of the meaninglessness of images will come into sharper view in the third part of this chapter, where the concept of myth will be put to work as a way of articulating the distinct imaginal panorama presented by ST with the situation and other important concepts. Suffice to say, for now, that the 'collection of images' reaches a culmination when connected to the fight against spectacular society, and that even at its most fragmentary, open, and directionless, the ST can still be interpreted as conserving the core of its political commitment – which is precisely the point of its fragmentation.

Finally, I would like to point to three examples from *Situationist Times #3* (1963), which was the first number to follow the *Golden Horn* method, regarding the kind of experimental approach that the magazine had towards basic Situationist theory. It is important to consider that barely a year had passed since the exclusions, and the ST was already venturing into a territory altogether

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[49] She took ideas and made reproductions of bits from SPUR, Drakabygget (the "Nashist gang's" journal) and the SI. Still, there is one magazine that seemed to have a considerable impact on de Jong called *i10*, and which unfortunately I was unable to access during the course of the research for this thesis. In any case, it would appear that Jorn's book became much more important in terms of structure from number 3 onwards. See "A Maximum of Openness: Jacqueline de Jong in conversation with Karen Kurczynski", in *Expect Anything*, p. 193.

[50] Karen Kurczynski, "Red Herrings", in *Expect Anything*, p. 161.

different from that of the SI. In an article entitled "Pattern of Situological Applications" (fig. 1.2), a very short text is appropriated from (probably) a dictionary of topological terms, and in which four short definitions are offered: "situation", "overlapping situation", "space of free movement", and "structure of a region". The definition of situation refers to the common understanding of it as a "life space"; however, the other three definitions complicate the first by proposing, on one hand, that a situation is not necessarily unique, that it, in fact, can be simultaneous with an undetermined number of other situations, and on the other, that such situations affect and are affected by, constitute and are constituted by, a place of freedom that is mapped out in a psychogeographical manner. By losing the "constructed" part, this definition contrasts strongly with the SI's as it removes the aesthetic

Fig. 1.2. "Pattern of Situological Applications", *ST #3*, 1963. Albert Sloman Library, Colchester

and political elements, opting instead for a physical and mathematical approach. Still, the image presents a sinuous illustration of the text, the black paint appearing as a dimension apart from that of the blank page *outside* and the brush handle lines *inside*. Following the definition (fig.1.3), the text could be seen as yet another overlapping dimension, and the composition's lines could possibly be understood as straight lines curved solely by perspective, delineating the various sensorial reversals taking place. The result is a conception of the situation similar to the SI's, albeit much "clearer" in its appeal to a generalized, given relationship to the world. The detachment

Fig. 1.3. Insert from *The Situationist Times #3*, 1963. Albert Sloman Library, Colchester

operated by this relatively straightforward move allowed the ST to take the concept to different heights, allowing its inclusion into what Jorn, even before his resignation from the SI and ever the pataphysician[51], called a 'situology', that purported 'science of situations' that Debord hinted at ever since 1952.

The second example is a story by an author called George Hay[52], in which numerous *noir* pulp fiction tropes are ironically exploited in a surrealist style. The entire narrative takes place in a single place, a situation from which everything, including the bodies of the characters, kaleidoscopically extends back and forth into that same place and time as well as others. As an exploration of the implications of a topological definition of the situation, the story illustrates with humour and numerous examples how it can, approximately, be *put to work*. The main character, about to open a bottle of wine in a bar, wonders: "I realized now the meaning of the word Providence – it was with *this* corkscrew that I had opened a bottle in the White Rat not two weeks ago; this corkscrew, and no other, therefore, was my stepping-stone from here to there."[53] It

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[51] "Le mérite de la pataphysique est d'avoir confirmé qu'il n'y a aucune justification métaphysique pour forcer les gens à croire tous dans la même absurdité. Les possibilités de l'absurde et de l'art sont multiples. La conclusion logique de ce principe serait la thèse anarchiste: à chacun ses propres absurdités. Le contraire est exprimé par la puissance légale forçant tous les membres de la société à se soumettre entièrement aux règles de l'absurdité politique de l'Etat." "The merit of pataphysics is having confirmed that there is no metaphysical justification to force all people to believe in the same absurdity. The possibilities of art and the absurd are multiple. The logical conclusion of this principle would be the anarchist thesis: to each their own absurdities. The contrary is expressed by the legal power that forces every member of society to submit entirely to the rules of the political absurdity of the State." Asger Jorn, "La pataphysique, une religion en formation", in *Internationale Situationniste #6*, 1961, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 31. Translation mine. In this article, Jorn is very critical of the pataphysical organizations that according to him were acquiring certain religious characteristics that demanded singular leadership. Jorn was enthusiastic about pataphysical thought, and the entire line of the 'science of situations' could find reflection in it.

[52] I was unable to pinpoint exactly who this author is or was; however, due to the nature of the story in *ST* #3, the possibility exists that it was the British George Hay (1922-1998) who created the Science Fiction Foundation in 1972. After all, some of his interests coincide very generally with those of ST: he was a socialist, and in principle the Foundation would be a tool for social revolution. See Dave Langford, "Critical Mass", available at http://ansible.uk/writing/odyss02.html, accessed October 28, 2016.

[53] George Hay, untitled, *The Situationist Times*, no. 3, The Albert Sloman Library: p AP 1.S5, p. 86.

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remains unclear whether the object is actually the exact same one as the other, but this confusion plays well as a reference to the situation of the object as defined in the "Pattern of Situological Applications", a *becoming* that draws together two different contexts into a topological relation that equates a 'space of free movement' with a 'time of free movement'. In this case, a situation is also the consideration of all possible points of contact in a given space and time, Jorn's "living instant in immediate contact with past and future" (see fig. 1.4: a score that plays on the structured uncertainty of jazz improvisation while connecting it to the design on a column head). This idea, as will be seen in the next part of this chapter, becomes integral to both his thought on triolectics[54] and topology.
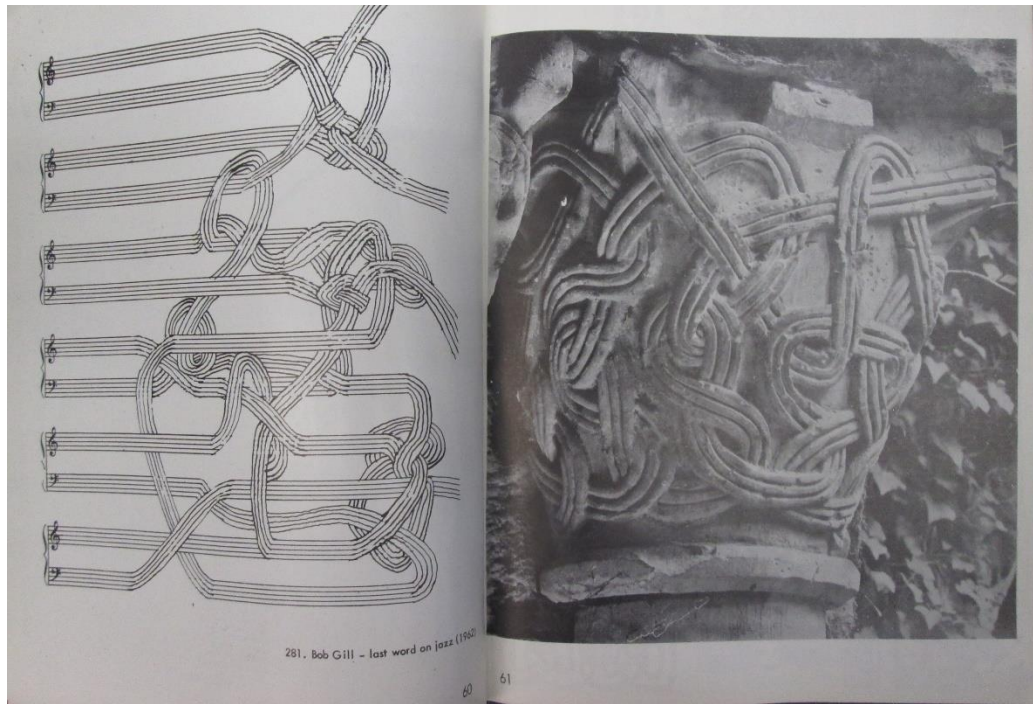
Fig. 1.4. "Last word on jazz", *The Situationist Times #3*, 1963. Albert Sloman Library, Colchester.

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[54] In advance of a fuller explanation of the triolectic to be given in the second section of this chapter, it is sufficient to say that the concept refers to a modification of the dialectic in which three terms are opposed. Paired with each other, the terms form a dialectic that is already to be subsumed in a dialectic with yet another term, exploding the synthetic step into a mosaic of resolutions.

Lastly, a short reproduction (fig. 1.5) of an article from a French literary journal entitled *Planète*[55] about the work of Soviet astrophysicist Alexandrovich Kozyrev is intended for a dialectic with Jorn's own philosophical work. Kozyrev argued that "the stream of time is not an image, but a force capable of being measured and of exercising an amount of work"; what interests me is the inference that time is not an ideal *whole* (as an image) but a divisible *material*. One of the consequences of this line is that "in casual mechanics [the science invented by Kozyrev] [...] the action is mechanically distinguished from reaction, cause from effect"[56], an idea that dialogues with a Jorn text from 1958. In the latter, he states that "the occasional" represents the transformation of cause into effect: "the cause is an effect that is transformed into cause by another effect it necessarily provokes."[57] The implication here is that time is a whole, a topological formation that bends into a Möbius strip, and that it therefore parts from a type of materiality (ideas, after all, have no form). The dialectical resolution can be summarized as a détournement of Kozyrev's principle, so time is a material whole and not a divisible ideal, which in the framework of an exploration of the concept of the situation means that its construction

Fig. 1.5. *The Situationist Times #3*, 1963. Albert Sloman Library, Colchester.

not only necessitates (via Jorn) an analysis of its relationship to time, but also draws into the horizon the possibility of having to conceive of it in terms of a *manipulation of time*. The

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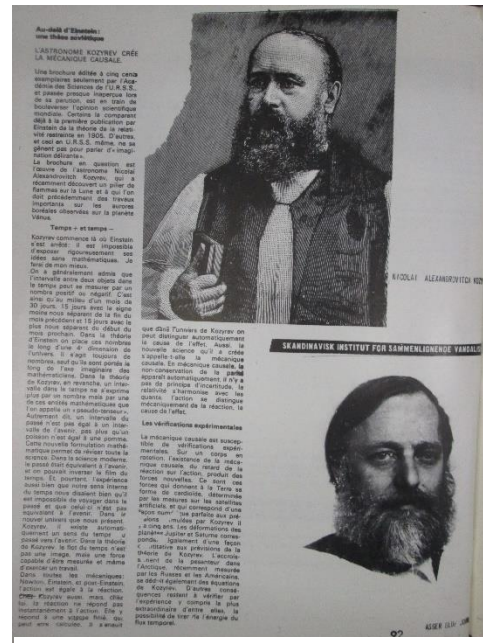
[55] *Planète* was primarily a platform for a literary offshoot from Surrealism (although rejected by the main of Surrealism itself) called "réalisme fantastique" ("fantastic realism"), and it ran from 1961 to 1971. The journal was a mélange of topics and approaches, covering areas as disparate as the study of epistemology, science fiction, the fantasy genre, art, sociology, and ethnology. See Grégory Gutierez, *Le discours du réalisme fantastique: la revue Planète*, MA in Modern Literature dissertation, Université Sorbonne – Paris IV, 1998. It featured contributions from a wide array of writers and artists, including Roland Topor, who would also feature regularly in *S.NOB*. Along with the George Hay text, this undercurrent of fantasy and science fiction in the third number of *ST* proves an interesting companion to *S.NOB*'s own endeavors into the same topics. Along with the pulp images of King Mob and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, the pop-cultural legacy of Surrealism forms quite a thread throughout these 1960s magazines.

[56] "En mécanique causale, [...] l'action se distinguée mécaniquement de la réaction, la cause de l'effet." [n/a], "L'astronomie Kozyrev crée la mécanique causale", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 3, The Albert Sloman Library: p AP 1.S5, 1963, p. 92. Translation mine.

[57] "La cause est un effet qui se transforme en cause par un autre effet qu'il provoque nécessairement." *Ibid,* p. 92. Translation mine.

undercurrent of science fiction in *ST* #3 (Hay's story, the fact that *Planète* was very interested in sci-fi) comes to be realized at points like the resolution of the Kozyrev-Jorn dialectic in these humorous, very comic-book-like conclusions; the game is up, but play as "the common creation of selected ludic ambiances"[58] is founded upon what the Situationists' favourite (perhaps even the only) conservative historian, Johan Huizinga, described as the paradox of absolute seriousness and relativizing humour[59].

De Jong has said that "Jorn's triolectic theory was somehow meant rather as a joke. […] It was not meant to be as serious as it's being used now."[60] Nevertheless, in light of the paradox mentioned above (of which Jorn was probably well aware), it is perhaps necessary to take these theories and conclusions as seriously as possible in order to also open up the analysis and interpretations themselves to a humbling measure of humour, exploring their implications as consciously and completely as possible, since new knowledge could perhaps emerge from this very tension. Regardless, what I hope to have accomplished from this introduction is to have set out the basic elements of the situation as the concept common to all numbers of the ST, and to have outlined how the philosophy behind them is experimental in principle. As will be further analysed later, it is this process what makes the ST fundamentally incomplete as a project, not only because it had to be cancelled for financial reasons after #6, but because its discourse is articulated around failure, openness, misunderstandings, relativity, and a multiplicity that becomes anxiously overwhelming if attempted to grasp as a unity.

2. The Structure of the (Situationist) Times

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[58] "la création commune des ambiances ludiques choisies", in "Contribution à une définition situationniste du jeu", *IS #1*, 1958, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 10. Translated by Reuben Keehan, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/play.html, accessed October 28, 2016.

[59] Dick van Lente, "Huizinga's Children: Play and Technology in Twentieth Century Dutch Cultural Criticism (From the 1930s to the 1960s)", in *Icon*, vol. 19, special issue, 2013, p. 59. In "Contribution a une definition situationniste du jeu" cited above, Huizinga is also quoted in exactly these terms: ""Nevertheless", says Huizinga, "we have already observed that the notion of "just a game" does not exclude at all the possibility of "just playing" with extreme seriousness…"", *IS #1,* 1958, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 10. ""Néanmoins, dit Huizinga, nous avons déjà observé que cette notion de "seulement jouer" n'exclut nullement la possibilité de réaliser ce "seulement jouer" avec une gravité extrême…"" Translation mine.

[60] Jacqueline de Jong in "A Maximum of Openness", in *Expect Anything*, p. 200.

The ST was published continuously from 1962 to 1964 with two numbers per year, although the last issue, #6, did not appear until 1967. The reasons for this are various, but perhaps the most considerable were the difficult relationship de Jong had with the last distributor she made a deal with, as well as scarce financial resources to fund the magazine[61].

The first issue (May 1962) was edited by de Jong and Noël Arnaud[62]. It ran almost entirely on the SPUR trial, finding in de Jong's "Critique" article/drawing a foundational drive towards furthering a movement of Situationists. De Jong had known Arnaud through Jorn, who probably knew him in turn from his Cobra and Imaginist Bauhaus[63] days. She reminisces: "*Surréalisme Révolutionnaire* [1948] was a magazine which was international and which had all sorts of disciplines in it. So I thought Arnaud was the right person to do it."[64] The attraction to internationalism is not to be understated, since arguably, with its multiple-language, mostly image-based editions, the ST is even more truly international than the SI itself. While there are no sources to support the following claim, it would seem like the emphasis the editors (primarily de Jong) put into making sure the titles are accompanied by "International Edition" suggest the possibility of the eventual existence of 'local editions' of the magazine. While #3, the "International British Edition", puts such an internationalism at odds with locality, the humorous juxtaposition of the inter(national) could also point towards an expansion of the journal's field of action, the ultimate consequence of which would be the production of an International perpetually in dialogue with each and every locality it attempted to take under its mantle.

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[61] "The official distributor, called Rhodos. I got through a friend of Jorn and it was a very official distributor who did scientific books and nothing avant-garde, but historic books and publications and well, all sorts of intellectual stuff, but nothing avant-garde. And they did it for the first two years very well and with number 6 it all went wrong, and that was the end of *The Situationist Times*, because of the distributor." Jacqueline de Jong in Johann Kugelberg (ed.), "Introduction to the Situationist Times Facsimile", New York, Boo-Hooray, 2013, p. 26.

[62] Arnaud was a member of "Main à plume" in occupied Paris, the Surrealist collective that endured and opposed fascism from 1941 to 1944. He was, later on, a founding member of the Revolutionary Surrealist group, with which Jorn had some involvement in 1947-1948. Their commonality lies in a rejection towards official and officialist communism, which also meant seceding from the main current of Surrealism in its attachment to open calls for revolutionary politics. By the time of the publication of *Situationist Times*, he had been a prominent member of the College of 'Pataphysics for nine years.

[63] Cobra was an avant-garde movement from 1948 (after the dissolution of the Revolutionary Surrealist group) to 1951, the name of which was coined by Christian Dotremont after the initials of the members' home cities (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam). In the breakup of Cobra in 1952, Asger Jorn, Enrico Baj, and Sergio Dangelo founded the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, which would be later fused with the Lettrist International and the London Psychogeographical Association in 1957 to form the Situationist International.

[64] *Ibid*, p. 9.

For the second issue (September 1962), edited by de Jong and Arnaud, they recruited Serge Vandercam, a Belgian painter and photographer who had once been a member of Cobra. It consisted of a psychogeographical report/experiment in which they made a dérive in the Belgian countryside. While having less text than the other numbers, it still contained a few in defence of SPUR, as well as an homage to Marilyn Monroe (who died during the dérive) and Yves Klein. It played much more emphatically with pop cultural elements than the previous edition, filled with comics, adverts, cartoon characters, and puns. As for the third issue (January 1963), it was the first to hold an overarching theme, specifically that of topology. Being the "International British Edition", it also showcased de Jong's network of collaborators from the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, with which the SI had a good relation[65]. It was also the first number in which de Jong took over editorial responsibility entirely, a situation that would persist till the end of the magazine. The fourth number (October 1963) was even more explicit in its adoption of a theme: labyrinths. After #3, "I got so fascinated by all these [topological] patterns", de Jong says, "I decided that there should be something on labyrinths."[66] The fifth one (December 1964) centred on rings and chains, and was perhaps the most expansive, elaborated and utterly labyrinthine of the entire run. Finally, issue six (December 1967)

> had a prehistory. I [de Jong] just wanted to make one issue completely different, because it became sort of maniacal to again have an issue with a theme. As I wanted to make "Wheel," which was of course very logical after "Labyrinths" and "Spirals" and "Rings and Chains", we had to have "Wheel". But I wanted to do the "Wheel" very, very scholarly in a way. And I had assembled, with Jorn, an enormous amount of visual photo material but no text whatsoever. […] [In the end,] I didn't have the money to make it because the distributor had used the money to publish another book.[67]

Because of this, de Jong decided to make something simpler – "something funny, frivolous" in her words – based on Walasse Ting's 1964 book *Once Cent Life*, which compiled his own writings with contributions from a wide set of international artists[68]. She alone selected the contributors, and because Ting's book was "very big, very expensive", she wanted to make "something similar but more modest, thus less expensive, in a smaller size, in a way as a document of what was going

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[65] *Ibid*, p. 21.
[66] *Ibid*, p. 25.
[67] *Ibid*, p. 31.
[68] *Ibidem.*

on among artists in our surrounding in Paris at that moment, to provide a sort of image for later on. It would be a snapshot of that moment."[69] With contributions by artists such as Wifredo Lam, Roberto Matta, Asger Jorn, Pierre Alechinsky, Roland Topor, among others, the magazine equalized all works through stone lithography into a single format, but due to its calibre it was then prey to galleries and art stores that started to rip apart the contributions to sell them separately at very expensive prices. Meanwhile, the distributor kept all the money for itself, bringing de Jong's project to a final, complete halt[70].

While numbers three to five share an evident common format, the structure of the entire run of the magazine could be said to be based, as argued in the Introduction, on research about the concept of the situation. This ties directly into the methodological concerns of détournement and dérive, to which are added two new developments[71] that further complicate them: to a lesser extent the Jornian triolectic, and to a major one topology. Even the sixth issue, which could seem to break the continuity, relates to this discussion by virtue of being what de Jong called a "snapshot of that moment" in 1967 Paris; nevertheless, it will be more relevant to the points I will make about the ST as an anti-organization later in the chapter. The triolectic and topology complicate the situation in a manner that branches out into modifications of other Situationist elements of thought beyond détournement and dérive, effectively forming an entirely different avenue for a revolutionary praxis. One of the most important elements transformed by them is that of the 'totality', which will be outlined further below and which has great relevance for the English group King Mob. As this section progresses, several Situationist concepts will suffer from these new associations, articulating them into a discourse that parallels that of the SI, except its inherent fragmentation does not allow the kind of success that has made the SI's own discourse endure more or less stably into our times.

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[69] Jacqueline de Jong in "A Maximum of Openness", in *Expect Anything*, p. 204.
[70] *Ibidem*. See also Johan Kugelberg (ed.), "Introduction to the Situationist Times Facsimile", p. 34.
[71] By "new" I primarily mean that they are not present in the texts of the *Internationale Situationniste* or any of their members' individual works. The last proposal that wanted to connect Situationist theory with mathematics was made by Jorn in 1960, but the SI did not follow this path once Jorn left, and even less after de Jong, the Germans and the Scandinavians were expelled.

2.1. The Triolectic

The triolectic was first put forward by Jorn in 1962 with a philosophical short book entitled *The Natural Order*, in which he engaged with the consequences for aesthetics and politics of the 'Copenhagen Interpretation', the approach to quantum mechanics first devised by physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg from 1925 to 1927. Jorn's understanding of it attempted to ground in recent physics what the Surrealists, the Romantics and anti-positivist thinkers before them had conceived of as the mutually affective relationship between subject and object; yet Jorn, as a committed communist and materialist, attempted to do away with what he considered those critiques' idealisms (the unconscious, the spirit, etc.) by integrating the Interpretation's conclusions into dialectical materialism. What resulted from this was a series of very innovative, off-key strands of thought, but what interests me here is to pinpoint his use of Bohr's and Heisenberg's complementarity principle to transform the dialectic itself. This principle maintains that objects have properties that complement each other and which cannot be observed at the same time, but that nonetheless are constitutive of the object. This conclusion was reached through experiments with light and electrons: "sometimes their behaviour is wave-like and sometimes particle-like; *i.e.* such things have a wave-particle duality. It is impossible to observe both […] aspects simultaneously. Together, however, they present a fuller description than either of the two taken alone."[72] When associated with the other quantum physics principle, that the observer (not as a subject, but as matter interacting with matter) modifies what is being observed, Jorn argues that one of the most important consequences is that to analyse any two aspects of a phenomenon (the wave, and then the particle) is insufficient to make a description of it, since it ignores the presence of a third aspect, namely, the observer as such[73]. For him, all complementary relationships are therefore composed of three factors, which he then, in a sleight of hand typical of heavy, dense texts such as this one, conceives of in terms of *form*[74]. By this I mean that Jorn, in a

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[72] Encyclopedia Britannica entry on "Complementarity Principle", available at https://www.britannica.com/science/complementarity-principle, accessed October 30, 2016.

[73] "In any two descriptions of a phenomenon, for the description to be sufficient or complete a third necessary description is always ignored, which is only to say that the three descriptions form a unit and thus become philosophically accessible." Asger Jorn, "The Natural Order", translated from Danish by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts*, p. 135.

[74] "There is an element of provocation [by Jorn] in that Bohr wanted his idea to transcend physics and claimed that complementarity was already affecting other domains of experience, though his arguments for these instances were quite simplistic so Jorn also found triolectics recurring in a variety of contexts." Hilde de Burjin, "The Silkeborg Interpretation Redux", available at http://www.hildegoesasger.org/2012/05/the-silkeborg-interpretation-redux-or-jorns-detournement-of-niels-bohrs-complementarity, accessed October 31, 2016.

somewhat topological move, constantly twists concepts out of their regular field of action, in this particular case *bending* an instrumental statement (to observe a phenomenon we need to take into account a complementarity that goes three ways), after further development, into this:

> by dividing […] dialectical opposition into three complementary forms of observation, the observation of *constants* or masses which we call *qualities* (and not like Bohr *quanta*) and the observation of *amounts* which we call *quantities* and finally the observation of *changes* or processes which we call *values* or variations, it is possible to acknowledge dialectics and the theory of complementarity as two of three complementary systems of experience, an artistic, a technical and a scientific system.[75]

What he does throughout the text is take the initial premise (three parts to describe something) and see it, aesthetically, as a form available for manipulation, implying that it can be mapped onto different "systems of experience" that are simultaneously drawn together in a three-way relationship. By moulding distinct terms with multiple meanings into the same logic, he also manages to twist them, for example, into a surrealistic, humorous comment on the Cold War: "whether a three-sided relationship is static or constant is dependent, however, upon whether a rising tension occurs. Then this could perhaps lead to an actual explosion, the possibilities of which are abreacted in a two-sided relationship by the   incessant consumption of energy. No political advice whatsoever lies in these observations. I am only trying to discover what happens."[76] His topological approach, in any case, reveals a deeper concern with *conservation*: "two dialectical oppositions neutralize each other, like positive and negative. Where there are three mutual oppositions, such a synthesis cannot occur."[77] At this point, the triolectic is meant to avoid the synthetic outcome of the dialectic, or in other words, to apply complementarity to its components in a way that accounts for the complex relationship between them without a resolution in which *advancement* is implicated. Neither the thesis nor the antithesis stop *being* by becoming a synthesis: they are simply always *becoming*. If the dialectic is taken as a progressive logic, with an adherence to classical mechanics' conception of time as universal and independent from space, the triolectic attempts to integrate quantum mechanics principles in order to more adequately express 20th century physics' proposal that space and time constitute a continuum. While the dialectic leads in principle to truth (a single outcome), the triolectic, in attempting to conserve all

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[75] Asger Jorn, "The Natural Order", translated from Danish by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts*, p. 148.
[76] *Ibid,* p. 157.
[77] *Ibidem.*

components and realize their mutual affects, leads to many truths, to many resolutions given in a multiplicity of tensions. Jorn's conceptual move disarticulates both the dialectic and the complementarity principle, since "complementary relations were, by definition, unresolvable while triolectic relations suggested a number of intermediate compromises which amounted to creative resolutions."[78] (fig. 1.6)

This détournement, at the heart of which lies an interaction between conservative and creative-destructive forces, reveals an idea that Jorn held at least since his Cobra years and which permeates the ST through the connections between triolectics, topology, and situationist concepts. In "A Crooked Bough", from 1949, he affirmed that

Fig. 1.6. Composition on the triolectic of time. *The Situationist Times #5*, 1964. National Art Library, London.

> the only true philosophy of life (if it is to be in harmony with life) must involve a dialectic that is both conservative and radical in character at one and the same time […] If a truly living tradition, or culture, is to be created, it can only come about as a result of harmonious and conflict-free movement between the most extreme conservatism and experimental radicalism.[79]

Even from the spiralling manifesto drawn by de Jong in #1 (fig. 1.7) and its call for accepting misunderstandings and possibly unreconciled contradictions as the basis of a truly (experimental) Situationist praxis, the idea of a simultaneously leftward and rightward movement comes to be fulfilled by the triolectic, which instead of *moving forward keeps in place*, albeit as a nexus from which an expansive multiplicity twists and bends. Because this also represents a different

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[78] Hilde de Brujin, *op cit.*
[79] Asger Jorn, "A Crooked Bough", in Ruth Baumeister (ed.),
and Architecture, 1938-1958. Translated from Danish by Paul Larkin. Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 2011, p. 218

relationship to time, the ST's views on history are altogether different from that of the SI, growing from a Jornian development of détournement that follows a long-time questioning of the relationship between the avant-garde and popular culture, finding that "originality means simply a specific perspective in space and time, rather than the old modernist narrative of individual breakthroughs."[80]
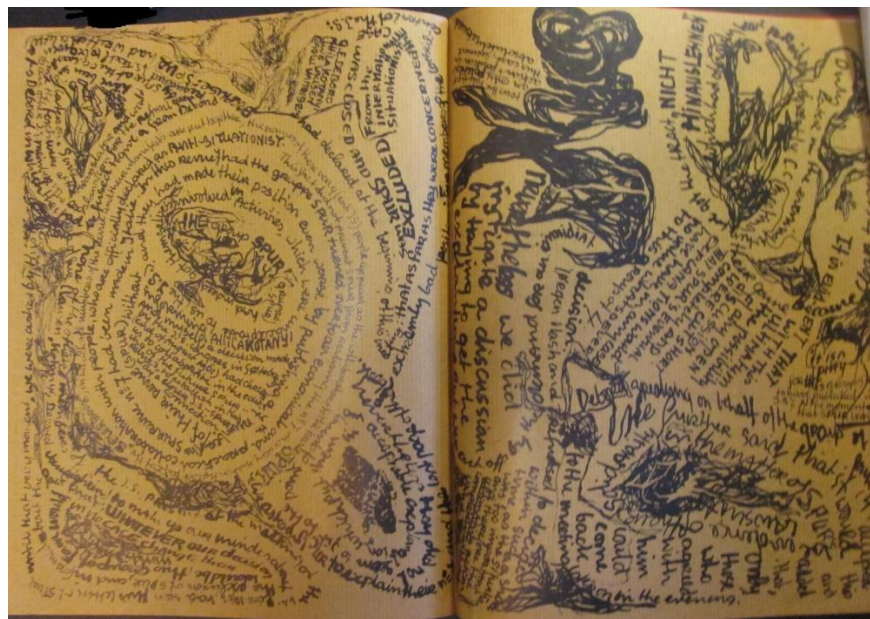
Fig. 1.7. "Critique of the Political Use of Détournement", *The Situationist Times #1,* 1962. National art Library, London.

It would seem that Jorn had never lost sight of Debord's 1952 pronouncement about a science of situations, a circumstance that aligned perfectly with de Jong's initial drive for ST to explore the consequences of Situationist theory beyond the political-aesthetic-economic articulation that eventually came to signify the SI discourse as a whole. In an article entitled "On the Triolectical Method in its Applications in General Situology", published in 1964 by Jorn's post-SI organization the Scandinavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism, he makes two immediately associated acts of naming: the triolectic as a *method* and the 'situology' as a theoretical corpus. By doing this, he is also (probably ironically) suggesting there could be a General and perhaps a Special Situology, mirroring special and general relativity. The text outlines situology through the further exploration of triolectics, now a method that could be used not only scientifically to describe situations but

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[80] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics*, p. 151.

also artistically to construct them. The foundational premise of the triolectic as a method was to be in the perception of time, abstracted into the three aspects of past, present, and future, and then claiming that "one of the forms of Time is always opposable to the two others present."[81] Jorn goes on to emphasize that certain historical and symbolic trinities can be generally conceptualized as triolectical devices, from "the Arianism of the Germanic peoples and the Roman civilization of the Latins" to the "Father and Son, a distinction of essences that the latter opposes in an absolute manner"[82]; the union of any two aspects of time "actualizes" as well as "potentializes" the third, by which Jorn seems to mean that, for example, in the conjunction of past and present is to be found both the clarity (actualization) and the urgency (potentialization) of the future. No new term emerges out of the ashes of the old, drawing all of them into a game of variabilities and potentialities centred on the point or context from which the triolectic was posed. After all, this conception of time presupposes a perpetual actuality, a perpetual simultaneity. However, Jorn argues, there is a delay between question and answer, which is to also say between the question and the application of the method to answer it, and in terms of a non-linear, constant complementarity this means a "duration […] which is the present itself, the actual as space. […] Anything that lengthens the delay between question and response will create the present exponentially – at the cost of the past and future. Ultimately, we will find an absolute, integral, eternal present: 'Waiting for Godot'."[83] This eternal present was what the SI saw as the goal of liberation, the 'leap out of history', but Jorn, in making a reference to Samuel Beckett's play, perhaps points at the profound loss of past and future as something not altogether desirable. Nonetheless, it is in the convergence of this delay and the formation of a (triolectical) antagonism where Jorn finds "the creation of a situation, [and] the basic necessary elements for the birth of any situation can be organized by the formation of two situations equally different and complementary to the first."[84] The point, it would seem, is not to create a single super-situation out of a million other ones (the 'leap out of history' of the SI), but just to create millions of

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[81] Asger Jorn, "On the Triolectical Method in its Applications in General Situology", translated from French by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts*, p. 239.

[82] *Ibid,* pp. 240-241.

[83] *Ibid,* pp. 245-246.

[84] It might be important, and worthy of an exploration that lies beyond the scope of this thesis, to explore the language used by Jorn in texts such as this, particularly because the translation here has settled on the "formation" and "creation" of situations, instead of the much more avant-garde, perhaps even strictly materialist, SI "construction" of them. *Ibid*, p. 246.

situations. A general situology would comprehensively study situations, not only descriptively, but also creatively, as the integration of subject-object in search of a free, playful life.
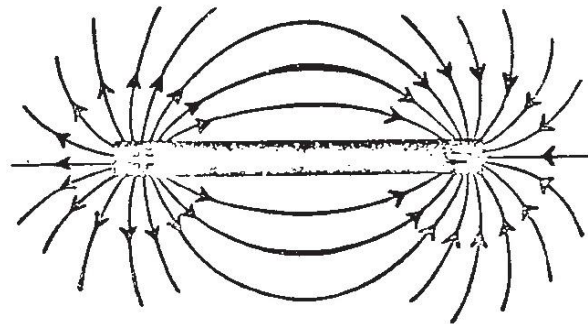
Fig. 1.8. Insert from "Open Creation and its Enemies", *Internationale Situationniste #5,* 1960. British Library, London.

2.2. The Topological Imagination

Topology has already been mentioned various times throughout this chapter, but will be given due attention now that the other basic ST concepts have been laid out so as to better flesh out its associative implications. Topology is the "branch of mathematics […] in which two objects are considered equivalent if they can be continuously deformed into one another through motions in space as bending, stretching, and shrinking while disallowing tearing apart or gluing together parts."[85] As early as 1960, Jorn had connected situology with topology in his response to a Lettrist critique of the SI, entitled "Open Creation and its Enemies": "situology, as the study of the unique, of the form, will be identical to morphology. But it could rightly be said that situology is a morphology of time, since everyone is agreed that topology is defined as the study of *continuity*, which is the non-division in extension (space) and non-interruption in duration."[86] (fig. 1.8) Jorn was playfully (which is to say, under complementary humour and seriousness) delineating the contours of a situology against other forms of scientific knowledge, which for him tended to *order*, to make absolute the distinctions of, say, geometrical elements in an objective to classify and categorize the world. For the SI at this point, this translated into alienation, a separation of any given subject from its experience of the world, an oppressing Cartesianism based on an absolute view of separation. What Jorn is aiming at is not, however, a

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[85] Stephan C. Carlson, "Topology", entry in the Encyclopedia Britannica, available at https://www.britannica.com/topic/topology, accessed October 31, 2016.

[86] "la situlogie serait en tant qu'étude de l'unique, de la forme, identique à la morphologie. Mais on peut justement dire que la situlogie est une morphologie du temps, puisque tous sont d'accord pour définir la topologie comme étude de la *continuité*, qui est la non-division dans l'étendue (espace) et la non-interruption dans la durée." Asger Jorn, "La création ouverte et ses ennemis", *IS #5,* 1960, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 39. Translated, with a couple changes by myself, by Fabian Tompsett, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/open1.html, accessed October 31, 2016. With Jorn's departure from the SI, their interest in topology drastically reduced. The project of a science of situations was relegated to the back of the SI's theorizations, and it is striking that when Jorn started to publish more consistently in *Situationist Times* that project became much closer to de Jong's interests. In other words, Jorn took topology with him when he resigned from the SI.

straightforward unification of subject and experience in the way the SI would argue for even in its late years (a dialectical resolution leading to the 'totality'), but at something arguably more complex. It would be logical to think, considering the revolutionary and libertarian background of the SI as well as Jorn's life-long heretical communism, that the conclusion of this analysis would be to emphasize the egalitarian nature of topology, in the sense that its "precise equivalences" allow for a political and economic extrapolation under which everyone's precise needs are met by virtue of the world's malleability as a single form. Nevertheless, Jorn takes a completely opposite and counterintuitive step, stating that in fact "equivalence teaches us nothing about the unique or the polyvalence of the unique, which is in reality the essential domain of analysis situs, or topology. Our goal is to set a plastic and elementary geometry against egalitarian and Euclidean geometry, and with the help of both move towards a geometry of variables, the ludic and differential geometry."[87] To make a formulation of it, Jorn is advancing difference as parting from *relative equivalences* over equivalence as parting from *absolute difference*, or in other words, a totality that is unlimited not because it flattens all distinctions in sweeping equalization but because it produces new equalizations from a variable set of distinctions[88]. This tricky, non-intuitive language carries over most Jorn texts, but what must be highlighted about this is the implication, for 'relative equivalences', of a term already explored in the previous part of this chapter: complementarity. With regards to topology and a possible situationist systematization of knowledge, it means that "either one must accept that it is no longer possible to establish a valid philosophy or one must accept the necessity of *the simultaneous presence of several complementary or mutually incompatible but equally valid philosophical systems*, principles or tendencies."[89] Relative equivalences produce no truth, but a multitude of them, and this premise, already behind de Jong's critique of the SI's organizational practices (the political use of détournement), is perhaps at the centre of the ST as a movement, as an anti-organization. It also posits an elementally malleable existence, a model of change that rejects progress-based narratives and which, with the aid of the triolectical method, produces what Stacey, in reference to the SI, writes is a "subject that

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[87] "l'équivalence ne nous apprend rien sur l'unique, ni sur la polyvalence de l'unique, qui est en réalité le domaine essentiel de l'analysis situs, ou topologie. Notre but est d'opposer une géométrie *plastique* et élémentaire à la géométrie égalitaire et euclidienne, et avec l'aide des deux, d'aller vers une géométrie des variables, la géométrie ludique et différentielle." *Ibid*, p. 42. Translated by Fabian Tomspett, with a few changes by myself.

[88] To use Jornian quantum jumps of logical juxtaposition, the former would be represented by existing communist states, while the latter would be best represented by communist or anarchist utopias of the kind imagined by heretical Marxists like the SI.

[89] Asger Jorn "The Natural Order", translated from Danish by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts*, p. 134.

experiences itself as conditioned, embedded in a specific historical moment, but also experiences these conditions as something to be transformed"[90]. This is the "noncontinous form of life" first described in the "Report on the Construction of Situations", which, in order to avoid confusion, could be retroactively re-understood in situological/topological language as a non-absolute form of life.

This interest in topology was not unique to Jorn, de Jong, and Bucaille, since conceptual and minimalist artists like Max Bill, Carl Andre, Lygia Clark, and Dan Graham were contemporaries in using mathematical concepts in the late 1950s and the 1960s[91]. In contrast, after Jorn's resignation in 1961, the SI abandoned the field of topology altogether, as well as most attempts at engaging in the creation of a Situationist science. What made the ST special in this case was not so much its use but its integration into a discourse that was founded in revolutionary politics, even if they did not overtly endorse violence towards the State like the SI, King Mob, or Black Mask/UAWMF, preferring to covertly exhort a philosophical assault, much like *S.NOB,* as will be explored in Chapter 4. In its dérive, the ST opened up myriad avenues of exploration that never went fulfilled, meandering from one image to another, proposing a topological understanding of matter that stimulates failure, another principle of experimentation. While #3 is the first full foray into topology, it had a presence ever since #1 with Surrealist maths teacher and artist Max Bucaille's "La problème du point". Bucaille contributed hand-drawn articles related to the topic

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[90] Frances Stacey, *op cit*, p. 31.
[91] Karen Kurczynski, "Red Herrings", in *Expect Anything*, p. 134. See also Sabine Breitwieser interview with Dan Graham, part of the MOMA Oral History Program, 2011. Available at https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript_graham.pdf, accessed October 31, 2016.

throughout issues 1 to 5, bringing to the fore the relevance that this field had, from the magazine's inception. His texts and drawings parallel de Jong's own in their transformative potential, at times elegantly and at others harshly bending into forms other than those intrinsic to their status as words and letters, simultaneously appearing as language and as pictures, enacting a tension that does not allow finalization as one or the other (fig. 1.9).

This tension reverberates over the entire run of the *ST*, in the sense that its image-centred format,

Fig. 1.9. Max Bucaille, "Situation & Probabilité", *The Situationist Times #2*, 1962. National Art Library, London

which flows uneasily between texts, collages, photographs, and drawings, tends to a saturation of material that impairs attempts at interpreting these works as wholes. This refusal is one of de Jong's purported objectives[92], but when reframed as part of a wider negation of a totality of absolute difference, some topological conclusions can

be inferred, especially if Jorn's *Golden Horn* book is taken into consideration. The latter "includes photographs of contemporary life next to drawings of petroglyphs, heraldic symbols, masks, coin designs, astrological symbols, and other heterogeneous forms of mythic imagery, in order to show the continuity of ancient popular symbols into the present."[93] This continuity, a *folding* of the past into the present and future, happens in a context where the anonymity and generic character of popular works of art creates an antagonism with uniqueness, with what is properly avant-garde, enacting that movement between two radical extremes theorized by Jorn ever since 1949. The *ST* also wielded a myriad images to produce topological encounters of pop and folk, of modern and

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[92] "A Maximum of Openness", in *Expect Anything*, p. 196.
[93] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics*, p. 85.

ancient; by putting into play objects and symbols from altogether different contexts (Celtic knots, Mexica codices, 20th century adverts, avant-garde art, and so on; see fig. 1.10) not only does it refuse a comprehensive reading that connects all of its elements together (a fundamentally positive objective task), it establishes a relative equivalence between them that is constantly in flight. Every single link constitutes an unspoken question of which the answer is potentially postponed forever, provoking a gap in thought where the present 'is actualized': a situation.

Fig. 1.10. *The Situationist Times #5*, 1964. National Art Library, London

In *ST #2*, there is a musical notation with positional arrangements and indications for a piece called "Signalement", by Dutch composer Peter Schat (fig. 1.11).
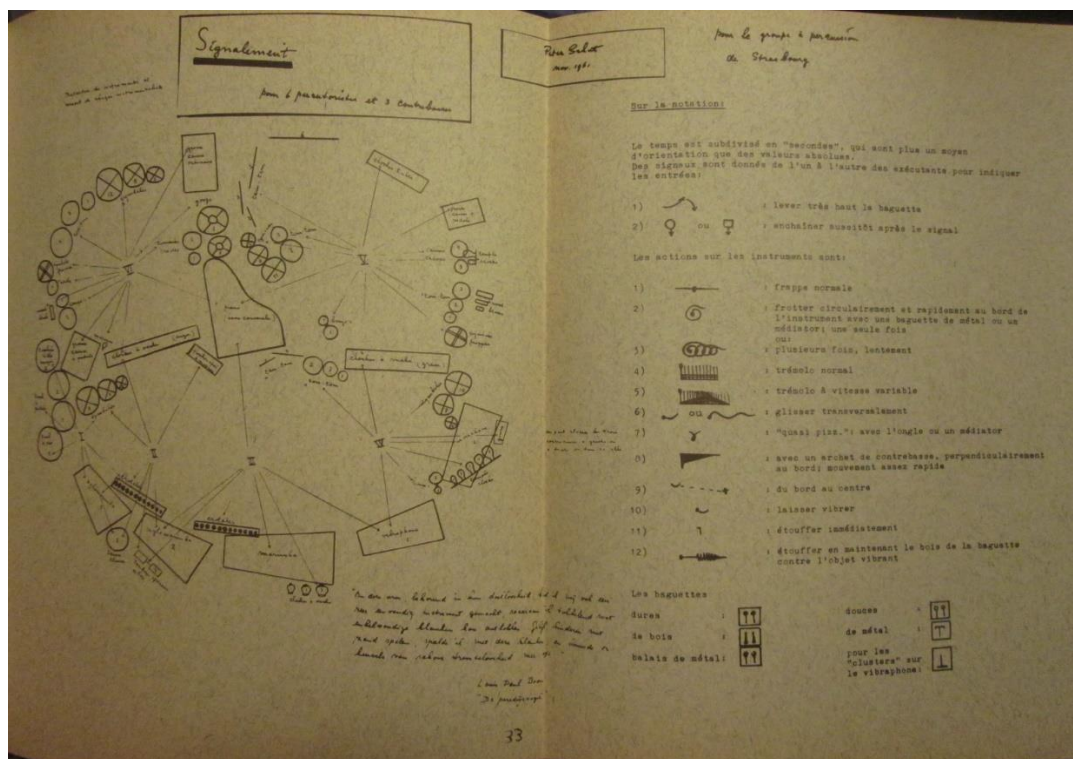
Fig.1.11. Peter Schat, "Signalement", *The Situationist Times #2*, 1962. National Art Library, London.

It is a visual score with multiple fold-in and fold-out parts (fig. 1.12), providing a symbolic language to be interpreted, creating an additional tension to the default one already existent in players' reading of Western musical standards. The reader is free to imagine how the work would sound, creating a multiplication of ironies already present in the title, which could be translated simply as 'description'. While the indications are detailed, and a schematic of the players' placement is provided, the score itself is an outlier for misinterpretation; the font is too small to read properly, and while it is but six pages long, the only recording I was able to acquire of it lasts seventeen minutes. The ST's print was also darkened and grainy, blurring some of the notational aspects together in a way that prevents the feeling of full, accurate comprehension. Schat's score is perhaps a good example of how the ST expanded into places left almost untouched by the avant-garde lineage claimed by the Situationists, and which the SI itself never even accounted for. Regardless, in terms of the discussion about topology, music is an apt candidate to be considered as a ready-made constructed situation, since it is simultaneously ephemeral and psychologically lasting – it does not imitate space, but *time*, and in this imitation opens up a horizon from which to surmise possible new relationships to reality, understood, through Jorn, strictly in material terms. Listening, as an act and not as a form of passivity, runs parallel to the act of playing, inasmuch the

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music's vague, undetermined qualities allow for an antagonism between perceptions that, seen generally, is also a relative equality, making it impossible to straightforwardly resolve the sound-senses dialectic. Therefore, under the ST's topological lens, the dissolution of spectatorship in music depends upon the folding together of listener and player, a very similar conclusion to those offered by composers like John Cage, and the conception of music as process would also be explored with care by minimalists like Steve Reich. While the ST never did include a theoretical text by Schat, the presence of his scores is meant as a further exploration of the concept of the situation, remaining only an avenue of research in a labyrinth sprawling with them. In the end, music does present an interesting case for Jorn's triolectical 'actualizations' and 'potentializations' of the aspects of time.
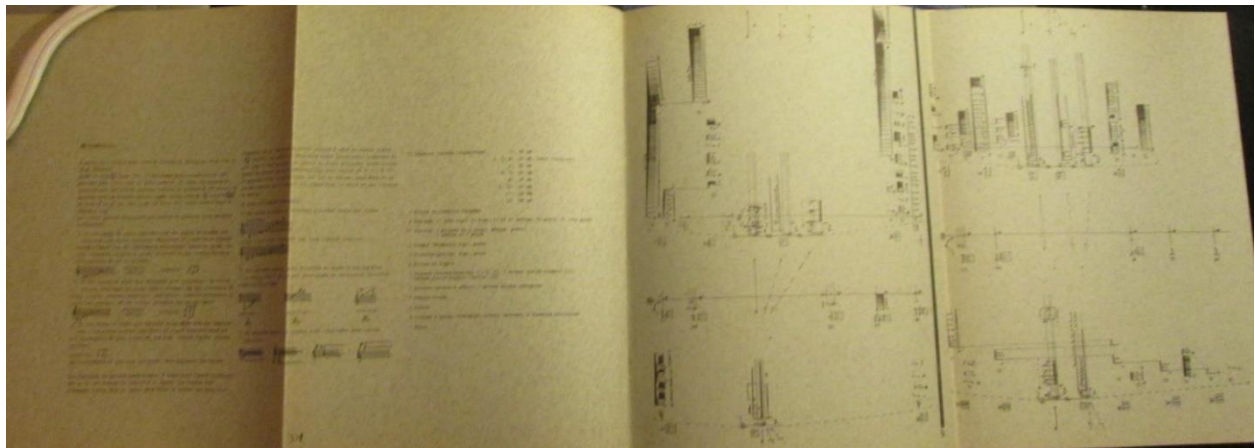
Fig. 1.12. Peter Schat, "Signalement", *The Situationist Times #2,* 1962. National Art Library, London.

One of the main Situationist drives was, in keeping with the ST's terms, an 'actualization' of all the revolutions of the past[94], and the visualization of a situation as a topological encounter allows the ST to provide an aesthetically grounded theorization of it where the SI sought a political one. One of the major results of this difference is that the ST's praxis imbricates many other fields apart from the political-economic-aesthetic territory that the SI prefers to focus on, if only because it could possibly be used for areas not strictly social in nature in order to effectively establish a

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[94] As will be seen in Chapter 2. In the context of the ST, which is to say the years 1962-1964, the most relevant example of this is to be found in the exhibition *Destruktion af RSG-6*, in which Michèle Bernstein presented a series of objects in which revolutionary moments of failure, particularly of the 19th century, were re-staged as victories using miniature soldiers and explosive styles of painting. See Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, "To Act In Culture While Being Against All Culture: the Situationists and the "Destruction of RSG-6"", in *Expect Anything*.

situology. Therefore, while the SI's reflection around the revolutions that preceded them is more narrowly defined under a politics of/as aesthetics, the ST's approach points towards the creation of an inherently incomplete discursive construct that is much more general, having more in common with epistemology as a radical projection of knowledge able to change life at the most basic level of interaction with the world, the level of question and answer. The *ST* issues bend into one another, and the fact of their chronological production, their very history, is secondary to their (non-linear, non-absolute) *continuity*, their existence as complementary elements of something inescapably unfinished called the Situationist Times. Thus, the situation is détournement (1st issue), it is dérive (2nd), it is a topological encounter (3rd), a labyrinth (4th), a ring (5th), and a 'moment' (6th).

In one of the many articles on labyrinths from the fourth issue, Dr. Hans Ludwig Cohn Jaffé, a German art historian working in the Netherlands, suggests that the spiral (such as de Jong's manifesto) is a labyrinth of one path that reveals itself as the form and gesture that signifies the realm of death; the spiral itself is a signifying movement, a *passage* in one direction. With Daedalus, the spiral suffered a topological transformation from the 'spiritual' to the 'real', provoking the emergence of "choice, thus risk, and with choice also conscience, the memory of the path that was chosen."[95] Jaffé describes it as a rupture between nature and humanity, the latter's realization that a world built by it necessitates choice and freedom of will, thus representing a different kind of passage. Accompanying this text are various others, such as a mathematical description of labyrinths by Max Bucaille (fig. 1.13) and a view of their political potential by Gordon Fazakerley and ex-Situationist Piero Simondo, including an article in which the spiral's

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[95] H. L. C. Jaffé, "Les labyrinths", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 4, National Art Library: X911004, p. 26. "C'est le choix, et donc le hasard, et avec ce choix la conscience, la mémoire du chemin choisi." Translation mine.

status as a labyrinth is challenged at the outset. Hence the magazine itself presents the reader with a series of risks and choices to be made in the gap between question and answer (what path to take?), creating, among many things, the possibility to re-conceptualize the situation (always as an incomplete discursive element, a perpetual work in progress) as a labyrinth. The dérive follows a labyrinthine premise to be found in

Fig. 1.13. Max Bucaille, "Labyrinthes Analytiques", *The Situationist Times #4*, 1963. National Art Library, London

psychogeography (and in the SI, unitary urbanism); détournement takes the spiral labyrinth and turns it on its head; the triolectic is set up in a way that "at any time there are three alternatives or contrasts among which to make a choice"[96]; but the most important conclusion from Jaffé's text for my purposes, in its antagonism with many of the other articles by different authors in different styles, is that labyrinths do not have solutions because they are not problems to solve, they are "mythical representations" of a relationship between life and death. It is worth remembering that the Situationist fight is one against *dead time*, the spectatorial passage of life into death, but while the SI is – transforming metaphors into concepts and vice versa – looking to provide for one way out, for a solution, the ST actively refuses to do so. Instead of mapping the labyrinth, of giving orders, it follows the de Jongian/Jornian anarchic principle of playing with the pathways at hand, stripping them of sense and giving them new ones at will in a topological fashion. This is what I first meant with the use of the term 'topological imagination': it is an image-based ingenuity that finds *forms* everywhere, and upon which every field of knowledge becomes a field of open creation, the conflux of which comes to articulate situations that expose these fields to each other, a living nexus.

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[96] Asger Jorn, "Art and Orders: On treason, the mass action of reproduction, and the great artistic mass effect", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 5, National Art Library: X911005, p. 9.

2.2.1 The Totality of Difference

Gruppe SPUR, in a 1962 text entitled "Our Reply", reproduced in *ST #1* and which concerns their trial for blasphemy, attacks "the closed legal system [that] seeks to classify art within its determinology", supporting a

> *détournement* of all knowledge: religious psychology, sociology, biology, depth psychology, pataphysics, comparative ethnology and other sciences. The law deliberately ignores art's right to use playful research methods to represent on an existential level the ferment of dissolution in a stagnating society. Our anti-ideological and antitendentious texts are multi-layered palimpsests, layered surrealistically and dadaistically; it's up to the reader to discern any clarity.[97]

De Jong's inclusion of this letter sets up a foundational parallel that provokes a distance from the SI in solidarity with the Germans, and which brings to the fore the possible comparison of the SI to a lawmaker, a comparison later repeated by Jorn in *ST #5*'s "Art and Orders" in reference to the SSI off-shoot group Co-Ritus. The letter marks out art as a tool to articulate the growth of socially destructive forces in order to rupture its unity-by-law, pursuing a different kind of consensus, the more personal, irreducibly individual and yet "multi-layered" relation between works, artist, and reader. In their magazine *SPUR #1* the German collective declared they had embarked on a quest to create "our own world" and "our own society"[98], which summarizes well the general avant-garde intent of all the Situationists at large, but which also represented the key problem that fragmented the SI throughout the years. Against the Central Committee, de Jong would find a platform for articulation in the multiple possibilities of the answer to the question of how to reach "our own society", but the SI did not ultimately want the reader to have to actively discern any clarity". Choosing text over images, the SI's path was evidently programmatic, dialectical, and in search of a truth that the eye would never provide: "for the SI, the image-form of the spectacle represents the totality of the social world. Hence, the spectacle is 'the general equivalent of whatever society as a whole can be and do'. The society of the spectacle thus corresponds to the historical moment in which commodification completes its colonization of everyday life, leaving nothing else to see."[99] The logic of spectacle is what SPUR called "determinology", an

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[97] Gruppe SPUR, "Our Reply", translated from German by Anja Büchele & Matthew Hyland, in *Cosmonauts*, p. 53. Original appeared as "Unsere Antwort", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 1, 1962, National Art Library: X930220, [n/p].
[98] Diedrich Diederichsen, "Persecution and Self-Persecution: The SPUR Group and its Texts: The Neo-Avant-Garde in the Province of Postfascism", in *Grey Room,* no. 26, 2007, translated by Noam M. Elcott, p. 61.
[99] Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 5.

instrumental reason that has populated reality with its concepts, and what the SI sought was to crush its foundations so as to reach the *true* totality, finding in the proletariat its chosen revolutionary agent, since only workers would be able to abolish work entirely. Free from the spectacle of/at work, a non-absolute drive to play would emerge, situations being constructed once and again, a collective and communal festival that would realize the promise of art after having negated its institutional alliance with lawmakers. In this totality, everyone would be a situationist at last, effecting a 'leap out of history' in which time would no longer be associated with capitalist instrumentality. The SI's struggle against fragmentation is better followed through Raoul Vaneigem's writings, which will feature more prominently in the next chapter, but which for now can be anticipated to pose the concept of the totality, even in 1967's *Revolution of Everyday Life*, as the logical outcome of all situationist activity. Thus, it is a *unitary* effort, a wide mobilization process that would bring subjectivity's pieces, broken by centuries of domination, back together, simultaneously destroying spectacular, fragmentary society altogether to let a new, powerless and fully equal social formation emerge.

The (false) totality of the spectacle is integral to the SI's rejection of art as a specialized site of struggle, which is to say as a mere diversion from what should be a unitary front. It does not preclude activity in the cultural realm, however, as some of the historiographical commonplaces have maintained, but it does presuppose an attempted engagement of the whole in every move. Since, according to the SI, Surrealism and Dadaism had realized and negated art respectively, media like canvas-based painting no longer held any emancipatory communicative potential, and any new work of art in essence perpetuated the logic of the spectacle by means of renovation, offering it new forms to recuperate and use for the purpose of domination. Jorn objected not so much to the fact of canvas painting's constant recuperation, but to the very logic behind the SI's arguments against it: "to single out painting as a tabooed site incapable of critique perpetuates its special status. Jorn's project as a whole attempted to destroy the unique status of that medium […]."[100] His approach to détournement is vital to his discussion with the SI, since he conceives of it in terms of a devaluation[101], an operative stripping of an 'important' image of its privileges or,

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[100] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics*, p. 183.
[101] See Asger Jorn, "Critique of Economic Policy", translated from Danish by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts,* pp. 177-205. This text, importantly, was produced while he was still a member of the SI.

on the flipside, granting a 'trash' image with the power of critique (after all, both are valued in spectacular society for opposite reasons). While the SI comes off as partially iconoclastic, Jorn was much more interested in conserving the image, which, as mentioned earlier, follows his particular philosophy of history and allows new, unexpected contextual configurations to appear. The ST's focus on the visual, as opposed to the SI's mostly textual format, not only implicates Jorn's 'conservatism' but also a position that is actually consequent with the SI's arguments; in fact, the very first time that de Jong had a more conventional approach that could be targeted by the art-world was also the moment when the ST was forced out of existence. Gestures such as Bucaille's handwritten articles coexist with mechanical newspaper collages and masses of depictions of anonymously produced objects and cartoons, creating relative equivalences that find singular interpretation impossible, and so demand, at the very least, a kind of drifting through, forming labyrinthine paths unique to the reader while never losing sight that those paths are simultaneously shared (fig. 1.14). In the topological imagination, this enables an opening that relies on the loss of specialization, devaluing it while at the same time affirming the differences from which it parts, in a non-absolute manner. These differences, via Jorn, part from creativity, which the Danish artist kept "trying to free […] from pre-existing definitions of art"[102], because "institutionalized, specialized discourses […] signify power"[103]. The ST's entire run is anti-specialist, perhaps even in the

Fig. 1.14. *The Situationist Times #4*, 1963. National Art Library, London. This image consists of two overlapping pages: the one below contains printed labyrinths; the one on top is translucent vellum paper for readers to trace the solutions for themselves. This copy was already solved, in red ink. Note also that for the lower left labyrinth there is more than one path that leads to the centre.

very last issue -- which at least attempts to devalue the domain of artist books -- and in a triolectical

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[102] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics,* p. 183.
[103] Karen Kurczynski, "Red Herrings" in *Expect Anything*, p. 141.

fashion finds in masses of images material for unexpected discursive movements that imply no resolutions but a multiplication of possible paths. As Kurczynski states, "in *The Situationist Times* there is no such thing as universality: forms may relate dialogically to each other, but they retain their uniqueness and thus resist abstraction as universal symbols."[104] In their relative equivalence, they reject the totality of the spectacle not because it is false but because it is uncreative, it has colonized imagination and *ordered* it in a manner that has changed the *possible* for the *permitted*. Instead of replacing this totality with a true one that will be theoretically well defined in advance by a vanguard organization, the various elements of the ST analysed up until this point could be said to articulate a totality of difference, which is to say a totality whose form will be conditioned by the circumstantial twists and turns that a revolutionary (topological) imagination will lay out depending on context, and which will take no primacy over others. In other words, it will arise out of individualized collectivities in creative harmony with one another, a multidirectional, unordered totality illuminated by the "labyrinthian [sic] clarity" that in *ST #4* Aldo Van Eyck said revealed the labyrinth as whole *and* part[105] (cause is effect, space is time…). It does not oppose a whole to another whole like the SI does with its unitary front, but a topological 'fragmentary wholeness' that, due to its inherent relativity, is uninterested in truth, and thus does not exclude alienation as long as it has not originated in an order. By attempting to draw attention to the possibility of creatively manipulating the spectacle in order to break it down without falling into the 'traps' of dialectical thinking, the ST is also attempting to realize what Stacey has called "Situationist poetry" as a "radical form of life, hinting at a revolutionary 'reversal of perspective' to come", an "anti-writing, tied to a living, creative subjectivity."[106]

To summarize, topology, as used by ST, presupposes the unity of time and space, form and content, in a way that can be shaped by people, not necessarily in dialectical form but in a way that prioritizes the tension between all elements. It sees progression in terms of process, not in terms of an event, and this means that the totality is not accessed through a single revolutionary upheaval but a perpetual revolution, a perpetual tension. It pre-empts Vaneigem's revolution of everyday

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[104] *Ibid,* p. 166.
[105] Aldo Van Eyck, "Beyond Visibility About Place and Occasion the Inbetween Realm Right-Size and Labyrinthian Clarity", in *The Situationist Times*, no. 4, National Art Library: X911004, p. 85.
[106] Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 79-80.

life, except instead of focusing on a singularity, it focuses on the possibility of millions of singularities. What the ST suggests is that the Hegelian 'end of history' is a petrification of human experience; instead, it wants to keep moving, but to do so without any sort of determinism (economic, social, political, scientific) whatsoever. Free movement is triolectical, it does not advance nor regress time, and that is why the totality, seen through topology, is one of difference; infinite in the way a ring is infinite, not only by itself but in the context of infinite kinds of rings in an infinite number of cultures and minds.

A question arises from this theorizing: how does this change actually take place? How is the incomplete, unfinished totality of the ST related to revolutionary opposition to the spectacle beyond its abstract incompatibilities? To answer this, I will try to mobilize a concept that, just like the triolectic and topology, seems to be persistent in Jorn's philosophy and which would seem could also apply to the ST and de Jong's direction for it. The totality of difference that I have tried to delineate above finds a very interesting parallel in what Chiara Bottici has conceived of as a political myth, not so much in its presence as an overarching, unifying imaginal construct in political theory but as a philosophical concept. According to her, myths "display what we can call a plural universality"[107] since they entail "the universality that resides in knowledge about different human characters", a structure that not only resembles what I have said above characterizes the one of the ST, but that is also quite similar to Jorn's own concept of myth.

3. Vital Images: A Politics of Myth

My research on the political aspects of myth yielded little of use in terms of a conception of myth contemporary or immediately related to the ST that could be, first and foremost, comparable to Jorn's, and second, that could complement it in order to further understanding of it[108]. Where the

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[107] Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 39.
[108] Said research included classic texts on myth such as Mircea Elíade's *Myth and Reality*, Ernst Cassirer's *The Myth of the State* as well as his *Language and Myth*. I do not engage with these discussions on myth, or with Emile Durkheim's earlier work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* because their aim is sociological and their framework explicative, while Jorn's aim is political and his framework is aesthetic, in the sense that does not attempt to offer, like these authors do, a rationalization about the functions of myth in societies (modern or otherwise). Also, these sociological works tend to treat myth in the same way that the Situationists did, as the elementary form of an

SI, through members such as Vaneigem, understood myth as ideological totalization, the ST, through Jorn, understood it as an essential, libertarian popular creativity that lay dormant. Recently, there have been many translation efforts of both long and marginal Jorn texts by various scholars, although plenty of works remain untranslated; nevertheless, in reviewing the available material, I found that Jorn extended his views on myth at the same time as he avoided making them more specific once WWII was over. This means that there is no clear-cut, reliable definition of myth given by him, which is why I will attempt a more historical reconstruction that includes texts from the 1950s and the 1960s in order to draw out the various tangents and key elements for a relatively stable definition. Therefore, I believe an explanation of this concept is necessary before moving on to the next part of this analysis and interpretation.

Jorn's concept of myth shares with the SI's a fundamental interconnectedness, reflecting (perhaps even refracting) positions that suffered but a few modifications over the course of his life. In "his 1957 afterword to the *Golden Horns* book, Jorn argues that reality is a combination of the return to old ideals, symbolized by the circle, on the one hand, and the linear conception of progress that has dominated the last few centuries, symbolized by a continuous line or vector, on the other. The spiral, then, becomes a symbol of compromise between the two viewpoints."[109] This is basically a re-statement of the quote from "A Crooked Bough" given above, trading philosophical terms for more visually centred, pre-emptively topological ones. These were meant for *activation*, as I will argue later on, precisely because of the possibility to interweave them with a variety of positions from which that spiral could be created. For now, I will advance this point by following Kurczynski, who states that the mythical images deployed in *Golden Horn* "are not symbols but signals, presenting the reader not with a finished and formalized example of a form-type but rather a kind of incitement or inspiration."[110] Myth, in other words, is not meant for consumption, but as a mobilization that consists of providing common knowledge (since myths contain certain epistemological approaches[111] that are anonymous and collective) with creativity, an imagination

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ideological construction. I will argue below that myth in the Jornian sense is actually instrumental in the struggle against ideology and the spectacle.

[109] Karen Kurczynski, "Red Herrings", in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jakob Jakobsen (eds.), *Expect Anything*, p. 161.
[110] *Ibid,* p. 166.
[111] Myth is, in this instance, also a form of knowledge. See Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 37.

that sees in unfinished forms a platform for direct intervention into the world. Myth, therefore, is not irrationality or belief in a totality of self-erasure in an ideal, but a systematization of reality, a *participative* communal effort to give the world a shape over time. The first part of the following section will function like a necessary parenthesis, in the sense that it will provide a specification of what exactly Jorn, and with him the ST, conceived myth as. This will aid further below in understanding how myth consists of a logic that underlies the production of the discourse by the group and its magazine. One last note is that sometimes the heterodox nature of Jorn's writings makes difficult to determine an exact definition of concepts. In order to avoid confusion, it is important to state now that there is a difference between imaginary and myth: imagination is an active faculty that in engagement with the world creates an imaginary; myth is the logic that articulates an imaginary and gives it sense and direction. Hopefully, this difference will become clearer as the concepts are better explored.

3.1. The Concept of Myth

Jorn's interest in myth arose from the Nazi occupation of Denmark during WWII. Helhesten ("Hell Horse"), the collective of which he was a part of at the time, waged a cultural battle with the occupiers around an issue that articulated the various concerns regarding nation, race, identity, and the idealized social constructs they demanded. Art played a major role in these totalizing discourses, which had reduced creation to representation (ideal or otherwise), and Helhesten opposed this view by understanding art as a common language developed socially and collectively, as myth. Against the idealism of the Nazis, Helhesten deployed a materialistic reversal in which fantasy and mythic themes freed the image from representation – "[they] argued that their fantastic forms were more concrete than conventional images because they existed exclusively in the painting."[112] It was not an argument to avoid censorship by limiting art's domain to the object, however, since the implication was that these images were born from group activity, from a collective endeavour whose relationship to fantasy did not merely represent them but *activated* their cosmology instead: a praxis. Helhesten understood aesthetics as politics, since mythic imagery, following this logic, was a "symbolic transformation of the society that developed it"[113],

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[112] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics*, p. 42.
[113] *Ibidem.*

arguing that myths grew out of everyday life, and that the creativity that gave them form was to be grasped as *mythmaking*. In 1941, Helhesten artist Niels Lergaard established an opposition between mythmakers and mere ""believers of myth", likely meaning the Nazis"[114], a duel perhaps comparable to that between the spectator and the situationist, and in which mythmaking is to be understood as "a deliberate practice [that] attempts the impossible: the […] creation of new myths"[115]. Whereas the believer of myth creates nothing but the misery of static relations colonizing everything, the mythmaker is the one that sets history in motion by virtue of producing, simultaneously, him/herself, his/her community, and the very reality that *contains* them[116]. This Romantic outlook has been traced back by Kurczynski to 19th century Danish philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig, who rejected the idea of myth as an insufficient, obsolete natural philosophy and "wrote that myths were living expressions of the cultures that created them."[117]

In the post-war period, organizations like Surrealisme Révolutionnaire and Cobra critiqued André Breton's call for a "new Myth", which tended to emphasize ritualization and cultic symbols that made it seem, to appropriate Helhesten's language, a re-ordering of belief instead of the renovation of *creative production* of the world. For someone like Jorn, mythmaking was sense-making allied to the possibility of manipulating the results of that subject-object interaction through the creation of (symbolic) forms[118]. In other words, it provided a system of knowledge that is both rational and expressive, that does not yield to symbolic repetition ingrained in belief, in spectatorship, and which rejects mythology for its passive categorization in favour of a mass of images meant to *incite*. In the Surrealisme Révolutionnaire congress in Brussels, 1955, "Jorn defines myth as the "explanation and figuration by means of which humans make an event out of lived experiences." Humankind, he continues, must live in an "active state of mythic creation", specifying that this is the "materialist" point of view toward myth."[119] Nevertheless, in keeping with Jorn's communism,

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[114] *Ibidem.*
[115] *Ibid,* p. 50.
[116] The container of society is, however, but a systematization of images, a mythological designation of what is permitted, and this form, regardless of the way in which it appears to the people within it, can be destroyed and made again. See Asger Jorn, "Critique of Economic Policy", in Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jakob Jakobsen (eds.), *Cosmonauts*, p. 196-197. It is important to mention that his text is from 1962, much later from the times of the Nazi occupation under which the mythmaker had an even more vital importance to Jorn.
[117] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics,* p. 50.
[118] *Ibid,* p. 57.
[119] *Ibid,* p. 56.

and as evidenced later in his tearing down of Lettrism in "Open Creation and its Enemies",
mythmaking is not an act of God or an idealism, it is a collectivism – immanently horizontal instead
of vertical, like dictated belief. In other words, for Helhesten, Nazi ideologues reformed the
foundations of a community they violently overtook through a totalitarian system of interlocked
beliefs (racial science, the destiny of the nation, and other idealist constructs based on abstractions
that did not coincide with the material reality of its subjects, or that attempted to mould that reality
according to its perspective). Against this, Helhesten proposed an active engagement and constant
reformulation of *perspective*; if the Nazi perspective tended towards its own eternalization as an
ideal (and thus demanded passivity from its believers: the world is always already explained by
the foundational myth), Helhesten offered in myth-making an alternative in which perspective is
modified by the making of history. The 'modern myth' of the Nazis is fixed in place, while myth-
making is a process of continually questioning and re-formulating the community one lives in.

In "Open Creation and its Enemies", written in 1960, Jorn develops the concept by refuting a
common source for radical conceptions of myth, the early 20th century thinker Georges Sorel. The
French writer of *Reflections on Violence* (1908) was an important figure for anarchists, avant-
gardists, and later on even fascists up until the 1930s. He offered the 'myth of the general strike'
as an operative concept designed to bring about the end of capitalism in the image of a singular,
sweeping apocalyptic strike from the proletariat: the general strike "must be taken as an undivided
whole and the passage from capitalism to socialism conceived as a catastrophe whose development
defies description."[120] Sorel consciously seeks to displace the powerful social and historical motor
of Christianity into this concept, but Jorn subtly indicates that such a teleology has also fed a logic
of persecution by remarking that "all those who don't fit in with this perspective are equally
assured of punishment by using the key formula of all the historic events of our century: the
accusation of treachery (to what? The system)."[121] He continues by saying that "for me all art is
an infinite multitude of mythic creations […] because I oppose free creativity to a return to the

[120] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, translated by Jeremy Jennings, p. 140.
[121] Asger Jorn, "Open Creation and its Enemies", in *Internationale Situationniste,* no. 5, 1960, translated by Fabian Tompsett, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/open1.html, accessed October 31, 2016

belief in a single imposed myth, or systems of myths"[122] (in other words, a singular image). If when it comes to Sorelianism "the myth is first of all an image helping to create the organic, revolutionary group"[123] without regard for whether the myth is socially founded or not, for Jorn -- and de Jong's own appropriations of his concepts -- the myth is not a singular image. It is a non-representational logic that in the application of imagination to the material world finds life, replacing the mediations of the spectacle with *living images* that are continually created by a community. As a logic, it helps articulate images already available in a critical manner as the multiply-sided continual re-formulation of a community; its direct opposition is the logic of the commodity, under which every image is available for a single form of consumption that passively reproduces the totality of capitalist social relationships. Thus, myth in this form also denies the psychoanalytic angles given to it by Breton's Surrealism[124], in the sense that it is not a latent force that comprises a common core for social organization, awaiting mobilization of its images so as to produce belief in change. Instead, myth grounded in mythmaking is an active process that continually works and reworks *forms[125]*, of which images are but a subset. If Sorel's term was attempting to reroute History, Jorn's completely forgoes its singularity in favour of stories and multiplicity, a pluralistic view of time that comes to be realized in the complementarity principle behind the ST's version of Situationist praxis.

The pluralism of myth(making) leads to an almost automatic operation of détournement and dérive, inasmuch as social material must be re-imagined (a triolectical movement between conservatism and avant-gardism) and consistently navigated through in patterns unique to the

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[122] "pour moi, tout art est une multitude infinie de créations mythiques, […] parce que j'oppose la créativité libre au retour à la croyance en un seul mythe, ou système de mythes, imposé." Asger Jorn, "La création ouverte et ses ennemis", *Internationale Situationniste,* no. 5, 1960, British Library: 4554.697000, p. 36. Translated from French by Fabian Tompsett, available at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/open1.html, accessed October 31, 2016This is a repetition of the Helhesten view of myth, but his critique of Sorel expands the concept further by rejecting images as organicist foundations for an organization.

[123] Nikolaj Lübecker, *Community, Myth and Recognition in Twentieth-Century French Literature and Thought*, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 26.

[124] *Ibid,* p. 66.

[125] This idea parts from Bottici's argument that "a myth […] is not a product that is given once and for all, but is instead a process of the continual reworking of a basic narrative core or *mythologem.* Blumenberg conveyed this idea through the German expression *Arbeit am Mythos,* which literally means "work on myth". If myth consists of the work on myth, not only are there no single myths, which are given once and for all, but the same *mythologem* also changes over time because, on each occasion, it is reappropriated by different needs and exigencies." Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 7.

individual/communal experience (itself a topological, labyrinthine relation) in a particular context. All of these operations would not lead to a truth to be believed in, but to a further truthmaking grounded solely in process, in play and not work. In articulating this last opposition, all of the Situationists produced a "valorization of a surplus of life [that] meant embracing all those types of values pertaining to practices and situations that are considered excessive, such as play, festivals, love and adventures: values that the Situationists deemed not applicable to forms of necessary labour or the fulfilment of brute needs."[126] I would argue that myth is what gives this surplus a shape, as an excess of vital images from which the possibility of remaking the world anew emerges. A myth is not exactly unitary, and yet it détourns *everything at once* because it springs forth from the most elementary interaction between a community and its surroundings.

To sketch a summary of Jorn's concept of myth as seen so far it would be useful to unpack the definition he gave in 1955 as an "explanation and figuration by means of which humans make events out of lived experiences". The relationship between explanation and figuration is one between rationality and imagination (*not* irrationality); because it *helps* make an event out of experiences it constitutes a logic that aids in the configuration of multiple images that demand active participation in their continual creation and re-creation, interpretation and re-interpretation. It is not a singular image, because under the guise of singularity, such as Sorel's understanding of Christianity or Surrealism's re-ordering of the cultic and the ritual under Breton's "new Myth", an event is made by the mediation of belief, which for the Helhesten artists meant a passivity that never once truly engages with the image. Additionally, this mediation of belief transposes the singularity of the image to the singularity of the event, in the sense that it reduces it to an individuality that does not necessarily interact with others. Instead, Jorn's myth, as a logic that explains and figures experience, as an active engagement that is free from mediation (belief), parts from the principle that the shapes that those experiences can be given are collective in nature; because there is no singular image to fit them into, the references through which the *making* takes place are a historical commonality, a culture of which all members participate and constantly rearticulate: a multiplicity of images from the past and the present, continually modified by each

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[126] Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 41.

and every member. In comparison to other conceptions, Jorn's is a concept of *use*[127] more than of explanation, which differentiates it from more philosophically rigorous or academic approaches. Unlike Roger Caillois, for example, Jorn does not appear to be concerned with the origin of mythmaking, and does not seem to consider it the result of a biological condition that finds in the imagination a tool for representation and understanding of itself as such. For Jorn, there is no sacred encompassed by myths, just like there is no unconscious directing the features of fantasies: mythmaking is a conscious activity that brings with it a materialist understanding of the world as malleable, and which conceives of myth *against* a singular image articulated and reinforced by belief. More concretely, because for Jorn the relationship between the subject and the world is dialectical, the images produced by mythmaking are constantly changing, which is also to say that, unlike the singular image destined for belief, they are not ahistorical.

Hints of this commonality appear already in *ST #1* in the youth revolt-like scrawls and thickly sinuous drawings of de Jong and the Gruppe SPUR contributors, which *reclaim* the knowledge they are provided with, such as museum object photographs, in order to give them an intensely expressive, obscenely erotic multiplicity of meanings.

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[127] I had to draw out the concept via comparisons and various Jorn texts in order to give it a sense; because it is a concept of *use*, it is not comparable to much more thorough and academically-inclined explorations of myth such as Roger Caillois' or Bataille's, who go much further in their analysis of the sacred. The differences with these authors' approaches to myth are therefore significant, both in the rigour of their construction (which is to say their form) as well as their content. Jorn also eschews psychoanalysis altogether, meaning that his interpretation is incompatible with Caillois' when it comes to the idea that myths "replace the animal instinct within man, which can no longer be realized and thus comes to life only virtually". Rosa Eidelpes, "Roger Caillois' Biology of Myth and the Myth of Biology", in *Anthropology & Materialism*, no. 2, 2014, p. 7. See also Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, translated from the French by Meyer Barash. Glencoe, The Free Press, 1959, p. 127. If the sacred is in principle unapproachable, myths are the *images* and the representations through which it becomes somewhat graspable. The idea of mythmaking not being ahistorical also touches on Bataille's 1940s idea of an 'absence of myth'; "despite [Bataille's] sympathy for Surrealism and its attempts to construct a new myth, he basically considers Breton as the *symptom* of a typically modern longing for myth. This longing is a symptom of something positive; it is the symptom of a desire for community." Nikolaj Lübecker, *op cit*, p. 78. According to this author, Bataille connects this absence with the 'absence of community', in the sense that "a traditional community is defined by its distance from and opposition to other communities – it excludes other communities. […] In order to institute a non-exclusive community, we must proceed from the basis of an absence of community: the "absence of community must be the foundation of any possible community." […] There should be no configuration of particularity – more precisely: there should always be the possibility of an absence of figuration – because this configuration produces exclusion." *Ibid*, p. 79. Since for Jorn there is a process of figuration in myth, there is always an articulation of what for Bataille would be an exclusionary community (see, for example, the almost 'civilizational' arguments used by the Second Situationist International in their manifesto). Nevertheless, Jorn's definition shares with all of these authors the idea that myth is the basis for a sociality, except that instead of being enshrined into a belief, it is critically engaged with and re-shaped.

Fig. 1.15. "Revolution", *The Situationist Times #1*, 1962. National Art Library, London

This image (fig. 1.15) pours away from the pages of the magazine, using collage, drawing, and even a painterly technique in a fragmentary piece that breaks down all of the philosophical underpinnings behind them. "Revolution" is clearly visible as well as a word that is difficult to discern, and their bent position, along with the white background, makes it seem as though there was a conventional perspective outlining the entire composition, aided by the table leg-like object in the lower right and the position of the cartoon character of what looks like a Napoleonic captain. However, the splotches and the drawings annul any possibility for clarity, but neither do they suggest a Surrealistic juxtaposition; instead, "Revolution" is the *only* element given enough space, and the chaos that surrounds it, even with the dark, expressive dashes of black, is a joyful excess born from nonsense. Revolution does not *order*, it pronounces vitality as a disorder (with its Nietzschean and pop cultural reference, the presence of the "Situationist Superman" (fig. 1.16) in the opposite page reinforces its vitalism), an erotic mashing together of the natural and the artificial into a non-whole.

The objects in these photographs (fig. 1.17), the page of which they are a part of probably plundered from an educational book or catalogue, are all defaced, as is the text. While similar in spirit to Jorn's

Fig. 1.16, left: "Situationist Superman". Fig. 1.17, right: Untitled. *The Situationist Times #1*, 1962. National Art Library, London.

"Modifications" series and his work with Debord in *Mémoires* and *Fin de Copenhague* (1959 and 1957 respectively), this détournement opts not for clichéd painterly images and forms but objects that have, too, been forcibly removed from their original context. It evidences the logic behind the appropriative technique in its 'fight fire with fire' approach, and in the overwhelming destruction of any sense that the page could possibly make the juvenile drawings create a gap in the understanding. As it pours out of the page, what it seems to demand is to keep on scribbling on it, to deface it at once – perhaps significantly, perhaps not, the only fully understandable words are "dream" ("rêve"), the feminine plural of "real" ("réelles") and the same for "material" ("matérielles"). A direct precedent for these images would be works by Cobra, as indicated by

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Serge Vandercam and Theo Wolvecamp's (two members of said group) signatures on the page. Cobra's own primitivism was politically oriented towards the liberation of "the "new man" from the strictures of bourgeois good taste and traditional cultural values"[128], but placed in the context of how primitivism was generally understood it still implied a measure of confrontation between the falsity and oppressiveness of 'bourgeois good taste' and something seen as 'authentic'[129]. However, the conflict here parts from the vandalism that the artists effect upon anthropological images and text, as if to destroy the neutral, documentary approach of the originals that grants them a certain power to determine what 'authentic' means. Instead, the disrespect with which they are treated points toward the kind of pillaging that Jorn had done in his 1949 "Modifications" series, which will be further explored below. There is no 'authenticity' in these images, inasmuch as they have been scrawled over with graffiti, blotting out their documentary power with a playfulness that shifts the conflict away from 'bourgeois good taste' and 'authenticity' by simultaneously insulting both[130].

Through the lens of political mythmaking, these two détournements become a good example to propose that the initial aggression against the spectacle launched by the ST already contained, in an excess that is definitely not present in the more rationalized, measured, precise use of images by the SI, the seeds of a multiplicity that gives birth to the SI-ST opposition. Via Sorel, Bottici argues that in "typically modern phenomena such as major social movements […] people participating in them represent their action in the form of grand narratives that depict their success."[131] In contrast, *ST #1*, which finishes with de Jong's manifesto[132], consists of a foundational tale of failure – SPUR's trial, their exclusion from the SI – that also differs from what

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[128] Alison M. Gingeras, "Primitivism and the Mask", in Alison M. Gingeras (ed.), *The Avant-Cobra and its Legacy*, New York, Blum & Poe, 2017, p. 134.

[129] See Paul van Der Grijp, "A Cultural Search for Authenticity: Questioning Primitivism and Exotic Art", in Thomas Fillitz, Saris A. Jamie (eds.), *Debating Authenticity: Concepts of Modernity in Anthropological Perspective*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2013.

[130] The Surrealist Yves Tanguy did an arguably related intervention in *Documents #34*, 1934, except the one in *ST* proceeds from a vandalization of the original material, rendered obscure by anti-artistic scribbles. Tanguy's intervention adds a mockingly artistic dimension to the dictionary page it is attempting to disrupt, whereas Vandercam and Wolvecamp's, while seemingly grounded upon an abstract-expressionist style, is much closer to the unintelligible drawings of street gangs and bored students. Tanguy's is an almost polite dialogue against rationalistic, encyclopedic ways of knowing, while Vandercam and Wolvecamp's is a violent, physical encounter with them.

[131] Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 6-7.

[132] Perhaps détourning the format of *IS #4,* which closed with the "Situationist Manifesto", literally putting theory before the program.

Bernstein shortly thereafter produced for the SI exhibition *Destruktion af RSG-6*, her re-production of revolutionary struggles as victories. In giving its story a fiery, angered point of origin articulated around communicative failure and persecution, the ST's imaginal excess directly counteracts the SI's rigorous imagination, for which grand narratives (like the victory of the proletariat, or its negative in the all-encompassing drive of the spectacle) hold an ambivalent value that ought to be *put to work*. This is perhaps why de Jong rejects the idea of a First or Second Situationist International, preferring to speak of a Situationist movement whose multiplicity includes them both, a complementary or relative equivalence that allows the evolution of stories instead of History. In a story written by Edward Mazman entitled "A Seeker of Labyrinths", published in *ST #4,* the main character eschews being *understood*: he does not want to make sense of cities, and so wanders about in them, but as soon as they start becoming intelligible, or as soon as others make sense of them for him by trying to help, he escapes. If we take this story as a negative comment on the SI's dérive, the ST's 'science of situations' is to be excessive, topological in its reach, but perhaps most importantly for this point, mythical in its profound, vital un-ordering, a horizontalism that forever opens the radically new to the old and vice versa. The lack of a grand narrative is what de Jong's editorial work in all the issues of the magazine constantly affirms against the SI's unitary methods, the masses of images and texts making for a grand incitement to mythmaking in their constant overlapping, drawing the reader to détourn and dérive while never actually insisting on previous familiarity with such concepts. As it is, it comes as a 'natural' practice when looking at the ST material, even if wanting to do so superficially.

3.2.1 Myth Against Spectacle

Myth-making can also serve as a strategy against the spectacle, in the sense that it replaces its regime with a reality always already constituted within the realm of affective experience. Attempting to articulate all of the distinct pieces so far overviewed into a flexible discursive construct, I believe that the nodal point is sovereignty; it is strikingly similar to the Bataillean sense in which it is a perfect surrender to the present moment (in more ST terms, pure play), simply because that is what the constructed situation would feel like and would be thought within as. By subtly making sovereignty the most important element of its revolt, topologically and triolectically expanding into any and all areas of life, the ST posits an *imaginary* to the spectacle's images, a

becoming instead of a being, possibility instead of permission. The spectacle illustrates absolutely everything, it is noisy where myth is "silent"[133], anti-representational because it "requires direct understanding as a subjective inheritance"[134]; or in other words, myth is already *directly lived* in the sense that it does not constitute an *a priori* mediation like spectacular images do, it is resistant to colonization by the spectacle because creativity here is a rejection of consumption, as it provides the interactions between subject and object with the immediacy of complementarity, available to anyone, even in alienation. In other words, myth-making allows anyone to give shape to the images that a culture populates the world with, as against the passiveness ("non-intervention", in the SI's terms) of spectacular consumption of meaning. After all, the seizure of the means of production is not enough, requiring a mobilization of *imaginary* forces as the basis of a new world, a materialistic version of the Surrealists' conclusion that the revolution must also be one of the spirit.

As said before, for the SI the struggle against spectacle was primarily a matter of achieving the truth (of destroying the false mediations covering all social relations), but "for Jorn, lying is more important than any concept of truth, because he considered truth utterly subjective. He writes that lies are expressions of contradiction with the existing reality"[135]. In other words, a lie is a discursive form that brings someone closer to objectivity, simply because it reveals a non-coincidence and therefore the possibility of questioning claims to truth. Not only do lies open many paths, they demand a creativity to formulate them, because, unlike truths, they are not just learned (rationalized): they must be imagined. In this way, ST reformulates détournement and dérive as critical tools that are not necessarily tied to the truth (singular) *beyond* the spectacle, but to a praxis that in a last instance leads to sovereignty. The editorial introduction to *ST #1*, written by Arnaud, states that "the merit of the lawsuit against *Spur* reminds us that all the conditions of tyranny subsist as long as the State is left in charge of legislating in matters of opinion, as long as it founds its authority upon a "revealed truth", as long as it claims the right to submit all human activity […]

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[133] After having named a series of paintings "Silent Myths", in 1953 Jorn stated that "I have used the word *silent* myths […] because of the personal reason that I believe visual art's relationship to mythic formation should be silent, that is not illustrating." Asger Jorn quoted in Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics,* pp. 97-98.
[134] *Ibid,* p. 99.
[135] *Ibid,* p. 202. This statement would be taken up by Jørgen Nash and the members of the SSI to argue that the artist was a liar, and that his or her function in society was to cheat and lie in order to bring those contradictions to the surface of social life.

by the sole criteria with which it provides this "truth"."[136] The State's claim is in this instance what Jorn would call a mythology, an unidirectional dialectic that seems to invariably fix it in the past, the present, and the future. By throwing an excessive uncertainty towards it, in a format meant to be widely read and passed along, the ST tries to tell many truths, about itself, about the SI, about SPUR, but is itself telling a lie to its readers: the Situationist movement exists, and it will threaten the State with its methods. By means of a massive quantity of elements to take into consideration, the ST is averting what it considers to be the SI and the SSI's own disparate claims to truth, focusing instead on laying the grounds for any reader to practice all of the Situationist methods without even really having to learn about them (despite everything, the ST will forever be incomplete). In other words, it is attempting to introduce them as an imaginary, as a mythical form of thought that finds in lies and fictions (of which the SI never partook) a suitable investigative point of departure towards sovereignty.

Maybe this is more faithful to the Situationist anti-specialization stance than the SI's full incorporation of Marxist language, and while not exactly anti-theoretical, the overwhelming amount of information and the sometimes contradictory nature of the discussions included along numbers 1 through 5 of *ST* enact a détournement of the SI's drive towards theory; even though de Jong was mostly in charge, it seems like the output of an international community engaging in a widely available, urgently relevant act of communication. However, where the SI increasingly conceived of its internationalism in a conspiratorial, terroristic tone born from its style of negation, the openness of the ST points rather at the development of a *style of affirmation*. As has already been mentioned in various ways, "Jorn believed […] that any great art must involve both celebration and critique in dynamic tension"[137], an idea that ever since de Jong's grand, foundational assertion that "WE ARE SITUATIONISTS", enunciated in the context of a critique of and separation from the SI, finds *positive* realization. De Jong refused to exclude anyone, because in principle the Situationist movement espoused inclusion, and although there were certain

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[136] Noël Arnaud, [n/t], in *The Situationist Times*, no. 1, National Art Library: X930220, p. 2. "Le mérite du procès *Spur* est de nous faire souvenir que toutes les conditions de la tyrannie subsistent aussi longtemps que l'Etat est laissé maître de légiférer en matière d'opinion, aussi longtemps qu'il fonde son autorité sur une "vérité révélée", aussi longtemps qu'il s'arroge le droit de soumettre toute activité humaine […] aux seuls critères que lui fournit cette "vérité"." Translation mine.
[137] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics*, p. 192.

tactics of diminishment that could be followed[138], there was no attempt to define the limits of the Situationist movement. Under this light, techniques like détournement, used by the ST as an equalizing devaluation, do not fully enter the field of negation because it is interested in keeping the image (even in pieces), regardless of its origin, spectacular or not.

Another consequence of the ST's anti-specialization and the articulation of Situationist methods as a myth, as an already available imaginary, is the posing of the question of community: what kind of sociality is the ST trying to give form to? How can it be described? As with other currents running through the entire magazine, I believe an answer can be found in Jorn's writings and de Jong's editorial reworkings of them.

3.2.1. Creativity Amongst Equals: The Labyrinth of Folk

In her analysis of the Debord-Jorn collaboration *Mémoires* from 1959, Stacey maintains that "getting lost and collapsing boundaries seem to be structuring principles of [the book], principles that in turn reveal the Situationists' alternative model of history and its counter-forms of memorialization."[139] This structure was also at the heart of *ST*, and its understanding of history, as mentioned earlier, is based on the conjuncture of different conceptions of time, of which the most radical and potentially open to change life was the quantum mechanical one. Memory, in the excess of visual and textual items of the magazine, becomes attached to a continual loss, in a manner not too distant from the way in which *Mémoires* and early Situationist theory emphasized the ephemerality of the situation. Nevertheless, the personal nature of the Debord-Jorn work and the exclusive collectivity of the SI pointed at a certain degree of tension between general ability and specialization that was usually resolved, through exclusions and textual attacks, towards the latter. What the ST manages to do is to redirect those efforts in a conceivably triolectical arrangement, conserving both the general and special while focusing on the ephemerality of the present, in the

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[138] For the Drakabygget declaration, which is the manifesto of the SSI, de Jong claimed to have printed it in a small font and a background color that made it very difficult to read. She did this because she had fallen out with Jørgen Nash and others from the Drakabygget group, who, for example, *lied* about Jorn and herself having signed the declaration. See "A Maximum of Openness" in *Expect Anything,* p. 195.
[139] Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 21.

sense that traversing the magazine's structure implied a loose movement that 'actualized' the choices made, and the question of the reader being a Situationist or not is shifted towards one in which the reader is becoming a Situationist. If the reader considers him/herself as one already, there is perhaps no possible sense of participating in some kind of exclusive truth, because de Jong's anti-interpretational stance relativizes any and all experience of the magazine. Rationally knowing Situationist theory produces, in principle, the same results as *imaginarily*, mythically applying them as the texts and images seemingly flow away.

What becomes summarily important in this process is the very social fact of its construction, since the mythical for Jorn presupposes anonymity and collective memory. For him, "truly modern art belongs to the life of the "people," meaning simply to local communities. […] To be internationalist meant to be especially attentive to one's own (as well as to others') vernacular traditions, not in a primitivist fetishism but rather a process of open-minded reinterpretation."[140] The devaluation operated by détournement, among other things, was meant to remove the labour and the skill behind the making of an 'original', to move an object from the realm of work to that of play, and the sheer amount of images of the *ST*, like the SPUR defacements of museum objects, brought to ground their de-individualization, a poetry to be created by anyone. Like the SI, the ST rejected art in its individualizing, work-based commerciality, but instead of seeking anti-artistic solutions (like the *Destruktion* exhibition), the ST approached it for its communitarian potential. In order to better argue this point, I will once again turn to Jorn's continual re-assertion of art as communal expression ready to be used as part of an oppositional tactic instead of an individualist statement. His early writings are particularly concerned with the 'high' and 'low' divide that had been variously explored by the avant-garde[141], and reveal an optimistic view of (ordinary, even kitsch) creativity as locus for new social relationships. "Jorn conceived the true avant-garde not as a set of professional specialists, but as a collective social force made up of amateurs seeking new ideas and techniques through constant experimentation."[142] The autonomy of art was to be denied, at first not as part of the discourse of the totality but as an elemental hostility to social life – art

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[140] Karen Kurczynski, Nicola Pezolet, "Primitivism, Humanism, and Ambivalence: Cobra and Post-Cobra", in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics,* no. 59/60, 2011, pp. 296-297.
[141] See, for example, the 1941 text "Intimate Banalities", first published in Helhesten's journal.
[142] Karen Kurczynski, *Art and Politics*, p. 5.

would be popular, or it would not be. This line of thought emerged during the Nazi occupation of Denmark, so it is significant to specify how this kind of claim subverts and antagonizes rhetorically similar ones made by fascists. The Helhesten artists posited a Danish people or *folk* in deliberate counteraction to the Nazi *Volk*[143], conceptualized, as mentioned above, as myth vs. mythology, attempting to establish a dialogic process from which flowed a visual language derived as much from modernism as from popular imagery[144]. Jorn's 1949 "Modifications" series, which, to use the term somewhat topologically, détourned reproductions of classically common, conventional paintings, aimed to ground the expressionist brushwork into something casual and ordinary, denying its intensely individualist suggestions of the genius breaking apart tradition. By juxtaposing conservatism and radicalism in an *easy* tension, putting them at play, Jorn humorously makes the antagonism seem like a child's casual disrespect of surfaces by means of a creativity that 'corrects' the image. The "artistic gesture [turns] into something untutored and populist, jubilant critiques much like graffiti"[145]: it is the limit-crushing juvenile scrawls of SPUR and de Jong in *ST #1*, or her labyrinthine structuring of artisanal, popular, and artistic images of objects, continually folding into each other not only across the magazine but across the entire run of it (figs. 1.17-1.20). What Kurczynski calls 'jubilant' is an extension of this excessive, simultaneously learned and unlearned utilization of images and creativity, the political consequences of which can be summarized in the relative equivalence not only of the contexts in which they were set in motion, but also of the gestures that from chaos have arranged new, even more chaotic forms. The ST's fight with the SI takes it to a stance that relies upon triolectical non-resolution, a position that does not particularly favour negation or blunt affirmation, highlighting the commonality of the creative act's vitalist humour. Regarding this, it is worth quoting a 1964 Jorn text extensively:

> What one expresses through destruction is critique. Critique is a secondary reaction to something primary that already exists. What one expresses through artistic creation is joy of life. Art is primary action in relation to the unknown. The French have brought critique into the revolutionary plan, but if critique also becomes the purpose of creative art, and the creative artist therefore a "specialized worker", whose work should only serve the permanent revolution's permanent consumption, then these Situationists have lost any sympathetic contact with the artists who seek to create a joy of life for its own sake, and drive them precisely into the arms of the power elite, which always controls the destructive instruments that can crush the people down, and which always make sure to have a moral excuse to make it all good and thorough.[146]

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[143] *Ibid*, p. 27.
[144] *Ibid,* p. 36.
[145] *Ibid*, p. 179.
[146] From an unpublished manuscript, quoted in *Ibid*, p. 183.

Once again, Jorn prefers a spiral movement in which "the artists who seek to create a joy of life for its own sake", a categorization that includes amateurs and non-specialists, are not excluded outright as reproducers of alienation and the domination implicit in convention. Furthermore, "Jorn conceives of art as an activity that combines the singular with the social […]. Jorn's artistic revolution is one that opens up a continuously changing and unbound experimental landscape where the relationship between the singular and the social is in constant flux."[147] The popular is therefore integral to the ST's project, inasmuch its mythical apparatus allows not only for a non-learned operation of its tools and concepts, it also functions towards making that operation a socially constitutive element. For de Jong, anyone can be a Situationist, but to be one does imply a base articulation of an identity. For the SI, that meant a revolutionary mind-set, knowledge of techniques, an adherence to a programme and becoming the subject of evaluations regarding its application; what the ST shares absolutely is the requirement of a revolutionary mind-set, but it relativizes everything else into a wilful handling and execution of Situationist methods and concepts, preferably from the vantage point of a myth (an imaginary) that possibly connects others into the same community.

Mythical foundations of communities are a widely studied field, but what is of interest here is the traditional sociological interpretation under which myth becomes an immanentism that structures a community's relationship to time as a determinist one, particularly in the Surrealists' and para-Surrealists' discussions precipitated by fascism[148]. Jorn's distinction between mythology and myth would name such an interpretation as 'mythology', but the version of myth so far explained still shares several elements with it, primarily in its connection to the social. While *ST #1* would seem to offer a narrative of origins, its mythical logic is focused on the acts of an all-inclusive

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[147] Jakob Jakobsen, "The Artistic Revolution: On the Situationists, Gangsters and Falsifiers from Drakabygget", in *Expect Anything,* pp. 224-225.

[148] "Nancy (1991) has written widely on the role of myth in German romanticism and in the Nazi state. His conception of myth cannot be aligned with the unorthodox Sorelian version […] but refers to the more familiar idea about the founding discourse of a community. In the Western world, '[m]yth is above all full, original speech, at times revealing, at times founding the intimate being of a community'. […] From these descriptions Nancy can link back to the ideas concerning immanentism: for him myth is the discourse through which a society seeks to satisfy its desire for immanence. On this basis, the critical dimension of Bataille's post-war [conception] becomes evident: when Bataille proposes the absence of myth, he is engaged in a critique against any immanentist (or totalitarian) structuring of the community. And when he goes on to theorize an 'absence of community' he is […] seeking to liberate a passion for being together that can be shared." Nikolaj Lübecker, *op cit,* pp. 84-85.

Situationist movement, avoiding any determinism or law-making intended to source a tradition from 'forebears'. In its constantly relativizing procedures, instead of having either a fundamental absence or a presence[149] at its core, the ST keeps something inherently ephemeral, simultaneously present and absent, at the centre of it all: the situation. Those who share and participate in this myth are from the beginning under a non-fixating, undeterministic bond, and it is a social relation that in artistic communication and creativity finds a basic linking element; since that communication would spring from the use of Situationist methods (in as many languages as the ST could muster), the social event of art would bring local conditions into play with international ones. In the spirit of de Jong's anti-organizational position, this leads to a different kind of network, one that resembles what Jorn and his Helhesten comrades opposed to the Nazi concept of folk, and which follows a certain populist logic of articulation in the sense that it presupposes different conditions, contexts, and interests coming together to form a 'people': the Situationist movement and not the Situationist organism. After all, "a myth is best understood as a process that is, at the same time, an act of saying and an act of doing. This is a process of continually reworking that involves a multiplicity of subjects. There are narrators, on the one hand, and receivers or potential re-narrators, on the other – without there being any possibility of tracing any sharp division between the two."[150] Myth is intrinsically 'folkloric' in the Jornian sense: multiple and non-institutional, non-hierarchical and common-sense, as well as potentially unique in each interpretation, the tracing of an imagined universality in imagined particularity and vice versa, all of which is dynamically oriented by the situation towards the simultaneity of the critique (serious, joyless) and creation (humorous, joyful) of a new world.

Issue #5, perhaps more than any other, reflects these principles well: not only does it include scholarly analyses of 'rings and chains', its main theme, it also reproduces folkloric stories from France and elsewhere alongside its images, fables and fable-like short fictions that twist and turn into each other under the motif of circularity. Max Bucaille's text on the finger ring focuses, for example, on distinctive uses of rings across ancient Greece, Rome, and the early Middle Ages,

[149] The SI, it should be noted, emphasized its work as that of an 'avant-garde of presence' not long after the expulsions of 1962 took place. See "L'avant-garde de la presence", in *Internationale Situationniste,* no. 8, 1963, British Library: 4554.697000, pp. 14-22.
[150] Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 99.

finding in the universality of the ring-form a particularity that locates it, in each instance, as a socially produced image with a history. Its sociological approach is uninterested in the individual instances of ring-bearing, letting the anonymous, folk understanding of it modify his own position as 'researcher' and 'classifier' in modern times; his text is limited to descriptions of knowledge that had a certain commonality now past but which remain firmly within the realm of the common sense, even in modernity (from marriage rings to status-highlighting gold rings and chains). This a knowledge that recurs, that leaps back and forth regardless of time conceptions, like a ring, it signifies wholeness, a wholeness that is perpetually fading away in every passing second.

Fig. 1.17: upper left. *The Situationist Times #3*, 1963.

Fig. 1.18: centre up. *The Situationist Times #4*, 1963.

Fig. 1.19: upper right. *The Situationist Times #2*, 1962.
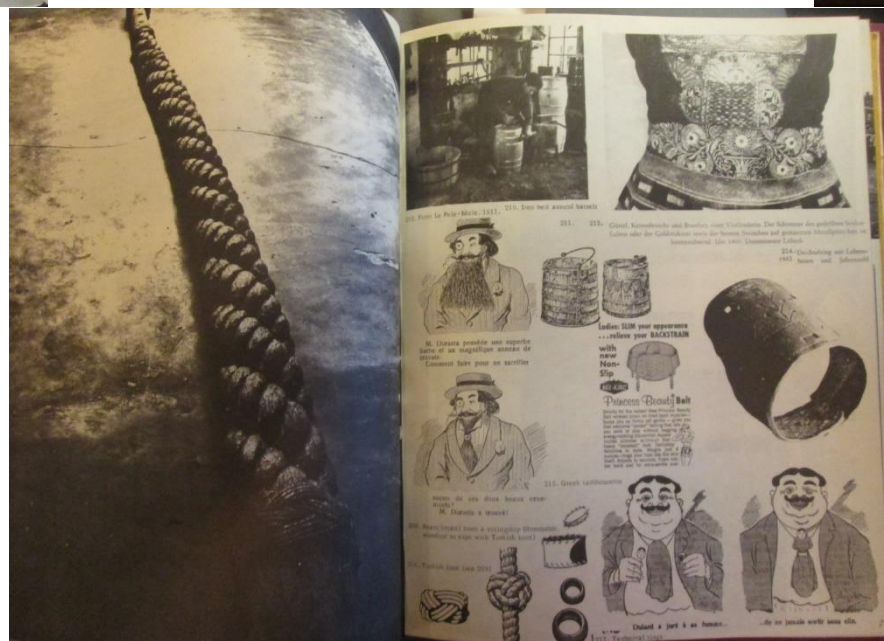
Fig. 1.20: centre down. *The Situationist Times #5*, 1964.

National Art Library, London.

Albert Sloman Library, Colchester.

3.1.2.1. The Vanguard and the Rearguard

If the political and social aspects of the ST's version of Situationist praxis would lead towards a populist movement, then the question of the avant-garde becomes even more pressing than before. The issue of revolution as process comes back at this point, ring-like, into the premises of the ST as a fundamentally radical anti-organization. In "A Crooked Bough" (1949), Jorn, following a Marxian simplification, wrote that "we are in the middle of a revolution where industrial production is concerned […], [and] it is also a concrete fact that a revolution is never anything other than a new way of organizing certain elements that already existed."[151] This position would become much more complex and sophisticated by the years of the ST's publication, but the core of the matter lies in the view of revolution as necessarily *ordinary*, which is to say not a special event or sudden occurrence, but an everyday relationship to the world. While Situationists like Vaneigem would take up this point extensively, the SI at large, in its commitment to revolutionary anarchism and Hegelian Marxism, tended to conceptualize it as a jumping point tightly circumscribed by historical conditions and capitalism's advancement of new strategies and techniques, such as the spectacle. The avant-garde's connection to the revolution came to depend on its capacity to theorize and actualize unitary critiques of capital and its expansion into all aspects of life, critiques that lead to the formation of a specific Situationist programme. For the ST, via Jorn, the avant-garde seems to make its radical claim not through programming (a 'new mythology'[152]), but through experimentation. If the programme subscribes to premises that indicate a *known* outcome if certain conditions are met (the SI's oppositional interest in cybernetics is not casual), the experimental does not give any assurances about the future, which in the case of the ST comes as a result of its non-linear conception of time. When de Jong defends misunderstandings as one of the constitutive components of Situationist activity, she is aligning with Jorn's experimental conception of the avant-garde, associated with a movement not only towards failure but also towards the unknown; the avant-gardist must retain a mythological

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[151] Asger Jorn "A Crooked Bough", translated from Danish by Paul Larkin, in Ruth Baumeister, *Fraternité Avant Tout*, p. 219.

[152] Bottici, describing the Romantic proposal of a 'new mythology' by Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin in the 19th century, asserts that "myth appears to encompass all that pure reason is not. However, […] the appeal for a "new mythology" ends up reproducing the Enlightenment's view of myth [as an irrational, obsolete natural philosophy] by simply inverting its axiological connotation […]." Encompassing all areas of life, there is a moral imperative at the heart of this proposal that indicates the steps and possible solutions to the current state; to the question of what is to be done, these Romantics answered 'revolution' as an idealized, rationalized path to destruction. See Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 75. In the case of the SI, it would seem that 'revolution appears to catalyze all that capitalism is not', and they come to follow a similar logic of programming: the inevitability of the timeline's realization means the solution implies a progressive series of developments towards which to work for.

willingness to *name the unknown*[153] and by doing it recall all sorts of contextual meanings previously available.

Stacey writes that the 1962 split in the SI arose between "cultural saboteurs prepared to work within the given artistic apparatus, and maintain the title of artists, and those whose goal was the total rejection of the prevailing consumer society and the overcoming of all separations"[154], a statement whose background relates to the conception of the avant-garde and its role in society. While the 'cultural saboteurs' of the SSI kept working the gallery system, the artists surrounding the ST maintained exactly the same goal as the SI, and I would argue that in many ways it was much more coherent in its philosophical erasure of separations (the SI failed in all fronts); geared towards the articulation of a movement and not an organization, the ST never did claim avant-gardism in the same way the SI or the SSI did. At the moment when the SI most fiercely attacked its ex-members in 1963, it attempted to present a strategy of re-activation (later reflected in King Mob's idea of burning down London once again) of "particular past radical negations of the status quo [that] continue to haunt the present"[155], grounding the constructed situation as what Stacey called "a complex and unpredictable overlapping of present and past situations"[156]. A representative of this was Bernstein's "Victories" in the *Destruktion* exhibition, an "irrealism" that "*is not simply a lie*, but the opening of what reality has become to what it might be. [emphasis mine]"[157] These correspondences of past and present, as described in Stacey's argument, presuppose a *lineage*, utilizing the constructed situation as the nexus in a programmable timeline from which the avant-garde, as one of *presence*, is able to plant the flag of the (true) future: revolution. I would argue that the ST, in its topological use of the constructed situation as mythical orientation of a movement, avoids the problems that the logic of the lineage brings to this idea of the avant-garde – first and foremost, that there is no need for an organization of social agitation or infiltration, and secondly, that the revolution is un-programmable because time is not a line, and there is no true future, only futures.

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[153] "Providing names does not just render stories possible; naming the unknown is already a way of dominating the unknown. […] By giving a name to the unknown, whole webs of other meanings are recalled." Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 116.
[154] Frances Stacey, *op cit,* p. 47.
[155] *Ibid,* p. 48.
[156] *Ibidem.*
[157] *Ibid,* p. 54.

The result is a strained relationship to avant-gardism as conventionally understood (even by the SI). In de Jong's anarchist ethos, the constitution of a movement should not come from an expositive, rationalized and abstract ordering, but from a mythical doing, which meant that the ST has but a few references to the avant-garde as such. It is not uninterested in it, however, and I will argue that the relative absence of the term is due to the character of a different articulation of its essential discursive elements. In Jorn's "Critique of Economic Policy", originally published in 1959 and re-edited in 1962, a point that should already be familiar to the reader is repeated:

> the illusion that progress and evolution are the same has come to an end. This has meant that the communist movement is dissolving. I go in for progress, but in order to progress one must be able to regress. In his cultural history, Hartvig Frisch has demonstrated that the forces of progress do not always evolve from the top, but can shoot out as side-shoots from the trunk. My idea of progress is therefore based upon an out-and-out revolutionary conservatism, for I am going back to the composition of the First Internationale and maintaining that none of its three basic principles – anarchism or the principle of the evolution of personal freedom, syndicalism or the evolution of wise, social organizations and socialism or the knowledge of the context of all social phenomena – can be done without today.[158]

This point is representative of Jorn's engagement with Situationist politics (embedded in their praxis) as much as of the ST's appropriation of his thought: revolution is a process that cannot just integrate past, present, and future in a sudden explosion of negativity. Whether it is a socialist conservatism or the plain conservatism of kitsch, keeping a consciousness of the properties of the ashes from which the new world would emerge is important for guiding purposes, in the sense that due to the ST's non-linearity a true immersion in the unknown would provide little to no rational or emotional significance. By refusing the programmatic, the experimentalism of the ST does follow Jorn in stepping lightly so as to avoid producing an alienation effect between the avant-garde and the people it would lead. A short parenthesis is needed at this point: this last issue of 'leadership' was a problem common to all artistic and political vanguards: before de Jong's anarchism, the very definition of the avant-garde as the army's lead is not to be trusted. While the SI, like the communist vanguard parties in Lenin's theories, found a ready-made solution in Hegelian dialectical self-erasure, the ST's reluctance to adopt the same approach reveals not an abandonment of the avant-garde altogether but a critical reappraisal of it.

There are two items I would like to highlight from *ST #2* regarding this argument. The first is a textual détournement of testimonials from Adolf Eichmann's trial (1962) by de Jong, played against the SPUR trial and the trial of a woman called Vera Brühne, who was convicted for a crime she did not

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[158] Asger Jorn, "Critique of Economic Policy", translated from Danish by Peter Shield, in *Cosmonauts*, p. 177.

commit in that same year. The text, in a regular typeface that imitates the format of court records, is a strident piece against order and obedience. "I called Eichmann "the symbol of progress"", the text decries, "this living dead is the prototype of the present human being, who created the machine after its own very picture. Normal people. We should go on watching the mirror."[159] The banality of evil cannot be underestimated, an evil produced by pure progress, the inability to stop and turn around; in Jornian terms, it is the inability to ponder the delay between question and answer, rapidly annulling past and present in favour of the future. It is the outcome of an essentialized futurism that burns everything it leaves behind, an internalized, paradoxically commonplace avant-gardism that places all of its trust in the program's capacity to determine the timeline. Therefore, no order, even the one inside the head, is to be confided in.

Fig. 1.21. Insert from *The Situationist Times #2*, 1962. National Art Library, London.

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[159] Jacqueline de Jong, untitled, in *The Situationist Times*, no. 2, National Art Library: X930221, p. 23. The quotations are taken from the testimony of Harry Mulisch.

The second item is an extract from the issue's continuous dérive (fig. 1.21), a comic-like détourned page. In it feature, if read as one would read a Western comic strip, a photograph of a monumental lion that exclaims "you collect worlds! You are a fool!", then, a bikini-clad woman from an undetermined cartoon advert thinks "they have a body similar to ours, but more vigorous… where do they come from?" Below, a fox that is held in someone's arms (whose head is cut off by the monument's picture) seems to yell "I never dreamed you were a radical!" (the only phrase in English) while a pig, standing on the floor, says "precisely professor Wells, you are what your people call a man of the avant-garde!", to which the fox finally responds, passively, "jah…"[160] This quick, self-mocking exchange could seem to portray a certain folkloric 'existing order', from the noble lion and the idealized woman (a modern princess) to the lowly fox and the even more lowly pig. The tamed wild animal, carried by a human, is completely clueless to the pig's radicality, who goes on to apparently praise the fox as both a professor and a 'man of the avant-garde'. The ridiculous position of the fox, its astuteness refashioned as a domesticated cuteness, is further emphasized by the pig's apparent little upwards jump, an enthusiasm that warrants no interest on the fox's part. There is a running joke on détournement here as well, in the 'similar body' mentioned by the woman and the fox's realization; the familiarity and harmlessness of the technique's container are but the interactive detonators of a radical assault, and the pig's unwarranted adulation of the fox suggests an equally unwarranted appreciation of the avant-garde (even, perhaps, of its virility, its 'vigour'). The pig is common, close to the ground, while the fox, once also common, has been *elevated* into a civilizational role that even at its most rebellious would never even recognize a fellow radical from below.

These ideas bring me to the last point I would like to make about Situationist praxis as found in the ST and the avant-garde: in distrusting its ordering (almost law-making) drive, and in refusing to completely tear down the past (whether revolutionary or otherwise), it could be much more aptly conceived of as a *rearguard*. The SSI's inaugural "Drakabygget declaration" of August 1962, reproduced in *ST #2* alongside Gordon Fazakerley's attack 'on the common market' (conceivably the recently accorded European market), makes a kind of caricature out of Jornian thought that nevertheless proves interesting. De Jong, who had distanced herself from the group surrounding Jørgen Nash (the authors of this manifesto), added a note in *ST #3* that expressed disagreement with the SSI declaration, years later retelling that she had printed the text in a way that made it difficult to

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[160] "Vous collectionnez les mondes! Vous êtes un fou!"; "Ils ont un corps très semblable au nôtre, mais plus vigoureux… d'où viennent-ils?"; "Précisément professeur Wells! Vous êtes ce que vos gens appellent un homme d'avant-garde!" *The Situationist Times,* no. 2, National Art Library: X930221, p. 22. Translations mine.

read. Still, the strong avant-gardist tone of the manifesto and its sectarianism would also present the possibility of it simply disagreeing with her anarchist principle of openness. Regardless, the text announces that the Scandinavian Situationists have created a "new ideology and philosophical theory we have called situology" based upon Scandinavian social democracy as an exclusion of "all forms of *artificial* privilege"[161] [emphasis mine]. Following from this, they start to outline the differences between Nordic and Latin culture, which is worth quoting at length:

> The Scandinavians strive towards reform where the French aim at revolution. We build on the past and we let new ideas grow out of past experience. This can be called an organic principle, it can also be called ultra-conservatism. Today terms like conservatism, progress, revolution, and reactionism [sic] have become meaningless. The terminology of liberalism is equally fatuous and played out. There is no point in using phrases of this kind of the Nordic philosophy of situations which is essentially tradition-directed. Herein lies our strength. On this we base our ideology and our working principles.[162]

To modernism's tradition of revolt, the SSI opposes growth, a re-orientation of tradition towards the growth of life instead of its suppression. While statements like these confuse Jorn's relativizing equalities of internationalism with its contrary in absolutely differential culturalism (there is simply no point in non-Nordics joining), they illustrate certain points the ST constantly levelled against the avant-garde form in its programmatic tendency of intolerance. Using myth, I believe it is possible to establish an antagonism to the vanguard in the following terms: "each variant of a myth [...] works on the ruins of pre-existing edifices. The pre-existing material is then directed towards new exigencies and transformed in order to give significance to the new circumstances through a process [of] [...] "reoccupation"."[163] In its parallelisms with Marxian revolution, this conception allows a disarticulation of the avant-garde as the trailblazer solely of the new and the unknown; the rearguard does not open paths, it experiments with them at the same time it attempts to direct pre-existing material. Where the vanguard occupies enemy territory and creates new forms *out* of the old ones, the rearguard *reoccupies* territories already known, creating new forms *from* the old ones in a topological fashion. Therefore, while the ST resists the avant-garde denomination, its strained relationship with it can be resolved by the concept of the rearguard, which, by belonging to the level of the pig, avoids predetermination and allows the inclusion of the much more flexible forms of praxis developed throughout the magazine without having to renounce altogether the aesthetic of/as politics claim. The rearguard develops détournements with full understanding of the traditional elements within them[164], assuming there is something that is always conserved in the operation. Concepts like

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[161] *Ibid,* p. 60.
[162] *Ibid,* p. 61.
[163] Chiara Bottici, *op cit*, p. 127.
[164] It is significant that de Jong very academically tagged all of the images used in the thematic issues so that the reader could see where they came from: old paths become new in labyrinthine fashion.

'folk' and 'myth' as used so far in this chapter are a good example: Jorn, de Jong, and the ST emptied them out of the worst parts of tradition, effectively 'correcting' them by diverting them away from fascism.

4. The ST as Anti-Organization

The revolutionary agent chosen by each group may reflect its chosen social articulation, as I will also attempt to argue with King Mob, and in the case of the SI-ST comparison, it is significant that for the former it was always the proletariat (even if they were expanding the definition for it), which meant an insertion into a tradition of revolt that espoused vanguard organizations. For the latter, the understated role of a non-specialized movement and therefore a 'people' highlighted and more coherently developed the Situationist current of thought that conceived of itself as anti-organizational. The exclusivity-openness binary haunted the SI for its entire existence, while the ST completely disregarded it as harmful and did away with it altogether, adopting a literal interpretation of the common Situationist anti-copyright statements in which "all reproduction, deformation, modification, derivation and transformation" is permitted, which is to say, where *everything is permitted*[165]. Of course, the SI's fiery defence of its theories, its almost paranoid rigorous closeness, and its organizational formation made it the longest-lasting collective of the ones overviewed in this thesis. All of them experimented with some kind of openness that was entirely antithetical to the SI's directives, and all of them suffered intense, short lives. Still, this history of failure (which ultimately includes the SI as well) can venture into branching paths full of possibilities when interpreting the different logics and concepts behind it. The ST's own experiment finds interesting comparison points with other theories about organization, particularly when it comes to the erasure of exclusivity in the name of openness. Attempts had already been made by other avant-gardes, but the most relevant here would be what Lübecker describes as a Bataillean idea that develops from his conclusion about the 'absence of myth' (or Jornian 'mythology', for our purposes) as the catalyst of modern society. According to the author, in order to create a truly free, vital, and equal social formation that absence had to be linked to other absences, leading Bataille to the view that

> a traditional community is defined by its distance from and opposition to other communities – it excludes other communities. […] In order to institute a non-exclusive community, we must proceed from the basis of an absence of community. […] There should be no configuration of particularity – more precisely: there should always be the possibility of an absence of figuration – because this configuration produces exclusion.[166]

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[165] Jacqueline de Jong in "A Maximum of Openness", in *Expect Anything,* p. 195.
[166] Nikolaj Lübecker, *op cit,* p. 79.

The ST never lays the ground for an organizational ruleset, and while the SI never really does the same either, there is an internal series of discussions and judgements that do end up determining a *configuration* for its functioning. In contrast, de Jong's experimentally oriented invitation to play, associated with the difficulty of imagining a Situationist movement (which is why I had to fall back on Jorn's 'folk') could be said to originate in this rejection of configuration, to an interconnected series of absences against which only an imaginary is put forward. In the relative equivalence of all approaches, a particularity, understood as an absolute difference, is also avoided. After all, "in group identities there is no single narrating body that can tell the whole story, and therefore, it can always be the case that there is no common story at all."[167] To the question of who or what is a Situationist there are two clear answers[168]: to the ST, it is everyone who *wants* to be (a matter of desire and praxis), while to the SI it would seem that it is everyone who *can* be (a matter, paradoxically, of *permission* and possibility).

The ST was able to operate as an anti-organization because it behaved *as if* the movement existed, which is to mythically say that in its imaginary it found a possible existence[169] without having to rationalize it into a programmatic endeavour thanks to both a different conception of time and its application in topology and triolectics. Its fragmentary approach, its implicit conception of a totality of difference, allowed for a plurality that left identity anarchically tied to a radical individual choice: readers of the ST already have all they need to be Situationists, but it is completely up to them if the identity is adopted or if it is topologically transformed into something else. The excessive nature of the magazine lays the groundwork for a Situationist praxis that is horizontal and in no need for specialization; moreover, its focus on images and texts as equally visual elements brought to bear a different kind of what Stacey calls a "Situationist archive", a fluid knowledge forever in escape. Attempting to make readers internalize techniques through the simple act of looking *through* the magazine, the ST articulates a reversal of the spectacle that uses conventional *sight* as its primary weapon, potentially realizing in a more effective manner what the SI tried to do through theory. In other words, the very format and editing of the publication, apparently chaotic and disordered, makes

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[167] Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 244.

[168] I am not counting here the SSI, which never really produced any comprehensive works under the name beyond the Drakabygget declaration. Not too long thereafter, Nash and Thorsen would found CO-RITUS, and the SSI would relatively quickly fade away from the concerns of the SI.

[169] "Properly speaking, social groups are not beings of *imagination*, because there is no single subject who has this faculty of imagination, but a being of the *imaginary*. In the case of social entities such as nations, classes and states, we are not dealing simply with abstract notions, but with socially constructed beings: it is because there are narrating bodies that behave *as if* such beings existed, that they do *actually* exist." Chiara Bottici, *op cit,* p. 241.

potential readers jump from one item to another, prompting them to *dérive* through the photographs and texts in order to establish relationships between images that, taken away from their original context, potentially break old habits of looking. For example, jumping from a pre-Hispanic Mexican snake statuette to the ornamental head of a Viking ship in the same page not only disrupts any historical understanding of such a parallel, it also potentially allows the reader to make new connections between those images that are unique to him or her, but that nevertheless share a background common knowledge of what they are. It is in this interaction of the common and the unique, with its détourned-like operation toward the image, that the reader could conceivably develop a new way of thinking about images themselves in terms that question not only the contexts but the ways in which the individual relates to them. Where the SI developed the theory of the spectacle into a sophisticated construct first meant to be understood in order to be fought against through techniques that need a certain degree of explanation (techniques that necessarily develop new ways of looking), the ST articulates a practical engagement that dispenses altogether with the explanations[170]. The situation, as the "living nexus" that brought everything into a flexible, continually unfinished whole, kept being the centre of the whole run, and was developed in manners that the SI would later subsume into a larger construct that, in retrospective, has led to a historiographical forgetfulness about the organization's very name.

"Writings are the thoughts of the State", Debord wrote in 1967, "archives are its memory"[171]. The last issue of *ST*, produced in that same year and after which it faced dissolution, consisted solely of art reproductions meant to be cheap and accessible: no text, no statements were made. As a 'snapshot of the moment', like de Jong called it, it attempted an imaginal memorialization that denied its accessibility through language, making it ephemeral. However, while the State has an archival memory, the market has no memory at all, and its immediate pillaging of the issue indicates that the past numbers were able to circumnavigate programmatic memory as much as capitalism's commercial colonization of the present tense. Perhaps a set of organizational principles would have prevented this from happening, but what is important to emphasize here is the anti-organizational aspect of the sheer diversity of the contributions and de Jong's levelling of them into an object meant for cheap consumption. In this, the other groups that will be analysed in this thesis were much more

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[170] The editorial work of any magazine is directed at particular ways of making sense, which is to say the ordering of the experience of reading with a particular set of meanings in mind. The *ST* inverts this premise, making editorial work into one of ordering possible *situations*, which means no one meaning is prioritized – on the contrary, the thematic key of the mid and later numbers of the magazine is the sole ordering motif, a key that is simultaneously reductive and expansive in the sense that it proposes one form that is revealed to have a myriad shapes and meanings.
[171] Guy Debord, *op cit,* p. 37.

successful, not because they had a more effective openness to them but because they had either a conspiratorial logic or a radically militant impulse to support them, enabling more nuanced forms of infiltration. Nonetheless, the ST's style of affirmation meant that everything in it was celebratory, a grand festivity of creativity, a popular/individual revolutionary uprising that wanted to play, act, and, fundamentally, take its time.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to argue that the ST's organizational discourse was articulated through four main parts that interact with each other and are tightly knit together. The first part is composed of foundational Situationist techniques and theories, such as détournement and dérive, the concept of the situation, and the idea of a 'situology'. The second part is de Jong's particular anarchism, which was the first step away from the SI and into a different kind of Situationist practice based on a principle of inclusion and openness. Therefore, ideas that were eventually discarded by the SI, or that it simply did not see as compatible with its programme, found a home in the ST, which did not shy away from heavy image use, the possibility of misreading or misinterpretation, and a non-textual, non-critical-theoretical way to develop its concepts. By including not only previous members of the SI but also multiple people unrelated to it, as well as by remaining open to many new and contradictory ideas also unrelated to the SI such as topology and the triolectic, the journal (and with it, the organization behind it) was constantly in danger of simply making no sense at all. However, its members' radical political commitment meant that the magazine was an ideological organ, turning the threat of non-sense into its opposite, a discourse from which many senses can be discerned. At this point the third part was introduced: in order to articulate the *ST*'s kaleidoscopic format into a borderless totality, the concept of (political) myth was suggested as a tool with which to approach the magazine; myth served as the *logic* behind the entire project, a framework that gives it sense as an avant-garde revolutionary endeavour.

The common historiographical understanding of the internecine fight that produced the ST has mostly furthered the idea that groups like the ST practiced art, and were therefore compromised, unlike the SI. I hope to have shown that this is not the case, and that the framework of myth as the collective production of an endless multiplicity tied to the commonality of imagination (the creation of the common-sense as the most profound artistic act) implies an alternative kind of Situationist practice that is just as powerful. This is where the fourth part, an outgrowth of how (revolutionary, anti-

spectacular) myth comes to be, becomes relevant: as a horizontal activity, it allows an articulation of very different subject positions into a community of equals. This is what the concept of 'folk' represents for Jorn, enacted by de Jong's anarchist principles of inclusion and openness, thus metaphorically making the fourth part of this organizational discourse eat the tail of the first. De Jong's anti-organizational stance is based upon conceiving of a 'Situationist movement' instead of a closed, rigorous collective – any possibility of *excluding* anyone means the constitution of a hierarchical body and therefore a static entity destined to paradoxically repeat the kind of totalitarian gestures it rejects in principle. In the end, the ST was a collective with a project perhaps even more radical than that of the SI itself, but its sheer anti-organizational, mythical excess makes it extremely difficult to pin down in the more academic, rationalized form that the SI and its critical theoretical tendency favoured, which is perhaps why most historians and commentators have proceeded to dismiss the ST for the last five decades.

Fig. A: SITUATIONIST TIMES PUBLICATION TIMELINE

May, 1962:
Situationist
Times #1

January,
1963:
Situationist
Times #3

December,
1964:
Situationist
Times #5

September,
1962:
Situationist
Times #2

October,
1963:
Situationist
Times #4

Autumn 1967:
Situationist
Times #6
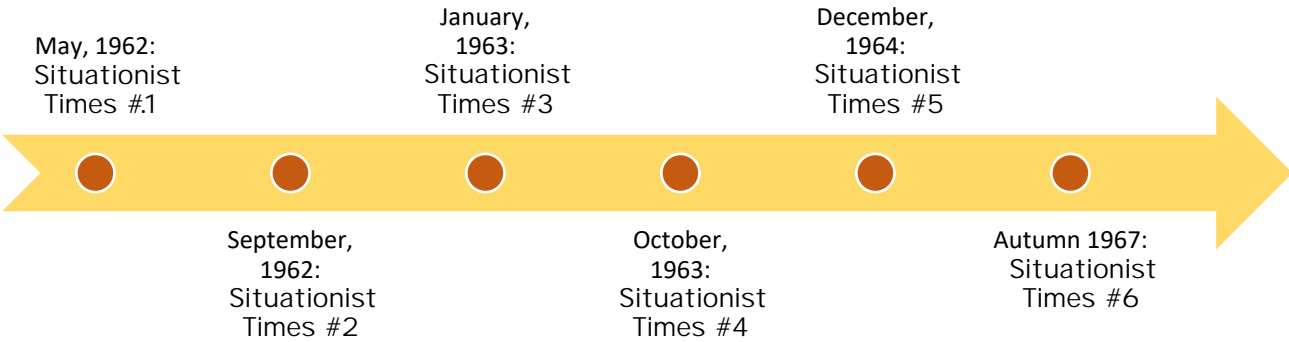
CHAPTER 2: KING MOB

1. Introduction

This chapter will be an overview of the UK collective King Mob and its magazine *King Mob Echo*, its pamphlets and actions. It existed from 1968 till roughly 1972 (see fig. B), and it emerged from the expulsion of the English section of the Situationist International from the 'main body' of the organization in 1967. As part of the SI, the English produced a single text called "The Modern Art of Revolution and the Revolution of Modern Art" (1967 – unpublished till 1994), the discourse of which seems to be of crucial importance to the later constitution of King Mob. Its framework is that of Marxism, but it makes a fundamental shift in giving primacy to the lumpenproletariat as the main agent of history. The name of the collective is a reflection of this theoretical development, emphasizing an anonymous, spontaneous, and dynamic operation of coming together that in its criminality (its very negation of the law) becomes sovereign. According to David Wise, the name was taken from the story of the 1780 Gordon Riots in London, when Newgate prison was torn open; upon the wall of the prison a proclamation read that the inmates had been liberated by authority of "His Majesty, King Mob"[172]. The members of the group bring to bear the context of late 18th century radical art and politics as Romantic and Gothic elements in a discourse that is meant to *inflame* the local history of London, where King Mob was mostly active. The way in which my interpretation and analysis will proceed will be to begin with the precedents of the collective as such, in reference to the activities of its core members both as part of the SI and otherwise, overviewing how it integrated Situationist theory (primarily from the then latest productions of Raoul Vaneigem and Guy Debord in 1967) in order to provide a theoretical background with which to move on to the group's images and activities. One of the most important effects of King Mob's antipathy towards the SI as a result of its members' exclusions was not only the rejection of the Situationist organization, viewed as too committed to theorizing and not interested enough in direct action, but also its adoption of the aesthetic and political approach of contemporary US groups Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (BM and UAWMF, which will be analysed in Chapter 3). BM had been deemed unfit for inclusion in the SI, and a small controversy arose between the English section and the French, resulting in the exclusion of the English from the organization as a whole. As a consequence, the third and final issue of *King Mob Echo* focused mostly on interpretations of BM and UAWMF discourse

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[172] This is possibly an embellishment of historical facts by David Wise, who writes about this story in "A Critical Hidden History of King Mob", available at http://www.revoltagainstplenty.com/index.php/archive-local/93-a-hidden-history-of-king-mob.html; accessed August 15, 2017.

in order to integrate it into King Mob itself, increasing its distance from the SI and highlighting its own version of a revolutionary organization centred upon art and politics.

1.1. Precedents

King Mob as such only came into being in 1968, but its members had been participating in the development of a revolutionary theory in two different places, Newcastle and London. Stuart and David Wise came from the context of the former, having had a hand in the publication of *Icteric* magazine, through which they came to know one of the founders of the American group Black Mask, Ben Morea[173]. The rest of the members of King Mob came from activities in the London context, and formed the core of the English section of the Situationist International. By 1964 the first members, Ralph Rumney and Alexander Trocchi, were no longer a part of the movement for reasons not relevant here, but in 1965 the roster once again included the English with the admittance of Donald Nicholson-Smith[174], expanding in 1966 with Christopher Gray and Charles Radcliffe, who brought along the small-press experience of publishing *Heatwave* and the American magazine *Rebel Worker* in England. After the exclusion of the whole of the English SI late in 1967, apparently they all remained close enough as to permit the furthering of their ideas in a way that, by September 1968, when the first issue of *King Mob Echo* was published, all of them formed part of King Mob, with London as its base of operations.

Rebel Worker (1964-1968) was edited by Franklin Rosemont, of the Chicago Surrealist Group[175], for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and it developed a critique from the 'vantage point' of

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[173] The Wise brothers came into contact with the English section of the Situationist International in 1967 via Ben Morea, several months before it was excluded from the SI. Stuart Wise, "Jumbled Notes: A Critical Hidden History of King Mob", in the Wise brothers' website, http://www.revoltagainstplenty.com/index.php/archive/34-archivelocal/93-a-hidden-history-of-king-mob.html, accessed in March 11, 2012.

[174] The sources about the admittance of people into the SI are few and very sparse, but in the 1969 text "The Latest Exclusions" found in *Internationale Situationniste* #12 describes: "We should mention that during the two years we had known him, Donald Nicholson-Smith was well liked and in every way highly regarded by all of us." From this, we could surmise that Nicholson-Smith was the next English person included in the group, around 1965. See Situationist International, "The Latest Exclusions", in http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/12.exclusions.htm, accessed in June 12, 2012. It remains unclear exactly when Timothy Clark was admitted, but it is safe to assume that given his relationship with Nicholson-Smith, he became a situationist at around the same time.

[175] The Rosemonts, editors of *Rebel Worker* and roommates of Charles Radcliffe at the time, visited Paris in 1966 "to meet with André Breton and other surrealists, as well as with Guy Debord and Mustapha Khayati of the [SI]. They brought back copies of the English language *Watts 1965: The Decline and Fall of the Spectacular Commodity Economy*, not only the first Situationist text I'd really read, but also the most exciting and cogent comment on the black riots of Los Angeles." See Charles Radcliffe, Franklin Rosemont (eds.), *Dancin' in the Streets!: Anarchists, IWWs, Surrealists, Situationists & Provos in the 1960s.* Chicago, Charles H. Kerr, 2004, p. 350. Through Radcliffe's account it is not difficult to see that the theoretical connections being done by the Situationists were also being done by different groups from other backgrounds;

Surrealism. In it, there is a very modernist concern with time, in a sense that springs from the intuition that one of the key elements of the constitution of capitalism is a keen awareness of historical difference and the effects of the irreversibility of history upon memory, as seen within the context of social relations *under* capital – work and accumulation of wealth as the final redemption from the past (as nature, as necessity, as dynastic determination and authority). The call is formulated thus in *Rebel Worker* as a "complete revaluation of revolutionary values as well as a vast reassessment of the whole revolutionary tradition"[176] , which follows a similar approach to the Situationist intent to re-appropriate radical moments throughout history, present, for example, in Raoul Vaneigem's *Revolution of Everyday Life*[177] but also present in earlier endeavours by the collective, such as Michèle Bernstein's piece for *Destruktion af RSG-6*, mentioned in Chapter 1.

However, the language that articulates the arguments of *Rebel Worker* retains the Marxist assessment of history as a reference for the destiny of the proletariat, while for the Situationists history is yet to begin; ours is a prehistory, a critical construct that will be able to at last invent all kinds of futures into the fabric of reality. History is therefore not a narrative tool by and for humanity, but perhaps the most destructive ideal of nature, an enslaving trap not of our own making. All sorts of figures of the past must come into play for such a project, a gathering of demands that must shatter the assumptions and stereotypes of the present, the artifice that grasps life with the tenacity of death itself. The 'precursors' mentioned in the magazine are the following: the Comte de Lautréamont, Charles Fourier, the Marquis de Sade, William Blake, and 'the Gothic novelists'[178]. The list highlights the connections to the, first Surrealist, then Situationist *invocations* of historical figures as well as the differences they held with them, in this case, the evocation of a definitively *English* Romanticism both at its most poetic and its most popularly metaphorical via figures such as Blake and the Gothic novelists.

Heatwave, while already approved by the SI, is a proof of this slightly variant integration of thought currents. The experience of the English with the Provo movement in the Netherlands was also part of this theoretical environment, at least in terms of discovering new forms of theory and bending the limits of everyday politics. More than half of the first number of *Heatwave* is dedicated to the Provos of Amsterdam, not in an anthropological approach but as a way of participation (Radcliffe and others visited Amsterdam in that year). The SI had already dismissed the Provos as a failure, critiquing their organization as having regressed into oligarchy. However, Radcliffe did not follow the SI line and developed his own view, resulting in "The Seeds of Social Destruction": "[the text] simply tried to show how the Dutch scene and Provo's recognition of the "provotariat" (a neat catch-all for the new lumpenproletariat of the leisure economy) could relate to Britain" see *Ibid*, p. 353.

[176] Tom Vague (ed.), *King Mob Echo*. London, Dark Star, 2000, p. 8. This compilation of King Mob texts and images was used primarily for references to *Rebel Worker, Heatwave*, "The Revolution of Modern Art and the Modern Art of Revolution", and a few other scattered sources I was unable to consult in archives.

[177] Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Translated from the French by John Fullerton and Paul Sieveking. London, Practical Paradise Publications, 1975, p.109.

[178] Tom Vague, *op cit*, p. 9-11.

This attention to the particularities of context and the aptness of certain figures due to historical relevance came to a climax in the way the second wave of English Situationists viewed pop culture in their country. While the Situationists established the comparison of Dada and "juvenile delinquency" through the premise that nihilism is a first step into revolutionary consciousness, there is little more on the matter of pop culture, the primary domain of youth. In Situationist texts it is treated as spectacular reductionism, as the place and time where the rage of the young is discharged and reflected back to them as consumer choices. This is where détournement is mostly deployed as an attempt to break the mirror, counting on an eventual detonation of the primal nihilism of youth. In contrast, the first number of *Heatwave*[179], edited by Radcliffe, explores the form such a nihilism takes, treating it in a more complex and comprehensive manner. While the conclusion is the same ("a grim-humoured reaction to the frustration implicit in this society and this manner of living"[180]), there is a much more substantial analysis of the differences between teenage 'tribes', which are not overtly discarded as spectacular consumer groups, but perhaps better described as the *lifestyles of nihilism* that emerge in the context of reification (work as adult life, work as the 'real world', etc.). In "The Seeds of Social Destruction", Radcliffe surveys the English context, poring over the details of each 'tribe' under the idea that a certain kind of radicalism could be reached not from the pages of a magazine or the reading of philosophy but from an intuitive, spontaneous reaction to the imposed subjectivity of a myriad social institutions. While this close approach was utterly context-specific, the members of the English SI and later King Mob would become ambivalent towards pop culture by the time of the publication of *King Mob Echo*, although it remained integrally hidden within their discourse.

In October 1966, with the publication of *Heatwave* #2 (its second and last issue), came the inclusion of Situationist texts, one of which was a promotion of a full translation of Vaneigem's "Basic Banalities" by Chris Gray. Only (and exactly) a year later, "The Modern Art of Revolution and the Revolution of Modern Art" was written as an internal pamphlet for the SI network, a text that concisely exposes the ideas advanced by the SI in its late years, the result of which would be Debord's

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179   Which the Situationists praised as "excellent" and "which seems to be evolving toward an increasingly rigorous radicality [sic]". See Situationist International and the Students of Strasbourg, "On the Poverty of Student Life", note 13, in http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/poverty.html , accessed the 13th of July, 2012.
180   Tom Vague, *op cit*, p. 27.

and Vaneigem's books in the last two months of 1967[181]. If the books by the French Situationists were the product of years of theorizing, the pamphlet by the English SI stands as a sort of experiment, a foray into 'total critique' that goes beyond anything any of its members had written before. A rigorous understanding of the Situationist intent on 'total revolution', the text also reveals interests that differ significantly from the French movement, in a way that, coupled with Gray's translation of "Basic Banalities", leads towards a specific vision of 'what was to be done'[182].

1.2.

Given that "Basic Banalities" was a cornerstone of the English understanding of the SI, it would be fruitful to connect it with "The Modern Art..." as a foundational document of King Mob, in the sense in which it establishes a first vector of action. The appeal of Vaneigem's text is almost obvious: it provides a full, clear introduction to the Situationist project, formulating nothing but an invitation to look at the present in terms of the failure of the modernist project to destroy the so-called divide between art and life, achieving only the expansion of artifice into life, petrifying it. His discourse could be read as an understanding of the radicalism of the avant-garde as more than an iconoclastic impulse; the mediation of life by images conveys a construction similar to an artistic regime, in which the limits describe the rules of the game in sacred terms, calcifying the structure into an example of an architecture intent on negating all possibilities of play. Art is therefore the source of all that is commonplace, all that is binding, and to destroy it and realize its promise of boundless, never-ending creativity (one free of *things*) is to bring about the free-form impulses of the anarchy essential to play.

Under the shimmering light of art-as-State, the ideological subjection to economic and instrumental reason is not the kind of *myth*[183] that class consciousness would do away with, being a participative construction on behalf of owners and non-owners.[184] According to Vaneigem, owners see themselves

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[181] Rigorous time lines of Situationist publications are rare, but the following seems trustworthy enough given its attention to detail: http://debordiana.chez.com/english.htm, accessed August 5, 2012.

[182] "Soon after the appearance of "Totality for Kids", Chris Gray contacted the [SI], and sent them a copy along with *Heatwave #1*. We had already decided to edit *Heatwave #2* jointly: its primary function would be to introduce Situationist ideas to Britain […]. The SI's reaction to "Totality..." was extremely positive and was rapidly followed by Mustapha Khayati's arrival from Paris to check us out more carefully." Nevertheless, Radcliffe and company didn't want or need approval from the SI: they had published everything before contacting the SI anyway. See Franklin Rosemont, Charles Radcliffe, *op cit*, p. 360.

[183] Myth is to be understood here in the sense that 'mythology' was used in Chapter 1. Vaneigem, in "Basic Banalities", approaches myth exactly as a political theorization of a whole, deterministic social formation, in the way philosophers of myth viewed the foundation of the Nazi state.

[184] "The owner appropriates and alienates them as producers of his own power, while the necessity of ensuring their own physical existence forces them in spite of themselves to collaborate in producing their own exclusion and to survive

as positive contributors in the sense that they recognize everyone's abstract right to possession, promoting a set of relations that undergo cyclical repetition while under the fundamental modern premise of irreversible time. The aestheticization of politics[185] is undone and replaced by the aestheticization of economics, masking all history as economic history, producing a society where the ownership of the means of production is born of a dialectic of sacrifices and *forms* of alienation, a mythological apparatus of progress that co-opts any and all movement into its linearity[186].

However, Vaneigem hints at a crack in this myth, composed by the social element that refuses to abide by its rules and continually assaults values, senses, and tastes: outlaws of all kinds, who by virtue of action become a noisy disturbance in the middle of the night. This point finds a very strong echo in the English section of the SI, under the Marxist denomination of 'lumpenproletariat', a concept interpreted by the English SI and King Mob under a straightforward Romantic lens that establishes it as "rotting mass", except, like the Situationists did with the proletariat and their 'new proletariat' in *On the Poverty of Student Life*[187], they attempt to bring the term 'up to date' by intermingling 'lumpenproletariat' with 'new lumpenproletariat'. The 'new lumpen' is composed primarily by youth; it is also intimately associated to "the vast escalation of petty crime"[188] as a historical fact pertaining to mass society. According to "The Modern Art…", the "lumpen is the sphere of complete social

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without ever being able to live. Excluded, they participate in possession through the mediation of the owner, a mystical participation characterizing from the outset all the clan and social relationships that gradually replaced the principle of obligatory cohesion in which each member was an integral part of the group ("organic interdependence"). Their guarantee of survival depends on their activity within the framework of privative appropriation. They reinforce a right to property from which they are excluded. Due to this ambiguity each of them sees himself as participating in ownership, as a living fragment of the right to possess, and this belief in turn reinforces his condition as excluded and possessed." Raoul Vaneigem, "Basic Banalities", translated from the French by Ken Knabb, found in http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/7.basic1.htm, accessed the 29th of July, 2012.

[185] I am here of course referring to the use that Walter Benjamin gives to the concept, as the aestheticization of political life, supplanting *rights* with *expression*. Vaneigem's text, without referring to Benjamin specifically, conceptualizes myth as just that: an expressive corpus that grants society with a whole, organic shape that prevents real emancipation from occurring.

[186]   Could the master, at the very moment he alienates the others, see that he reduces them to dispossessed and excluded beings, and thus realize that he is only an exploiter, a purely negative being? Such an awareness is unlikely and would be dangerous. By extending his dominion over the greatest possible number of subjects, isn't he enabling them to survive, giving them their only chance of salvation? ("Whatever would happen to the workers if the capitalists weren't kind enough to employ them?" the high-minded souls of the nineteenth century liked to ask.) In fact, the owner officially excludes himself from all claim to privative appropriation. To the sacrifice of the non- owner, who through his labor exchanges his real life for an apparent one (thus avoiding immediate death by allowing the master to determine his variety of living death), the owner replies by appearing to sacrifice his nature as owner and exploiter; he excludes himself mythically, he puts himself at the service of everyone and of myth (at the service of God and his people, for example)." *Ibidem.*

[187] In it, the SI states that the formation of the society of the spectacle is the "new misery of the new proletariat", best exemplified by the poverty of the student. "La misère de l'étudiant reste en deçà de la misère de la société du spectacle, de la nouvelle misère du nouveau prolétariat." Internationale Situationniste et Strasbourg étudiantes, *De la misère en milieu étudiant: considerée sous ses aspects économique, politique, psychologique, sexuel et notamment intellectuel et de quelques moyens pour y remédier*, Paris, Zanzara Atheée, 2011, p. 4.

[188] Tom Vague, *op cit*, p. 68.

breakdown of apathy, negativity and nihilism – but, at the same time, in so far as it defines itself by its refusal to work and its attempt to use its clandestine leisure in the invention of new types of free activity, [the lumpen] is fumbling, however clumsily, with the quick of the revolutionary supersession now possible."[189] In short, for both the English SI and later King Mob, the lumpenproletariat refers to a Romanticized criminal stratum of extreme poverty that hinges on young people who form gangs instead of unions, who engage in theft instead of activism (thus rejecting the world of work), and whose nihilism represents an empty signifier that can be possibly granted with revolutionary meanings[190].

Vaneigem's ideas are at the forefront of *King Mob Echo*, where Debord's absence can be easily detected, although his influence is well represented in the language that constructs "The Modern Art..." The English Situationists built a synthesis from both authors' works, the result of which is their first and only text, and which clearly deals with the art question as the entry point to total revolution. The most evident example of this is the importance attributed to the lumpenproletariat, raised as an issue in "Basic Banalities", but of much less relevance in both of the French Situationists' books. The English followed closely Vaneigem's idea that the lumpenproletariat represented a basic contempt for work[191], and "The Modern Art..." paraphrases his enthusiasm for the lumpen: "The juvenile delinquents – not the pop artists – are the true inheritors of Dada. Instinctively grasping their exclusion from the whole of social life, they have denounced its products, ridiculed, degraded, and destroyed them." [192] Along with the analysis on youth revolt found in *Heatwave*, the increased importance of the lumpenproletariat as a criminal element (connected, many times, with pop culture) within the development of King Mob is but a logical succession to the manner in which the English adopted the Situationist texts that were first translated to their language. Their focus also pushed these ideas further: the lumpen is a source of agitation, later functioning as an ally, being already the most sensitive of all social strata to revolutionary demands, contained already in its (voluntary or not) refusal to work and the invention of new variations of free activity in clandestine leisures utterly alien to those who function within the confines of 'normal' pleasures[193].

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[189] *Ibid*, p. 69.
[190] For more sophisticated readings than the English SI's as well as for a wider historical discussion of the term, see Peter Stallybrass, "Marx and Heterogeneity: Thinking the Lumpenproletariat", in *Representations*, no. 31, Special issue: The Margins of Identity in Nineteenth Century England, (Summer 1990), p. 69-95; Nicholas Thoburn, "Difference in Marx: The Lumpenproletariat and the Proletarian Unnamable", in *Economy and Society*, vol. 31, no. 3 (August 2002), p. 434-460.
[191] Raoul Vaneigem, "Basic Banalities".
[192] Tom Vague, *op cit*, p. 68.
[193] *Ibid*, p. 69.

2. Organization

The exclusion of the English from the SI at the end of 1967 led to a deep exchange of ideas between them and their US peers, reflected within *King Mob Echo* as well as in the constitution of the group, as it differed from the SI in its "street-wise" focus and its rejection of a rigid organizational structure[194]. Establishing themselves in Notting Hill, they came into contact with a series of UK history folders, one of which was about the Gordon riots of 1781 in London. The disturbances were religious and political in nature, perhaps the last of their kind regarding "the fact that London was put to the force of fire"[195]. There was a sense, because of this, that London's radical history remained buried under its streets, and coupled with the Situationists' idea of bringing forth all the revolutions of the past, the allusion gave the group the notion of an impetus of spontaneous violence on a mass scale... the moment in which an apparently unconnected and dispersed multitude turns into a *criminally virtuous* gathering of demands. The basis of King Mob then lies in its synthesis of elements from both the SI and Black Mask / UAWMF.

The functioning of the SI could be said to be the honing of the manner in which the Surrealists had earlier engaged the issue of politics, pulling together, however briefly, an entire network of revolutionaries across various countries, moving the form of the conspiracy into strategic positioning, a deviated war machine. As with all machines, the failure of a part leads to the failure of everything else, and it slowly broke down over the years. This is, maybe, why King Mob adapts the idea of "affinity groups" from the Americans, a complex metaphorical (dis)order that purports the tactical deployment of guerrillas to an existential plane where communication has been subverted. The commonality of the cause overcomes the need for rigour, and reveals an engagement of the concept of totality in different terms than the SI by doing so within the field of everyday practical needs and events instead of doing so as a centralized organization whose main productions were texts. Where the SI was *structured*, both the Motherfuckers and King Mob were loose 'groups'. This is a reflection of theory, which we will overview through Vaneigem's and Debord's books (available by January

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[194] "King Mob was a spontaneous coming together of subversive youth from middle class and working class backgrounds though most had been through aspects of higher education, which they'd found to be a constant stream of ridiculous mumbo-jumbo. [...] There was for a brief - too brief – moment a remarkable similarity between them and little class hostility was evident in the paramount need to express the coming together of what we thought at the time was the first total revolutionary critique in history." Stuart Wise, *op cit.*

[195] *Ibidem.*

1968) and the three issues of the English magazine (which go from April 1968 to sometime during early 1969).

2.1. Situationist deviation for different organizations

The Revolution of Everyday Life and *The Society of the Spectacle* are a prime example of how a body of theory (the whole of *Internationale Situationniste*) can open up the way for different-and-yet-essentially-similar works, since both books utilize ideas that complement each other: they turn into weapons that aim at the same target from unusual, divergent angles. This openness can be viewed in the organizational aspect of the Situationist milieu, where revolutionary life-rigour could be attained in the closely scrutinized way of the SI as much as in the more trust-based connections of King Mob.

The jump-start point at which both books converge is in the terms of an insurrection 'of a million minds' tied to an invisible provocation. If the spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification then invisibility and disunity (understood in the anarchic, individualist sense) come together as tactic to avoid the spectacle's camera-eyes, which continually configure a geography of identities and roles played in stereotypes. The spectacle is similar to an artwork, in the sense that it instrumentally unifies the gestures of makers under conditions external to them, and which will enable the artwork's growth – in other words, a language made official, an individualization only to the extent that the subject is a part of all sorts of production (of art, ideology, consumer items...). Invisibility means seeping through the cracks of the spectacle to pervert its language[196]. The Situationist technique of détournement supplies the form of this perversion, by appearing to change nothing when it has changed everything. The action of détournement is for the most part untraceable, having no author and generating no *art*. As it is not limited to images, there is a possibility of applying it to social forms, to organizations that would undermine society by laying its own detonating building blocks beneath[197].

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[196] "The social practice which the autonomous spectacle confronts is also the real totality which contains the spectacle. [...] The language of the spectacle consists of *signs* of the ruling production, which at the same time are the ultimate goal of this production." Guy Debord, *op cit*, p. 7.

[197] "Where the real world changes into simple images, the simple images become real beings and effective motivations of hypnotic behaviour. The spectacle, as a tendency *to make one see* the world by means of various specialized mediations (it can no longer be grasped directly), naturally finds vision to be the privileged human sense which the sense of touch was for other epochs; the most abstract, the most mystifiable sense corresponds to the generalized abstraction of present-day society. […] The spectacle […] is the opposite of dialogue. Wherever there is independent *representation*, the spectacle reconstitutes itself." *Ibid*, p. 8.

Such an organization would begin from the idea a truly lived experience where representation and mediation have no place. The English group adds to this what "[the Surrealists] saw quite rightly, that the most vital role a revolutionary avant-garde could play was to create a *coherent group experimenting with a new life-style*, drawing on new techniques, which were simultaneously self-expressive and socially disruptive, of extending the perimeters of lived experience."[198]

The birth of desires and their objectification in "life-styles" cannot be an individual enterprise, it must be *total*, one that overruns all linguistic structuring (words limited by things and things limited by words) to clear the path towards something infinitely new. Still, communication remains a problem, and for Vaneigem there are three weapons against spectacular language: détournement, the dialectic ("open dialogue"), and "sensual speech" (understood as the spontaneity of individual and collective poetry... an erotic communication)[199]. This last weapon, Vaneigem says, "is well known to lovers" as a "silent communication" in which the mediation of language becomes unnecessary, turning its components-as-tools into their opposites, a myriad words and signs that mean everything to the lover and nothing to whoever else is listening. It is a secret language that denies all *reasonable* and instrumental attempts to intrude, it is all sorts of Dadaist word-games and Surrealist spirituality condensed into mental binds. This kind of communication takes effect in the practice of collectivity as it engages the world, but the question of how such a group would operate becomes, at this point, pressing, and to which Vaneigem responds by stating it would function "[as] a micro-society formed on the basis of the radical acts or thoughts of its members, and maintained in a permanent state of practical readiness by means of strict theoretical discrimination."[200]

Vaneigem's words find complementarity with Debord's when the latter states that "a revolutionary organization must constitute an integral critique of society" and that "in [its] struggle with class society, *the combatants themselves* are the fundamental weapons" inasmuch as they do not reproduce the dominant society's conditions within itself[201]. The critique must be total, for which the organization must rigorously keep dialectics in its very body in order to reach the finality that is self-dissolution, not as *disappearance* but as ultimate dissemination. The Situationists understood this

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[198] Tom Vague, *op cit*, p. 61.
[199] Raoul Vaneigem, *op cit,* p. 57.
[200] *Ibid,* p. 119.
[201] Guy Debord, *op cit*, p. 34-35.

under the Marxian idea of the destiny of the proletariat, while King Mob pointed at a more Surrealist eventuality, a sudden, apocalyptic consciousness of everyone being a part of the same conspiracy, being a part of King Mob. Liberation for them, as we have seen, is not the destiny of the proletariat but that of the lumpenproletariat, always stigmatized by the idea of crime.

2.2. The sovereignty of the criminal

For both the Situationists and King Mob, crime has deep political and economic implications, both in terms of the uncovering of power relations and ideology, but also as an intervention upon the self-production of subjectivity under capitalism. It is a refusal at many levels, a total critique of the society of the spectacle contained in isolated actions, but while this conception remained unexplored fully by the SI, King Mob, by associating it with its views on the lumpenproletariat, developed several new ideas that resonate with their organization.

Vaneigem described crime as "the most pitiful action and at the same time the most noble" that is able to disrupt and expose "the self-regulating mechanisms of the hierarchical social community"[202] which is to say the consciousness of *constraints*. In these terms, any crime is inherently an act against mediations, whether they be stereotypical relationships or the architectural imperatives of urbanism; for a moment, the order of things comes undone in transgression, and all crimes become essentially equated, in the eyes of power varying only in taxonomical terms. Hence, it is possible not only to imagine an environment of criminals, an ecology in opposition within which the only relations are actions born of and against constraints. Such activity emerges from the spectacle itself, and it is perhaps one of the few things it cannot completely annihilate through ideological or material means – crime becomes society's own reflexive deviation, using its elements (from values to products) against itself in a series of cycles that lead immediately into sheer isolation. King Mob's project aimed to gather all those criminals into a community of dissent, to appropriate their violence for the benefit of revolution.

Such a collectivity presents an economic function that King Mob seemed to understand well but which in the end was not able to cohere into its form. In Vaneigem's view, outlaws revealed the

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[202] Raoul Vaneigem, *op cit,* p. 10.

reason of power at its extreme, whether via media scandals or moral outrages that obscured humanity under the mantle of the public good (always a quantitative matter, the well-being of economic order)[203]. This maintenance, since productive labour is a part of the technology of law[204] in the sense that it conducts the poetic potential of all into the cyclical logic of commodities (which includes the time of work as well as the time of leisure, pre-configured as it is by stereotypes enacted in consumption), represents the safeguarding of production. If the "passion for creation"[205] is alienated by the duty to produce, the alternative is rejecting such a duty as much as negating it even further by attempting to *un-produce*. If anti-art is understood here as an apocalyptic self-negation, this Romanticized anti-production could be taken to close the alienation gap by destroying capitalist production's very claims to a valid existence (utility, progress, well-being, prestige…), liberating subjectivity from things, letting it *create* at last without allegiance to anything but itself. Crime is, in this way, an avenue for un-production, if only because it is based on the refusal to work as well as its direct intervention upon the field of production[206]. By hindering the 'natural' communication of commodities, criminal activity develops several theoretical implications, the first of which is related to how private property is conceived. It potentially turns private property, always mediated by money and other social contracts, into a kind that is closer to public, which is why under a revolutionary directive it has the capacity to establish a direct relation between subject and object; if a subjectivity in the capitalist society of the spectacle is that of an invariably mediated being (even to itself, ridden by stereotypes and clichés that easily replace thought processes with ready-made abstractions), then one of the results of criminal activity is to ignore such mediations, to suddenly dismantle the order of things and its hierarchy, returning to an existential sort of 'authenticity' in which relations are based on sheer presence and experience. Crime degrades all contracts and disrespects all order simply because it is the negativity defined within such things. Hence, it un-produces because it follows no production line at the same time it subtracts from one or many others.

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[203] This is akin to what the Surrealists of the late 1930s thought about criminal activity: the 'evil' in play was always relative, and it was always relative to the context in which the crime was made, including its coverage by the press and all the moral outrages that blocked the voice of perpetrators from speaking. The most prominent of the cases analysed by the Surrealists was perhaps that of Violette Nozières, a teenager who murdered her father after years of abuse, and which caused, at the time, all sorts of scandals from all sides of the press. The Surrealists picked up her testimony and used it against the ideological conditioning of left-wing and right-wing journalism, attempting to reveal them both as farcical allies in oppression. For more details on this see Jonathan Eburne, *Surrealism and the Art of Crime*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2008.

[204] *Ibid,* p. 24.

[205] *Ibidem.*

[206] Its co-opted form would be organized crime, modelled on specific social forms contained in society at large, in reality never putting a halt to work as straightforward production of goods.

The English SI accepted the theoretical implications of Romanticized crime, in a sort of prelude to King Mob: "The vast escalation of petty crime – spontaneous, everyday crime on a mass level – marks a qualitatively new stage in contemporary class conflict: the turning point between the pure destruction of the commodity and the stage of its subversion." The subversion is one of meaning, of art: "Theft is, in fact, a summary overthrow of the whole structure of the spectacle; it is the subordination of the inanimate object, from whose free use we are withheld, to the living sensations it can awake when played with imaginatively within a specific situation." [207] The subversion of the commodity consists, then, of its criminal appropriation and the consequent perversion of its value into a uselessness subordinated only to the sovereign pleasure of unbridled creativity.

3. A Romantic-infused anti-art organization

3.1. The Mob

As mentioned briefly above, there is another key aspect to the constitution of King Mob, that of British Romanticism. The hypothesis sustained here is that several elements of the movement directly inform the manners in which the group came to be configured, especially when it comes to its *image* as function of a theoretical concern with the history of revolution. The name itself refers to the Gordon riots of 1781[208], which Ian Haywood takes as the origin of what he terms the 'spectacular mob'[209]; by 'spectacular' he means the dramatically public and sensationalist mode of representation most commonly associated with the press. In the interest of avoiding confusion with the Situationist use of the same word I shall re-term it 'hyper-mediated', which is an alternate way of describing the status of the mob as a multilateral, unfixed image or text that is mostly found in twice-removed perspectives. In any case, the Gordon riots infected the public opinion with an image of popular violence that was strictly related to an overthrow of the government, and they "provided 'the context in which many English people naturally saw the events of 14 July 1789'. Out of the Gordon riots emerged a new force in British cultural history – the [hyper-mediated] mob."[210]

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[207]   *Ibid*, p. 69.
[208]   "At the time, Smiths, the popular newspaper and trashy mag newspaper chainstore brought out a series of attractively presented folders on various events in the history of these islands. One of them was on the Gordon riots of 1781 in London when a huge swathe of the capital's destitute population was swept up in an orgy of looting, burning, and bitter revenge." Stuart Wise, *op cit.*
[209]   Ian Haywood, *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776-1832.* New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006, p. 181.
[210]   *Ibid*, p. 184.

Such a force is built evocatively in the following way:

> The *Annual Register* called the night of 7 June [1781]a time of 'infernal humanity... one of the most dreadful spectacles this country ever beheld... everything served to impress the mind with ideas of universal anarchy and approaching desolation'. Dr Johnson spoke of a 'time of terror', and William Cowper described a 'Metropolis in flames, and a nation in ruins'. Nathaniel Wraxall saw a resemblance between the Gordon riots and the Peasants' Revolt, comparing Gordon to 'Wat Tyler and Jack Cade, the incendiaries of the Plantagenet era'. The mob's contempt for genteel property implied a degree of class-consciousness. […] The City of London authorities were initially slow to intervene, but a force of 10,000 troops was eventually brought into the capital to restore order. Their impact was lethal […] The destructiveness of the riots was unprecedented.[211]

In the hands of the press and public figures, the hyper-mediated mob worked as a rhetorical device destined to neutralize the political content of its violence by weaving its stories as tragic lessons, narrating its progression always from small disturbances to general disorder to an ultimate self-consumption[212]. Whether the treatment was conservative or radical, the image of the hyper-mediated mob was mostly determined by the violence it generated, pitting it against generalized ideas not only of Enlightenment but also of humanism, in the sense that it potentially allows for more than the destruction of private property and death dealt in the name of order or rebellion. The result was an urge to deny whatever purpose there could be behind it, picturing it as a singularity that transgressed cause and effect by having only an effect, and therefore historically invalid as well as utterly *wasteful*. It could be said that it constitutes an inverted aristocratic sovereignty, if only because of its inferred extra-historical nature and its drive to waste and self-consumption in the most 'savage' of ways. Hence the aptness of the very name of King Mob, holding in its compounded irrationality and rationality (its movement in a city and its reasons for it resemble a sort of conquest – the image of the mob is enacted as the vanguard of nihilism) a kind of force that can potentially match that of the actual sovereign, whether it is a royal figure-head or a modern(ized) democracy. At this point it is important to add that Haywood's hyper-mediated mob of the 18th and 19th century "is led by mock-leaders, by criminals and impostors, women, agitators of 'the lowest order' that cowardly scatter before the 'natural strength of established society' is 'aroused and directed'."[213] While the image of savagery negates the mob's discipline, organization and purpose (which is to say its rationality), the image of the coward mock-leadership negates the very possibility of the mob's inarticulate voice while hiding the actual, material power of superior State weaponry over the makeshift arms of the mob – it expects to be met on the battlefield, as gentlemen would.

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[211] *Ibid,* p. 185.

[212] *Ibid*, p. 187.

[213] *Ibid*, p. 188.

"We weren't really interested," Stuart Wise says, "in the whys and wherefores of the riots like its "No Popery" it was the fact that London was put to the force of fire and we were thus liberally interpreting the picture ourselves as we dreamed of doing the same thing all over again!"[214] The emphasis on the violence and the interpretation of a picture is worthy of note: even if there are many divergent lines in the history of the riot, the fact of its hyper-mediation and the theoretical implications this holds for an organization such as King Mob are a constitutive part of its network-like (non-)structure.

3.2. The Romantic Mob

A few, general ideas of Romanticism will be introduced into the interpretation of King Mob as organization; while a thorough revision of *all* aspects of Romanticism pertinent to the subject matter is ideal, it is also a task that exceeds the scope and objectives of this thesis[215]. Therefore, the issue will be threaded with the analysis of the images and text contained in *King Mob Echo*, which form a part of the group's praxis and its attempt at a dissemination via activities such as the Powis Square riot of June 15, 1968, a mere two months after the publication of the first issue of the magazine. This is the moment, much like that of May for the French, in which the organization is put in motion and is no longer just a radical network off-shoot from the bowels of both the art-world and the activist milieu. The hypothesis is that, while revolutionary Romanticism[216] is mentioned as only an element

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[214] Stuart Wise, *op cit*.
[215] For an excellent analysis of King Mob's literary leanings, see Samuel Martin Cooper, *'A Lot to Answer for': The English Legacy of the Situationist International*. University of Sussex D.Phil Thesis, May 2012. Cooper argues that King Mob's literary leanings can be interpreted through the lens of William Wordsworth's 'pastoral' view of 'the common', whereas I will argue that the Romanticism in operation here is definitively not of the pastoral, nature-centred variety, but the one that gives primacy to subjectivity, the will and the sublime to the extent that it questions the natural; this is also why I used the Gothic as a point of reference when talking about King Mob's Romantic vein, since it remains much closer to Gothicism's perversions of nature than to Wordsworth's brighter form of the natural. While I will disclose the meaning of the Romantic and the Gothic in steps as the image analysis unfolds, suffice to say for now that I've used a variety of sources such as Isaiah Berlin's *The Roots of Romanticism* as part of my hermeneutic procedure in order to establish what it is from the Romantic and the Gothic that King Mob engages with and represents. A thorough revision of these two philosophical and artistic currents is out of place in this thesis, which is why I will look primarily at the specific *use* that King Mob gives them under my interpretation, arriving at fragments of their meanings that articulate more clearly how they work instead of attempting to fit King Mob into a predetermined, fixed definition. The Cooper thesis was later published as a book in 2017, but after consulting the equivalent sections of it that I had first approached in the thesis I saw no reason to shift to the book since the argument did not change significantly.
[216] The text "Le romantisme révolutionnaire', written in 1958 by Henri Lefebvre with Lucien Goldmann, Claude Roy and Tristan Tzara, and which was one of the many over which the founders of the Situationist International discussed about in its early days, represents here one of the avenues of interpretation of King Mob's organization, but not the only one. King Mob fits quite well with the text's basic definition of a new romanticism opposed to the old, particularly in its approach to the consciousness of the relationship between the possible and the impossible, but it also exceeds the text's definition at many – if not most -- points; for example, King Mob never insists, like the "new romanticism" does, "upon the clarity of outlines" of *works* (of art), even if the lines between form and content are completely blurred. In other words, King Mob's principles are inherently compatible with the text's definition, but when it comes to the group's production

of characterization of the group, it actually informs the *plot* of King Mob as a thousand-headed hydra, emblazoning its operations with an overwhelmingly expressive bent that clearly distinguishes it from the mirror-bureaucracy procedures of the SI.
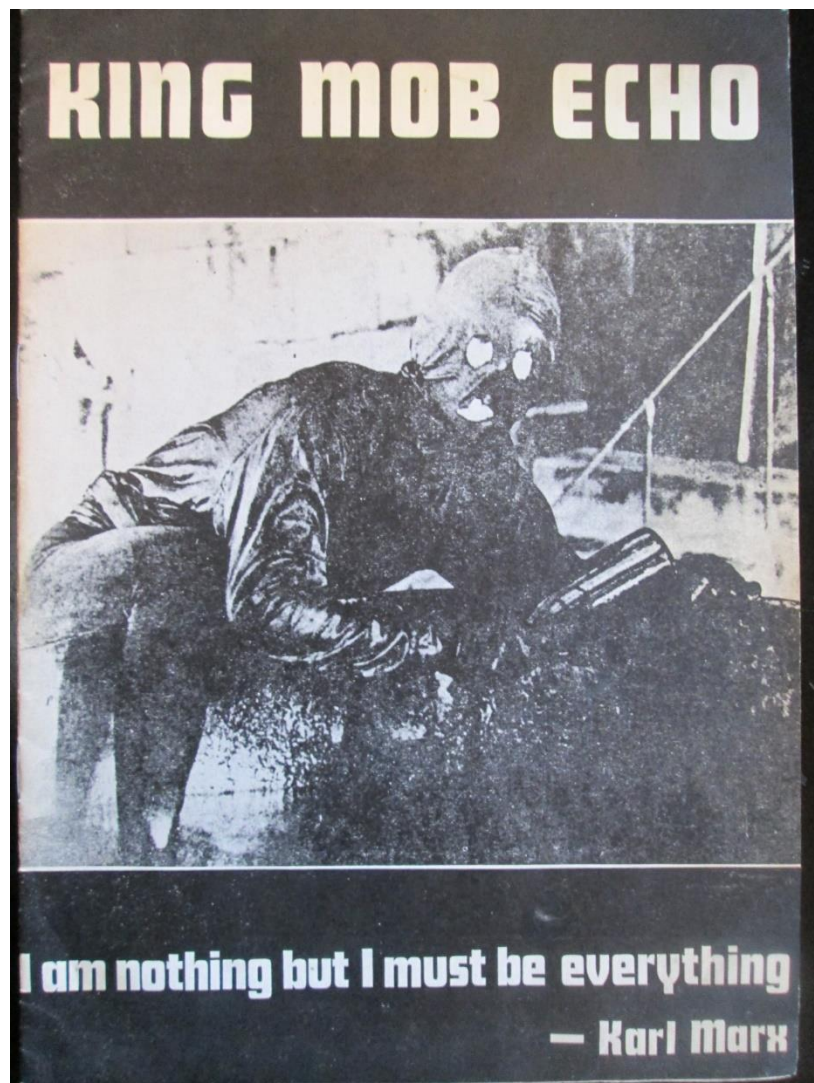
Fig. 2.1: *King Mob Echo 1*, 1968, National Art Library, London.

This intent is suggested even from the first issue of *King Mob Echo* (published in April of 1968, see fig. 2.1), which is not only named after popular low-cost journals such as *Daily Echo*[217], but which

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and its praxis, there are other articulations at work. This is why I will approach other, broader definitions of Romanticism as well as the concept of the Gothic in order to better explore how King Mob's revolutionary Romanticism operates.

[217] "We wanted to make an impact – essentially a popular impact without being populist which meant something quite different to a mass circulation, 20th century Daily Echo type newspaper. The magazine itself became the first of a bunch – the first and the best – though that's not saying much. By 1971 even run of the mill leftists were doing things along similar lines." Stuart Wise, *op cit*. The publication was preceded and accompanied by stickers designed by Donald Nicholson-Smith, which contained Situationist-inclined phrases from May '68 such as "Never Work!", and which were

also enacts the struggle for communicative hegemony launched by the very form of the first *Internationale Situationniste*; underlined by a Marx quote reading "I am nothing but I must be everything", the stakes are clearly defined by its ghastly apparition into the field of (publicized) cultural production. It is supported by a still of the 1913 silent film *Juve contre Fântomas,* written and directed by Louis Feuillade, author of the *Fântomas* serials so beloved by the Surrealists. The still corresponds to the final part of the film, in which the arch-villain Fântomas, whose main ability is to impersonate and transform into anyone, anywhere, escapes from the clutches of the law by hiding inside the cistern of the villa he has been cornered in. Fântomas 'true form' is the faceless, black-clad person depicted in the still, an empty signifier that can be filled with anyone's characteristics. His emergence from the cistern, from the bowels of an empty house, points towards the manner in which King Mob articulates a ghostly, evasive identity -- it is an image so ambiguous it could elicit both dread and confusion. It appears as if the eyes and mouth have been manually erased, an effacement that renders the figure hollow, turning it into an empty signifier that can be filled by the evocation of a city's shadow: the criminal, the perverted, and an obscured bottle with no label that could hold all sorts of promises, from violence to simplistic metaphors of soullessness. It is an image forever in *escape*, presenting the impossibility of identity, an avoidance of Vaneigem's stereotypes by means of a ghostly claim to being as the pursuit of something that is not quite there, something occult inasmuch as it is hidden in plain view, a non-religious mystery infused by concrete, bricks, and metal. The conspiratorial nature of the whole Situationist network comes to the fore both in the image's referential framework and the reading of it as one against identity, granting its anonymous, iconoclastic anti-visage a certain Gothic quality that recalls the suppression of history *as haunting*. It is the Situationist realization of all the revolutions of the past as a sort of impure materialism (just like that of the Surrealists) that allows Marx's famous metaphor in the *Communist Manifesto* to, in a way, come into existence.

But what is this conspiratorial nature, as implied by the *Barrabas* image and the organization of King Mob itself? If "the romantic doctrine was that there is an infinite striving forward on the part of reality, of the universe around us, that there is something which is infinite, something which is inexhaustible, of which the finite attempts to be the symbol but of course cannot"[218], then not only the Situationist slogan of demanding the impossible acquires one of its senses but also the self-representation and

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pasted across Notting Hill at the time. See Pablo Argente (ed.), *King Mob: Nosotros, el Partido del Diablo*. Madrid, La Felguera, 2007, p. 50.

[218] Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*. London, Pimlico, 1999, p. 101.

performance of the SI as hidden forces besieging capitalism on a world-scale, or perhaps more appropriately, on a world-stage. However, while the SI does define its limits within its revolutionary programme and their party structure, King Mob's operations, in its first few months, refer to an open-endedness that refuses to be outlined as *code*. It tends towards the conception of its membership as a permanent flux-in-opposition that cannot be controlled, the suggestion of an infinitely expanding criminal activity that cannot be subjected (both physically and philosophically), predicted, nor seen – a global crime syndicate like the one in *Barrabas*. The figure on the cover resists identification, and therefore eludes all constitutional foundations, any and all instruments of power dedicated to the fitting of all human experience within the constraints of descriptions legal or otherwise; the romantic 'depth' becomes relevant at this point, the notion that any and all language is insufficient to describe existence, giving birth to the chasms of the 'profound' which often lead to darkness. In terms of King Mob, this means not only the potential field of action of Vaneigem's "erotic communication" and the assault on an aestheticized economy - an economy that not only *appears* but *explains* and *describes* - via criminality, but also its movement within and beyond what, at the time, was conceived of as 'the underground'[219]. King Mob, like the figure on the cover, attempts to be untouchable, like the lumpenproletariat, to lie at the margins of the normativity of economic language.

I will now overview the texts and images of the first issue, offering descriptions with short interpretations in order to exemplify and link the ideas explored above with the texts and images themselves. Afterwards, I will attempt to draw out how they were put to work in the actions organized by King Mob soon after the publication of the magazine.

The first text of the issue, "The Return of the Repressed" by Norman O. Brown, author of *Life Against Death* and a beacon for would-be revolutionaries in the English-speaking world during the 1960s[220],

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[219] An 'underground' which was constantly concerned with appearing 'above-ground' and making its presence felt: "The underground press was to the counter-culture what Fleet Street journalism is to 'straight' society. The underground even created its own version of Reuters, in the form of the Underground Press Syndicate and the Liberation News Service (both originating in the US), which ensured international dissemination of news considered significant for the counter-culture. In addition, many underground papers, including IT, Oz, and Friends/Frendz, were circulated internationally." This institutional mirroring in the so-called 'alternative society' of the 1960s details the preoccupation of the 'underground' with competing on the same ground as its supposed opposite, under the same terms and by the same techniques, automatically defusing any explosive potential it might have had. See Elizabeth Nelson, *The British Counter-Culture 1966-73*. London, MacMillan Press, 1989, p. 46.
[220] See the *New York Times* note on Brown's death: Douglas Martin, "Norman O. Brown Dies", in http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/04/arts/norman-o-brown-dies-playful-philosopher-was-89.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm , accessed the 26 of October, 2013.

is significant in this regard. Its rhetoric firmly-and-yet-vaguely affirms an analogical procedure that relates to the alchemical formula favoured by the Surrealists, that of 'as above, so below'; while the concepts might not quite fit together under scrutiny, their value lies in the offering of the possible. What can be drawn from it, then, is not an explanation but a vision of transmutation that reflects the most utopian aspects of the Situationists while simultaneously providing some clues of what an organization like King Mob might be. So,

> Thought as work can be buried in machines and computers / the work left to be one is to bury thought; quite a job / to put thought underground / as communication-network, sewage-system, power lines / so that wildness can come above ground / technological rationality can be put to sleep / so that something else can awaken in the human mind / something like the god Dionysus / something which cannot be programmed.[221]

In keeping with the metaphor used by Brown of the underground and the surface, and connecting his idea that there ought to be a disconnection of thought from programming to the theory of the spectacle behind King Mob's own political articulation, what emerges is that this sewage-system of communications should be simultaneously developed from within the spectacular ("technological rationality") as in its margins. It should keep out of sight ("buried") for it to allow "wildness" to "come above ground", establishing a kind of rhetorical fluidity between the underground and the surface in which technological rationality becomes contested. The collapse of order implies unleashing the fluidity of everything it contains:

> To confuse reality with appearance as far as possible, to break down the barrier between illusion and reality, between dreams and waking, between night and day, between the conscious and the unconscious, in order to produce a sense of the absolutely unbarred universe, of the wall-less universe, and of perpetual change, perpetual transformation, out of which someone with a powerful will can mould, if only temporarily, anything he pleases.[222]

The "wall-less universe" of "perpetual change" can be applied to the manner in which King Mob attempted to establish the rhetorical fluidity between the underground and the surface inasmuch as its organizational principles were devoted to an unclear, ever-changing membership, unlike the SI's approach, which demanded the clarity of a stable membership roster. Because the group is so fluid, changing constantly, it potentially grounds the conspiratorial, criminal event (mentioned in the last section) in which the side of order is surprised by the sudden revelation of being surrounded by *enemies.* The uncertainty activated by such a group could also be understood under the terms of the production of a paranoia, the kind of which every state is already an expert at. It is a process that,

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[221] *King Mob Echo*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064. Brown's text is visually ordered like an experimental poem, which brings the magazine close to art and literary magazines of the time in format. The size of the magazine itself also comes to bear, as it is larger than a pop cultural mag but not as large as the newspaper it is meant to mimic, a détournement of the kind of literary / art journals that were supposed to feed into the minds of the culturally interested.

[222] Isaiah Berlin, *op cit,* p. 116.
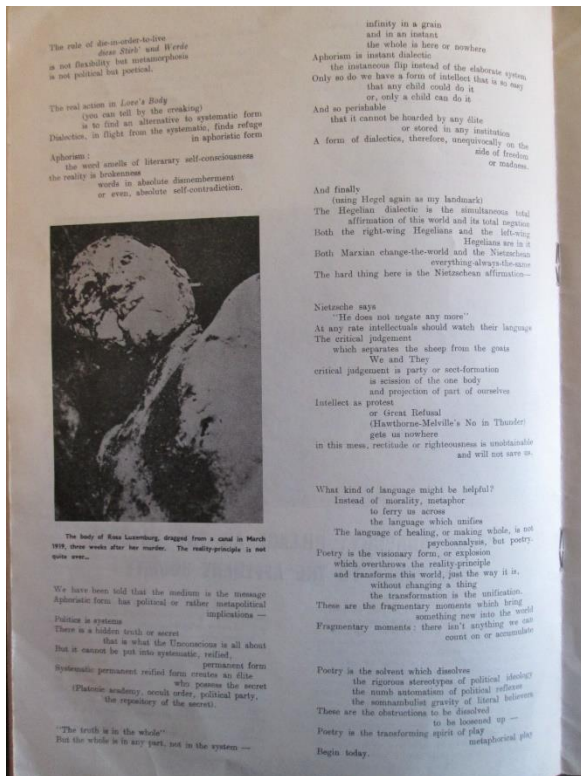
parting from the discourse of security, is fabricated from the threat of the loss of control. King Mob might then use paranoia as an immanent menace to the spectacle's hold of time and space in its hegemonic self-representation as both eternal and unmovable. History itself is uncontrollable, and it is in this way that it is seen as full of enemies, a darkness within that is attuned with paranoia as a fundamental fear of the infinite.

Fig. 2.2. *King Mob Echo 1,* 1968, National Art Library, London.

The text has a companion image, a photograph of the corpse of Rosa Luxemburg three weeks after her murder (fig. 2.2), under which the caption "The reality principle is not quite over..." reads, the ellipsis signalling the uncertainty of what is to come. It illustrates the dialectic of life and death that is referenced within the text as follows: "Hegel, *Phenomenology*: 'Not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself undefiled by devastation (*Werwustung*), but the life that suffers death and preserves itself in death is the life of the Spirit. Spirit gains its truth by finding itself in absolute dismemberment (*Zerrissenheit*)."[223] This dissolution is to be brought about, among other things, by the invocation of dead revolts, the momentary harnessing of death as part of an assumed idealist narrative for the purposes of a final turning of the spectacle against itself. In other words, it is the gathering of *nothing* (as death, as nihilism, as utter negation) with everything (as life, as poetry, as play) within the terms of a collectivity, one that summons the cadaver of a dead revolutionary to affirm the importance of the first text in its magazine. While it was implicit in the uses of crime, it is here where the Gothic makes a decisive entrance to the praxis of King Mob, and where its connections to Romanticism begin to take a clearer form, as we will keep exploring later on. Suffice to say that the image perhaps demands to be understood not in terms of sacrifice but in terms of an anarchic coming together constituting a self-effacing network that would enact its dialectical 'destiny' upon the ruins of the 20th century, leaving only poets infinitely realizing themselves in its wake.

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[223] *King Mob Echo*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064.
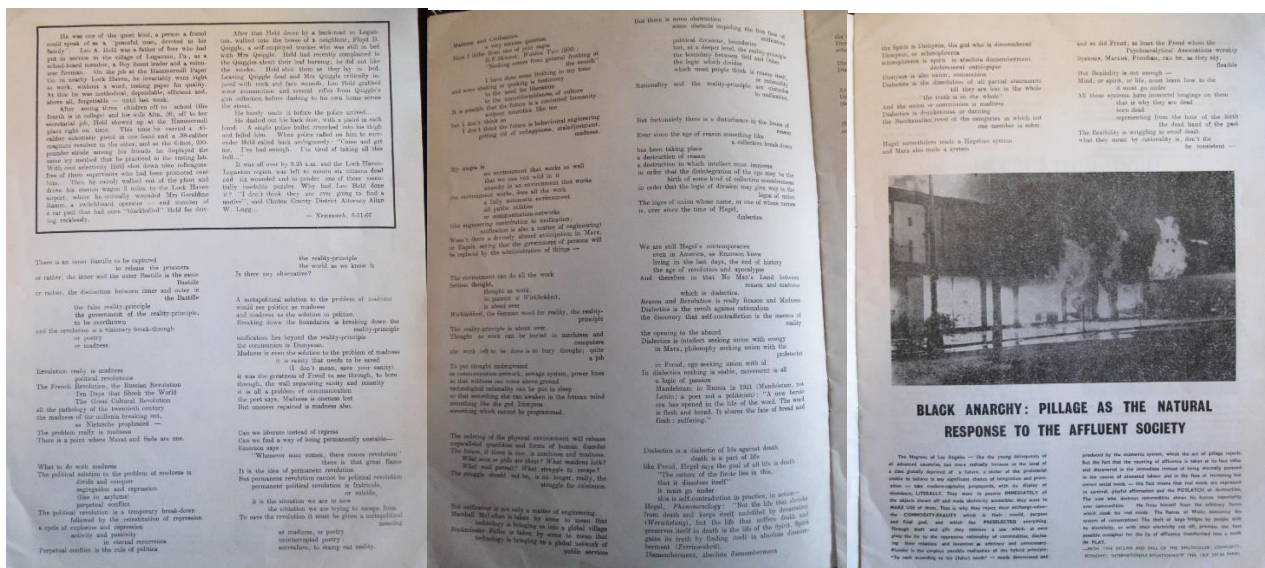
Left to right: Fig. 2.3, Fig. 2.4, Fig. 2.5. *King Mob Echo 1*, 1968, National Art Library, London.

The second text, framed atop the Brown text at the point where it says "There is an inner Bastille to be captured", is a *Newsweek* note detailing the 1967 killing spree of Leo A. Held, a "peaceful man, devoted to his family", in a village in Pennsylvania, United States (fig 2.3). Working as a sort of visual interlude to "The Return of the Repressed" that recalls the advertisement strategies of pop culture magazines, it is set within the order of the magazine in the same terms as a translation of the 1966 SI analysis-celebration of the Los Angeles riots of the same year ("Black Anarchy", fig. 2.5), in which "pillage as the natural response to the affluent society" is acclaimed as the strongest of indications of the forthcoming insurrection, an utter festive nihilism in which *everything must go*. The terrible figure of Leo Held is described as "methodical, dependable, efficient and above all, forgettable […] until last week"[224], denoting not only the journalist's romantic sensibility (a sensibility that nevertheless grows from political standards of modernity) for the historical significance of one who is (criminally) sovereign but also the uncertainty left in the wake of his actions, for decency, morals, and the mechanical subjection to power is no longer enough; the blacks of LA become unforgettable as well in the sheer force of their nihilism, in which "the theft of large fridges by people with no electricity, or with their electricity cut off, provides the best possible metaphor for the lie of affluence transformed into a truth IN PLAY"[225]. The picture that articulates both texts depicts an enormous American-style storefront engulfed in flames, like both a ritual fire in which consumption

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[224] *Ibidem.*
[225] *Ibidem.*

is sacrificed and the sudden suspension of all rational presuppositions for action, a moment in which reason collapses to give way to an instantaneous apprehension of nothingness as the result of violence. This sublime moment, the point at which the attorney assigned to Leo Held's case says "I don't think they are ever going to find a motive"[226], effecting a kind of unattainability of comprehension, hints at the function of King Mob within the "current affairs", which is to say within a threatening obscurity better left untouched, a never-ending source of violence biding its time beneath the surface of the known.

The following text ("Desolation Row"), which is arguably the main text in the magazine, is taken from Vaneigem's book, where he describes the Situationist understanding of nihilism, from which juvenile delinquents emerge as the true successors of Dada, working as a synthesis of Norman Brown's poetic suggestion of invisibility and (dialectical) self-effacement as seen through both the case of Leo Held and the Watts riots. However, what if both the *nothing* and *everything* of killing sprees and large-scale destruction and plunder were, in fact, concerted efforts with one and the same objective? The English Situationists' idea of infiltrating the lumpenproletariat (Vaneigem's juvenile delinquents and nihilists) becomes significant here, as King Mob articulates, in quite a literary manner, their field of action within the terms of a massive international conspiracy, a sublime global network whose praxis is ideology critique, an imminent assault on the spectacle and its entire contextual framework.

Three more texts stand beside Vaneigem's, the first of which is titled "The Art of Death" and which consists of a transcript of Jack the Ripper's letter to the 'Central News Agency', dated September 25, 1888, coupled with an *Evening Standard* note of 1967 describing the suicide rates of Cambridge University students using gas. It states that "there is, in fact, only one satisfactory solution, and that is to get natural gas to Cambridge as soon as possible..."[227], revealing the anxiety of the problem as a wider, economic one – an issue of wasted time and money, which with the suggestion that Jack the Ripper holds the press and perhaps all its readers ironically as his 'boss', implicates the spectacle in the complete negations of being that are involved in murder and suicide, a sample of *total unproduction*, a sort of positivity of nothing, precisely an art of death. "Jack the ripper is essentially inaccessible. The mechanisms of hierarchical power cannot touch him; he cannot be touched by

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[226] *Ibidem.*
[227] *Ibidem.*

revolutionary will. He gravitates round that zero-point beyond which destruction, instead of reinforcing [the one] wrought by power, beats it at its own game."[228]

The Ripper's inaccessibility draws an evident attraction for an organization such as King Mob, which aims to avoid and subvert all mechanisms of power, and while the killer himself might have little importance beyond this theorization of the uses of nihilism, the group might have picked up on one of the most typical characteristics of his figure, his essential existence as thousands of fragments of potential corruption of wills. Therein could lie the choice of the infamous "Dear Boss" letter, the beginning of the Ripper's hyper-mediated *nature*, since the printing of this text by the press[229] started a wave of Ripper letters and notices penned by dozens of different people over Britain (and sometimes even from other countries)[230], a wave that led to both a 'media frenzy' and all sorts of pointless searches by the police. The Ripper quickly became a hyper-mediated character, a criminal that, like Fantômas, was everyone and everywhere at once, at the forefront of public discourses in the form of press reports and police statements, both a challenge to power and an utter fascination with it, as in Vaneigem's assessment. The hoaxes surrounding the case ranged from the simplistic to the type of subversiveness (direct and indirect) that both the Situationists and King Mob would have probably approved of for their breaking into the nihilistic:

> A few [of the hoaxers] were discovered and prosecuted, including a young Yorkshire mantle-maker, Maria Coroner, who had written to her chief constable and to a local newspaper announcing in flowery language the arrival of the Ripper in Bradford, later claiming she had done it 'in a joke'. Asking what she had been charged with, she was told it was a breach of the peace under the common law, to which she replied 'I should like to see the common law, it is so common I have never seen it'. [...] Maria's landlady claimed that the girl was so excited by reading about the Whitechapel murders that she (the landlady) was afraid to go to bed at night. Miriam Howells, an Aberdare labourer's wife, wrote letters as the Ripper threatening to kill two local women, but claimed she 'only did it for a lark'. [...].[231]

These examples are strongly indicative of 'the art of death' as the practice of a macabre joke, a humorously sinister exercise of what could be conceived as King Mob's Gothic plot, a deadly haunting of hegemony as horrid pleasure, as the sublimity-producing perversion of threatening the

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[228] *Ibidem.*

[229] Ted Remington, "Dear Boss: Hoax as Communal Narrative in the Case of the Jack the Ripper Letters", in *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture.* Albany, University of Albany Press, 2003. Vol 10, pp 199-221, p. 205.

[230] "The signatures [of the many letters received in the wake of the Whitechapel murders], predictably, are mainly variations on Jack the Ripper - 'Jack the Riper', 'jack ripper and son', 'Jack the Skipper', 'Jacky the Ripper', 'J.T. Ripper' - and even overseas claimants such as 'Jack o estripador' (of Lisbon). Lesser-known rivals like 'Brumigan Bill the Slaughterman', 'Jim the Cutter' and the 'black brunswick boy' also make their appearance, revealing the sheer quantity and variety of correspondence reaching the police at the time, from all over the world." See Heather Creaton, "Recent Scholarship on Jack the Ripper and the Victorian Media", in http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/333 accessed on October 27, 2013

[231] *Ibidem.*

life of capitalism '*for a lark*'. If the construction of Jack the Ripper is the product of sensational market tactics as much as of its feedback in the form of an eerie appropriation that can be put in motion as a prank or as more direct threat to authority, then the use of his ethereal presence implicates a certain shift in meaning that resembles that of détournement. It is, however, an undirected, generalized kind of violence, an image of splattered blood that *must* be summoned for the revolutionary development of an all-encompassing strategy to be carried out by an anarchic collectivity that, in this case, has left behind the more Enlightenment-inflected threads of the Situationists in favour of a 'localized', Romanticism-inflected union of theory and practice.
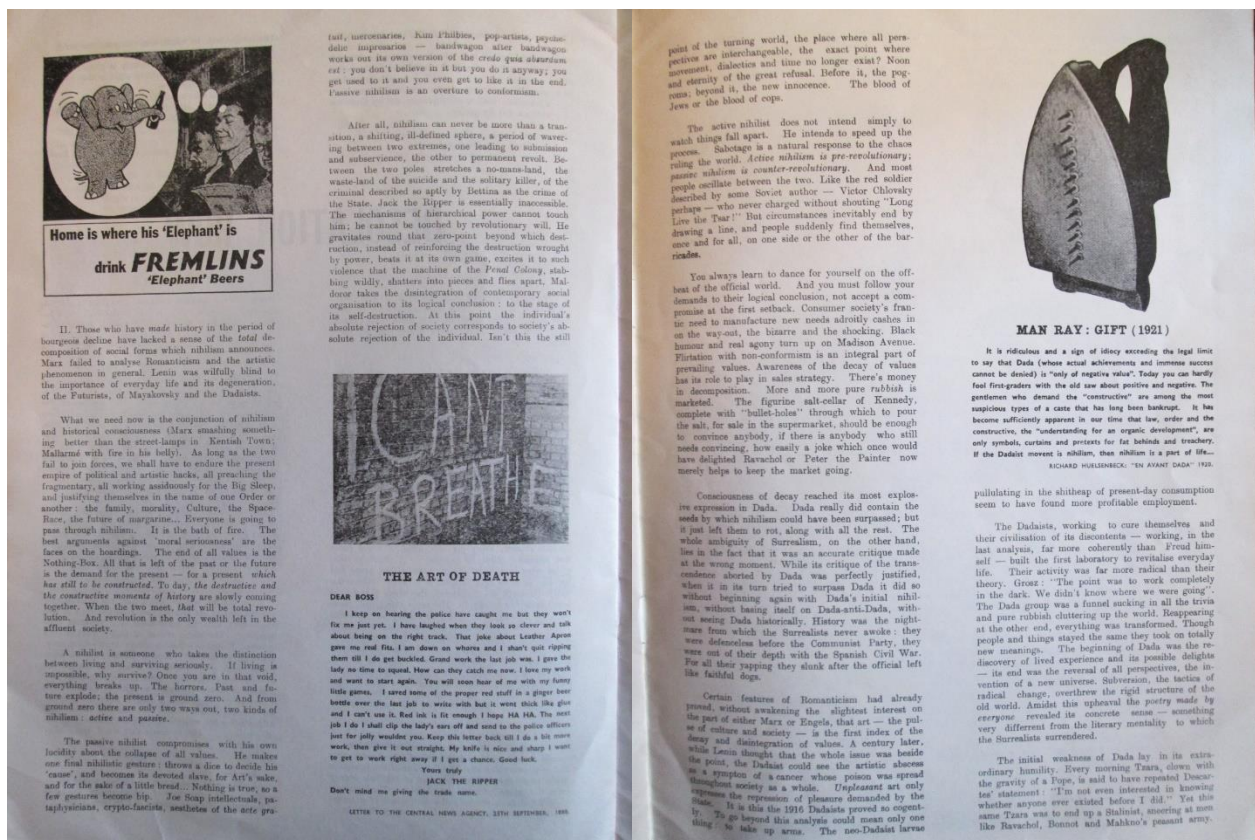
Fig. 2.6. *King Mob Echo 1,* 1968, National Art Library, London.

The second text is an excerpt of Richard Huelsenbeck's "En Avant Dada" (1920) in which he defends the value of negation, set below an image of Man Ray's *Gift* (1921). This image is perhaps most interesting when paired alongside an advert for Fremlins beers positioned (sort of) analogically in the

previous page[232] (fig. 2.6). Vaneigem's text can be used to best connect these apparently disparate elements: "the Dada group was a funnel sucking in all the trivia and pure rubbish cluttering up the world. Reappearing at the other end, everything was transformed. Though people and things stayed the same they took on totally new meanings."[233] Both the *Gift* and the man in the commuter train dreaming of a cartoon elephant that cheerily offers him a beer are as much "pure rubbish" as something else, something transformed by the very function of an advert in a radical self-published magazine, becoming useless, wasteful, a sadistic tool of rhetoric aimed to be reproduced like an *echo* in service of revolt, grinding the Ripper hoaxer's humorous words into the printing of the press as total redistribution of (radicalized) meaning: *it is so common I have never seen it*.

The third text is called "The Prehistory of the Id", which brings together an excerpt from Norman Cohn's work on heretical mystics from the 16th century (a work used and well-regarded by Vaneigem) with a quote from Sigmund Freud that reads "Mysticism is the confused intuition of that realm, lying beyond the Ego, where the Id reigns"[234]. In the Cohn quote, the 'wildness' of Norman Brown's text as it appeared at the beginning of the magazine makes a return as the "Nameless Wildness" whose insight leads to "untrammelled freedom", in which "man lives according to his caprices without distinguishing between God and himself, and without looking before or after". Because the objective is to leap beyond prehistory, the title continues the suggestion that the unleashing of wildness leads to liberation; the dialectic between these two quotes could lead to the idea that this unleashing is a mystic revelation (as in the Cohn quote, in which the character's spirit communes with an "incorporeal image") "lying beyond the Ego". If the ego is instrumental reason, the surface of thought, the id is what lies buried beneath it, with the potential to "put it to sleep". To leap out of the 20th century, what is needed is an unorthodox materialism, flawed and fundamentally idealist, contaminated thoroughly with poetry and, at least in King Mob's case, romance (in this case, as wildness). The image tied to "Prehistory" is that of two medieval peasants (fig. 2.7), a man and a woman, holding hands and dancing in a circle, conceivably in an ecstatic state of mind. In an interesting reversal, this figure of the peasant mystic (a figure treated here in a non-mystical way) is the polar opposite and the spiritual predecessor of the juvenile delinquent; the latter is one who believes in nothing while the earlier is

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[232] Fremlins Brewery was an actual brewery that closed in 1972. The advert was probably either reproduced illegally or détourned in some way, although it is not clear how.
[233] *King Mob Echo*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064.
[234] *Ibidem.*
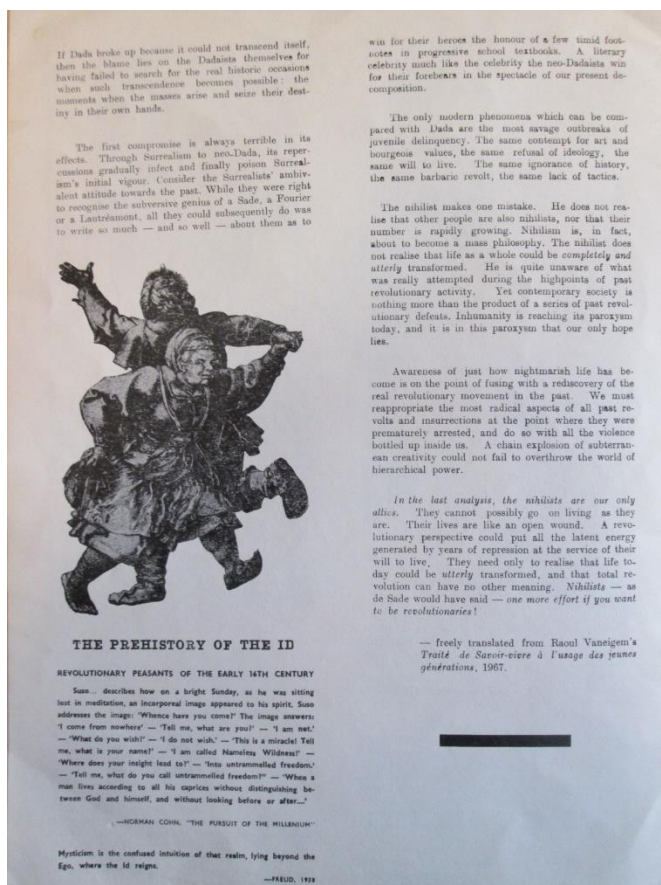
Fig. 2.7. *King Mob Echo 1,* 1968, National Art Library, London.

one who believes in everything, one finds itself nowhere but in boredom while the other finds itself absolutely everywhere as extension of self. "In place of a myth, the bourgeoisie can only produce ideologies. And because ideology is essentially a *partial*, *technical* rationality, it can never integrate the total negation of the nihilist"[235], in the very same way that Vaneigem describes the Christian myth, as a totalizing artistic rationality[236], could never integrate the positively iconoclastic, individualistic-and-yet-universal *affirmation* of the mystic. The first issue of *King Mob Echo* ends[237], in this manner, as a portentous tool for the revolutionary construction of new identities, a call to arms designed to probe spectacular subjectivity and provoke a subtle change in self-production, one that would hopefully lead directly to the invisible insurrection of a million minds[238].

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[235] *Ibidem.*

[236] Through Vaneigem, I mean here a religious rationality that attempts to draw a (social) totality in the art that it produces (a mythology), as against what he describes as the "partial, technical rationality" of bourgeois ideology, which is based on instrumentality and specialization, which is to say social fragmentation.

[237] There is, however, an 'advert' entitled "Urban Gorilla Comes East", authored by Dave Barbu under the name of an organization called CATCH-22. It doesn't appear again in either King Mob 2 or 3, and it is a straightforward 'call to arms' ("we want to meet people, with a view to mobilising resistance") via the posing of questions in the vein of the *IS* and *Rebel Worker,* such as "Why is King Kong the most heavily guarded animal in the Children's Zoo? Why is he asleep?" It is fair to suppose that CATCH-22 had little to no effect, although it is more interesting to consider it, as will be seen later in the case of The Black Hand Gang, as an offshoot of King Mob that represents one more hydra head looming over its prey, hyper-extending its representation to encompass an indeterminate mass.

[238] This is an idea first developed by the English Situationist Alexander Trocchi, which appeared in the text "Technique du coup du monde", in *Internationale Situationniste* no. 8, in 1963. In it, Trocchi forwards the notion of a 'seizure of the world' as against Trostky and Lenin's 'seizure of the state' by means of a cultural revolt taking place at the level of consciousness, propagated by an inner, previous revolt in the intelligences of people regardless of their context. The means to spark this revolt in intelligence would be what he refers to as 'spontaneous universities' across the world, an idea similar to Chris Gray's 'anti-university', except without the militarism and wider in scope. Trocchi's aim was not to confront power directly, but to 'flank' it like 'history' did, via Trotsky, to the Russian Empire. See Alexander Trocchi, "Technique du coup du monde", in *Internationale Situationniste,* no. 8, 1963. British Library: 4554.697000, p. 48.

There is a text published by the group a few months later (October of 1968) which could be considered a small annex to the first issue, a short piece entitled "Art Schools Are Dead", and which starts with the Marxist rehash of communism's ghost: "A spectre is haunting art, it is the spectre of annihilation."[239] This phrase is followed by an incendiary rhetorical piece about the need for the suppression of art schools and the (sold-out) avant-garde in general, an idea that takes place in the (logically false) inductive assumption that to end the totalizing tendency of any and all society there ought to be an end to the personal reflection of this whole. "Revolution against the art school trick must be seen as revolt against the status quo – against its duplicity and ever increasing hypocrisy"[240], which is to say that all action must be contextualized as part of a wider struggle in which the understanding of power is originated in a modern(ist) art-historical question of representation, a question that easily translates into politics. In this case, the historical avant-garde's revolt is summarized into the existentialist (and situationist) concern for authenticity, and in this sense it is perhaps significant that *no image* is attached to the text. I now turn to explore this significance, which I take to be not only a gothic manoeuvre in which visuality is, to some extent, finally effaced, but also as an index that points towards the actual practice that the group developed.

So, how does all of this come together as something that is to be applied collectively to reality? When King Mob moved around the area of Notting Hill in 1968, they became "quickly aware of local anger about the lack of play space for children, which in Notting Hill had resulted in children being knocked down by cars."[241] This ethical concern was best *represented* by the garden of Powis Square, which remained close to the public at large, except for a few wealthy proprietors within the area. Through word of mouth, the group arranged an assault on the fences surrounding the square on a Saturday afternoon, a time ideal for idlers and those out of work (in all senses), a time in which the possibility of people unaware of the event but sensitive to its politics was higher[242]. They hired a gorilla suit and a circus horse outfit (manned by two), for the purpose of putting into play an element of schizophrenia[243] (perhaps as a fundamental question of identity and its political construction through images) and a carnival (one inherently rebellious) of libertarian activity that would allow for uncontrollable play. When their attack on the fences was under way, they apparently attracted quite a number of people into joining, breaking the locks and opening up the square to everyone and anyone

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239 Tom Vague, *op cit*, p. 83.
240 *Ibid*, p. 84.
241 Stuart Wise *op cit.*
242 *Ibidem.*
243 *Ibidem.*

who would want to run around and play. After a short while, the police arrived and started rounding up suspects, arresting both the gorilla and the two-man horse. The Council of the area, which had previously denied the possibility of letting the space be used by the community at large[244], pursued the criminals and fined them. Some months later, however, the area would be opened up to the public at last[245]. Of great interest is the poster they used that day to announce the action, as a roll call of enemies of law and order in all their guises (fig. 2.8).
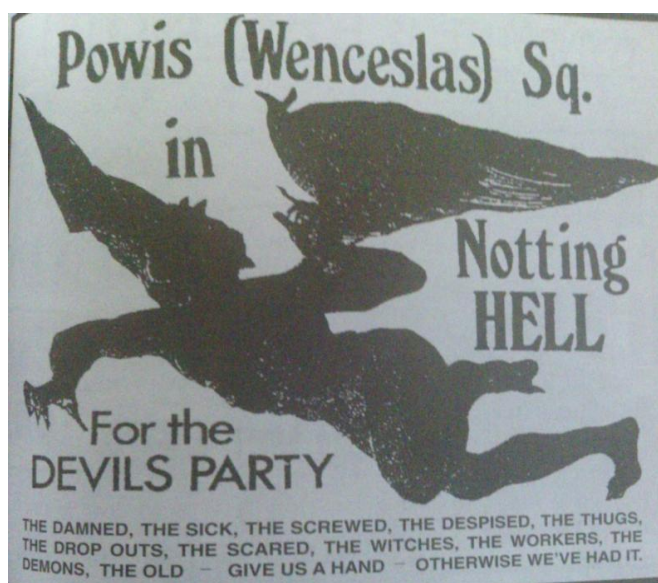
Fig. 2.8.   *Sq.*   poster, 1968. Reproduced in Tom Vague (ed.), *King Mob Echo*.

It identifies the taking of Powis Square with society's cast-offs, an agitation born from a romantic rhetorical device, a demonology or catalogue of "particular people or categories of people representing offensive practices or institutions. The demonology possesses obvious rhetorical significance, but […] it can also be understood as a socio-intellectual tool[,] […] as a style of reasoning that presupposes some sense of community, a core belief and behaviour with reference to which deviance and heresy can be evaluated [...]"[246]. The demonology has the sufficient linguistic elements to determine a populist line of us/them, attempting to constitute a community via the identification of an enemy. King Mob reverses this constituting effect by détourning it, by negating the negation and turning it into a positive antagonism, subverting the meaning of these images by

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[244] Pablo Argente, *op cit,* p. 151.
[245]   Tom   Vague,   "Notting   Hill   Timeline",   Chapter   11.
http://www.historytalk.org/Notting%20Hill%20History%20Timeline/timelinechap11.pdf , accessed the 1st of November, 2013.
[246] Kevin Binfield, "Demonology, Ethos, and Community in Cobbett and Shelley", in Stephen C. Behrendt (ed.), *Romanticism, Radicalism, and the Press*. Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 157-158.

turning them on the discourse that gave them birth, attacking it with its own (mostly literary) stereotypes. The "DEVILS PARTY" acquires in this context more than the suggestion of carnival, perhaps intuitively leading to the constituting act of a party understood under the influence of politics: all traitors and ghosts of society, seen in the low-dim light of a Victorian gaslamp, coming together to realize the threats they not only represent but *live out* – the overwhelming failure of modernity. What is more, this collection of misfits comes to augment the sense that there is, implicitly, a heterogeneity about them that is not present in the rest of the social structure, an underlying, if updated, Romantic view of (rational) order as inherently cybernetic, as inherently systemic in its production of alienated subjects that merge into each other through the stereotypes in which they develop their mediated relations. Rejected by both the traditional left and right, the possibility of a devil's party presents a paradox in which the impossibility of their class consciousness as well as their economic (in many senses moral) uselessness becomes the only theoretical recourse for a leap outside history, for a total revolution that takes Vaneigem's advice ("the nihilists are our only allies") to heart.

A brief parenthesis: there is yet another angle to begin to explore in this, which is the Romantic attitude of pessimism and fatalism that, according to Isaiah Berlin, "has a natural affinity to [German philosopher Johann] Hamann's view that God is closer to the abnormal than he is to the normal, which he openly says: the normal do not really understand what goes on. [...] On this view God is closer to the thieves and the prostitutes, the sinners and the publicans [...]"[247]. Following this, there is a tragic framework to the craving of the infinite, to the demand of being everything, to the poetry made by all, if only because it supposes an immersion within the darkness at play beyond the modern façade of luminous progress, intertwined as it is with constitution not as gameplay but as mandate. The figures of the 'great sinner' and the 'superfluous man' (as both aristocratic and bourgeois forms) become relevant for their essential relationship to freedom, first as domination (the Situationists' noble, a mastery of history as mastery over God) and then as marginalization (the Situationists' bourgeois, a mastery of nobility as mastery over self), leading to the complete negation of society for its incapacity to reveal the possible, for its ultimate obstruction of will[248]. In King Mob, these concepts are cleared from both their religious and potentially fascist content, infusing society's demons with an idealism that creates an interesting juxtaposition in which the lumpenproletariat, the perfect pessimists and fatalists (which is to say, with Vaneigem, the perfect nihilists), become a revolutionary body in no small part because of their relationship to freedom, one built upon both domination and

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[247] Isaiah Berlin, *op cit,* p. 56.
[248] *Ibid,* p. 83.

marginalization. To bring them together is therefore an act in which demanding the impossible is constitutional, a dangerous community that holds a promise of the totalization of opposition, the growth of a field that may come to rival capitalism as a whole. It is in this way that the Romanticism of King Mob is not so much related to nature but to the perversions of it: with the Gothic in hand, the lumpenproletariat is not Wordsworth's poor or disenfranchised as closest to the power of nature but a collective ghost denied existence by the science of capital, a ghost that has always been ready to demand bloody retribution. King Mob's plot is not the naturalization of reason, understood in Marxism as ideology critique, but a very anti-natural, near-mad 'revenge tragedy' in which the outcome is either the murder of capitalism as it awakens or the protagonist's disappearance into a myriad little lines of recuperation.

To retake the main thread, what happened at Powis Square brings forward each and every theoretical element touched upon until this point: Vaneigem's ideas about piracy, leading to the English Situationists' conception of the lumpenproletariat[249]; Debord's considerations of time and the mediated nature of the society of the spectacle (the fence as castle wall, as aristocratic symbol; man as normativity, as bourgeois symbol); the nihilist's frustration and violence (whoever joined in just for the *hell* of it); a kind of erotic communication and participation (not everyone involved was identified and captured by the police, and in fact, most of the people who were there had nothing to do with King Mob anyway); the emancipatory potential of the criminal act as collective act (opposed to an *organized* act); the Gothic dissemination of the criminal act across all sorts of boundaries as ghostly plot; the Romantic empowerment born from the act of the spontaneous constitution of a mob. Even if only for mere instants, King Mob gifted the square to the community surrounding it, nullifying its use as symbol drawn from the function of property relations by letting people enjoy the space beyond any instrumentality, turning nothing into everything. In this way, their discourse on art had worked, and from an optimist reading of Powis Square it could be said that it proved King Mob had effectively created a Situationist praxis that radically differed from the kind that the SI itself pursued over the years.

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[249] And the potential of a devil's party, a demonological move that equates the status of "the thugs" with "the workers", following a logic of equivalence that proposes that all *demands are criminal*, all demands are a function of the dialectic of everything and nothing, and therefore all demands are a glimpse into the horizon of the infinite, lurking beyond so many apparatuses of power.

The second issue of *King Mob Echo*, published in November of 1968, shows a much more acute concern with the specificity of studentship, one that is probably both the result of and the participation in the aftermath of the year's student revolts. It also shows a much more evident rejection of Situationist lines of thinking, particularly when it came to the scholarly tone with which the SI addressed its audiences[250]. Instead of offering a lecture, it provides a dialogue: entitled "Two Letters on Student Power", it contains a text from Christopher Gray with a response from Richard Huelsenbeck[251] (fig. 2.9).

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[250] And students themselves: see Mustapha Khayati's "On the Poverty of Student Life" from 1966.

[251] The German Dadaist himself. According to Ben Morea, he had been corresponding "quite a bit" with Huelsenbeck in the early 1960s since both lived in New York, which presents the possible connection between the members of King Mob - who were on very friendly terms with Morea after all the problems they had with the SI - and Huelsenbeck. His participation in this issue of King Mob implies more than just the 'actualization' of Dada, furthering a sort of living connection with history, an immediate refusal of the art historical standard of situating all avant-gardes under the rubric of historically specific styles. Huelsenbeck, who would pass away in 1974, considered himself a Dadaist until his death: as with 'Situationist', the Dadaist was seemingly not an identity or an adhesion to a movement, it was a matter of being, of deep integration between self, everyday life, and the praxis of Dada. See Iain McIntyre, "Up Against the Wall Motherfucker! - Interview With Ben Morea", in http://libcom.org/history/against-wall-motherfucker-interview-ben-morea , accessed on the 1st of November, 2013.

Fig. 2.9. Chris Gray letter on left and middle; Richard Huelsenbeck letter on right. *King Mob Echo 2*, 1968, Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

The cover image is Spanish neo-classical turned Romantic Gothicist Francisco de Goya's "Capricho no. 39: *Hasta su abuelo*" (fig. 2.10).
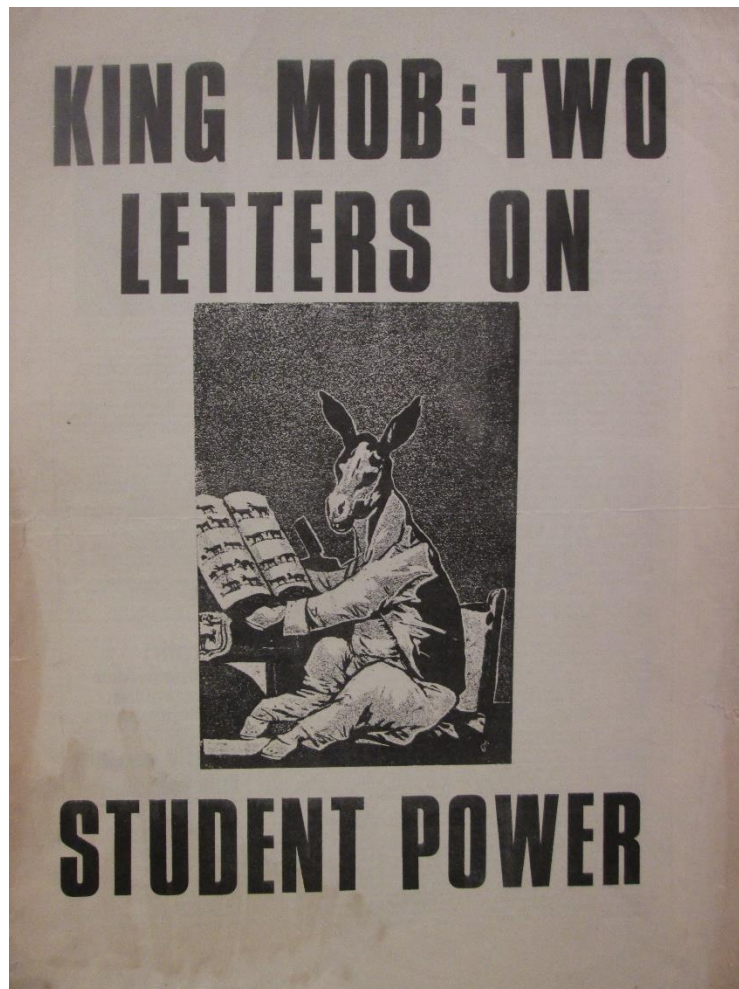
Fig. 2.10. *King Mob 2,* 1968. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

A play on neo-classical portraits of nobility, it mocks its values by replacing the human figure with that of a donkey, with all of its raw connotations of clingy stubbornness and narrow-minded stupidity. The donkey pores over an open book that shows only figures of other donkeys in line: the English translation of the engraving would be "Even his grandfather", indicating that the only truly hereditary character of nobility is its idiocy. In the context that refers to the hereditary character of knowledge and its teaching to students, the metaphor could be read crudely and simply: idiots reading other idiots in a mirroring, never-ending chain of obstinacy that leads nowhere but to the isolation of the working farm animal, to the social condition most alienated and

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unconscious in the voluntary abdication of subjectivity implied in studious self-delusion. Nevertheless, this last part is perhaps the only thing separating the student from the lumpenproletariat, at least in the terms laid out by the English section of the SI. The liminal status conferred upon it by its social function (a much-despised undefinable quality that is projected unto the student's unproductivity, and which is often tied to its youthfulness) could understandably *work* towards its re-constitution into a new, revolutionary identity. Suitably, King Mob deploy a situationist tactic: "For us there is only one real 'educational' problem today: how to *appropriate* all the means of material mastery of the world *accumulated*, at a terrible price, by several centuries of bourgeois rule – means that today are kept out of our grasp by both the systematic mystification of specialists and by the systematic violence of cops."[252] The project outlined by Gray in the first letter blurs the distinction between appropriation and détournement, revising the terms of the relevance of the historical avant-garde by stating that "The 'cultural revolutionaries' of the 20's knew that there was only one possible *basis* for their new heaven and earth – *revolutionary seizure of all the epoch's accumulated scientific knowledge and actual technological power* and their use, initially, to *stamp out work*; later as the tools to liberate desire, to stamp out reality."[253]

The venture into further self-definition indicated by this theoretical distancing from the SI shows the reconfiguration of certain concepts and the pressure to put them to the test, even after the relative success of Powis Square. Turning to 'appropriation' is an example of this, not only because it distances itself from the artistic, even literary violence of a détournement that sophisticatedly corrupts the spectacle from within, but also because it brings it into a much more traditionally anarchist strain of thought that effects physical violence on property; if everything is there for the taking, it is no longer solely by means of perversion but by means of re-possession. The Watts riots, Jack the Ripper, and the murder/suicide newspaper clips find another kind of resonance here, one that, unlike in the situationist reading, becomes an image of 'raw power', which is to say a more direct inversion of the structure of power: a mob that burns a city down instead of the total corruption of hegemony intended by the kind of organization the SI essentially performed.

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[252] *King Mob: Two Letters on Student Power*, 1968. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York. TAM.530, Box 4, Folder 22.
[253] *Ibidem.*

Gray's proposal in the first letter is the creation of an "anti-university", a concept that ignores completely its historical and institutional background, leading to a series of practical proposals that can only articulate their goal within the constraints of rhetoric, something which the second letter touches upon more closely. In any case, it is to be centred upon the idea that "MODERN ART ENDED with a radical reappraisal of creativity, with the Berlin Dadaists and the Paris Surrealists, with the first real experiments in an essentially new form of *activity*."[254] The emphasis on this new activity is important in the light of the protests elsewhere in the world that year, as it could be understood as a reaction to the failure of the whole enterprise of the SI. It returns to a vision of revolution that springs forth from willpower and more importantly action, a Romantic compulsivity to make the world in our own image, following a series of ideological connections that, passing by Fichte, lead to a *state of war*. The text of the first letter reflects this situation, in which what "can *only* be taught – the only information that can only be transmitted, the only classes that can only be organised hierarchically – is an unscrambling, a vulgarisation of scientific knowledge and a series of introductory experiments in its application to the future: to guerrilla and civil war."[255] While Gray calls this "a school for Crime", the meaning is perhaps much more straightforward than in previous iterations of the uses of criminality given the context of military allusions, which serve to nail down the intellectual transition to a more traditional far-left discourse, the kind that would be used by the Angry Brigade a few years later and which was relevant in other parts of the world, particularly Latin America. Still, the 'anti-university' maintains the basis of King Mob's own organizational principles, particularly the ghostly ones: invisibility as infiltration and mobility as the capacity to disappear when detected, all the while keeping its integrity as a collectivity. While the comparison to mobility as part of guerrilla warfare dislocates the gothic interpretation, it brings it one step nearer to the much more subtle and complex implications of the 'affinity group' that they would later adapt and develop from the Motherfuckers.

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[254] *Ibidem.*
[255] *Ibidem.*

One more interesting aspect to the theoretical stumbling that King Mob undergo as they realize their full 'independence' from the SI is the function of the anti-university in its social context, which emerges as a direct response to the failure of the May movement:

> The whole question of liaison with the rest of society. The famous workers-students-unite bit doesn't just seem platitudinous and hollow: it seems completely misleading. In the first place, in the most highly industrialised countries all young students are well on the way to being no more than young workers – and vice versa – they are becoming one and the same thing. Even now the real disparity lies not between those who made it and those who flunked university but between both groups and the rest of the proletariat. In immediate, tactical terms there would seem to be a far richer and more promising point of contact: with that darkening twilight zone on the brink of which the university rebels are already poised - Sargasso sea brimming with every PhD on the dole or the building site – the new lumpen – the new *dangerous classes* – the swarming, petty criminal no-people of the ghetto.[256]

With university resources funnelled into criminal use, the subjectivity of the student (as well as that of the skilled proletariat) is slowly overtaken by elements of that of the "dregs of society", articulated by an education that grows from gutter-bottom up, a contagious lesson in the intricacies of *having no history*: like Louis Althusser's conception of ideology, King Mob's lumpenproletariat is dream-like, always seemingly found by chance upon waking, haunting the imaginary relationship of individuals to their 'real conditions of existence'. This is not to deny its materiality, but on the contrary, to decisively affirm that these dregs "have much to teach", potentially consuming everything in their path to vomit it all back at the spectacle, albeit strange, utterly uncanny, with a pestilent revolution brewing in its head. These un-subjects, occupying all sorts of places reserved for the pure, would bring about the end of power by *robbing it* of its very grasp on politics. All this is highly contrasting to the idea of a state of war, and is perhaps now familiar to the reader in the sense that it follows King Mob's Situationist roots, but which is perhaps a part of the attempt at a new self-definition built upon a dialectical relationship to Situationist theory that both negates and affirms it.

The answering letter is the first one's antithesis, beginning with the outright hostility towards the militaristic jargon deployed: "All the guerrilla activism bit is *crap* - reach for your Che Guevara chemistry set, learn to tell one end of a gun from another: SO FUCKING WHAT? As if the

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[256] *Ibid*, p. 88.

problems are going to be military, or para-military. What about the cops inside your head?"[257] The scope of Huelsenbeck's response is wider, aiming at a contextualization of the idea of the anti-university under the terms of social conditioning, where the "real big wheels of mass repression, Family, School, Organised Work, Re-socialisation via the welfare state apparatus"[258] operate. There is an attempt here to explore the institutional angle to the whole idea, but given the pamphlet form of the piece it is understandable that the work falls down on rhetoric, pushing the issue into the field of ideology critique ("towards a new science of *persons*, towards the dismantling of the Ego, the destruction of unconscious life"[259]), where, in the case of this text, the Freudian gets mixed with the Marxist in the equivalence of unconsciousness with what is an implicit false consciousness. If we follow the dialectic between both texts, the concept of the anti-university becomes subsumed to both an ideologizing and anti-ideological process in which subjectivity is mangled and revived (like Frankenstein's monster) through a reconfiguration of identity (from worker to thug, from student to 'the damned') *in the service* of revolutionary intent. This is to say it is not quite yet freed, not quite yet sovereign, a scenario different from the Situationist-conspiratorial – if idealist – sudden historical conjunction of an entire 'underworld' that emerges with sufficient force to pull off the ultimate crime, the scenario that could be pictured from the texts of the English SI and King Mob up until Powis Square. As if to confirm the break with any visible trace of the Situationists, the letter mentions that a revolution in the university "won't yet be revolution – it won't be in the right place – but it'll be a gas, and like all disturbance it may spread. That has happened already in France, even though the drivelling Leninists of IS are breathing a sigh of relief and talking about the 'failure' of spontaneity."[260] The use of Leninism as an insult is clear: a rigid structure modelled as so-called vanguard party that holds little relation to the actual conditions of existence given in its context. For Huelsenbeck, this relation remains to be made, and there is an underlying hope of realizing any and all plans of bringing about the end of *everything*.

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[257] *Ibid*, p. 89.
[258] *Ibid*, p. 90.
[259] *Ibid*, p. 89.
[260] *Ibid*, p. 90.

There are two companion images (fig 2.9), the most interesting of which is a picture of a partially naked woman that could have been taken from a porn magazine, with a caption that consists of an excerpt from a letter by Samuel Coleridge about Wordsworth's sister Dorothy. The image is used, in its presentation, similarly to those in *Internationale Situationniste*, but instead of de-familiarizing it and the viewer's engagement via détournement in the addition of text, it works in this case as a political sensationalism in which the objectified stares back; the idealization of the purportedly virginal Dorothy by Coleridge moves exactly in a direction contrary to that of the picture in respect to its primary function of titillation. This is perhaps not so much détournement as dialectics understood via the Maoist conception of the contradiction, a clash of meaning that engenders historicity, a movement of matter, a unity, and perhaps most importantly, an *opportunity*. Like the "anarchist 'education'" that Gray suggests as the sole 'program' of the anti-university in the form of an invisible, conspiratorial presence, the merging of two oppositions yields a (false) union that represents a break from the past, the moment in which Huelsenbeck's emphasis on historical specificity takes place, an opening in the armour of time that, because of a here distant presupposition of economic determination, allows for an action that could conceivably accelerate the passing of the present (or a Great Leap Forward). The woman in the image is both the Romantic Woman, a transcendental sign, and an object of pleasure, creating a *sense* that the infinite is as ideal as it is physical, presenting the possibility of grasping *it*[261]. As literature meets itself in the mirror-maze of commoditization it provides its own melancholic eulogy as violent materialization, both King Mob's and Huelsenbeck's 'death of art'. Integral to their vision of modernity, it is a death to which "the system" responds with all sorts of palliatives, like the second image present in the issue, an advert for an antidepressant, targeted by King Mob especially at students.

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[261] It is very difficult to discern if this clash is a critique of Romanticism, as the usual idealization of women associated to that movement easily translates in our times as their very materialization in terms of images: both are little more than empty signs or stepping stones in a man's journey to self-realization. Nonetheless, considering the later relation to the hyper-masculine discourse of Black Mask/UAW, it would be sensible to state that King Mob is more interested in the infinite than in a deconstruction of the images of women, and so the objectification is not torn down but ratified.

Fig. 2.11. *King Mob No. 2 ½*, 1968. Tate Archive, London

A poster was published shortly after the second issue, billed as *King Mob No. 2½*, a blunt, violent image that fulfils the transition from the engagement with the theory of the SI to that of Black Mask/UAWMF (fig. 2.11). A hairy man bursts forth from the centre of the spread, shouting three statements as he raises his right leg to conceivably kick the viewer away. Surrounded by bloodstains and revolvers, the drawing immediately recalls comic books, which hold a vast social significance of their own regarding anti-sociality and violence within pop (pulp) culture. It is a distillation of the aggression of the hyper-mediated mob, a kind of impulse to maim viewers through a powerful rhetoric that is made from the same matter as the onomatopoeic punches and gunshots of detective comics. It is urgent and imperative, leaving the viewer, like a mob tracing its course through a city, no other options but to run away or join in: you're either part of the thugs doing the kicking or part of the cops getting kicked. This is King Mob's style of negation, combining elements of abstraction (the very defined circle at the centre), expressionist abstraction (the *action* of the dripped blood, the ultimate chain reaction of the simplest surrealist act), pop art (the standardized quality of the revolver copies, the giant speech balloons), 'streetwise' "low-art" (the drawing of the man himself), and a reduced futurism (his

violent, sudden movement tending to the outside of the poster) in order to produce an image that invites participation into burning everything to the ground. After all, to see beyond (economic) history, to momentarily grasp the infinite, *all you need is dynamite*. The sublime must be created, a sublimity that blows up the foundations of a "civilization that represents death", a setting into motion of an immediate type of violence that is an apparent counterpoint to the previous configuration of the collective as haunting, except that it remains so in terms of its hyper-mediation. Such a style brings King Mob to a different praxis than that of the SI, grabbing pop culture by the horns once again, pouring onto the spectacle to mediate their being as representation, violently blasting away the fear of recuperation by portraying the historical moment as a 'Mexican standoff' in which they were "looking for people who like to draw". The pun is evident, which is to say détournement has no place here, only its parallel in appropriation, as used by Gray in the first text of the second issue. As such, it effects no corruption but *draws* the line of the state of war, leaving behind the constitutional possibility of the Gothic plot in favour of a much more traditional military-populist discourse in which the words 'tactics' and 'strategy' re-acquire their straightforward meanings, and so the organization cannot remain the same, since its principles have shifted. As will be seen shortly, the form of the 'affinity group' of UAWMF is better adapted to such a shift than the Situationist-like shadow of the state, thereby presenting the change as necessary for the continuation of King Mob's existence.

Since this shift is enmeshed closely with aesthetics, the writing used in the poster stands out for its heavy, straight quality, like a mixture of expressionist and futurist fonts in the style of a Roman wall-scripture; the 'u' in "up" shaped like a 'v' and the rhomboid 'o' grant the letters a primitive-classical force that would seem inadequate to their modernity, except this is the kind of noisy harmonics that the futurists favoured in terms of sound. These are words meant to be read in the key of gunshots, intoned in the savage classicality of *new barbarians at the gates*. The historical avant-garde's turn to exotic 'primitivism' is perhaps the most immediate referent here, and if paired with the Gothic it provides the scope of the struggle as one made against civilization itself, with representation ("YOUR CIVILIZATION REPRESENTS DEATH"[262]) as integral to the

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[262] The line "YOU FUCK DEAD WOMEN" makes the machismo of the address more than clear, and it is important to have in mind that King Mob and the Motherfuckers were constituted by men, while the IS was host to a couple of women at most throughout its history. This is a continuation of the usual conception of the avant-garde as male-centric,

battlefield. Wilhelm Reich, Geronimo, Dada, all of them become barbarians in their own right if seen under this light, as both destroyers and resistance figures (of therapy, of colonisation, of culture, in no particular order) that are exploited by King Mob's contradictory association of them to America[263], striking the historical echo of revolutionary war into motion while turning away from the past locus of Paris at the same time. From this violent echoing of barbarism follows that, if Huelsenbeck's saying that "the future is wide open now, it's flames for certain from here on"[264] was taken to heart by King Mob[265], the function of the poster as/and street graffiti can take an entirely different meaning to that of the Situationist version, which is to say it turns into a *literary* 'writing on the wall': the words of the apocalypse. The Situationist graffiti is an activation of urban space, a psychogeographical tool that inscribes détournement within dérive, but its popular origin led King Mob less towards the analogical workings of the SI paints and more towards its basic, 'brutal' anti-sociality, related to the spontaneous anger of the mob instead of the perversion of the city. The Romantic quotes abounding in the group's recorded paints take on a disturbing quality if associated with the millenarian mind-set of the 16th century revolutionary peasant favoured by both King Mob and Vaneigem, as both warnings of the imminent disaster and the poetic threat of bringing it about. The spelling mistakes in William Blake quotes and elsewhere, whether intentional or not, invoke the poet's voice as the anonymous calls of an identity that could only be defined by the lumpenproletariat, the awakening of the scum of the earth into an organized mob with a Romantic aspiration to enact the sublimity of the end times... a (doom) poetry made by all.

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having its direct opposite in accounts of the art-world during the same period, in which women are not only numerous but prominent. For examples, see Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.

[263] Reich, who was Austrian, arrived to the United States in 1939 fleeing from the war. Like many other exiles of the conflict, he could hardly be considered as an *American*, even if he made significant contributions to the counter-culture of the 1960s and eventually died in a US prison because of it; he is not so much American as an icon of anti-Americanism. Geronimo is, as well, the perfect example of a non-American: Geronimo was the name given to him by the Mexican army, who he fought relentlessly against while simultaneously fending off the US army's advances upon Apache territory. If anything, Geronimo is also an icon of anti-Americanism. As for Dada, little needs to be explained here – its total negation, which spread from Zürich to Berlin to New York, would be difficult to characterize positively with a nationality.

[264] *Ibid*, p. 90.

[265] There is a certain regret in having confused optimism for optimal conditions in the writings of Stuart Wise, and the reader can get the sense that even if the revolution did not become concrete, they thought it was a near-future possibility. Even in 'underground' publications, their radicalization by 1969-1970 speaks of an urgency that could be read as desperation, but which could also point towards an ambience in which there could have been a distinct intuition of the inevitability of insurrection. See Elizabeth Nelson, *op cit*, p. 113-120 and Stuart Wise *op cit.*

The apocalyptic angle to the death of art and the urgency it generates surrounding 'the revolution' may also be seen briefly in a flyer by Ben Morea named "The death of art spells the murder of artists. The real anti-artist appears", which was possibly re-printed by King Mob between June and October of 1968[266], and which extols the murder attempt of Andy Warhol undertaken by the feminist Valerie Solanas. As a riff on the simplest surrealist act, the text provokes to be read as a fun act of brutal *humanism* ("the hater of <u>MEN</u> and the lover of <u>MAN</u>") configured by "the true vengeance of DADA" and interpreted as self-dissolution (since, according to the flyer, Solanas turned herself in to the police). Framed by what seem to be stencils of firearms, this 'artistic' violence is inscribed in the only possible way after the death of art: as an *aesthetic judgement* that claims to know the truth of dialectical self-abolition held in so high regard by the Surrealists and other historical avant-gardes, up to and including the SI. The flyer contains a hit-list, mostly of artists and famous musicians, with the names of Warhol and Mario Amaya – who was also shot in the same incident – crossed out, crowned by an appropriation of a Bob Dylan lyric that reads "so don't think twice it's alright". The flyer, in its rhetoric and its black toilet humour, could be seen as a 'killing joke', in the sense that it directly endorses violence without assuming the serious tone it often demands, leaving the possibility of murder open while avoiding any reflexive language that would put the group in the position of apparently planning one; the flyer is part of a performance of hyper-mediation that constantly makes apocalyptic references such as "America's white plastic cathedral is ready TO BURN", a hyper-mediation that verges on cartoon ultra-violence. Signed by King Mob and The Black Hand Gang, it is the only moment where another group beyond Black Mask or the SI is mentioned, but this version, perhaps, of the Serbian 'detonators' of the First World War (another signal of the end of the world) was composed of the same members of King Mob. This brings us closer to the idea of 'affinity groups', which will be explored further on, and which does not depend upon a centralized subjectivity that produces certain identity politics, for it matters little if King Mob is one or many as long as the collective keeps working. Unlike the tightly controlled membership of the SI, King Mob expects splintering and an internal dialectics that allow for a fluid extension of its limits, perhaps even of its sovereignty.

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[266] This document can be found among King Mob materials in the Tate Archive, with no credit given to Ben Morea. The re-printing of the flyer could be understood as a form of appropriation and replication of the original material, coming to be indistinguishable from a production by King Mob itself. See "The Death of Art Spells the Murder of Artists. The Real Anti-Artist Appears", Tate Archive: TGA 200720/3/27, 1968.

In December of 1968, before the last issue of *King Mob Echo* was published, there was another action by the group, sometime close to Christmas. A mobber dressed up as Santa Claus entered a Selfridges department store on Oxford Street, London, and began to give out the toys to children, along with pamphlets for their parents under the title of "It was meant to be great but it's horrible – Confessions: S. Claus 1968". Adorned with holiday motifs, the text argues in the voice of Santa Claus that the festivity has been co-opted by capitalists, pointing out that it is more community-control than community-building, a tool for management instead of an experience of self among others, "a whole lot of lies about love and mercy mild. It's your duty to carry on buying even though they've hardly left you enough cash to get yourself a coffin and opt out of it all"[267]. The pamphlet invites the reader to turn frustration into gleeful destruction: "let's smash the whole great deception. Occupy the fun palace and set the swings going. Grab the gifts, and really *give* them. Light up Oxford Street. Dance around the fire. Exult in the funeral: the final show-down of the Christmas con."[268] Shortly after the distribution of dozens of pamphlets and toys, someone called the police, who arrested Santa Claus himself and took him in for inspection[269]. As a performance of King Mob's principles, this is a simultaneous approximation to and deviation from Situationist practices in the sense that it uses appropriation and gift-giving as an attempt to dispel false consciousness, which, paired with what must have been a dramatic mise-en-scène in the essential generosity and innocence of Santa Claus outlawed by cops (a metaphorical incision of the permitted upon the possible), creates a highly contradictory image of the criminal. It is indeed a détournement of 'the spirit of Christmas', perverting its meaning in order to break the ideological horizon of whoever was witness and allow them to get a glimpse of an endless bliss in violent self-realization as community. However, it is too close to a spectacular futility in its approach given its diminutive scope, which under a Situationist understanding would come close to the futility of Trocchi's 'cultural revolution' in its failure to engage a totality, leading instead to yet another 'cultural diversion'. In any case, there were several other actions before the publication of the final *King Mob Echo*, mostly about the destruction of corporate private property[270]: in all of these

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[267] "It Was Meant to be Great but it's Horrible: Confessions, S. Claus", Tate Archive: TGA 200720/3/28, 1968.
[268] *Ibidem.*
[269] Pablo Argente *op cit.* p. 50
[270] "On March the 17th, 1968 we started to turn over cars in Oxford St getting quickly pushed aside rather heavily by demo stewards. Obviously we were nervous anyway about provoking such a break in England's recent tradition of

instances Vaneigem's conception of nihilism is played out by King Mob as festive vandalism, a gleefully criminal unmasking of the crushing price behind the solemnity of social contracts, an alienation to be broken by gift-giving as an instance of arming for (ideological) war. For this group, that meant all kinds of iconoclasm, from a brick breaking through a store's glass to the raw, teenage obscenities drawn into subversive posters by Richard Bell. It is in this sense that King Mob, even after the traditional leftist discourse of militarization present in the first of the "Letters on Student Power", is not a righteous avatar of justice (always the configuration of parties, charities, and other spectacular devices) but an enabler of passionate, violent play, an *impious corrupter of youth*.

3.3. The Gothic Mob

The third and final issue of King Mob, published in early 1969, seals its close affiliation with the Motherfuckers, using their texts and analysis for the whole magazine. Since that organization will be approached in the following chapter, the focus of this section will be not on the historical aspects or the relevance of the Americans to the English (which will become clearer as the thesis develops) but on the interpretations King Mob takes away from their overview in terms of their importance to organizational principles, as well as the images this carries with it. First, a brief sketch of organizational ideas will be drawn, followed by a longer exposition and analysis of the pictures that make up this issue. The history that King Mob writes about Black Mask and UAWMF is selective and sometimes even fantastical, which means that there is a rhetorical redeployment of facts and events that serve the purpose not so much of historically defining who or what are BM or UAWMF but refining the identity of King Mob itself and further articulate its own political positions.

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peaceful protest and thus connecting again with its distant but deep riotous past! By October of the same year such assaults had become easier to carry out (in the meantime, insurgents had quite magnificently smashed up a lot of cars in France) and we were a lot less fearful as we contributed to violent disorder smashing show room windows and trashing the regalia of the rich near the Hilton Hotel in Hyde Park as well as giving many a camera a good seeing to when those stupid idiots within our own ranks of protesters started clicking shutters." Stuart Wise, *op cit.* This last part is very interesting for its iconoclastic value – a destructive production of anonymity. While 'preservation' of anonymity would be a more logical term, I think that in the case of King Mob and Black Mask/UAWF it is a condition of existence for all the organizational reasons analysed so far, both in their controlled-yet-ecstatic self-representation as well as in their threatening shadow-form of opposition. Therefore, it is not a defence mechanism but an offensive one, the exact contrary of the IS idea of a sort of loosely institutionalized conspiracy.

The overview starts with Black Mask, whose founding members had a background opposite to the common artistic or literary training of the rest of the Situationist-related collectives, apart from coming from a lumpen stratus – Ben Morea spent some time in prison as a teenager, where he first started learning about art[271]. According to King Mob, this "allowed them to get through Futurism straight away – to the *real* Futurism, science, elegance, and violence, the most purely delinquent of all 20th century art spearheads."[272] It understands Futurism as the practice of a *way of life* instead of solely as an artistic set of referents, in light of which a praxis becomes necessary; a revolution in culture is, in this theoretical move, inherently rejected for its false identification of itself with the (Situationist) totality, developing an isolated – and infinitely marketable – kind of production that cannot go beyond its constraints. This turned Black Mask onto a similar theorizing of organization to King Mob, parting from the mob not as hyper-mediation but as a gathering of nihilists that could previously conceive of no relation between them. There is, however, a place within cities of which such a gathering is a permanent feature, a real space occupied by 'the dregs of society' that could conceivably grow into a bastion of revolutionary ideas in the face of modern urbanism[273]: the ghetto. Making a metaphorical equivalence, another instance of this 'gathering of nihilists' is that of the mass demonstration, where all sorts of anti-social behaviours converge, and from there it is only a small jump to make to establish the same equivalence with society at large. Like its own infiltration of the lumpenproletariat, in King Mob's reading Black Mask would infiltrate all these iterations of potentially nihilist groupings:

> Practically, [Black Mask] tried *to turn demos into riots*. To turn everyone on to the complete shit of everything, the cars, the buildings, the goods for sale, every aspect of their immediate experience. To turn them on to the physical excitement and euphoria of actually fighting it all, fighting it fully, here and now, fighting it with their hands not only their minds. To turn everyone on to the fact that the only possible value, or pleasure today, the only way to really get across to anyone else, to oneself, is to join together to combat the whole of reality. TO TURN THEM ON TO REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE.[274]

It is important to stress that by *demos* the text probably only means 'demonstrations', but a reading of it as 'the people' can be an interesting – if by now fairly expected – avenue of interpretation, especially under the apocalyptic, Romantic key with which King Mob attempted to activate the violent potential of the city and the previous conspiratorial referents it used. In any case, unlike

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[271] See Iain McIntyre, *op cit*, accessed November 4, 2013.
[272] *King Mob 3*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064.
[273] *Ibidem.*
[274] *Ibidem.*

the English, whose project was one of sprawling contagion, "BLACK MASK saw themselves as a catalyst: a small, tightly-knit guerrilla unit, its tactics preplanned, its objective to precipitate a state of mass hypnosis into a Reichian outburst of anxiety, anger and festivity."[275] The mention of an "urban guerrilla" does not devolve into a rhetorical move of taking up arms like in the second issue, considered here instead as a signifier of a kind of collective configuration that can facilitate many an action through the assembly of "small autonomous groups" that could coordinate on their own terms; the *how* of this is a variation of Vaneigem's erotic communication, as shall be seen shortly. One of these actions was a "'mill-in' at Macy's in Christmas", when large numbers of people alone and in small groups flooded the store at peak hour, impersonating shoppers and staff. According to King Mob, they moved goods around without arousing suspicion, all the while soiling, breaking, and giving them away to passers-by. Dogs and cats were let loose in the food department while a bird was set to break the carefully positioned ceramics of the decorations department, and *decoys* planted themselves amidst groups of fleeing regular shoppers who were "roughed up and hustled outside" by the police[276]. Like King Mob's Powis Square, this infiltration of normality that affects people beyond the group acted as a provocation to both the authorities and those who found themselves unexpectedly involved, setting up the hopeful conditions for an empathy as much as a revelling mood in the face of violence.

As Black Mask grew out of the artistic milieu and turned into the Motherfuckers, "their activity really took off: became permanent, polymorphous, *a revolutionary life-style*."[277] This permanence was directed at the ghettos, the heart of the absence of history, the place that "stands for the dissolution of everything. It's no transitional experimental station or enclave: no Tangier, no Big Sur. It's pure hell. One window, one door, four walls. A dead end."[278] While such a discourse underestimated the capacity of capitalism to provide a million images of social mobility, connected

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[275] *Ibidem.*

[276] *Ibidem.* It is important to note here that the Yippies claimed this action as their own (see the "Macy's Giant New-Nation Celebration" flyer from 1968); King Mob is here selectively engaging in a fantastic retelling of a story and the participants in it for their own rhetorical purposes. The history of Black Mask they are writing here is perhaps purposively obscure, redeploying facts as interpretive weapons, just like the Wise brothers often do in their re-telling of the history of King Mob. Accounts of this action differ, but what is important here is King Mob's *form* of storytelling.

[277] *Ibidem.*

[278] *Ibidem.*

with a kind of nihilism that, like that of urban youth, can be co-opted into forms of individualism and an alienated sociality born of competition, it provides the substance of the incendiary, analogical operation intended by these groups to make Hell a concrete utopia. The foremost tactic to this end, according to King Mob, is what it called "atmospherics"[279], which was "designed to exacerbate the contradiction between what people *apparently* feel and what they *really* feel: to invert all the symbols and stereotypes in any given area."[280] This could be understood as an applied critique of spectacle based on a psychogeographical use of (something that remains unclear) in order to counteract ideology, which the use 'apparently' in opposition to 'really' immediately brings it in line with the orthodox Marxist view of superstructure. Regardless, this modulation of an 'atmosphere' within a city becomes a matter of representation; in broad, generalizing avant-garde terms, futurism is canalized into an expressionist field, subverting it in the style of surrealism with an existentialist purpose, throwing everything into conflict. The point of such a caricature is to reiterate that all of these ideas are born from a retroactive relation between art and politics, a project that for the 20th century started with the historical avant-gardes, and that all of these issues of organization and mobilization are never once free of their roots in a deep examination of art history as a history of liberty, not from socially constrained form as in the Greenbergian line, but from itself as deceit.

Like King Mob, the Motherfuckers intervened in local struggles, although in a much more comprehensive manner, which in King Mob's view was much closer to home than the overarching, overwhelming philosophic endeavour of the SI. Situationist texts were 'translated' by the Motherfuckers into 'everyday language', and so "what, a few months before, had been 'The poverty against which man has been constantly struggling is not merely the poverty of material goods; in fact, in industrially advanced countries the disappearance of material poverty has revealed the poverty of existence itself' became 'Your community represents death. You eat dead food. You live dead lives. You fuck dead women. Everything about you is dead... the struggle is for real life...'"[281] The text transforms completely, a 'lumpenproletarianization' that distils sophisticated,

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[279] UAWMF never use this term, so it is basically a conceptualization by King Mob that parts from an interpretation of UAWMF's activities and texts.
[280] *Ibidem.*
[281] *Ibid*, p. 113.

'high' discourse into a strident 'low' one that rejects philosophy in favour of a rhetorical re-constitution. This is broadly how the transition of King Mob from its Situationist shadow-of-the-state form to an attempted affinity group in the *style* of the Motherfuckers (of which its only instance is the Black Hand Gang that signed the Solanas flyer) could be described. In terms of images, such a transition is also reflected in the jump from détournement to appropriation, from an attack on representation itself made from within to one made through it.

Another important point to be connected fully is one that has underlined this part of the text so far: violence. In King Mob's reading, it is one of the basic elements that keeps the organization close-knit, articulated always as "self-defence" and "libertarian forms of *crime*" that produce a re-signification of the ghetto (and then other public spaces) as a combat zone intended to polarise anyone that comes into it[282]. This is perhaps what the method of 'atmospherics' is, as the violent, rhetorical activation of a language understood as "self-expression of the whole body[;] language as collective action [,for] communication is a group project and adventure – a shared predicament, dangerous, illegal – a world suddenly tense, expectant and tonic, a situation whose outcome depends solely on the verve and audacity of one's own intervention."[283] As in the action at Macy's or Powis Square, there is a provocation at play that inevitably leads to a confrontation with the police, in which violence is expected, in which violence suffered (since it is always self-defence) at the hands of power (which labels whoever's in its path as dangerous, illegal) is granted a constitutional place as it weaves people together into mutual identification as *same*. It is both artistic and political in its *creative* potential, "the only shock brusque enough to snap dissidents out of their trance and its dream syntax: a karate-trained Dadaist commando actually fighting in the gutter is enough to complete the demoralisation of any intellectual [...]"[284] Vaneigem's erotic communication is here primarily a body language, an expressive martial art that has earned its name as a modern art, a sublimely violent aesthetic that draws people into a collective that is temporary at first, with a non-military discipline through which they share their nihilism

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[282] *Ibidem*. Once again, it is an articulation of politics that should be understood with populism in mind. For a discussion on the kind of delimitation implied in populism, see Ernesto Laclau, "Populism: What's in a Name?" in Francisco Panizza (ed.), *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. London, Verso, 2005.
[283] *King Mob 3*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064.
[284] *Ibidem*.

(newfound or otherwise) with their surroundings by means of touch, materializing a utopian intent with every kick and punch.

When the police pushed the Motherfuckers out of New York, they set up a network of contacts around the US, creating the IWWC (International Werewolf Conspiracy, a mocking of the IWW)[285], and producing a series of questions on organization that King Mob brought forward in the magazine as part of its 'historical overview' of their American counterparts. Along with the issue of invisibility, the problem of the ever-present danger of recuperation is resolved via the affinity group, the most important – for the purposes of this Chapter – conceptual adaptation from the Motherfuckers, understood as the

> coming-together out of mutual need or desire: cohesive historical groups unite out of the share necessities of the struggle for survival, while dreaming of the possibility of love. In the pre-revolutionary period affinity groups must assemble to project a revolutionary consciousness and to develop forms for particular struggles. In the revolutionary period itself they will emerge as armed cadres at the centres of conflict, and in the post-revolutionary period suggest forms for the new everyday life.[286]

It is conceived as a response to mass culture/society as mass control, developing into small groups executing "small actions" that would "CREATE A WIDESPREAD CLIMATE OF STRUGGLE WITHIN WHICH ALL FORMS OF REBELLION CAN COME TOGETHER AND FORGE THE FINAL FORM: REVOLUTION..."[287] The scope of the affinity group is widened by its function as a component of a revolutionary community, the terms of which are, as seen before, opposed to 'civilization', adapting anarchism itself to an aesthetic that is freed, albeit with difficulty, from the militarized solemnity of the far-left guerrillas of Latin America and elsewhere. In contrast to them it looks to operate from within, even if it maintains an ideological assumption of 'being outside', and it also differs from urban guerrillas in the sense that it seeks to build itself from a completely different kind of violence, always in hold of the perspective of 'self-defence'. For King Mob, this means another kind of decentralization to that initially implied in their theory by achieving a disciplined subdivision originated not from action but from reaction, from the violence of the state instead of an apocalyptic call to total subversion. The affinity group would remain consistent (or,

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[285] *Ibidem.*
[286] *Ibidem.*
[287] *Ibidem.*

in conspiratorial terms, secure) by its communicative rigour in the experience of the illegal, although submerged in a permanent dialectical exercise implied in its contact with other affinity groups, producing in this way a community of mass action, a political ready-made that suddenly disintegrates the regularity of signs that is consensus: a great surrealist upheaval. All of these organizational concerns seemed to be effective for King Mob, since after their various interventions they "began to gather a fair amount of attention and individuals started appearing from nowhere to contact a group that didn't basically exist. If anything it was a kind of personalised, magnetic force of attraction immediately sending waves out over then coming back to source."[288]

The other text in this issue is taken directly from a Motherfuckers leaflet from late 1968, going by the title of "A Little Treatise on Dying". It is signed by the IWWC, and consists of a miniature manifesto in which several ideas are thrown together as maxims, the significance of which resides in bringing to the very fore the Gothic figure of the werewolf as a metaphorical aid in the articulation of a subjectivity that is fundamentally malleable by will and in direct opposition to any and all ideological constraints set upon it[289]. The IWWC is a wilderness call, a plot that is terrifying only to the enemies of the monster's claim to a freedom spawned in love and violence, a threat that is not only infectious but also immensely seductive in its transgressive corporeality, an *alluring body horror*.

This takes us directly to the images in this issue, beginning with the cover of the magazine, a pop-like drawing of a werewolf's face framed by futurist force-lines that make the monster seem like it

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[288] Stuart Wise, *op cit.*
[289] *King Mob 3*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064. "Lycaon, the first werewolf in Western literature, undergoes his lupine metamorphosis as the culmination of a fable of hospitality. Ovid relates how the primeval giants attempted to plunge the world into anarchy by wrenching Olympus from the gods, only to be shattered by divine thunderbolts. From their scattered blood arose a race of men who continued their fathers' malignant ways. Among this wicked progeny was Lycaon, king of Arcadia. When Jupiter arrived as a guest at his house, Lycaon tried to kill the ruler of the gods as he slept, and the next day served him pieces of a servant's body as a meal. The enraged Jupiter punished this violation of the host-guest relationship by transforming Lycaon into a monstrous semblance of that lawless, godless state to which his actions would drag humanity back." Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)", in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (ed.), *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 12-13.

came suddenly out of nowhere, provoking someone in the darkness (conceivably the viewer) to stammer in fear proclaiming "A M-M-M MOTHERFUCKER IS **A WEREWOLF!**" (fig. 2.12).

Fig. 2.12. *King Mob Echo 3,* 1969, National Art Library, London.

The name of the magazine completes the page as a frame broken from the one above, diagonally like a constructivist shout, creating a comic-book harmony of display. The werewolf itself is drawn in the style of pulp magazines of the 50s, brutally showing its sharp teeth and unblinking eyes as if caught in the moment of pouncing for its prey. The text shows in a simple way the nature of the paranoid doubt intended to be produced in the 'sculpting' of atmospherics, a rational, possibly

power-laden question ("what is a Motherfucker?") that finds its answer in an unforeseen violence born from an image of irrationality and bestial darkness. Its quickness and aggression resonate with deadly implications, a glimpse into what is obscured by ideological conditioning and aestheticized economics, a void that *bites* and brings forth a moment "where the conventional systems, readings of landscape or text, [break] down, [finding] in that very collapse the foundation for another order of meaning"[290], the moment when the sublime is grasped. A form of terror is realized in the production of paranoia, similar to what has already been said about King Mob's plot, except this time the difference lies in representation: whereas before any and all positions in the network were invisible through both the rendering of anonymity and hyper-mediation (as in the Jack the Ripper letters), the werewolf is not anonymous but hidden, developing its communication in the midst of a witch-hunt instead of doing so beneath the state's perception, which is to say through body language instead of spoken language. In this sense, the image of the mob is better suited to the kind of discourse maintained until the second issue, while the image of the werewolf fits the making of the affinity group in its pop monstrosity, an anarchist version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*[291] where the duplicates are not devoid of emotionality but on the contrary, are bursting with it to the point of violent transformation. If we follow Thomas Weskel in saying that "inner space, the infinitude of the Romantic mind, is born as a massive and more or less unconscious emptiness, an absence"[292], it could be said that it is at this point that a subjectivity modified by King Mob would *appear* as an extreme antagonism to the finite basis of the kind of subject that poses a question as rational as "what is a Motherfucker?". It becomes a projection of the inner absence of law and constraints conceived as lycanthropy, a fundamentally monstrous – infinitely degenerate, as Lautréamont might have said – lack of humanity. As such, it transcends the natural in its alchemical union with it, bringing together elements impossibly disparate into an incomplete shapeshifting whole whose very unintelligibility does violence to any idea of closeness, fullness, or in other words, any idea of a society. The revolutionary movement proposed through the vague connections of affinity groups enacts its surreal representation as a monstrosity, an

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[290] Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 22.

[291] The 1956 American science fiction movie in which a small town in California is invaded by extra-terrestrials that plant duplicates of people, who are, on 'the surface', exactly the same people, but the protagonist finds out they have lost every trace of expression and individuality. Even its Cold War politics could be relevant to the image of the werewolf as the 'enemy within', except the change in this case is wilful and visible. Other 1950s movies in the genre work exactly in this way, by turning monsters into the ever-looming metaphors of chaos as social decay.

[292] *Ibid*, p. 15.

unnatural alliance that infects the social body with an incurable blessing of night-time *insight* and the claws with which to reach for the everlasting play of difference illuminated by the moonlight. If monstrosity is always already a displacement of signs[293], then, understood collectively, it is a repository of too many fears and indexes of otherness, a swarming overexposure that, to return to the futurists, is pure noise, the cacophony of a Detroit neighbourhood in flames, the liberating terror of the Romantic sublime. The worst of it is, according to a Gothic literary strain, that the monster and its threat cannot be fully exorcised – it always returns[294]. This also provides another layer of interpretation which can be added to the hyper-mediated functioning of King Mob's images, in the way they violently explode before the viewer as sublime monstrosity, as an assault coming from nowhere and everywhere at the same time, overwhelming the senses as they attempt to pummel a certain subjectivity into being.

Within the magazine a division could be made between images that appeared before elsewhere in the Black Mask and UAWMF magazines and those that are "original", or at least present only here. The ones from the American magazines will be analysed next chapter, and their importance in King Mob as part of a certain curatorial hand should be understood as a renovated engagement with pop culture, one that had been diminished ever since the last number of *Heatwave*. In many ways they serve the purpose of illustrating the theory behind the group being described, as well as pinpointing its aesthetic reach into the popular-Gothic that might have made the Surrealists proud (and the Situationists angry).

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[293] "Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again." Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *op cit,* p. 4.
[294] *Ibid*, p. 5.

Fig. 2.13. *King Mob Echo 3*, 1969, National Art Library, London.

The first image of those that will not be analysed later is a reproduction of Peter Paul Rubens' *The Head of the Medusa* (1617-1618) (fig. 2.13) with an added text balloon that makes the decapitated head say "WE MUST DEVELOP OUR OWN STANDARD OF BEUTY [sic]". A slain monster, surrounded by sinister figures of nature (snakes, spiders, scorpions, the 'scum of the earth') is made to speak in the first person plural, throwing the viewer into a position where the Medusa is perceived as 'one of us', a dislocation of identity that works in the style of the actions at Powis Square or Macy's by turning a gaze of horror and respite into an empathic connection. This identification with a dead monster is exactly what brings it back to life in an operation that is no longer dialectical but analogical, one that demands a reading of the image like one of Delacroix's revolution-related paintings, in which there is a whole political definition at stake, always in an implicit and virtuous spilling of blood. This is perhaps Percy Shelley's reading of Medusa's tragic story as well ("On The Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci", 1824), seeing her as a "victim of the tyranny and cowardice of established power"[295]. According to Jerome McGann, in Shelley's poem the Medusa holds a humanizing 'grace' (her beauty as haunting reminder) that becomes mixed with

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[295]   Jerome J. McGann, "The Beauty of the Medusa: A Study in Romantic Literary Iconology", in http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/shelley/medusa/mcgann.html , accessed on November 5, 2013.

the horror of her decapitation as emphasis upon her victimization at the hands of the Gods[296]. This dual attribution can be related to the function of her gaze as both "preserver" and destroyer,

> the complementary destructive aspect of all creative energy. Such a duality in the imagination's function was always a fundamental part of Shelley's thought in both politics and art […]. What the Medusa does, then, at least in its destructive aspect, is to represent the horror which has been laid upon man and his world as a curse. Prometheus will not curse the tyrant who has put him in chains; to do so would be to perpetuate the initial curse denounced to the world by Jupiter. What the Medusa does is what Prometheus does: present an image of suffering and horror which is the reflex of the cursed heart which has caused that suffering. […] To Shelley, a corruption has invaded the beauty of the Medusa's original form, but his poem turns her death into an apocalyptic event distinguishing the forces of light and darkness. [297]

This possible connection of how the Medusa picture could be inscribed into the discourse of King Mob is made not only to reaffirm the Romanticism pursued by the group as a form of localization of Situationist total subversion, but also to develop a sense of the *monstrous* multiplicity of elements being set to work as constitutive and rhetorical, an interpretive wealth that derives from the distortions introduced by, for example, deliberate spelling mistakes, a performativity that violently proclaims its irreducibility. This is why Medusa's gaze achieves, analogically, both nothing and everything, both life and death, re-creating her victims as eternally waking sculptures, a kind of murder that essentially grants the gift of a leap outside time, which is exactly the kind of redefinition of beauty (nonetheless a historical one in the allusion of a certain people in a certain context) that King Mob and UAWMF were looking for.

The next three images will be grouped together since they are interrelated in their evocation of a Gothic dungeon, of an underground place brimming with ghoulish secrets and which is intended to remain out of the public eye. The dungeon is where memory is both unmade and stored, where the light of God cannot reach or is lost amidst an obscuring haze woven in excess and corruption, the over-ground's violent unconscious. In terms of the modern city it is the sewage, and all the associations that derive from it in social constitution as theorized by Marxism point towards the forms of the lumpenproletariat as the production of a terrible self-reminder that inspires disgust.

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[296] *Ibidem.*
[297] *Ibidem.*

Fig. 2.14. *King Mob Echo 3*, 1969, National Art Library, London.

The first image is a comic-book panel in which an ominous, tattered figure is utterly surprised at the strange, almost formless monster that is living at the heart of a seemingly abandoned Gothic edifice (a church, a hall, it is uncertain) partially submerged in darkness (fig. 2.14). A plant is juxtaposed into the image, and the monster growls while the figure exclaims "OH MY GOD! IT'S THE MOTHER-FUCKERS". The terrible aspect of the Motherfuckers is clear under the light, a creature that haunts the depths, the sublimity of the 'light at the end of the tunnel'. This representation is a variation of themes already seen, but it develops an interesting turn in the next two images, 'portraits' of two kinds of Motherfucker, the American and the English one.

Left: fig. 2.15; right: fig. 2.16. *King Mob Echo 3,* 1969, National Art Library, London.

The American Motherfucker (fig. 2.15) is a long-haired bearded young man being arrested by the police amidst a multitude; the officer is made the equivalent of the gaunt, wooden figure of the dungeon, who discovers a Motherfucker in a mass (of people) because *he* is the one who will resist arrest, who will fight back and will incite the rest of the 'sewage' to a violent upheaval, all the while being just one more person on the street. A student, a drop-out, a rocker, a yippie, a hippie – they're all scum, but the Motherfucker is conscious of his monstrosity, and he looks right at the viewer with contempt. The English Motherfucker (fig. 2.16) is "The Forgotten Prisoner of Castlemere", the skeleton of someone who was chained down in the depths of a dungeon never to be seen again: the alliance is eminently strange, inherently alchemical, and while it might follow the steps of a

Hegelian becoming (in which the sun of Reason has left Europe behind, in *darkness*), it also plays upon an opposition of life and death. The image itself, however, provides a humorous pop allusion, the kind of which the whole theorization of a werewolf subjectivity is teeming with. The picture is the cover of a boxed model toy by a company named Aurora, which released the "Forgotten Prisoner" kit in 1966 (fig 2.17) as part of an association with the magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland[298]*, a publication made by fans of Hollywood horror movies and which spawned many a fanzine based on an appreciation of pulp films.

Fig. 2.17. "The Forgotten Prisoner of Castel-Maré". *Picture taken from a toy seller at Amazon.com*, 2012.

In 1969 the company released a version of the model which was made out of phosphorescent plastic, and it is perhaps in this sense that the completely illuminated creature of the first image,

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[298] The sources for this information are scattered first-hand accounts, which makes it difficult to pin down exactly how and when these events happened. As with many parts of popular culture, it is under-documented in an academic sense, while being loosely over-documented in various discussions by fans of toy models around the internet. Of note is that the model was reissued recently and can be bought once again. For a concise description see the collectables toy store L & L Collectables, in http://www.landlcollectables.com/catalog/product_info.php/products_id/1013177 , accessed on November 6, 2013.

as well as the close-up of the full face of the rebel of the second (in contrast to the profile of the cop and the cut-up faces of the people in the back), could be interpreted: a Motherfucker glows in the dark. The Motherfucker is, then, a pieced-together subjectivity, a hyper-represented manufacturer of fear and paranoia, one that has emerged from the deepest of dungeons with a message performed in both real and suggested violence, a danger-based modification of spaces whose subsequent signification (as contested and contaminated by the rot of dungeons exposed) allows them to identify. King Mob's return to pop culture is in this way much more subtle, less concerned with analysis of a traditionally leftist nature and therefore less anxious about recuperation than the SI. This is, nevertheless, also an indication of the strange predicament of King Mob's intellectual rigour, something that can be seen by comparing the contents of the last issue with the first; while the history of Black Mask and UAWMF has several important insights related to the whole network of Situationist-connected thought, the text and the images developed shift entirely from a dialectically informed process to an analogical one – it mostly rejects Reason and turns to the occult, managing to tumble through different articulations of logic from one moment to another[299].

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[299] This is how class analysis of a Marxist type is followed by statements like "the fundamental question is one of reconnecting on a far, far deeper level – on the level of the Id, on the level of a *primordial* energy [...]" *King Mob 3*, National Art Library: SZ. 0064.

Such is the logic of the spread that follows the magazine's text, entitled "WE ARE OUTLAWS", subtitled "The cities are the new frontier" and "A new manifesto: THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO OUR LAWLESSNESS" (fig. 2.18). This image, like many from this issue, is an UAWMF work reproduced without contextual consideration, an appropriation that has different implications from the originals in terms of its insertion in an altogether different rhetorical vein and context. Stripped from its origin and made part of King Mob's discourse, this image ends up working like a synthesis of Situationist and Motherfucker theory. Like one of Jack the Ripper's letters, it pushes its representation to the limits of hyper-mediation, a chaotic assembly of handwritings, fonts, slogans, and quick, dirty drawings that perform an invisible, multiple, overarching threat, a sublime totality of forthcoming violence. By this point, the reader should be able to make his or her own connections to the praxis examined

Fig. 2.18. *King Mob Echo 3*, 1969, National Art Library, London

so far, as the spread/poster is effectively the clearest iteration of King Mob's style of negation, perhaps even more so because it is not an 'original' work and only a reproduction. The back of the magazine also contains another spread, a series of panels drawn like a medieval fable (using even gothic-style writing), under the title of "From the Book of the Motherfucker" (also a reproduction of a UAWMF image). It tells the story of a "nice concerned man who wanted to build a movement", going through a series of lessons about communication as the act of constituting a community, illustrated by various transformations of the body, a process of mutation that results

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in monstrosity. The last lesson sees the 'nice man' turned into a devil, a co-opted messenger that "got paid a lot for going around & telling other people what they should do. *But somehow the movement transcended him.*" This 'moral fable' basically warns against the possibility of dogma, attributing the 'founders' of movements with a precise narrative of recuperation; also stripped from its origin and put to work by King Mob in this way, it makes for a jab against the Situationists that ironically also originates from them in their insistence upon the constant *presence* of history, the critical unfolding of dialectics.

After this issue, King Mob suffered from a long and painful dissolution that lasted until 1972, when all of its members had practically moved on, whether they found a place within the spectacle or continued with their revolutionary activity in a different configuration. "Once the revolution didn't immediately materialise within two or so years, the whole impetus became clothed in a wish-fulfilment which increasingly had little basis in reality. [...] The more the situation began developing a desperate edge, the more an abstract —revolutionary wish fulfilment – well at least for 2 or 3 years - took over."[300] The failure to see the problems in the mirror[301] produced a very flawed, if fascinating, praxis, and it is not my intention to provide an analysis of the (self) defeat but to re-generate the possibility of setting its meanings up for play, once again, for a different context.

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[300] Stuart Wise, *op cit.*
[301] Crime as the highest form of sensuality "could […] justify some of the worst and most reprehensible acts of lumpen behaviour like turning your mates over or robbing them of a few pence in "the revolution of dirty little tricks" as we quickly termed it." *Ibidem.*

FIG. B: KING MOB TIMELINE

1965-1966: Creation
and expansion of the
English Section of the
Situationist
International

Late 1967: Exclusion
of English Section
from Situationist
International

1967: English Section
writes "The
Revolution of Modern
Art and the Modern
Art of Revolution"

April, 1968: King Mob
Echo

June, 1968:
Powis Square
action

Late 1968:
King Mob No.
2 1/2

Early 1969:
King Mob Echo
#3

November,
1968: King
Mob Echo #2

December,
1968:
Selfridges
Santa Claus
action

CHAPTER 3: BLACK MASK, UP AGAINST THE WALL MOTHERFUCKER, THE INTERNATIONAL WEREWOLF CONSPIRACY

1. Introduction

This chapter will be an overview of three groups: Black Mask (BM), Up Against the Wall Motherfucker! (UAWMF) and finally the International Werewolf Conspiracy (IWWC). These groups are interconnected primarily by Ben Morea, who co-founded and participated in all three, along with other artists and activists such as Ron Hahne and Osha Neumann. Black Mask was the longest-lived of the three, producing magazines from 1966 to 1968; UAWMF produced a single magazine in 1968 and contributed various images to the newspaper *Rat Subterranean News* throughout that year and well into 1969; IWWC only contributed images to *Rat* in 1969, disappearing in 1970 (see fig. C). While the collectives' magazines were self-produced, *Rat* was edited by an actively political group of underground journalists and writers, and it reported on the most important events for the late 1960s counterculture in New York. It was associated with many countercultural groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society, with which Black Mask and UAWMF often had close contact. BM were initially in contact with the SI, which approached the US group for possible membership under the sponsorship of the English section. However, they were summarily dismissed by Raoul Vaneigem, which brought on the rift between the English and the French. Regardless, BM seemed to have adopted concepts such as that of totality from the SI, and developed a theoretical bent that ran in parallel to the SI project, except it was less interested in philosophical rigour as it attempted to draw out as directly as possible the transition from the theoretical to the practical. Thus, BM and the other groups it later transformed into deployed a framework that is comparable to the SI's in scope, utilizing anarchist techniques of appropriation instead of the perhaps more sophisticated détournement. As I did with King Mob, I will analyse images and actions (mostly recorded in the magazines themselves) that I believe articulate well the discourse upheld by these collectives throughout the years: while not centred upon Ben Morea, he is the point of connection between all three groups (BM, UAWMF, IWWC), and therefore is an important element from which to build an interpretation. As such, I will attempt to delineate possible interpretation avenues by means of their discursive network, which included, as

precedent, the New York performance unit Group Center (1964-ca.1969), Wilhelm Reich's writings via Morea, the avant-garde (Futurism, Surrealism, Dada), anarchism, Marxism, and the wider US counterculture of the late 1960s. With BM, the clearest points of articulation are those of an organization dynamically constituted around performance and war, while UAWMF turned towards the more classically anarchist 'affinity group' and an appropriation of the family structure, finally transforming into a loose conspiracy with IWWC.

1.1. Precedents   Group Center

The group around *Black Mask* (which, at first, was composed only of Ben Morea and Ron Hahne) started to coalesce sometime during 1966. However, both Morea and Hahne had previously contributed to a variety of artistic projects, of which perhaps the most important for the themes in this thesis is Group Center[302]. Coming together in 1962, this collective represented one of the many derivations of the ideas surrounding the avant-garde as social configuration of form and content, grouping politically-minded artists that were not quite interested in institutional recognition, whether of historical or curatorial nature[303].

Group Center was formed by American Italian artist Aldo Tambellini in New York's Lower East Side, which had up to that period been one of the city's slums, and which in cultural terms was becoming a kind of mirror-image to the more traditionally bohemian atmosphere of Greenwich Village, home to the Beatniks and the middle-class section of the hippie movement at the time. The Lower East Side attracted this portion of the 'counterculture'[304], but quickly reconfigured it

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[302] There is an argument to be made for the impact of Living Theatre, a performance unit founded in 1947 and in which Ben Morea participated in the early 1960s, upon the collectives whose story starts with Black Mask. However, beyond the focus on the body as a site of political struggle, and therefore the conception of politics as also an issue of performativity, I am unable to make any significant contribution to this argument, which is why I have decided to focus on Group Center instead.

[303] I will only overview a few ideas from Group Center that carried over to Black Mask and that are relevant to this thesis. For a much more comprehensive account of activities, including Ben Morea and Ron Hahne's participations, see Gavin Grindon, *op cit*.

[304] One which eventually transformed the northern area into, simply, the 'East Village', perhaps involuntarily revealing the class divide within the countercultural movements of the 60's and 70's themselves. See Jesse McKinley, "FYI"; "When did the East Village become the East Village and stopped being part of the Lower East Side?", in *The New York Times*, June 1, 1995. Available digitally, at http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/01/nyregion/fyi-649895.html. Accessed on May 13, 2014.

with a working class identity in which the partly religious, peaceful, communal abstraction of the hippie rebellion became a concrete, highly politicized communal set of relations that in the long run allowed for a keen understanding of the violence of everyday life. Group Center, then, "was formed without finances but with a larger idealistic vision of a better connection with the community", with the belief that "the artistic community has reached a new stage of development. In a mobile society, it is no longer sufficient for the creative individual to remain in isolation. We feel the hunger of a society lost in its own vacuum and rise with an open active commitment to forward a new spirit for mankind."[305] Echoing the social principles of every avant-garde that implicitly reject genius and transcendence, Group Center was *mobilised* to breach the elemental loss of spirit, meaning here the exercise of a creative freedom that is still close to the esoteric formula of making oneself, making the collective whole of selves, into a divine image. However, Tambellini quickly pulled this eminently Beat discourse down to earth, stating that "creation is not the commodity of a status-seeking class. Creation is the vital energy of society. We believe that the […] 'system' is an enormous dinosaur extinguishing at a fantastic rate which opposes truth and freedom […]." By making truth and freedom the core of the mobilisation, Group Center turned the issue of a social art into one in which questioning the false values and ideas of the 'system' is a primary activity of any and all production. Similarly, by conjuring a unitary image of the 'system', its political opposition becomes just as totalising, a community that is potentially the whole of humanity ("mankind"), and it is these two philosophical aspects what most clearly transition from Group Center into Black Mask / UAWMF as the very core of radical opposition, even if they would be modified over time. The kind of modifications Morea and Hahne adopted were hinted at ever since this moment, although Group Center did not develop them in any significant way: Tambellini recalls that

> David Bourdon wrote about "Group Center" on January 11, 1965 for The Village Voice: "They picketed a Monday night opening at the Museum of Modern Art... passing out handbills protesting the taste-making policies of the museum. Last March they paid a stealthy 3 A.M. Visit to the most powerful up-town galleries and museums; equipped with a masonite stencil and a can of spray paint, and disguised as workmen, they branded the sidewalks with a circle about two feet in diameter containing the word 'centerfuge'." Centerfuge was the term used for many […] activities of "Group Center".[306]

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[305] Aldo Tambellini, "A Syracuse Rebel in New York", in http://www.aldotambellini.com/rebel.html, accessed May 15, 2014.
[306] *Ibidem.*

The 'centerfuge' image of a circle (fig. 3.1) becomes that of an ever-escaping, ever-expanding *force* towards the outer limit, an avant-garde incursion into the unknown that brings back the contamination of the infinite that would break apart normality and reveal the truth of creative energy hiding underneath. This would also point towards the organisational ambiguity of King Mob, but over time Group Center did not effect its political intent beyond the domain traditionally attributed to artistic expression, the artistic event, the very identity of the artist conceived as professional.

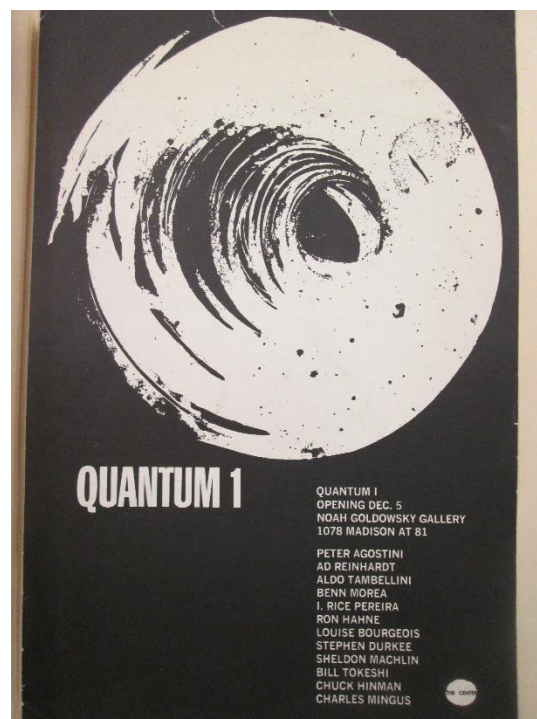Fig. 3.1. "Quantum 1" exhibition flyer, 1965. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

While in Group Center, Tambellini developed a concept that would be recurrent throughout his activity, that of 'black'. It informed various performances and pictorial works, always related to the circular forms that the Group used as force, as representation of the organic mobilised. In a passage worthy of full citation, Tambellini explains that

Black, to me, is like a beginning. A beginning of what it wants to be rather than what it does not want to be. I am not discussing black as a tradition or non tradition in painting or having anything to do with pigment or as an opposition to color. As I am working and exploring black in different kinds of dimensions, I'm definitely more and more convinced that black is actually the beginning of everything, which the art concept is not. Black gets rid of historical definition. Black is a state of being blind and more aware. Black is oneness with birth. Black is within totality, the oneness of all. […] Black is one of the important reasons why the racial conflicts are happening today, because it is part of an old way to look at a human being or race in terms of color. Black will get rid of the separation of color at the end. […] I strongly believe in the word [sic] 'black power' as a powerful message, for it destroys the old notion of western man, and by destroying that notion it also destroys the tradition of the art concept.[307]

This concept is paired with Tambellini's work in mixed media in a sense that portrays the technological achievements of modernity as the horizon of a new age. It is an historical leap of faith that obviates history itself and treats its makers as the "primitives of a new era"[308], the inhabitants of a time that is determined solely by the expectations of an imagined – often utopian – full realization of the history of technology. It is a position that, as seen with the SI's thought about automation, is not rare amongst the avant-garde movements of the 1960's, nor amongst philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse. Additionally, it is easily connected to the kind of anarchism, Romantic in its revolutionary aspirations, that finds in the organization of civilisation (the division of labour, the coming into being of governments-as-states, etc.) an original sin, idealising 'primitive' society as the purest expression of an essential Rousseauvian equality. As will be seen later, the equivalence between the primitive, the barbaric, the free, and true is made within the discourse of UAWMF under arguably the same categories that were relevant for Tambellini's Group Center, probably carried over by Ben Morea across collectives[309]. The primitives of the new era carried, in consequence, the weight of the responsibility of avoiding yet another original sin; black, and not the stars, was to be the most reliable guide in the mapping of a history emancipated from itself, not dialectically but by analogically projecting the *beginning*, the unity of the void, into the future. Their language, appropriately enough, is that of an avant-garde

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[307] Anne Brodzky, interview with the artist, in *Arts Canada,* Toronto, 1967, no. 133. Also, "In a 1965 performance Tambellini recited a text: "Black is space black is sound black is color black is darkness black is anger black is void." In his works "black" is wielded as anti-material – an intriguing darkness captures our human fascination with the unknown. Together, the sound and flickering lights heighten the senses and reveal those aspects of human life that Tambellini considered to be necessary for meaningful existence: sensitivity, awareness and direct experience." From Naomi Lev, "Aldo Tambellini", in *Art in America*, posted at http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/aldo-tambellini/, accessed May 13, 2014.

[308] See the interview with Tambellini conducted by Ernesto Menéndez-Conde, "We Are The Primitives of a New Era", in https://www.artexperiencenyc.com/we-are-the-primitives-of-a-new-era-an-interview-with-aldo-tambellini-part-i-2/, accessed May 13, 2014.

[309] See Gavin Grindon, *op cit*, p. 7.

precursor closely described in *King Mob 3*: "Black Zero [...]: space-light-sound event [...] built on a series of experiences designed to bombard, propel, and blast the audience into what Group Center believes is "The New Reality"... the psychological re-orientation of man in the Space Era... the exploration of the Microcosm and the Macrocosm... the violent revolutions in our social structure..."[310]. Read in the key of Futurism and its militarized visions of the world, this text gestures at the later adoption of its immanent violence by the Motherfuckers, canalised through the 'blackness' of Black Mask, one which also adopts the cry of "black power!" and whose relation with the image of death attempts to realize the duality of the void as both ultimate negation and creation. A black mask, in this context, becomes the reflection of power as sheer helplessness, the voice of an anarchic becoming that poses the fundamental threat of extinction in the name of the new, of a deep glimpse into the unknown.

1.2. Glimpses of Theory: Marcuse and Reich

Another set of references that will be used throughout this chapter is that comprised by works of Herbert Marcuse (*One-Dimensional Man*) and Wilhelm Reich (*The Mass Psychology of Fascism, The Sexual Revolution*). The selection of these books was made on a contextual basis in the case of Marcuse and a more direct connection in the case of Reich. In many ways Marcuse best represents the derivation of critical theory that in the 1960s coincided across various theoretical points with the more intuitive assessments of society made by the countercultural movements, including those originated in an artistic milieu such as Black Mask / UAWMF. *One-Dimensional Man* will be looked at for reference, since its contextual place in the 1960s is that of one more extension and re-location of Marxism at large, one that was sufficiently important to be considered foundational to that Other of left-radicalism such as that of UAWMF or the New Left[311]. The

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[310] Flyer entitled "BLACK ZERO, "EXPANDED CINEMA" AT THE BRIDGE", November 23, 1965, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 1, folder 5.

[311] It could be argued that Marcuse was, for the Situationists and other radical groups in the United States, what Sartre was for the Situationists and their peers in France, which is to say the unavoidable presence of the 'public intellectual' with which debates or agreements must be wielded as matter of course to establish a firm sense of contemporary legitimacy. See the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy entry "Herbert Marcuse", in http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marcuse/, accessed May 14, 2014; Douglas Kellner, "Herbert Marcuse", in http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell12.htm, accessed May 14, 2014. The difference between the New Left and the radicalism of groups such as BM was to be found, primarily, in the kinds of discourses articulated: the New Left was much more of an academically inclined public platform of discussion whereas the radical groups prioritized action

concepts Marcuse deploys in his book will be referenced throughout the analysis to indicate, primarily, a philosophical context in which a series of re-evaluations of Marxist tropes occur (class, dialectics, etc.). To put it succinctly, his ideas represent what groups such as Black Mask are carrying out in the streets. Therefore, the use of Marcuse's ideas will belong to a more general realm, or in other words, to an abstract discursive level, whereas Reich's will be more particular and concrete, as will be discussed below.

Regarding Reich, Ben Morea says that

> In order to help me stay away from heroin I got very interested in Reich, in art, and philosophy. You know, I was trying to educate myself. In fact, when I was in prison hospital […] there was a therapist there who kept bringing me higher consciousness books. She brought me *The Murder of Christ* […]. I read a lot of Reich, *Character Analysis*. He's really important, in terms of revolutionary consciousness, of changing the planetary consciousness, as it exists today.[312]

The connection, therefore, between Reich and the development of Black Mask / UAWMF is overt, at least in how Reich's theories inform the group's collectivity; nevertheless, an explanation of Reich's concept of a sexual revolution was published in *Black Mask #*7. The books chosen to explore this relation are early works, and they present a very rich panorama on how exactly a revolutionary consciousness might emerge from a will to radical realization, which is to say, in this case at least, a will to power that is often uneasy with its own 'nature'. *The Sexual Revolution* covers many an organisational principle that Black Mask / UAWMF applied during their short existence, always holding in the background the promise of youth culture, from which many an aspect of 1960's revolt emerged. At the same time, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* articulates a vision of fascism that is not so much political but structural, a *condition* that renders the possibility of a reactionary Great Refusal clearly as a matter that was definitely not settled with the end of the Third Reich. It is, therefore, the basis of a study of *the enemy*, the constitution of which is delineated throughout the writings of Morea and others, not only other members of UAWMF but also theorists such as Marcuse.

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and confrontation. In other words, generally speaking, where New Leftists produced books, the radical groups produced magazines.

[312] Johan Kugelberg, (ed.), *Opposition: Black Mask, Ben Morea & UAWMF,* Exhibition catalogue. New York, Boo-Hooray Art Gallery, 2014, p. 5.

1.3. Towards some key concepts

There are many recurring themes in the discourse of BM/UAWMF born from the adoption of several concepts that are not explicitly developed in writing but which belong to the more general context of thought currents in Western Marxism (which is, importantly, a distinction that is not so much geographical as it is geopolitical). Given their centrality over the course of the groups' activity, it might be helpful to attempt to specify their content with the aid of texts that feed into the theoretical underpinnings at work in the magazines and elsewhere. Hopefully, this specification will later on clarify and deepen the interpretations of the groups' texts and images.

The first of these concepts, perhaps the most important, is that of 'revolution' and the form or anti-form of the politics that were to be *created* for its realization. As with the SI and King Mob, the form is eminently Marxist, where the conception of 'class' is fairly well-defined, or at least assumed as the very foundation of identity (and therefore, a cultural matter). However, the narrative status of the proletariat as historical agent is undermined ever since *Black Mask #1* by the American context with regards to race – race divisions are often much more present, much more immediate, and much more determinant (in other words, fully instituted into the American State) than class position when it comes to the US collective. Against the SI's proletariat and King Mob's lumpenproletariat, Black Mask subtly – at least at first – develops an image of the racialized Other as the historical agent of revolution, and proposes a straight-on identification with this sector of the oppressed that still operates under a Marxist framework and hence, eventually, leads to a mix that results in texts like "Nigger as class" in *Black Mask #10*. The work that this dissolution of racial frontiers implies, one that is primarily about images, treats visual categorization and visual action as the continuous falsification of two of modernity's foundational myths, liberty and justice. Understood under the mantle of (classical) anarchism, these two truths of 'natural law' are hidden by the entire organization of States and all of the codes they institute into everyday life. Therefore, it would be the work of an *enlightened* revolutionary praxis to, among other things, bring about those truths to the realm of materiality, to actively dispel the attempts to hide them and reveal the manners in which the interests of States (made equivalent with the interests of the bourgeoisie) falsify their materialization. It is important to say at this point that this materialization is not limited to economics, which means it is also at this point where BM/UAWMF diverge from orthodox

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positions in both Marxism and anarchism, breaking the fixed nature of their thought primarily through the deployment of psychoanalysis, just like Marcuse and Reich did. This meant that, following Reich, they conceived that "there are no class borders for the structure of character", even though class is maintained as category for analysis[313].

This conception of a political work effects an intertwining between psychoanalytical principles and Marxism's concept of ideology, articulating its critique with a therapeutic approach, bringing together the question of truth and the question of health (which for Reich is, summarily explained, knowledge of the self, geared towards autonomy, which would become the basis of 'natural' community). Politics under these questions become a symptom of power, the way in which it veils its toxicity for the body and mind, for example, on the one hand the suffering of slavery and on the other the conviction that such suffering, such slavery, is *necessary*. Consequently, for Reich the liberation of the mind and body was one and the same, and consisted of a concise call for the development of consciousness, of a responsibility grounded upon the truth, the Reason of a humanity exercised under the plenitude of mental health. Subjection becomes a matter of wilful ignorance of self and of a Reason that is stunted, in the sense that it is imposed and is not born autonomously from self-reflection. Finding in sexuality the key of the susceptibility of people to falsify their needs and desires by ideological directives, Reich set out to analyse the pillars upon which repression rests, always with an interest in the possibility of joy as healthy living. Hence, "the word "revolutionary" in this book, as in other texts of sexual economy, does not signify the use of dynamite, but of truth; it does not signify clandestine meetings or distribution of illegal propaganda, but an open and public call to human consciousness without […] subterfuge [...]"[314]. Of course, the sense in which Black Mask and UAWMF use the word 'revolutionary' adopts the same meaning, except it leaves the scientific / academic sense behind in order to also encompass "the use of dynamite" and "clandestine meetings", a dialectic that leads to a synthesis that in the

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[313] Wilhelm Reich, *La revolución sexual: Para una estructura de carácter autónomo del hombre*. Translated from German to Spanish by Sergio Moratiel. México, Origen/Planeta, 1985, p. 13. Translation mine, from Spanish. From here on after referred to as *La revolución sexual*.

[314] *Ibid,* p. 16. Reich is, of course, defining his political use of the word 'revolutionary' against that of radical left and right orthodoxies, as well as against that of Stalinist Soviet Union.

group's praxis comes to mean the performance of an organization as group therapy as much as a war machine.

This is how revolution 'starts at home', by opposing the psychological structure that feeds from and is fed upon by the ("coercive") family, which Reich constantly refers to as a historical product against the common (and commonly conservative) ideal of the family as 'human nature'. For Reich, most ideas about the family are eminently pathological in their constitution of an ideological imperative that masks an irrational justification for suffering and psychological sickness in the form of a very (R)easonable common sense. According to Reich, they are all a form of sentimental self-deceit, giving shape to an "ideological atmosphere" in which neurosis blooms[315], a minefield that is impossible to traverse without a consciousness of the false division between the individual and the social as a logical extension of the falseness of *all* divides. It is, in this case, neither an analogical nor a dialectical operation, but a syllogistical one, and it is reflected in the ways in which UAWMF articulated its revolt as community of oppressions, unlike King Mob's phantasmagorical evocation of the mob or the SI's détournement of the party structure, and holds many more similarities to the ST's attempts to form a movement and a 'people'. The hippie commune and the affinity group are, in a logical sense, completely incompatible with the structure of State-as-family, and as a consequence must conceive of a border, natural or ideological, with which to imagine itself as being *outside*. The war[316] it wages on 'straight' society becomes akin to that between two States in which one of them has been defeated and whose territory has been

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[315] *Ibid*, p. 96.

[316] As shall be seen, the elements to talk of a war are all articulated in a discourse of confrontation that parts, first and foremost, from an idea of *class war*, except over time it would overcome its economic implications and include ideas such as a generational gap that determines a fundamental political frontier different from the (classically) Marxist one. Also, the terms under which the war is conceived come from Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), the theoretician that wrote *On War* in the early 19th century, and upon whose work is founded a widespread military and academic tradition linking warfare and politics as a *modern* phenomenon. He was a Prussian general and military theorist who provided a major shift in military theory with his book *On War*, which deftly related war with other aspects of social life, primarily politics, through dialectical methods. It consists, in essence, of a philosophy of war that became a major reference for many thinkers throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Since BM, UAWMF and the IWWC were adamant about the use of violence as integral to avant-garde practices, I believe a few aphorisms and concepts from Clausewitz are apt to be used as background to understand the discourse surrounding the US collectives' intent to *bring the war home*. Clausewitz would be the inspiration for Guy Debord's *Game of War*, so I believe it is suitable to think the war-waging aspect of Black Mask/UAWMF and the IWWC through the Prussian general's understanding of war and politics. This will, however, be a minor 'set-formula' with which to think, so I will not delve into the literature on Clausewitz since the referent is more of a research tool than an attempt to re-negotiate his works into the context of the 1960s avant-garde, since that work would comprise an entire thesis by itself.

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occupied, which is to say a modern war focused on resistance[317]. As such, one of the most potent weapons for the resistance becomes appropriation, an artistic move that re-purposes an object out of a logic of scarcity and lack, conditioning its reuse, in the case of Black Mask and UAWMF, to the lineaments of truth and health. This is how UAWMF also becomes 'The Family', by abolishing the Reichian prefix of "coercive" on one side, and on the other by breaking its internal functioning through sex-economy and effecting the political designation of its enemy, marking its territory as *liberated* territory. Unlike the family, it does not reproduce itself "by sexually mutilating individuals; […] perpetuating sexual repression and its derivatives: sexual disorders, neuroses, mental alienations, perversions and sex crimes." Unlike the family, it is not "the seed of individuals frightened before life and fearful before authority [...]"[318]... and yet, it remains a *signal of a social order*, one that is fundamentally, crucially different from the one it broke off from.

The family, as perhaps one of the primary units of economy, is therefore the first target of appropriation by a group such as UAWMF, with revolution in its mind. "If the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of the vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible. This is a goal within the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization, the "end" of technological rationality."[319] The question of how to organize and direct the productive apparatus becomes essentially one of appropriation, an economic move within the aestheticized field of revolution, which would lead to a situation where "when all men are free these accomplishments [of 'civilization'] will be multiplied by the thousands: then we will have atomic energy to warm man not to burn him; machines to aid man not to cripple him"[320]. In appropriation, the form of revolution restates, uneasily, its more conventional aspects as a definitive takeover that re-directs the energy of power in re-purposed channels that represent the destruction of the symbols that used

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[317] It is a war whose modernity springs from the civilizatory impulse of the European West, with imperialism as its vanguard, and which in this case is perhaps modelled after the decimation of Native Americans. Resistance does not lose its World War II connotation, however, given its confrontation with an all-encompassing fascism, a fascism that is essentially structural.

[318] *Ibid*, p. 101.

[319] Herbert Marcuse, *op cit*, p. 5.

[320] *Black Mask No. 4,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036, box 14. None of the *Black Mask* issues have page numbering, but since they are only up to six pages long, with good text distribution, it is not really necessary to make the reference. Also, article titles will be noted for texts that are part of an article, otherwise no title will be in the reference.

to hold everything together[321]. As a technique, it differs from détournement in that it suggests a contradiction not of the existence of objects or images but of their use, which is to say a contradiction that stems from ideology. Thus, "new modes [of struggle] can be indicated only in negative terms because they would amount to the negation of the prevailing modes. […] Economic freedom would mean freedom from economy – from being controlled by economic forces and relationships; freedom from the daily struggle for existence, from earning a living."[322] Following Marcuse, a revolution must be total in order to end the need for revolution, and the sign of this totality is negative; appropriation pulls that negativity away from nihilism (though not too far) by providing a consciousness of being on par with history, of granting Aldo Tambellini's vision of the "primitives of the new era" a present tense that makes considerations of obsolescence sound out of place except when applied to those versions of revolution that are not autonomous (for appropriation paired with the philosophy of activism *seems* like autonomy) and deemed ideological, perpetuating the past (Leninism, Stalinism, even Maoism). This is why, whatever their differences with the Yippie movement or the San Francisco Diggers, BM and UAWMF respected them as *contemporaries*. It is also why for them the need for legitimacy as *the* revolutionary movement is almost non-existent, in stark contrast with the avant-garde political competition the SI developed over the years.

The next two terms to go over are 'community' and 'race'. These are present throughout all of the groups' existence and will benefit from a brief explanation of their meaning. Community, for example, is an appropriation of the criticism inherent to the hippie commune, but, as is now a common characteristic, *armed to the teeth*. Considering what has been said of nature, Reich's 'sexual revolution' referred to the substitution of patriarchal family for a "natural form" of the same[323], echoing UAWMF's appropriation of the term for their own organization, later on refining it into the theory of the affinity group as the "coming together out of mutual Need or Desire".[324]

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[321] As we shall see, the root of the problem with this radical view of aesthetics is that it can acquire a political configuration that could go *anywhere* in the scale of left and right, and the manner in which this ambiguity is dealt with by BM and UAWMF is of great interest.

[322] Herbert Marcuse, *op cit*, p. 6.

[323] Wilhelm Reich, *Revolución sexual*, p. 16. Translation mine.

[324] *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker,* 1968, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: TAM530, box 1, folder 62. Since there is only one issue of the magazine, the references hereafter will only be made to the magazine title and the article

Unlike King Mob, BM and UAWMF do not see criminality in itself as a key aspect of their revolt, and although they (especially UAWMF) would certainly welcome it as yet another front in the war, it is important to make a distinction. BM and UAWMF at no point aim to be criminal organizations, and in UAWMF's denomination as a "street gang" the criminality is played out not in the same sense of a wide, Bataillean economic disruption (as in King Mob's utilization of the criminal in order to undermine the logic of the commodity) but as an image of territorial action, an image of urban warfare. As such, there is no mirroring of the State but an anarchic, unregulated expression of neighbourhoods, a micro-political instance of what at the time was most closely associated with a youth (pop) culture brimming with nihilists. This is also where the line is drawn between UAWMF and the guerrillas of the 1970s: for the earlier the war is always total in scope, born of communion and a mass movement that is not to be led *only* in military terms.

As for race, it is integral to the groups as part of a greater vision of totality in which racism is the most flagrant form of an irrationality that is subtly supported by the kind of mysticism that operates with an inverted analogical thought (in other words, a *reactionary* form of analogy): as below, so above. *Black Mask*, however, which was primarily white in its racial composition, is often directed at non-whites, with the express intention to establish solidarity with their struggles across the country, pointing not only at the principle of a shared *repression* that remains to be cured, to manifest as self-knowledge, but also at the overarching racial division that impedes said solidarity, attempting to erase it by an identity extension that comes dangerously close to a merely rhetorical constitution of community in the form of a new class division, whether 'new proletariat' or 'nigger'[325]. Behind this is precisely Reich's idea of a struggle between mentalities, between psychological structures, turning race into a psycho-social artefact while confirming its effect in the attempt to create a new social category, a theoretical move that inevitably leaves little room for the flexibility the group demanded. By unifying races into a more abstract concept of class, the particularities of context become secondary, bringing the theory back to a much closer position to

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title the text is taken from if a title is available. For the full quote on the definition of the affinity group, see Chapter 2.

[325] See *Black Mask No. 8*, *Black Mask No. 9*.

orthodoxy, at least in relation to the politics of historical agents. Nevertheless, this uneasiness of 'separate camps in the same army' plays off variously over the course of the groups' life, sometimes asking for unification as the shared struggle of class and sometimes advocating for both a union and the *division of power*[326]. While the name of the group potentially indicates a relation to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*[327], the concept of race handled throughout the magazine is relatively straightforward, in the sense that it does not immediately involve the sophistication of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, and at most it explores the abolition of race through its sublimation into 'class'. However, it does conceive of race not solely as an identity, but as a social relation that produces alienation, and it also conceives that self-determination comes from a confrontation with the material conditions that configure racial experience, which leads to an appropriation of such materiality in order to allow an expression of the slave to emerge. This conception is much closer to that of the Black Panthers, with which Morea associated and which are heavily present throughout *Black Mask* in particular. Race is thus also a social field of action from which certain autonomy should be developed (as in Stokely Carmichael's "The Basis of Black Power" from 1966) through organizational procedures towards consciousness and community, the model after which the aforementioned 'division of power' was sometimes proposed by the artist collective.

2. Black Mask

One of the main expressions of Black Mask is found in the magazine edited from 1966 to 1968, consisting of ten numbers in total. This section will overview the entire series through the focus of three main research questions and their subsequent interpretations: organization as performance, organization as mass psychology, and organization as the waging of war. The first will look at the configurations under which an artistic-political revolutionary collective can be understood as performance, as the difficult extension of the limits of art as first practised by the futurists (at least in the range of influences studied here; the symbolists and others had done so before). In the same

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[326] See Ben Morea, "The Issue is Not the Issue", 1968, TAM530, box 1, folder 52; at the end he exclaims "All Power to the People! Black Power to the Black People and hip power to the hip people!"

[327] This is something claimed by Gavin Grindon in "Poetry Written in Gasoline", but the few sources that I was able to explore which go over the group's foundations contain no reference to this connection, including the available Ben Morea interviews. This is why I prefer to obviate this connection in favour of the group's connections to the Black Panthers, which is definitely present in the sources and the magazine itself.

sense, the group's writings reveal a concern with said extension that is canalised through organizational language and tropes, an urging of action that is, evidently, to be *performed* as a collective. The second question will attempt to elucidate how such organizational referents are deployed as ideology critique under the psychological terms set out by Wilhelm Reich, understood as 'mass psychology'. Under this idea, an organization becomes a platform for 'truth', as both an exemplary form and a provocation. The third will be perhaps the most striking, taking the mostly abstract militarism of the avant-garde into the domain of organization and its representation as truly an adventure in warfare.

2.1. Organization as performance

"The Futurist declaimer, [Marinetti] insisted, should declaim as much with his legs as with his arms."[328] This inclusion of the body as an integral part of the creative act is the very opening of a series of possibilities for expression that were hitherto inconceivable in the art-world, and it is an acceptance of the complexity of art's position within modernity. This position, the Futurists argued, is central to modernity in the way it generates tools and mind-sets to come to terms with an environment that is forever out of reach, surrounded by a technological reason that, as is the case with economics, escapes any and all attempts at *total* comprehension. Performance becomes an individual, personal interaction with the times that allows, even if for a moment, a relation to a whole, "a method that enabled radicals to devise actions that could address simultaneously the structures of language, economics, politics, social institutions, cultural history, and the body."[329]

With this in mind, I will be using Mike Sell's analysis of Living Theatre's performance to look at Black Mask's texts and actions. Living Theatre was, after all, another source for Ben Morea and the collective through which he first came upon anarchism[330]. The author says that:

> As both practice and discourse, countercultural performance addressed the need (1) to identify and
> disrupt existing social, cultural, and economic boundaries, (2) to systematically challenge existing

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[328] Roselee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the present*. New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1979, p. 14.
[329] Mike Sell, *op cit*, p. 16.
[330] Ben Morea gravitated around the collective ever since 1959, when it was participating in protests against air raid shelters in New York. When the Living Theatre presented *The Brig* in 1963, Morea said "that's where I "cut my teeth" on radical realization. I began to recognize the potential for change." Johan Kugelberg, *op cit*, p. 3-5.

discourses of experience, everyday life, and the politics of culture, (3) to produce new ways of thinking and acting that effectively valued aspects of experience, everyday life, and culture systematically excluded from the mainstream, and (4) to ground all of this in specific social and cultural situations.[331]

This is also deeply related with what King Mob called 'atmospherics' when describing the operations of their American counterparts, a technique that, funnily enough, is never mentioned in UAWMF discourse. However, their identification of such a technique can give here an analytical tool with which to interpret some of the more philosophical underpinnings to UAWMF's direct precedent in Black Mask. Performance, for the latter, is a very wide instantiation of the politicization of aesthetics, meaning here a programmatic immersion of avant-garde principles of art, while for the earlier it dissolves into praxis and turns the creative act into the revolutionary act, moving into the terrain of the aestheticization of politics[332]. That both concepts maintain a reciprocal relationship in these groups is clear, giving their activity overall a complex character full of contradictions that cannot be just unravelled by analysis. In any case, the performativity of the language of organization comes to the fore in the rhetorical excesses and in the manners in which they engage the issue of internationalism, opposing its humanistic universalizing expression in the peace movement with an image of race/class war being waged locally, not only in social and economic terms but also much more importantly in culture. Therefore, atmospherics brings with it the implication of modifying the very air we breathe, an unseen agent that is integral to life on the planet, in a way a vital connection that is abstract and concrete, universal and otherwise. In this kind of performance, an analogical operation takes place: change the space of the surroundings, change the space everywhere else, *one* culture at a time, *all* cultures at a time. In BM and UAWMF, to perform is inevitably to revolt, for being is enacted as a force of consciousness that is able to conceive, artistically, of the world as one that can be possibly re-made in its image.

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[331] *Ibidem.*

[332] See note 175. Regarding this concept, at this point it is important to mention that Benjamin's theory of fascism ties war closely with the aestheticization of politics; however, later theorists such as Jacques Rancière have argued not only that there is always an aesthetics at work in the political (a point which I agree with) but that there are different possible types of aestheticizations of the political. See Sami Khatib, "The Aestheticization of Politics: Rereading Benjamin's Theory of Fascism", 2015, available in https://www.academia.edu/12225411/The_Aestheticization_of_Politics_Rereading_Benjamin_s_Theory_of_Fascism , accessed July 25, 2017.

In one of Black Mask's very first actions as a collective, organization became a symbol: "As creative men, we say "destroy the museums" [and closed New York's Museum of Modern Art in October 10, 1966 because] it is symbolic to us of the total suppression of man. [And] a man strikes at that which directly confronts him."[333] The response to an institutional symbol such as the MoMA is to negate its role as arbiter of value, which, by dressing up as city service workers and hanging a 'MUSEUM CLOSED' sign on the entrance (fig. 3.2), complete with construction-project typography, Black Mask pretty much straightforwardly protested as an element of *divisive* urbanism and a detriment to creativity.
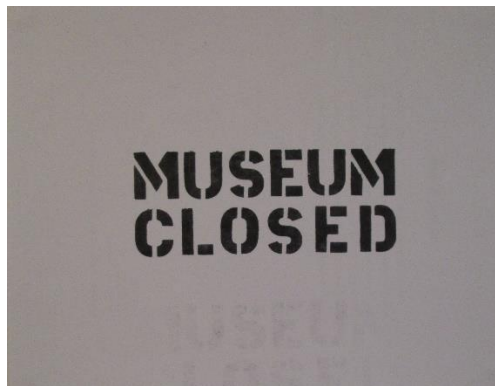
Fig. 3.2. "Museum Closed", October 10, 1966. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

If the MoMA symbolizes a fragmentation of cultural power, its closure by merely a couple of artists engenders its re-taking in the paradoxical simplicity of a performance, which is to say the kind of art that, with the Futurists, Black Mask understood to belong to the streets, to the city's mechanical acceleration and not to the realm of artistic objects. The MoMA's (and with it, all museums') reification of revolutionary currents into pleasurable cultural capital is, in this way, denied any and all relevance by re-directing the attention of spectators to a living polemic taking place at the moment when Black Mask hung up the sign. It affirms the life of the city in the possibility of imagining the museum's demolition, and by establishing a certain undetermined collectivity (two people dressed the same, handing out pamphlets) it presents organization as the symbolic opposite of an institution, de-structuring social order as such into a matter of Artaudian

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[333] *Black Mask No. 1*, 1966, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.

theatrical affinity, a deeply personal and yet deeply public relationship that cannot help but modify everything around it.

This vision of the totality, in its mythical quality, comes to resemble Aldo Tambellini's concept of 'black' as both ultimate negation and affirmation, as the erasure of history by a tidal wave that is irredeemably modern in its primitivism. The cover of *Black Mask #2* (fig. 3.3), an image of an eclipse that represents all that Morea and Hahne worked with while in Group Center, is thus underlined by a text entitled "Total Revolution".
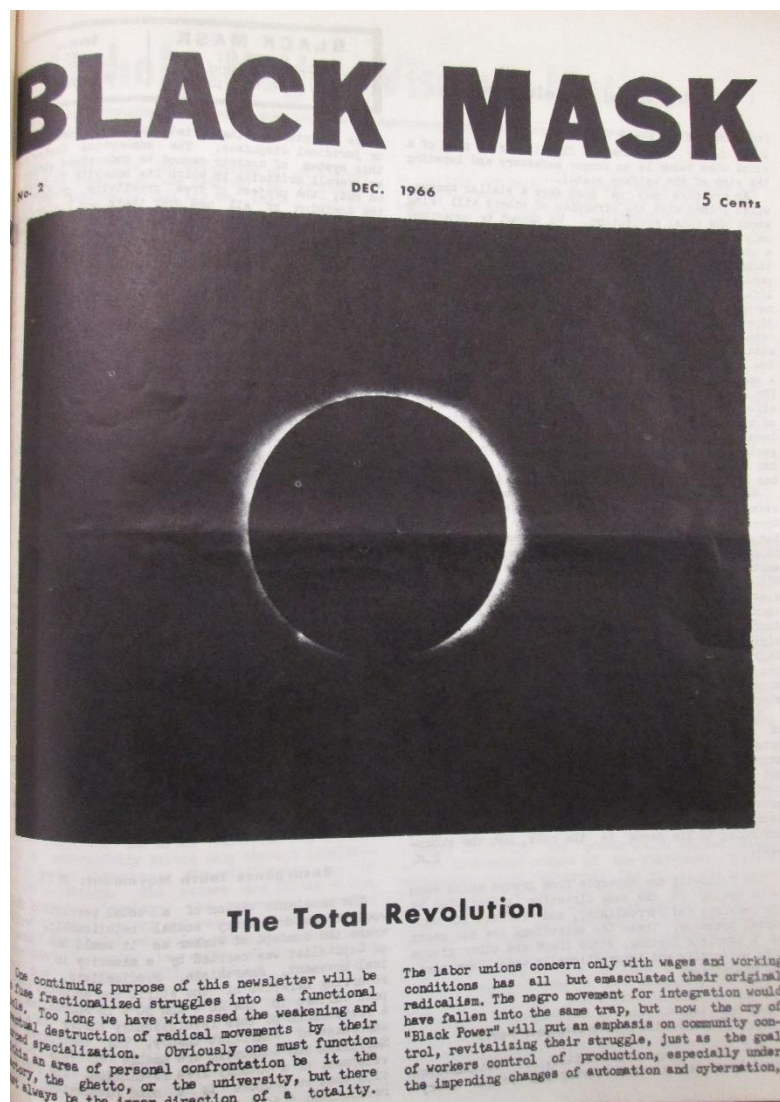
Fig. 3.3. *Black Mask No. 2*, 1966, Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

Focused on organization, the text states that "one continuing purpose of this newsletter will be to fuse factionalized struggles into a functional whole. Too long we have witnessed the weakening and eventual destruction of radical movements by their forced specialization."[334] The centrifugal force of Tambellini's 'black' creates a unity that is not that of modern universality, but a "functional whole" that is implicitly understood as an organism that acts and works in accordance with its most basic refusal to die, expressed as the creative urge to revolution. In consequence, its way of declaiming with arms and legs would later open up the violence of the screaming voice, of the 'words in freedom' that *are* machine-gun blasts, to the performative ugliness of the violence of the punch and kick. It is the staging of street fighting as perhaps the most extreme aspect of theatrical cruelty, immersed as it is in life-or-death impulses, (clumsily) acrobatic improvisation, and the sheer discipline of focus: a bodily creativity that best represents life as struggle. But let us not get ahead of ourselves; for now, the arm and leg are a metaphorical way of referring to the constituent *cells* of a revolution that is coming, of which Black Mask would be the heart and mind, a massive, great antagonist worthy of the Leviathan. The organicist metaphor also finds its 'black' reflection in the anarchist naturalism that is key in BM and UAWMF's discourse, a naturalism that holds totality as its own and totalitarianism as its artificial other:

> The aesthetic revolution of today must be a part of the total revolution. A revolution which will bring about a society where the arts will be an integral part of life, as in primitive society, and not an appendage to wealth. A society where man has control of his life and the economic wealth of his community. A society free of bureaucracy, both totalitarian and bourgeois. A society where "to each according to his needs" is the rule, not the exception.[335]

The equivalence between the 'totalitarian' and the 'bourgeois' is an instance not only of a kind of political thought prevalent amongst post-war thinkers of a radical-left persuasion, but also of the (populist) rhetorical work of atmospherics – bureaucracy is yet another institution to which a symbolic opposition must be set within cultural parameters that work their way into a modification of economic and social positions, establishing ideology critique as the basic unit of performance, of creative action. In a way, it is a wider version of 'MUSEUM CLOSED', an intuitive unitary urbanism that seeks to build and demolish its way through the mass-psychological deception of Cold War politics conceived in its true singularity as *civilization*, as an environment in which the

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[334] *Black Mask No. 2,* 1966, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.
[335] *Ibidem.*

air does not nurture a healthy organism but a necrotic one. "There are emerging forces; cybernation, growing weaponry, and world-wide revolution which we are affected by and which we in turn must affect. We can and must re-shape the total environment; physical and psychological, social and aesthetic, leaving no boundaries to divide man."[336] The sculpting of this total environment needs politics as instrument, a politics that is essentially relational instead of contractual, which in more artistic terms means a politics based on performance – the concreteness of the now – instead of on the abstract, gradual connections made by art objects – the low-key, eventual influence of museums and galleries. In this opposition is also contained one of community against society, of black against white, of the dialectical against the formal logic (at least in its one-dimensional guise). The Black Mask, as mentioned above, becomes a potent symbol of this primitive set of *demands* as the negation of civilization in the coming of a 'new age', a mask of death that spells doom for illusory freedom and the false creativity of mass destruction. It is, in short, the shock of truth in the name of life: "the hippies have become victims of their own ideology. In their rejection of the grand spectacle – Hollywood/Madison Ave./America – they have accepted a spectacle no less destructive, one which substitutes synthetic play for real life, while at the same time they have become tools of those against whom they have supposedly rebelled."[337] So says one of Black Mask's flyers, which has, on the flip side, a drawing of a black vortex over which the word 'NOW' lingers (fig. 3.4; *cf.* with 3.1).

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[336] *Black Mask No. 3,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.
[337] Flyer entitled "Freedom is not a gift from Captain Fink", undated (probably 1967), Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 1, folder 32.

Fig. 3.4. Backside of "Freedom is not a gift from Captain Fink", 1967. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.
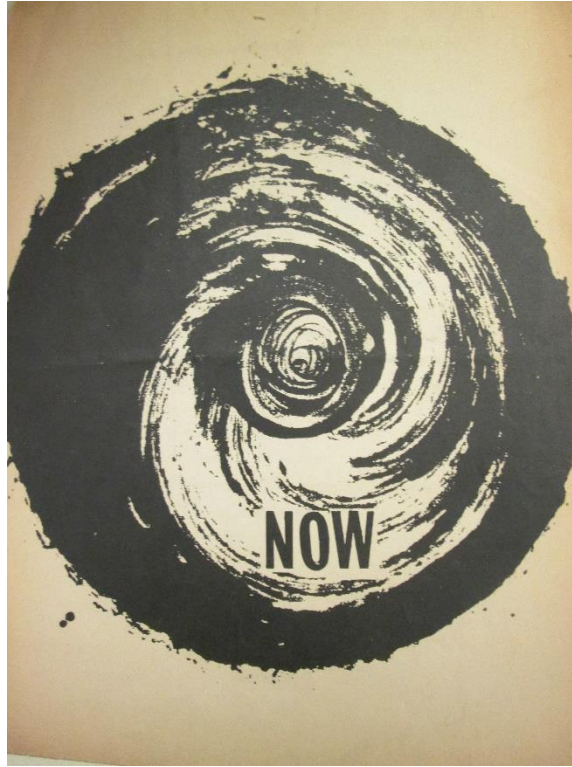
In the same line of thought, the cover of *Black Mask #4* (fig. 3.5) illustrates the idea as the registry of the "WALL ST. IS WAR ST." action of February 10, 1967. In it, the collective marched through New York's financial district completely dressed in black while carrying various giant (presumably plastic) skulls on sticks. The leaflet they gave out that day states that "bull markets of murder deal in a stock exchange of death. Profits rise to the ticker tape of your dead sons. Poison gas RAINS on Vietnam. You cannot plead "WE DID NOT KNOW"."[338]

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[338] Rollo Romig, "Occupying Wall Street in 1967", in *The New Yorker*, http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2011/10/black-mask-wall-street-1967.html#slide_ss_0=1, accessed on May 23, 2014. For more details of this action, see also the pictures in Gavin Grindon, *op cit*.

Fig. 3.5. *Black Mask No. 4*, 1967. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

This staging performs the revelation of truth as a funeral march as much as a sort of *danse macabre* while the leaflet exclaims "BUT YOU TOO ARE THE VICTIMS!". 'Black' and death are the common features of the group as it moved through the city, and the photograph captures the unnerving quality of what would seem its utter silence: the declamation is bodily, a dérive that maps a geography of lies and engages it by haunting its confines. Renaming Wall St to War St is a straightforward expository tactic, while the march centrifugally unites the viewers, the victims, in the sudden vision of death as (dislocating, shocking) truth. With such an appearance, the group

resembled an esoteric cult, and the possible discomfort caused by their passing could be connected to the sinister character of the cult as the perversion of religious experience, as the representation of a close, tight-knit community that generally stays out of sight, but that when it emerges from the depths of consciousness it triggers a fear born of the uncertainty of the unknown, of the unpredictability of mysticism at its most fanatical. The cult also speaks in hidden truths, and Black Mask sets out to "speak [the enemy's] name to the world – "War" St."[339], treating Wall St like a demon to be exorcised, its 'true' name reserved for other demons (a mass unconsciousness) and for those who have dared to tread the demonologist's path of heretical knowledge. The danger of speaking the devil's name, however, is not so much that of granting him life or power, but that of a generalized, indifferent acknowledgement: "Wall Street remains and the war goes on."[340]

Even so, the theatrical approach to the staging of truth never stops aiming beyond the dissolution of the assumed actor/spectator divide (translated also as activity and a misunderstood, despised passivity), attempting to appropriate the surroundings in the course of performance, in the same way it opened politics up for the Futurists. Through this expansion of consciousness, the indifference of space is transformed into something *valuable*, into something that can be granted a cultural (and by extension, social, economic, etc.) set of referents with which to interpret and modify it according to knowledge methods that almost always arise during artistic activity. This is why "man must seize direct control of his environment – socially, economically and culturally. We can recognize no power outside of the people, no elite […] which determines the political direction, no separation between politics and the rest of life. The same must be done culturally – a "total culture needs no experts, no artists, it needs only men."[341] The means to do so, then, is the performativity of organization, the criticism of both improvisational and rule-bound sociality in everyday life, most of which has been naturalized into common sense and made universal(izing) by institutions. Intriguingly, this does not lead, as that quote (and Neumann's account)[342] shows, to the dislocation of gender issues as integral to atmospherics, embracing instead (in Black Mask) the SI's position regarding what they believe is the kind of organization inherently compatible with

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[339] *Black Mask No. 4,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.
[340] *Ibidem.*
[341] *Black Mask No. 7,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.
[342] "The vicissitudes of male emotional life dominated the Motherfuckers. Women played a distinctly ancillary role in all matters," Osha Neumann, *op cit*, p. 58.

a liberating performance of collectivity – the workers' councils[343]. To this they add another kind of performative group, the 'non-workers' councils', which presumably enact a dialectical operation between the time of work and the time outside of it as the possibility of side-stepping technological rationality and its totalizing view of work. Together, these two types of councils would represent an anarchic becoming under which "black revolt and white resistance become one"[344], made up of distinct *signals* that communicate the truth of the devil's name by way of their existence as alternative political configurations of life. These signals would be, like Vaneigem's erotic communication, simultaneously hidden and visible depending on the subject that is looking, the most basic condition of survival in guerrilla warfare like the one that was taking place in Vietnam: since resistance was codified, for the sake of security entire villages were slaughtered by the US army.

This 'obscurity' brings us to *Black Mask #10* (fig. 3.6), in which "EVERYONE CAN BE A DADAIST" is proclaimed alongside an image of English artist Henry Moore's *The Helmet* (1939). This is in turn underlined by the headline of "Lasime Tushinde Mbilashaka" (Swahili for "We shall conquer without a doubt"), a letter from black activist H. Rap Brown, who was, at the period, leader of a coalition between the Black Panther Party and a university students' organization that opposed the war in Vietnam.

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[343] "In the struggle between power and the new proletariat, workers' and non-workers' councils will be the organs through which men rise to resolve political, social and economic questions in function of their own lives. The separation between false categories, as the separation between work and leisure time, will eventually be dissolved." See *Black Mask No. 7*. It is interesting, in retrospective, to see how this last part *has* taken place already, except not in the way Black Mask imagined. Instead, the separation has been dissolved by collapsing 'leisure time' into work. BM members also wrote variously about the issue of work and its rejection at different times over the course of the existence of these groups, perspectives which, for example in "Another Carnival of Left Politics", sometimes reveal idiosyncratic associations between "automation, cybernation, and free love on the streets". See Ben Morea, Ron Hahne, *Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: The Incomplete Works of Ben Morea, Ron Hahne*, *and the Black Mask Group*, Oakland, PM Press, 2011, p. 130-131. However, my interest at this point in the thesis is to focus on the *Black Mask* magazine's discourse. In any case, the debate about the refusal of work that includes the SI's own views has continued over the decades up until our times, and includes the Autonomia Operaria movement in the 1970s and further, American anarchists such as Bob Black ("The Abolition of Work", 1985), and most recently discussions on post-capitalism, automation, and work meaninglessness by authors and collectives such as CrimethInc. (*Work*, 2011), David Frayne (*The Refusal of Work*, 2015), Nick Srnicek & Alex Williams (*Inventing the Future,* 2016), David Graeber ("On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs", 2013), Harry Cleaver (*Rupturing the Dialectic*, 2017), among others.
[344] *Black Mask No. 9,* 1968, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.

Henry Moore said of *The Helmet* that it was "a kind of protection thing […] and it became a recording of things inside other things. The mystery of semiobscurity where one can only half distinguish something. In the helmet you do not quite know what is inside."[345] Black Mask state that to be a Dadaist is to participate in "every form of revolutionary subversion […]: hysteria, madness, abuse, black humor [...]"[346] It is an activity that is driven from below, from the layers of emotional life that are covered up by what Marcuse called one-dimensional Reason. It is a reason that ascribes meaning to everything within the reduced framework of a positivistic progress, of an objectivity that deploys its material oppression as psychological repression. Pairing these distinct elements together, it could be said that Reason's helmet protects the wearer from him or herself, from the *animal* that aches for release; however, if subverted, the helmet becomes Moore's "mystery of semiobscurity", a breakdown of communication in the face of political antagonism, the revolutionary's (the animal's) last resource to get through any battle alive. Subversion, in essence a military term, is a fight from within, an overturning of common sense that, in the traditional image of class warfare, befits those who are not yet capable of open belligerence, those

Fig. 3.6. *Black Mask No. 10*, 1968. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

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[345] N/A, in the Henry Moore Foundation Website, http://www.henry-moore.org/works-in-public/world/uk/edinburgh/scottish-national-gallery-of-modern-art/the-helmet-1939-40-lh-212 , accessed May 24, 2014.

[346] *Black Mask No. 10,* (1968) Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.

without mass support, perhaps even those without any support at all. It is in this sense that Black Mask then allude, importantly, to the German Dadaist Johann Baader; "schizophrenic, [Baader] becomes the key figure of Berlin Dada. He is Tzara's "Idiot" transcended: the Idiot/Madman/Guerilla in life – the man without aim or prospects, the "lowest" of all, the shit of America."[347] Using the terms laid out in this composition, Baader no longer carries the helmet of Reason, and because of that he is *sovereign*; his repression dissolves since he no longer has an aim or prospects; because he is free of all concerns beyond the care for a paradise on earth he is *one and every* man (and woman), the lowest of the low. Ideologically speaking, this coincides with the view that Native Americans and blacks are the lowest of the low in the United States at this point in history, belonging to the lumpenproletariat, regardless of their economic status, systematically oppressed to keep them from wealth and parity before the law. Accompanied with Rap Brown's letter, for whom "aggression is the order of the day",[348] subversion retakes its military origin and summarily deploys a violence that targets everything, phrased as a will to power, as a Dadaist conquest that shall "rejoice in [America's] destruction and ruin".[349] This is a rhetorical fulfilment of a declaration of war inscribed in the magazine cover's distribution: BLACK is Dada's impulse towards an absolute affirmation of nothingness, MASK is Moore's modernist sculpture as the inversion of reasonable argument, as Rap Brown's negation of government as "the enemy of Mankind".[350] Thus the group's name finds its performative truth in the promise of a revolutionary future anchored on the aesthetics of politics and its avant-garde partner in crime, "the scent of apocalypse."[351]

Moore's helmet pops up across the last issue of the magazine, first as the mass-psychological idea that "the enemy is within as well as without"[352] (an idea that is ambivalent in the face of its utilization in witch-hunting, or in its more immediate catastrophic past, anti-Semitism), and then in the dialectic that holds realization as eventual self-negation to be the path towards the truth of self-consciousness. The performance of this criticism is vital: "learning how to be revolutionary

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[347] *Ibid.*
[348] *Ibid.*
[349] *Ibid.*
[350] *Ibid.*
[351] *Ibid.*
[352] *Ibidem.*

includes learning how to move in a revolutionary way."[353] An organization that takes all of this into its constitution must as a result look like the exaggerated shadow of the State, like a war brooding right at the heart of every home in the entire country, every body as site of an unseen struggle between utopia and dystopia. In the physical remoteness of its realization, such an organization is endlessly performative, in terms of an effective, if wide, rhetorical modification of spaces[354] as much as in terms of a destruction of artistic objects in their common-sensical position of the beauty of function and the function of beauty – the State, as both object and stage, is torn apart by the process of organizational, performative inquiry. Even then, the conspiratorial tone of this performance does not lead directly to the IWWC, but to the much more militant, anarchist, and publicly violent UAWMF. It is, perhaps, the result of Black Mask's heeding the call of Rap Brown to an open war.

2.2. Organization as Mass Psychology

Ever since *Black Mask #1* (and, as we have seen, also ever since Group Center) the collective is an open supporter of the radical sector of the civil rights movement in the form of a close reading of the Black Panthers not so much as a party but as a group that is potentially similar in principle regarding the politics of aesthetics. It can be described simply: an image is knowledge, and it can be true or false, as much as it can acquire value through context. The language with which this value is constructed becomes complex as it enters different usages, and its 'environmental' character allows its modification by artistic means (performance) as well as an analysis of the behaviour – of the subjectivity – that it produces through an approach to psychology. However basic, this approach works through an understanding that images and the language they speak come to configure a bodily relation with the world, expressed in a variety of everyday thoughts and doings, extending far into the fabric of society as mass movements. Black Mask's support of the Panthers is a recognition of the toxic contradiction inherent to an image of freedom based on slavery, an ideological unification that in its lack of coherence and its anti-Rational rationalistic core rings false. In *Black Mask #1*, the letter of support, accompanied by Frederick Douglass quotes (one of the most important abolitionists of the 19th century and a black man), implies a

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[353] *Ibidem.*
[354] "The object of ghetto struggles is to destroy the ghettos; the object of student struggles to destroy schools." *Ibidem.*

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confrontation between what is true and what is said is true from the perspective of 'the slaves'; looking upward, there is a clandestine set of relations that, as said in the last section, works in public and in hiding, in this case the knowledge of truth. This community, based on such hidden/public knowledge, has the mass psychological advantage of being underestimated by those who propagate false imagery, in the sense that they constitute a few amongst the many who invariably accept and let themselves be constituted by falseness, blending into the average psychological profile where the statistical reason of power sees no disruption. This is perhaps a very similar to that developed in the notion of a "street gang with analysis" – Douglass's knowledge born from the experience of slavery is mirrored in the 'lumpenproletarian' knowledge of Black Mask's members. Against the bourgeois/proletarian success-driven learning of schools and colleges, therein lies an opposition exemplified in both Neumann's and Morea's lives as drop-outs and failures: this knowledge, like slave knowledge, is auto-didactic, individual instead of collective/mass, as well as *born against* oppression in the womb of alienating work and poverty. In 'authenticity' they have found truth, in a direct relation, perhaps even fusion, between the inner and the outer, the mind and the body as they degrade under the weight of an ideology that constantly gears mass behaviour towards the naturalization of a hierarchy, understood, first and foremost, as an image, as an artistic product.

This is how the inclusion of a Laszlo Moholy-Nagy text in this first issue, "Vision in Motion" (1947), could be connected to psychology:

> The true artist is the grindstone of the sense; he sharpens eyes, mind and feeling; he interprets ideas and concepts through his own media. In the midst of vast social controversies he cannot escape that task. He has to take sides and proclaim his stand; indeed the artist has a formative ideological function, otherwise his work would be only an exercise of skill in composition. Hitler was aware of this. He propagandized trash, he tried to destroy modern art, science, and philosophy as the greatest sources of opposition to his vicious system of oppression.[355]

The reference to fascism becomes a demand for politics, for the artist to assume responsibility for the images created, to assume a commitment to truth as the opposite of "propagandized trash". Moholy-Nagy continues:

> Politics freed from graft, party connotations, or more transitory tactics, is mankind's method of realizing ideas for the welfare of the community. Such a "weltanschaung" is transformed by the

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[355] *Black Mask No. 1*.

arts into emotional form, and becomes retroactive in the realm of conscious existence. This suggests that not only the conscious but also the subconscious mind absorbs social ideas which are then expressed in the specific media of the arts.[356]

The importance of the truth-as-welfare is, therefore, that it must be realized so that the whole of psychological existence – and therefore material existence – is modified according to politics freed from its own imagery of party composition, untrue political rivalries, and so on. Under these terms, an artists' group must be an exercise in ideology critique, in the analysis and explanation of the discourse composed by the myriad images produced by society, which are understood to be integral to any and all subjectivity. Its own image must coincide with the performance of truth, and that inevitably leads to an engagement with the public-as-mass, with the view of the totality that had been revealed not only by Marxist thinkers and revolutionaries but also by fascists. Its role in a way of producing knowledge becomes affirmed in the development of social consciousness, and so Black Mask comes to represent an 'organ of the press' in the same way King Mob did.
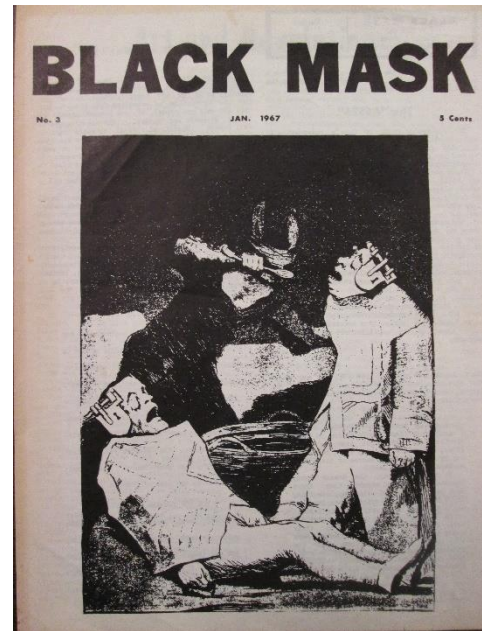
Fig. 3.7. *Black Mask No. 3*, 1967. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

The Enlightened quality of this endeavour is reflected in the cover chosen for *Black Mask #3* (fig. 3.7), "Los Chinchillas" (1799), which is # 50 of Francisco de Goya's *Caprichos* series. The manuscripts of the time that specify the contents of the image refer to it as conceiving of ignorance as the reduction of the world's knowledge into an authoritative genealogy of sources. One of those interpretations is relevant here: "Los necios preciados de nobles se entregan a la haraganería y superstición, y cierran con candados su entendimiento, mientras los alimenta groseramente la

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[356]   *Ibidem*.

ignorancia."[357] Enough has been said by better authors about these pictures, and what is of interest here is Black Mask's use of it as an indication of identity, a political move that describes who the magazine is for and who it is against, in the sense that it establishes 'high' and 'low' within an epistemological framework developed as critique. That *other* education is centred on an irrationality that disguises stupidity and selfishness (the figures do not open their eyes to see each other restrained by ideological convictions) under the cover of nobility and strength, an aristocratic naturalization. The "Wall St is War St" action is detailed in this issue, and it becomes an urgent call for the mass rejection of educational self-delusion, since "peace advocates are certainly (for the most part) well intentioned, but without an accompanying understanding of the profit of war and the economic needs which it satisfies, they cannot hope to see peace. A system based on internal and external exploitation is itself the enemy."[358] In other words, the peace organizations will never be enough because they are only a slightly negative reflection of the sort of knowledge that fragments vision so much it cannot perceive the totality that has produced it, a fragmentation that is primarily psychological in nature. Reichian autonomy, after all, demands a full-bodied antagonism that never stops understanding the enemy as just as *complete* as itself, as unhealthy as it itself is healthy.

Fig. 3.8. *Black Mask No. 5*, 1967. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York.

Black Mask #5 (fig. 3.8) features Joan Miró's *Head of a Woman* (1938) on the cover, a painting that resulted from the artist's anguish over the Civil War raging across his homeland of Spain. The horror of the picture, that of war-torn existence, is weaponized as the attack on a lack of

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[357] "Those stupid people of noble reputation are given to sleaziness and superstition, and they close with locks their understanding while being rudely fed by ignorance." Edith Helman, *Transmundo de Goya.* Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1983, p 54. Translation mine.
[358] *Black Mask No. 3*.

responsibility, a lack of *heart*, indicated by the Hans Arp quote that underlines the image: "The normally constituted bourgeoisie possesses rather less imagination than a worm and has, in place of a heart, a larger-than-life-sized corn which only troubles him when there is a change in the weather – the stock-exchange weather."[359] The monstrosity of a deeply existential torrent of emotions is both the result and the counterpart of the bourgeoisie's passivity and conformity in the face of human pain, but the way it is articulated in the cover of the magazine denotes a grotesque sensibility: it is horrifying *and* funny at the same time, Miró's picture suddenly transformed by Arp's text into a carnage-filled cartoon where a well-dressed bourgeoisie cannot see the woman mutate before their eyes into the very image of an all-powerful suffering because they're busy imagining nothing at all. It is, most definitely, a black-humorous cover that appeals to the reader's capacity to synthesise, to make out the point at which expectations (about the nature of revolution and the place of the artist in it) are subverted enough to give a hint at an identity whose humour parts from a knowledge of truth, a truth that is as sad as it is absurd – the joke mobilises truth from the gut, and it is in the gut where appropriation takes place.

If the gut, in its lowness and concreteness, provides a point of departure for the subversion of identification that is produced by appropriation, then the question of mass organization becomes an argument for the psychological alignment with a categorization made by BM on rhetorical grounds: "the essence of revolutionary struggle has always been the demand for power to quantitatively and qualitatively change our lives; therefore it is not a question of sympathy with the downtrodden […] but a question of identification: we are the downtrodden."[360] 'The downtrodden' is, basically, a wide conception of that which is not the bourgeoisie, articulating the sociality of different groups under a single populist sign that enables a certain political antagonism. As such, it pre-empts any efforts made to *divide*, as the social-scientific analyses of class or race would do, and while it closes the path to Reichian mass-psychological organization, it opens a diversion of it towards the kind that is effectively the domain of fascist movements in their claims for an overwhelming, instinctual identification with one or more concepts based on some type of segregation and differentiation (racial, national, religious...). Still, it is at this point where an

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[359] *Black Mask No. 5,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.
[360] *Black Mask No. 9*, "Demonstrations: A Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory".

important difference is made by the intervention of Wilhelm Reich's texts within the magazine, and the gut as another entry-point for (repressed) sexuality:

> The perversions of living are not whimsical: they are integral parts of society as a whole. The fact that certain pathologies (which are truly perversions of life) appear to exist in an entirely individual way having no relationship to the social and political structure of society is a consequence of the intensity of repression as well as deeply rooted fears of comprehending the profound misery of our lives.[361]

Sexuality is the truth of a healthy life, and its repression generates an economy of false needs and desires that find expression in pathological perversions which anchor subjectivity to a deep irrationality, one where morality is mythologised and leaves no room for the questioning of its (legal) principles. Under this view, when in *Black Mask #10* a text reads "Berlin Dada released a libidinal energy capable of revolutionizing reality. [...] and now we must pass through the end of art into politics, equipped with the play instinct in order to destroy politics"[362], one of the consequences is that the identification becomes *libidinal* in a context phrased in pretty much the same way Reich referred to orgasm, which is directly associated with a healing character attributed to the loss of the ego. This loss, as the burning off of the falsities brought on subjects by the nature of character as self-repression, represents one of the clearest paths to the truth of the totality that is beyond myth, a wholeness that does not restrict Reason but amplifies it, that is not one-dimensional but dialectical, and it explains the (failed) attempt of Black Mask to trigger a revolutionary consciousness in its appeal to the "nigger revolution [or[the total expression of a new emerging class of dispossessed."[363] Against the Marxist denomination of the 'lumpen', a point of departure for rejection, Black Mask involves the horizon of labour made obsolete by automation to make a vague opening of the category, talking not only of "non-workers" but also of "automated ex-workers", as well as inserting race right in the middle of its articulation as an element of counterpoint: "the question of "Nigger" transcends race and becomes one of class."[364] The libidinal energy of the Detroit riots, the orgasmic qualities of an economy of destructive potlatch, is read simultaneously in the key of universalization and totality, of one and two-dimensionality, and this incompatibility is what perhaps leads to this appropriation of "nigger", of this re-calibration of its content, to be unsuccessful, since it evacuates its historicity in favour of an uneasy extension of its

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[361] *Ibid*, "Revolution and Psychoanalysis and Revolution".
[362] *Black Mask No. 10*, 1968, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.
[363] *Ibid,* "From Revolt to Revolution".
[364] *Ibidem*.

meaning that is more ideological than historical[365]. In any case, the "transcendence of race" might be understood here as the reversal of the fascist's vision of racial unity; this union is born of the mass-psychological loss of the ego, of looking at Watts engulfed in flames and seeing the downfall of "white racist civilization" as carnival, as a festivity where there is little space for anything other than (dialectical, equalizing) truth.

2.3. Organization as war-waging
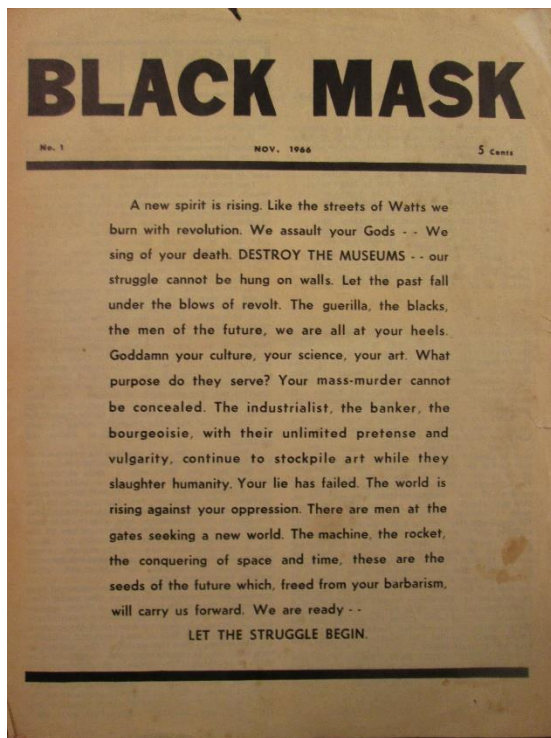
Fig. 3.8. *Black Mask No. 1*, 1966. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York

Even if the avant-gardes are always already military in some aspect or other, few are the ones that integrate the anti-rational, anti-humanistic core of militarism to their discourse, which is to say that almost none of them follow the Futurists into what in the eyes of many is the most embarrassing extension of their ideological mélange – war conceived as an adventurous march into the future. Black Mask defines its intentions ever since the cover of the first magazine (fig. 3.8): "A new spirit is rising. Like the streets of Watts we burn with revolution. We assault your Gods... We sing of your death. DESTROY THE MUSEUMS... our struggle cannot be hung on walls. Let the past fall under the blows of revolt. The guerrilla, the blacks, the men of the future, we are all at your heels."[366] The cover of *Black Mask #1* is the shortest of the group's manifestos, and it is perhaps the one that most endured, since the rhetoric of warfare made it over the years through to UAWMF in 1968, lessening to an extent until the formation of the IWWC in late 1969[367]. It is also one of the group's most direct, clear declarations

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[365]   The term's meaning was stable in its association with dispossession, but contested in its more concrete, usually racial aspects. See, for example Jerry Farber's "The Student as Nigger" of 1967, or Pierre Vallières *White Niggers of America* of 1968.

[366]   *Black Mask No. 1*.

[367]   It could be said that the language of war is transformed along with the subjectivity of the Motherfucker, leaving its modernity behind and expressing itself as a legendary kind of struggle, as a Gothic fantasy of apocalypse, where

of war, a threatening gesture that finds no parallel in the other magazines of this thesis, and it is a stark revelation of another dimension of avant-garde thinking that is usually left unexplored and which consists of an adherence to the classical Clausewitzian notion of politics as war (politics by other means). This enactment of the avant-garde's militaristic confrontation with society and culture presents a historical panorama that evolves as another instance of the mid-century transformation of modern warfare, with its emphasis on visibility (everything *can* be televised), its technological follies (*seen* in Vietnam and Cuba) and its keen concern with the relation between theory and practice as a primary logic of physical conquest and domination that possibly floods over culture as well. Theory and practice as strategy and tactics acquire under a modernist lens a characteristic 'civilizatory' output – complete control of a given situation, the way to the future paved upon the corpse of chance, of a *reactionary* 'nature'. This Futurist understanding of war is carried by Black Mask and later UAWMF into their organizations as another expression of the total revolution, and the background of (the edges of) the art-world, performance, and mass psychology provides a series of basic differences with other radical groups that later comprised 'urban guerrillas', as was the case of the Angry Brigade in the UK and The Weather Underground in the US, both of which assimilate the fiery style of negation of their immediate precursors in King Mob and the Motherfuckers but which have completely left artistic references behind. In contrast with the guerrillas, the Motherfuckers could be said to see war as Marinetti's declamation with arms and legs, conceiving total revolution as strategy, with hand-to-hand combat as well as provocative performances corresponding to tactics. In Black Mask, the tactics, for a lack of members, are an elevation of rhetoric to the point of an intense symbolism that craftily weaves deception and presence (as precise strikes) together to form an image of impending collapse, of the inexorable coming of *the future*. This is not to say that Black Mask extolled war as such in the same way in which the Futurists did, but that the group does conceptualize violence in a manner that does give it primacy as part of revolutionary conflict. This has different implications than for other avant-gardes that similarly saw violence as a means to an end (constructivism, Berlin Dada), at least in terms of integrating it into the core of its organizational articulation, as will be argued throughout this section, as the first step in a war against capitalism.

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there is an army of monstrous beings lurking unseen at the edge of a dark forest. A very rational war, then, becomes irrational, trading the logic of formations and positioning, of war as gaming, for terror and an orgasmic, virile existential threat, or war as myth-making.

Black Mask's cover-manifesto will be paired with the MoMA action as a first attack, as the announcement not only of the political divide but of a new battlefield in a new front in a new war, that of total liberation. The message is precise: "On Monday, October 10 at 12.30 pm we will close the Museum of Modern Art. This symbolic action is taken at a time when America is on a path of total destruction, and signals the opening of another front in the world-wide struggle against suppression."[368] Note the use of the words 'symbolic' and 'signals'; the action is symbolic because it is strategic, and its tactical deployment consists of establishing a communication line to the war's ultimate aim as well as to any and all undefined allies. To the question of 'why museums?' (and not other, more conventional – military – targets) Black Mask responds that

> nowhere do we say that others should start here, or for that matter that they should abandon their present course to join us, in fact quite to the contrary we state that we are going to join them, by "opening another front". We fully realize the manpower it takes to overthrow a system won't come from a small minority but we are not a small minority since we are joining a world-wide struggle, which has many fronts.[369]

The reiteration and self-assurance of the 'small minority' not being a 'small minority' evidences a rhetorical move that can only be made by a *detachment*, an instance that combines the military and the religious meanings of the word, in the sense that the group portrays itself as the vanguard in another front of a war waged in the name of subject over object, in which the battlefields and armies are vast and numerous. As detachment, the group conceives the structure of the organization as collaborative; it is a vanguard open in membership, which will change in UAWMF as it instituted a certain degree of loyalty and trust as the basis of belonging. This also works under the assumption that there is no State behind the operations, no bureaucracy or hierarchy that delimits areas of action and objectives to be accomplished, which is to say that the world-wide struggle described by Black Mask is, in essence, a communal effort, an anarchis form of organization that has taken its cues from another instance of organized anarchism in armed struggle: that of the Spanish Civil War[370]. Thus, the message communicated by the magazine's publication of various

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[368] *Ibidem.*
[369] *Ibidem.*
[370] Morea adopted the "affinity group" from Spanish anarchism's models of operation during the Civil War as 'grupos de afinidad'; "He [...] spent time with the anarchist theorist and writer Murray Bookchin, from whom he adopted the concept of the "affinity group" drawn from the Spanish anarchists of the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI). Like the FAI, which was not a political party, but functioned as the theoretical and moral compass of the much larger anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), Black Mask and its successors liked

letters of support from soldiers who have decided to reject the Vietnam war, as well as those related to black power and Native American equality organizations, is a clear drawing of a State panorama that is fractured, a fragmentation that spells possibility. The 'enemy within' an organization like Black Mask is ideological, a culturally determined internal matter, while the 'enemy within' the State is Black Mask and its articulation of the potential of an anarchist federation, the constitution of which would imply not only an ideological opposition but also a territorial one. To make the refusal of soldiers to ship to Vietnam visible is to set sights on *military* targets as the source of potential revolutionary activity, to reveal the unitary image of the violence of the State as false, and at the same time to make a threat: the enemy, the spirit of Black Mask and its allies, is already *inside.* All it takes is the urge to truth.

Truth is here the primary of all battlefields, and exposition as a form of combat derives from an iconoclastic conception of the social, an iconoclasm that makes deep, sometimes mystical connections between art and life but that is here turned to reason by logical thought. "First we must expose the enemy, speak its name to the world – "War" St. Yet we can't stop there, for beyond Capitalism lies the whole rotten civilization known as the western world."[371] Exposing the enemy, speaking the truth of its name, is not only a form of exorcism but also an argumentative move, a rhetorical tool that aims at dispelling the vagueness of ignorance understood as taking the world at face value. Beyond capitalism, beyond the *face*, there is a rotten whole; the form is a lie or a misdirection, it is the un-truth of a content that, if revealed, would appear 'as it really is', repulsive on first sight. The logic 'behind' this tactic is simple, and it is the product of a kind of war that is waged, importantly, at an aesthetic and informational level, much like the one between the US and the Soviet Union at the time. What matters in the everyday political lives of citizens is not so much an individual (or collective) reasoning of the virtues of capitalism or socialism reflected as

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to style themselves as a non-hierarchical, non-party vanguard ready to fight against authority in whichever way the moment demanded." See Timothy Scott Brown, "The Sixties in the City: Avant-gardes and Urban Rebels in New York, London, and West Berlin", in *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 4, Summer 2013, pp. 817-842, p. 825. "The term 'affinity group', now common in Western direct-action social movements, was first coined by the group. Marcuse spoke at the School of Visual Arts on 8 March 1967, and Morea challenged his vision of art's saving qualities. Afterwards they met at Bookchin's apartment with others including Russell Blackwell. Blackwell and Bookchin discussed how the anarchist militias in the Spanish Civil War, including the Friends of Durruti (of which Blackwell had been a member), were organized principally around groups of *compañeros*, with Bookchin suggesting it as a contemporary model." Gavin Grindon, *op cit*, p. 23.

[371] *Black Mask No. 4.*

democratic process, but a sentimental adherence to images that provide ready-made value judgements on all kinds of information, images that lock the democratic process into a set of given constants. The work of a revolutionary organization is, therefore, that of an interruption of the aesthetic flow, an attempt to *correct* the course of information towards a certain coincidence of form and content. This Cold-War theatre of war is, in a way, transposed by Black Mask to culture as the battlefield of truth; the extreme consequence of a performance against *everything* including itself is a military one, and it follows the Surrealist call of a 'revolution now and forever'[372], a struggle projected infinitely as the present, where ideology critique is, first and foremost, conceived of a critique of false consciousness or said adherence to pre-digested images. Surrealism takes, under an interpretation by Black Mask, the form of military history, and its manifestos are read as a theory of war, a reading that reveals a series of Clausewitzian notions underlying the premise of a total revolution. While the SI's Guy Debord developed these notions into a fully-fledged synthesis within his work "A Game of War", Black Mask intuitively anchored to them as an expressionism: the rage of a subjectivity that refuses its chains to objectivity and grasps 'reality' as one that must be modified by the angered surreality of revolution, an overcoming of what is naturalised as truth (or common sense) in favour of a new kind of consciousness. In Debord's game, the dialectical becomes another instance of (turn-based) combat, and it is similar to the manners in which Black Mask deal with 'the path to truth'. They do so by the publication of a statement credited to André Breton that says: "it is our rejection of all accepted law, our hope in new, subterranean forces, capable of overthrowing history, which makes us turn our eyes towards Asia (today read as the third-world)[…] It is the *turn* of the mongols to Bivouac in our squares. [Emphasis mine] [373]" To camp in enemy territory goes further than bringing the war home, as the Vietnam anti-war movement pretended, and it also means to engage in a struggle "whose scope is as wide as the cosmos"[374], to become, precisely, a detachment of an army that is rhetorically limitless.

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[372] *Ibid.*

[373] *Ibidem.* This statement, taken from the text "La Révolution d'abord et toujours" (1925), was a collective tract. It is, however, credited solely to André Breton in this issue of Black Mask.

[374] *Ibidem.*

In the same issue where "Revolution Now and Forever" is quoted, Black Mask published what is perhaps the strongest image of the whole run of magazines: two black men hanging from a tree, killed by racists in Mississippi, accompanied by a public relations text about Miss Mississippi of 1962 and her journey to New York to participate in the Miss America contest, presumably of the same year (fig. 3.9).

From: George Bennett, Public Relations
Time: Wednesday, August 29, at 10 A.M.
Place: Hotel Astor, Yacht Room, 8th Flr.
Occasion: "Miss Mississippi" visits New York en route to Miss America contest; Stops at Hotel Astor

Beautiful Charlotte Ann Carroll, "Miss Mississippi of 1962," will say "hello" to New York tomorrow morning, Wednesday, Aug. 29, at 10 a.m. in the Yacht Room on the 8th floor of the Hotel Astor, where she is stopping during her visit to our city. The southern beauty is on her way to the "Miss America" Pageant.

"Miss Mississippi" has dark blonde curly hair and blue eyes, is 5' 8" tall, and measures 37-24-37. She will wear practice shorts for the photographers.

Miss Carroll is 19 years old and a sophomore studying education at Delta State College in Cleveland, Mississippi. She is an honor graduate of Europa (Miss.) High School, one of four daughters, and resides in Walthall, Mississippi, with her father, a grocer-farmer, and her mother, a city clerk and Gallup poll taker.

An excellent horsewoman, Miss Carroll is part owner of a horse. She also swims, dives, water skis, sketches, sings, dances and was three times named an All-State basketball champion while in high school.

Miss Carroll was also Webster County Forestry Queen. She was chosen "Miss Mississippi" over 47 southern beauties on the basis of swimsuit and talent competitions. Her "Olive Oyl" song-and-dance skit got one of the biggest ovations in the history of the Mississippi pageant.

Fig. 3.9. "Mississippi", in *Black Mask No. 4,* 1967. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

Interpretations can be straightforward: the vacuity of the naturalised beautiful can only be filled, contextually, by racist murder, by an aesthetic of death whose key elements are injustice, violence, and tragedy. Defined by an objectification of what she can do (swim, sing, dance), Miss

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Mississippi reflects the same operation that *subjects* her: what a black person can do, what a black person is as he or she becomes part of a spectacle of something that is yet to be called by its name: war. If death is this objectification, this passivity of war-like pageants, then life is invariably the response of subjectivity, an action that is meant not only to be seen but heard, tasted, touched: "Creative man undertakes the poetry of the deed or he flounders with the death strivers and suicides of this sad demented nation."[375] The horror produced by the juxtaposition of the image and the text consists of what could be termed, vaguely, as the sublimity of the superficial enjoyment of imagining the woman as she acts without creativity (another kind of death) with a close-up view of the terrible acts of the society she represents – its 'standard of beauty' begets the iconoclastic violence of racism as it attempts to erase any and all symbols of an abstract Enlightened equality. To its borderless universalism, the concept of race retorts with harsh, concrete geographical limits that aim to be invisible, which is to say purely ideological as they reproduce themselves in every subject of 'the system'. Therefore, to traverse these limits is to go nowhere at all, for they are always in production by the self, configuring new environments to look quite a lot like the old.

In this way, to Miss Mississippi's travel, conceived as the movement of false consciousness, Black Mask opposes mobilization, which is also an anarchist break-away from the tradition of the mass demonstration. This was put into action in April 15, 1967, in a march gathered from several points of New York City that converged at the United Nations building. The march, detailed in *Black Mask #6*, included a contingent of anarchists and Black Mask members that broke off from the main line to move throughout different parts of the city that were not part of the original plan of the demonstration, of which they say was a "break-away march [...] which was [...] [physical] and [psychological], first by leaving the line of march and its prescribed route and second by leaving the concept of "symbolic" protest, with its incumbent belief in moral persuasiveness, for the road of direct action."[376] An important element of this seemingly improvisational violation of accords, beyond its psychogeographical implication, is the idea of resistance, which generates echoes of a strategy designed to wage war during occupation by enemy forces. If mass demonstrations are

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[375] *Ibidem:* it is important to note here that it is 'creative *man*', and that vacuous beauty, which is to say a numb passivity, is feminine. Black Mask's and UAWMF's machismo is deeply connected with the vision of warfare as man's domain of activity.

[376] *Black Mask No. 6,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.

'merely' symbolic, like Miss Mississippi going from one part of the country to another, drawing a map of hidden alienation, then the activity of resistance retraces that map as one that reveals the enemy's strongholds and weaknesses, all the places where the State-sanctioned mass demonstration cannot go because its communication is made of passive rhetorical gestures. In other words, Black Mask sees the mass demonstration as the continuation of politics (an extension of the status quo), whereas mobilization via resistance and vice versa are the continuation of politics *by other means* ('outside' the status quo). In the same issue of the magazine, the article "Revolution or National Liberation?" begins by saying "our support for the Vietnamese people is unequivocal. This is no "war", but an act of naked aggression by a major power seeking to conquer a small, relatively backward nation (technologically not culturally) for economic and political reasons."[377] Why is it not a war? This question can be answered through recourse to Clausewitz once again, in the sense that it is "naked aggression", it is not politics (regardless of the last part of the quote, which uses 'political' to mean spectacular politics) but sheer greed, a bodily corruption of the virtues of politics as they pertain to the lifeblood of history understood dialectically. In consequence, the true war is that being waged by revolutionaries, while the one being waged by the State is seen under the light of an unhealthy psychology rooted on the rules of private property.

The Romanticism of this position infuses a short but quite important article in the same issue entitled "The "Klefts": Warrior-poets". In it, Black Mask formulate an image of organization that is comparable to the guerrilla but which is based, instead of on fully-fledged modern military operations, on a mixture between a brotherhood of thieves and 19th century freedom fighters (after Byron). During the entire span of the Ottoman occupation of Greece, many Greeks "found "freedom" by becoming *Klefts* or rebels, living in the mountains and carrying out raids on the Turks. Some romanticists refer to these rebels as the celebrated brigands who for centuries harassed the wealthy Turks in Robin Hood style."[378] In Black Mask's version,

> at night around their fires the klefts danced and made up poems to sing to one another. And in the valleys the young men heard them, and one by one, the bravest made their way to the mountain tops. For the dances and courage and poetry of the klefts were the essence of liberation. Like

[377] *Ibidem.*
[378] The Hellenic Electronic Center, "Klefts, Armatoloi and "Kotzambasides" - Greek Revolution of 1821", in http://www.greece.org/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=580&Itemid=820 , accessed June 16, 2014.

Baudelaire at the barricades of the Commune. Like Lorca. Because Lumumba too was a poet. And Sitting Bull performed the Sun Dance before the Custer fight. As Le Roi Jones and Watts guerrillas create kleftic cantos.[379]

These 'kleftic cantos' made in the context of riots are, of course, part of a very modernist appropriation of the mythical qualities of ritual, its unconscious attractiveness stemming from the violent promise of a utopia to be realized in the here and now, in *brotherhood* and in poetry as an active engagement with the world. As such, its image is of a clan of men based on two intuitive, primitive principles that constitute a kinship: to combat an overwhelming enemy while maintaining a loyalty that parts from a war-time bond, the camaraderie born from political divide. This brotherhood is familial inasmuch it unifies economic sociality with the rhetoric of shared blood – the blood spilled in combat, whether it be the enemy's or one's own. It is freed from the structure of the (modern) family in its appeal to a primitiveness that is anarcho-individualistic, in the sense that the group lives for itself only, and owes no allegiance to a larger social entity. In its poetic appropriation of ritual, the brotherhood stands by itself as a rogue entity that escapes the State, at least when it comes to a dissociation from the State's own rituals and the images of citizenship they carry with them. The 'warrior' part of the brotherhood also denotes a primitive form of association that, while military, pre-dates the institutionalised modernity of 'soldiers': conscription, large armies with chains of command, supplies, and communications, preferring instead the individualisation and free-willed determination to fight for some ideal or other, but more importantly, for the brotherhood itself. It is a collectivity that is not *massive* in nature, and that allows for a sort of mythical unity that romanticises violence as the catalyst that brings mind and body (theory and practice) together in the warrior's skill, in the warrior's ability to fight.

With this in mind, the Marxist question of praxis in issue #7 is formulated as follows: "For too long we have witnessed the degeneration of revolutionary thought into an argument over method; as if the only question left open was "How" and not "What." It is time we questioned not only the means but also the content – thought as well as action: For together they are the revolution but separate they are a tragedy."[380] Thus, if seen under the idea of the warrior's skill, the mind-body

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[379] *Black Mask No. 6.*
[380] *Black Mask No. 7,* 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: PE.036.

divide represented by theory and practice is overcome in street combat, in a *martial art*, where they are united by an utter contingency (the police baton coming down; the throwing of a Molotov cocktail) as much as by politics (allies, enemies, a territory in dispute). A martial art is essentially *cruel* in the Artaudian sense, disciplining the mind and body to recognize and produce conflict in the performance of the self as a weapon, of being as a *true* weapon with which to destroy the falseness of the separation between said mind and body (metaphorically, perhaps, as government and army). A photograph header (fig. 3.10) in this issue illustrates this through the country's racial tensions:

Fig. 3.10. "Black America", *Black Mask No. 7,* 1967. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

"Black America" stands as an enraged, physically threatening mass before white America's single armed soldier; a store sign at the background in the middle reads "HOME ART", which is fitting both for the crucial place of race in US society as well as the protesters' performance of their fury, unarmed (and yet combat-ready with fists and legs), while the representative of the State passively awaits. It is fitting because for Black Mask this is what art best *does*, it plants aesthetics firmly on the ground of politics, which at the time is also buzzing with the language of warfare. Theory as strategy as mind, and practice as tactics as body become, in art, the essence of creativity, of a poetry made by all. This conception is achieved without ever leaving behind the Situationist premise of aesthetics as part of a problem not only of mediation ('direct experience', the 'Battle of Watts' and combat in riots) but also its close relative in communication (the perspective of the

whole, the movement of detachments to thwart enemy operations). Following Reich, Black Mask states that "thus, we must find our way back to the body; language must be made to destroy itself; we must find a way of communicating our feeling of our bodies, subverting all the scientific and historical categories that have so far only been agents of repression."[381] Communication, then, must be channelled into battle, as a way to connect mind and body so that repression gives way to liberation in every kick and punch – 'atmospherics', as environmental modification, becomes the political capacity to conquer enemy territory and turn its very being, its very essence, into one's own.

To conclude with this part, I will briefly touch upon Black Mask's relation to power. While the other countries' magazines treat power as part of the problem – so to speak -- Black Mask treats it as crucial to the enterprise of revolution in the sense that there is no possibility of change without power.

> It should be abundantly clear to the southern movement that we too can only score victories over the Government's foreign and domestic policies of oppression and violence when we organize ourselves to win political and economic power. [...] Since no tyranny concedes anything without political and economic power being brought to bear against it, we intend to build a movement that will force the power structure to concede all of its power to the people.[382]

The argument lacks a firm understanding of what it is that the organization seeks (what is, exactly, political and economic power?), presenting a metaphorical reading in which power is, essentially, *force*. Sure enough, the traditional definition of power is the capacity to enforce, but in the Situationist milieu it is also the capacity to *define everything* and establish it non-forcefully in subjectivity through every kind of social relation. Black Mask's understanding of power here differs fundamentally from the SI, and they do not follow the latter's Marxist-anarchist theory, opting instead to view power from the more socialist Black Panther lens of a populist revolt that aims not so much to destroy States but take them over. Nevertheless, the rhetorical effect is an emphatic will to power that claims an autonomy dependent on the symbol of 'the people', a deviation from anarchism that, like Marinetti's Futurist Democracy and Sorel's myth, dangerously

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[381] *Black Mask No. 9.*
[382] *Black Mask No. 6.*

borders the kind of will that rejects conventional politics in favour of a violent seizure of the structures that hold society together.

The last article of this issue, called "Fragments of a Revolutionary Totality" and signed by "the Totalist"[383] presents a perspective that is closer to the SI's: "Our problem is not the seizure of power and the establishment of socialism: for we have been forced to see that what is revolutionary about change is that people begin to take control of their own lives in the struggle to throw off that which suppresses them. For the present the ultimate tactical question must be, not the seizure of power, but its dissolution!"[384] It is a perspective that, while published in the group's magazine, seems to have had little resonance with the rest of its members, since the majority of the texts that touch upon the issue of power constantly reiterate the need to take over. The meaning of power as the force with which to oblige change ignores in this case Reich's and Marcuse's appeals to Reason, to a kind of revolution that does not instrumentalise social structures in order to establish an economy of power in which it is idealistically distributed equally – after all, that was what socialism, both national and international, came to represent, as just a different kind of repression *and* oppression.

3. Up Against the Wall Motherfucker!

Early in 1968 there was a leaflet that members of Black Mask distributed to people in the Lower East Side, and which said "you have noticed by now that BLACK MASK is no longer arriving […] The reason is a direct result of our theory – The movement must be real or it will not be. Now the call is INTO THE STREETS..."[385] UAWMF was thus born, taking their name from the Amiri Baraka poem "Black People!" of late 1967[386] and shifting the organizational core of Black Mask, which as we have seen follows an art-as-politics principle, into one that is closer to an idea of politics-as-art that brings it more in line with Marinetti's Futurism, and which is what King Mob

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[383] Alan Hoffman, the person that Raoul Vaneigem, in his visit to New York, dismissed as an idiot and a mystic.
[384] *Ibidem.*
[385] Ben Morea, Ron Hahne, *op cit*, p. 86.
[386] Gavin Grindon, *op cit*, p. 22. See also Breanne Fahs, "Reading Between the Lines: Ben Morea on Anarchy, Radicalism, and Revolution", in *Left History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2012, p. 38.

perceptively picked up in their short history of their American counterparts. It cannot be emphasized enough that art is key to all of the ideas at play in the groups' discourse, and the images serve the purpose of *enacting* them for an audience removed from historical immediacy to be able to discern what, in general, they do not only as artistic objects but also as political ones. In this section, the overview will surround three possible avenues of interpretation of the aesthetics of the organization as they set in motion a series of ideas that ultimately connect with those analysed in Section 1 of this chapter. So, the first part of this section will look at the conceptions of UAWMF as a 'warrior clan', as an organizational form that appropriates the family structure and generates a certain tension with the development that will be seen in the second part, about the sexual liberation implied in Reichian thinking. Lastly, the third part will deal with the not-quite-anti-theoretical turn that UAWMF produces in contrast to Black Mask's distinctly theoretical bent, a turn that places pop culture at the heart of a rejection of everything 'high art' or 'high politics'. The theme of (artistic) appropriation will also be recurrent, more so than it already was, coming to be decisive in the next couple of years as one of the group's principal techniques[387].

3.1. A warrior's tribe and the savage's contempt

There are various parts that compose the whole of the idea of the affinity group, and one of the most important carries over from Black Mask as a self-understanding that, among other ideas, is based on war. Tracing the historical roots of resistance movements in the US, Ben Morea started to craft the identity of the Motherfucker as one rooted, first, on the loyalty of commitment to a group, second, on the group's very belonging to a certain land, and lastly, on the opposition to fragmentation. Morea found in Native Americans the answer to the question of what it is to be an American radical – "socially and politically, I related to the Native American as the origin of the American identity."[388]

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[387] Given Ben Morea's bad relation with the SI, and given that in "Basic Banalities" there is no definite description of what is exactly détournement, it is possible that Black Mask and UAWMF came to see appropriation as the better alternative, not only for lack of information but also out of spite of anything Situationist-related. After all, Vaneigem refused to even see Morea when he went to New York, and when things turned sour between the American section of the SI and the French, the role Morea played was very divisive, even if he remained only partially involved in the entire issue. See the letters between Murray Bookchin and Ben Morea, as well as the letters exchanged between the English section, the American one, and the French during 1967, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 2, folders 9-11.

[388] Johan Kugelberg, *op cit*, p. 13.

Native Americans have been idealized in various ways by European authors ever since the conquest and colonization of the continent, of which the Enlightenment's noble savage is perhaps one of the most enduring examples. In the case of the Motherfuckers, taking the image of the legendary Geronimo[389] as the basis for rebellion completely overlooks the mostly institutionally based appeals of Native Americans in the 20th century. Instead, it highlights the violent last-stand rhetoric associated with wartime occupation; recalling the 19th century wars against the Natives becomes a powerful political statement that also functions as an idealized representation of what a community should look like. Hence, Native Americans become in UWAMF a representation of organizational principles that are essentially primitivist, a modern anti-modern form of avant-

Fig. 3.11. "Armed Love/Love Armed" flyer, ca. 1968. Tamiment & Wagner Archive, New York

garde assault on bourgeois ideologies. Geronimo's appropriation of the European gun in that image (fig. 3.11) is, in this sense, an analogical reference to the group's re-signification of the family; usually accompanied by the idea of self-defence, it also presents a series of connected propositions articulated by classical anarchist ethics, insofar as the image of the Native American comprises a different set of injustices to that of the civil rights movement. Under this light, it is a tight community of outsiders rejected and ridiculed for their way of life, which romantically refuses to stand down and goes to battle even against impossible odds. The affinity group, which is the core organizational concept for UAWMF, is intuitively born from natural law ("[it] is a pre-organization force, it represents the drive out of which organization is formed")[390], and has a pre-

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[389] Geronimo (b. 1829, Mexico, d. 1909, US) was an Apache leader who commanded bands of men for 30 years (from around 1851 to 1885) in a continuous war against the States of Mexico and the US. His military achievements and particular resilience when faced against forces deemed superior earned him a reputation for fierceness, even after his capture and status as a prisoner of war of the US after 1887. His persona was launched into celebrity in the US after he began to be paraded in fairs and expositions by the victorious US government in the early 1900's. See C.L. Sonnichsen, "From Savage to Saint: A New Image for Geronimo", in C.L Sonnichsen (ed.), *Geronimo and the End of the Apache Wars*. London, University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
[390] *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, 1968, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive: TAM530, box 1, folder 62.

modern history[391] that in its association with the resistant image of Geronimo and the Native American 'tribal aesthetic' constitutes a primitivist idealism. In this idealization the Native American has a deep relation to the land, to territory, as a revolutionary-mythical point of congregation that differs from the idea of the nation in its anthropological throwback to the federative constitution of pre-Columbian North Americans. The anthropology is simple – the first step is the individual, then the family unit, then the tribe, then the community, and lastly a people. Mixed with the Marxist narrative of the seeds of the new society being produced in the old, this view of the Native American attempts to establish, like many a sci-fi novel at the time, a post-national and yet primitive vision of the future, except UAWMF was realizing it in the present. The group advanced an experimental organization that is, in theory, a symbolic collectivity that by ridding itself of modern law achieves an anarchic modification of space and time: territory stops being property and returns to nature, while time is extended infinitely in revolution instituted as community-binding ritual.

Fig. 3.12. *Rat Subterranean News,* vol. 2, no. 1, March 14-21, 1969.

This image (fig. 3.12), published in *Rat* magazine, presents a distinct aesthetic that is taken directly from a collage-like approach to what can easily be understood as 'generic' Native American designs. It is not the intent of this thesis to trace the origin of these images, but the purpose they serve in this one-page manifesto magnifies the federative idea of equalizing the individual and the collective, in terms of the representation of each concept: in the family we can see that "each being stands separately, but not alone"; the tribe encircles the familial body that *makes* its first letter; the community derives into a mythological snake as the psychedelic understanding of a group that sets the skies in motion;

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[391] "In so-called "primitive" unitary societies the affinity group attempts to balance a complexity so thorough that it approaches totality. But the division of labor that arises from the struggle for survival causes a fragmentation & un-evenness in the distribution of material as well as psychological & cultural wealth." *Ibid.*

finally, the people is an abstract composition of circles within circles that encompass the entire cosmos. The drawing in the middle is elusive, but perhaps it is connected with the textile idea represented by the title and the other adornments, as a way of partially leaving Western modes of knowing in favour of a myth-based grand design that unfolds over the time of weaving, affecting everything else in the process. In any case, what interests me the most for this section is the drawing of the horned figure that holds feathers in both hands, the warrior as super-naturalized, static metaphor of a two-dimensionality that consists of the positivity of defence and the negativity of attack.

Another image published in *Rat* helps to clarify this figure:

Fig. 3.13. *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 2, no. 18, September 10-23, 1969, p. 12-13.

It (fig. 3.13) illustrates and is illustrated by a quote from the book *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), a recompilation of oral accounts by an Oglala Lakota holy man, made by John G. Neihardt, a poet

from Illinois. It depicts a ritual that mixes North and Mesoamerican iconography; the tree of life and the animals feed into a rainbow that fills both humans with colour, intuitively and *naturally* uniting them by means of a ritual in which the world is not made, controlled, or mastered but understood as the sheer potential for creativity – " "Take this," he said. "It is the power to make live [sic] and it is yours." Now he had a bow in his hands. "Take this," he said. "it is the power to destroy, and it is yours.""[392] The dialectic of life and death becomes a dialectic of love and hate as it traverses the psychedelic ritual of familial union, masking its modern development within the State under the guise of a *cosmic* change in its fundamental meaning, no longer being an economic unit (aligned so easily with the Nazis' hatred) but a purely political one. In the enactment of politics, we return to Clausewitz when Morea states that "I was attracted to the holy warrior. I coined the term "armed love". Because you know we were theoretically part of the "love generation," yet we were warriors."[393] Love, as politics, cannot help but become armed.

What is, however, the aesthetic content of the rainbow that fulfils the purpose of a mythologizing communication (albeit erotic, dialectical in its most concrete aspects)? On one side, it is battle and discipline, and on the other it is love for each other *as* discipline: about the former, Neumann says that "[Ben Morea] did what he said he would do. This was his code of honor, the code of the street, to which he adhered with the discipline of a martial artist. He was calm and focused in battle, able to calibrate his actions in moments of tension, while all around him, less hardened street fighters like me panicked and struggled not to flee from danger."[394] About the latter, he says that "Ben was always vigilant in his search for weakness, and insistent in his demands for loyalty. The commitment he demanded, and that we were quick to demand of each other, knew no boundaries. We concealed our vulnerability. Ben rewarded us with the promise to protect us with his life."[395] The warrior's life is guided, then, by a "natural" code of honour, its cosmic connection a deeply romantic martial sensibility that antagonizes the Enlightened 'party line' and the hierarchical, symmetrical classicism of the state military. Thus: "Our non-violent Love and the violent Defense of our community are the true expressions of nature and life – destroying what is old and rotten to

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[392] *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 2, no. 18, September 10-23, 1969, p. 12-13. Fales Archive: AP2.R36.
[393] Johan Kugelberg, *op cit*, p. 13.
[394] Osha Neumann, *op cit,* p. 56.
[395] *Ibid,* p. 59.

make way for what is new... ARMED LOVE / LOVE ARMED!"[396] The return to nature is characteristic of the traditional anarchist assumptions of sociality, and it is at this point where an appropriating inversion of Futurism takes place, projecting Reich's 'natural health' into an undefined future in a language that approximates fascism in its myth-making turn to narrow equivalences between nature, beauty, and a war for truth. However, in its anti-conspiratorial openness, UAWMF moves away from such conceptions, and the starkest difference resides in the formation of identity. In contrast to what Reich maintains about the fascist subject, UAWMF remains fundamentally incompatible with the structure of the State, in the sense that there is no ideological absorption into one-dimensionality, retaining instead a diversity that was not totalizing in its intent to unify.

> The new identities we adopted did not, of course, obliterate the old. Little as we cared to dwell on our differences, the mix of self-doubt and assurance with which we entered into our new life depended in part on whether we were men or women, middle class or working class, college educated or not, in our teens or twenties. It mattered whether we were raised in the country or the city, and whether we were white – almost all of us were, at least in the core group – or a person of color. It's hard to find a common thread in our various backgrounds or in the paths that led us to the Motherfuckers. We were like the cast of characters in a Hollywood disaster movie, thrown together by circumstances, forced to depend upon each other, and bringing to our predicament a range of strengths and weaknesses.[397]

The affinity group, in this sense, becomes a melting pot of urban warriors *united by fate*, by the mythological rainbow that *initiates* people into a collectivity that rejects anarchism's version of the original sin, the division of labour, by means of a non-economic division of political capacity: to each according to his or her own weaponized being, no longer burdened by ideology and in 'natural' alignment with desire. This is why "MY UTOPIA IS AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WORKS SO WELL THAT WE CAN RUN WILD IN IT" (fig. 3.14):

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[396] Flyer entitled "Armed Love", 1968, Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 1, folder 40.
[397] Osha Neumann, *op cit*, p. 59.
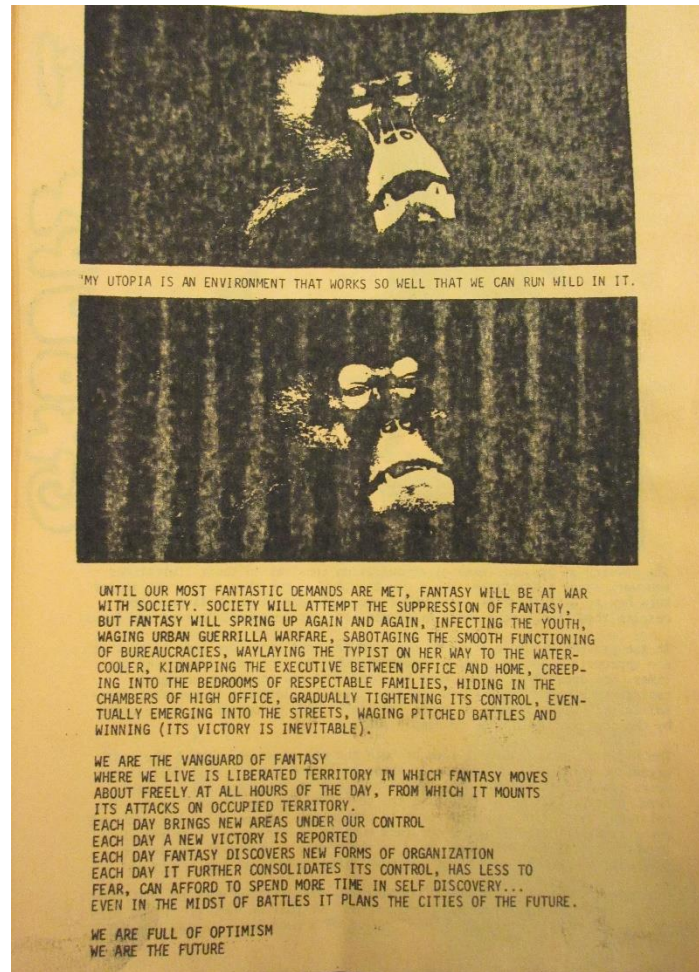
Fig. 3.14. *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, 1968. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

The two baboon images work as a sort of sequential portrait of the Motherfucker, inasmuch the first phrase seems to be enunciated by the animal, hinting at an anti-humanist slant that removes all specifications of humanity as constituting a different part of the animal domain: a *true* human is *only* an animal. And this animal, in its integral relation to its surroundings, is simultaneously an integration of reason and instinct, of freedom and necessity, of need and desire; the capacity to fully express this life is performed as the inner emergence of a baboon's face, the animal that is repressed by an environment that works against it, that impedes its running free by subjecting it to categorizations that lead to no other ways of thinking the human except in terms of a political animal, an economic animal, and so forth. This animality is, in essence, fantastic, for it attempts to extirpate the 'realism' of definitions and knowledge born of logic to replace it with nothing at

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all, with a void that is to be filled by sheer creativity, by new ways of dealing with the world that are not based on mastery but on a communal sense. "Until our most fantastic demands are met, fantasy will be at war with society", the page says, and it describes fantasy as a kind of ideological infection that is to spread amongst every current organization as the *final* cycle of life (one that begins in the street gang and then goes through the office, the home, the government, returning to the streets in the end and waging a war in which "its victory is inevitable", ending the need for other cycles). Fantasy, therefore, also represents a sort of de-naturalization of the present one-dimensionality in order to give way to a naturalization that is two-dimensional, that finally allows the viewer to see these two portraits as *self*-portraits. Under the terms of this ultimate reduction of humanity to its 'blackest' elements, the meaning of the "vanguard of fantasy" becomes a disarticulation of environments as they are, a break in the lines of communication that keep a certain objectivity/subjectivity alive through reproduction. The liberation of territory the manifesto speaks of consists, then, of the warriors' modern acceptance of 'comms' as primary target and the struggle this implies, first, on the strategic level as a matter of *objectives* to be appropriated, conventional maps to be redrawn, and information to be intercepted; second, on the tactical level as a matter of subjects to be re-configured in the day-to-day organizational functioning, of psychogeographies to be established, and enemy subjects to be broken in hand-to-hand combat (possibly cutting through imposed kinds of self-understanding). On this last point, it is important to mention that viewed through Reich's theories, hand to hand combat could be conceived of as an expression of a deep, almost hidden biologic self-hood through which an attempt to erase social mediation within oneself might be made:

> On the surface layer of his personality the average man is reserved, polite, compassionate, responsible, conscientious. There would be no social tragedy of the human animal if this surface layer of the personality were in direct contact with the deep natural core. This, unfortunately, is not the case. The surface layer of social cooperation is not in contact with the deep biologic core of one's selfhood; it is borne by a second, an intermediate character layer, which consists exclusively of cruel, sadistic, lascivious, rapacious, and envious impulses. It represents the Freudian "unconscious" or "what is repressed".[398]

This approach not only brings back the baboon emerging from within but also drives forward the point that to end mediation within oneself is to end the unconscious. In the animality of their portraits, UAWMF follow Reich down a path in which the 'deep natural core' of a weaponized

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[398] Wilhelm Reich, *Mass Psychology*, p. XI.

HOW TO MAKE IT IN THE JUNGLE

DIAGONAL FORMATION

SKIRMISHER LINE

L-FORMATION
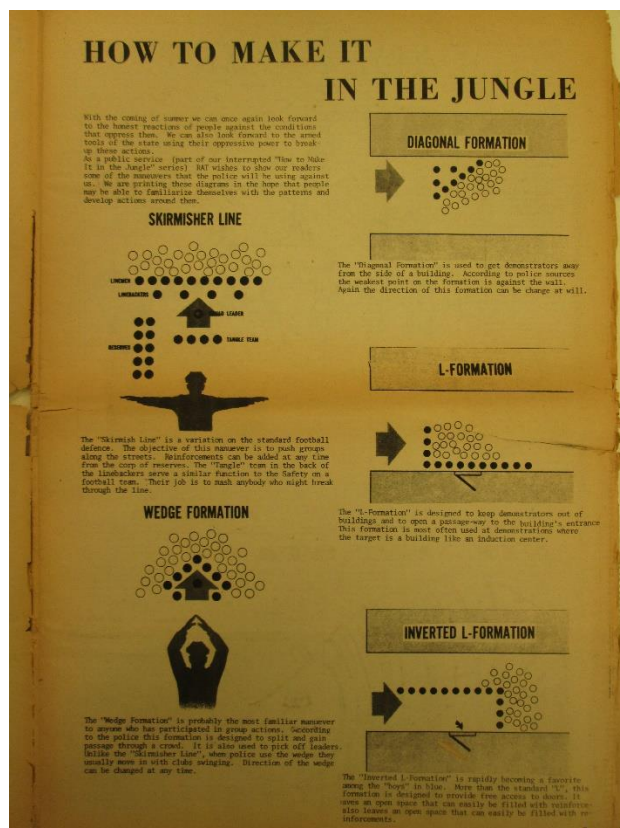
WEDGE FORMATION

INVERTED L-FORMATION

Fig. 3.15. *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 1, no. 10, July 1-15, 1968. Fales Archive, New York.

being is, in tactical terms, the wilful force behind a punch that cracks and *moulds* the very matter, the very bodily presence of false consciousness, whether in the form of police officers, a gentrified neighbourhood, or their internalization as conventional cruelty and rapacity. An image from *Rat*, published in July 1968, throws this idea into the fold of strategy once again, and "How To Make It In the Jungle" (fig. 3.15), a set of drawings that immediately recalls military planning (and to a certain extent, group sports planning), attunes the reader to the implications of bodily confrontation as a performance of war-gaming, of the complex interaction between positioning, thought, fighting, communication, weapon use, and other kinds of movements (the yelling, the threats, the feints, the improvisation).

It is, perhaps, the war-dance as pragmatic ritual, a performance that makes concrete that which is learned from the rainbow-like revelations of revolutionary thought. Like any ritual, it codifies the space it takes place in through myth, and it establishes the form of sociality that the group will relate through, which in the case of UAWMF consists of the affinity group. "In so-called "primitive" unitary societies the affinity group attempts to balance a complexity so thorough that it approaches totality. But the division of labour that arises from the struggle for survival causes a fragmentation & un-evenness in the distribution of material as well as psychological & cultural wealth."[399] Hence, the affinity group as a warrior tribe is one in which the division of labour is simply not instituted, and survival is collectivised in a different way by means of an amalgamation of hyper-individuality and group identity; on one side the warrior's individual skill is crucial for

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[399] *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, "Affinity Groups".

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the hunting-gathering of resources that usually come from 'enemy territory' (the pillaging of commodities), and on the other the 'Family' structure that UAWMF appropriates works like a network of fail-safes, raising money for the imprisoned, running 'free stores' and other community locales that sought to give concreteness to the idea of 'liberated territory' (the re-direction of commodity meaning). Everyone has the same role, to contribute to the fulfilment of needs and desires of the group, and when context demands it that role is modified by aesthetics into a political stance, or in other words, by sensory experiences (a police siren, a middle-class suit, the architectural shift between city sectors) into offensive / defensive codes that often intertwine. This weaving together articulates an idea that "perhaps the closest we ever came to a unifying purpose as a group (hindsight) was the often articulated and seldom completely defined attempt to achieve the <u>Ultimate Synthesis of IMAGE & CONTENT</u>."[400] In contrast to the false claims of capitalist society, then, UAWMF attempts to establish the coincidence of image and content (in other words, to do away with alienation), understood as the form of truth, and all its appropriations constantly provoke a re-evaluation of everyday life under these terms. Thus, the affinity group is the truth of the Family, and the Family becomes a set of relations that reject blood in the name of commitment, economic ties in the name of Reichian sex-economic and political ones, and private property in the name of communal property. By changing each member's name to a familial one, the clan's identity becomes a boon (of belonging), a responsibility, and a representation in which image (the body of the member) deeply connects to content (the body of the community). Its function is analogical, and an act of one is an act of many and vice versa: like a punch or a knife-slash, the image sculpts truth; like a battalion's manoeuvres, the content positions itself to grant said sculpture its specific place and purpose.

3.2. Organization as sexual liberation

Just as the regular economy is mobilized for war and with it the family unit, so the 'Family', in its formulation as affinity group, becomes part of an armed effort of self-defence in which the

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[400]   J.S., Letter to Max Blechman, February 14, 1992. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 3, folder 1.

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weaponized beings of the members represent the very first line of battle in a field that is first and foremost ideological. The image of the affinity group is emblematic (fig. 3.16):
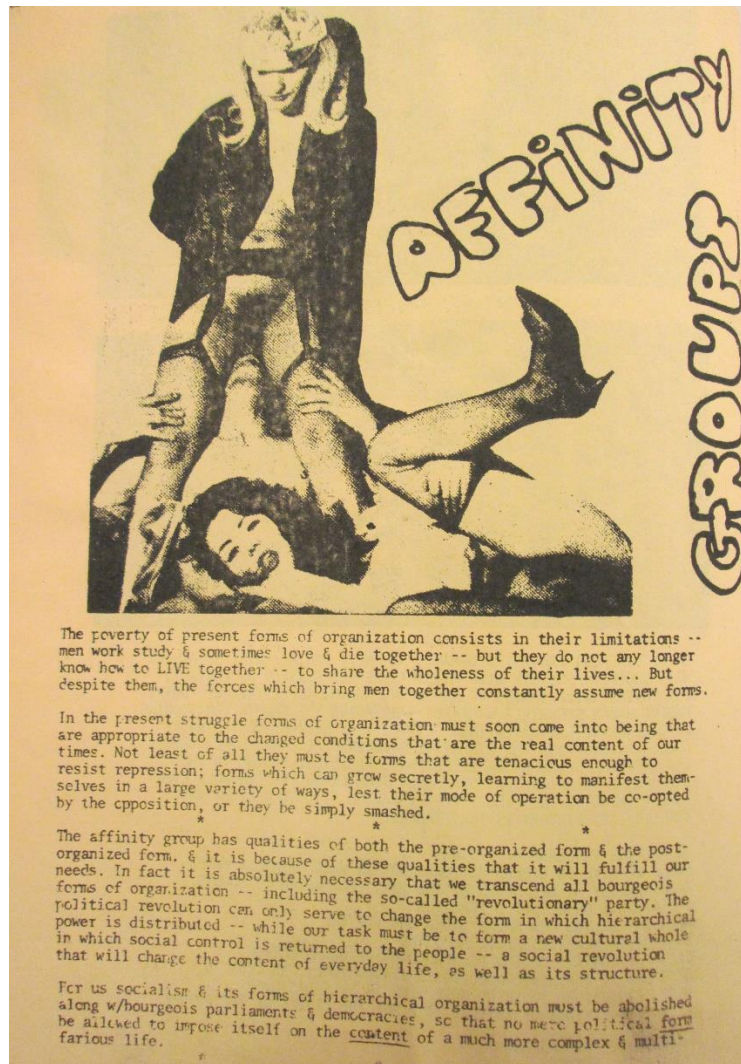
Fig. 3.16. *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, 1968. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

Not only is it openly sexual, it also presents an ambivalent[401] three-directional fulfilment of desire. It invites the viewer *in* through the woman laying down, enticing participation in (an egalitarian)

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[401] Ambivalent because its political aspect, in a first, unknowledgeable approach, could go either way: women in power or women *as* power. Nevertheless, in an archival document written by "G.A.N.", we find a contemporary critique that states that "one reason the UAW/MF did not survive is that individuals were purposively frustrated in

sexuality that has aesthetically broken through the various configurations of the family form of the 1960s, whether in its incipient stage of the heterosexual couple or its later development into a family unit that ought to reproduce itself. In this sense, the woman that stands comes to replace male verticality, at least in her casual demeanour as she glances downwards with a barely visible smile, evoking modernist paintings in which "deviated" sexualities are suggested by means of bodies and eyes that meet the spectator with the challenge of *decadence*. And how is this decadence conceived of? If we follow Marcuse's narrative regarding one-dimensionality and the technological thought of progress, then the affinity group's decadence consists of, first, a tear in the instrumental aspect of the family as an ideological factory that perpetuates itself, and second, a dispersal of the logic that fuels it by re-establishing a dialectic in the political re-organization of relations within and without the group; instead of being extrinsically determined, it becomes fluid in accordance to each member's needs and desires. In the simpler terms favoured by UAWMF, this decadence is the incoherence of living, of identity (fig. 3.17):

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any effort to particularize their affections. [...] The position of women in the MF group left much to be desired." See G.A.N., "Untitled Critique", 1969. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 1, folder 57.
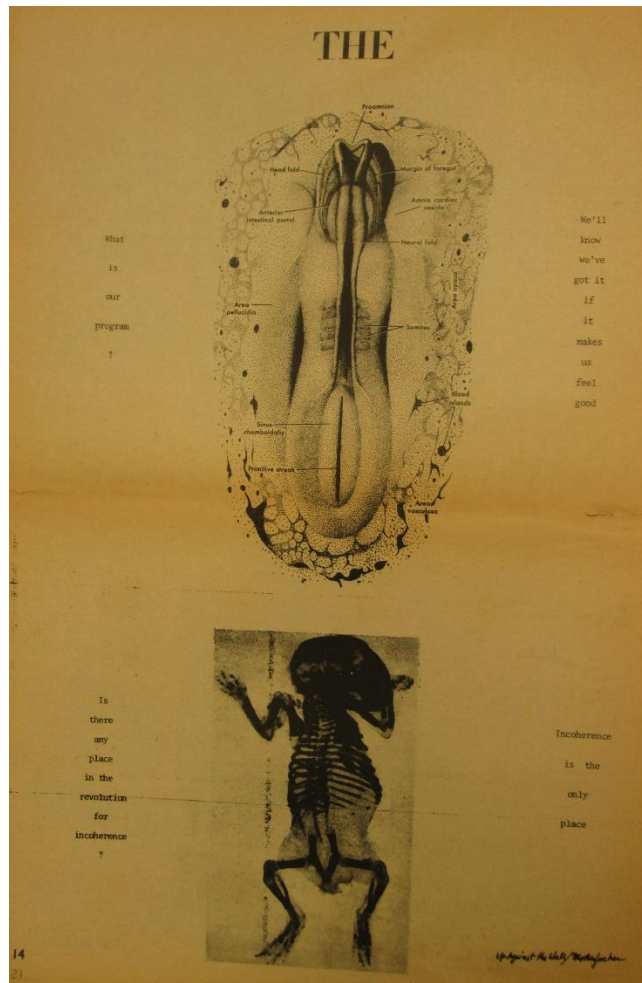
Fig. 3.17. *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 1, no. 17, September 20 – October 3, 1968. Fales Archive, New York.

Two very specific questions ("What is our program?" and "Is there any place in the revolution for incoherence?") find their answers mediated by two images of life at its barest – the embryo and the new-born child, between which there is no narrative beyond a sudden realization made of a specific leap in cellular evolution, two steps of the same being that remains, visually at least, disconnected in spite of its well-known, well-charted course. The program is purely intuitive, purely erotic, and "incoherence is the only place" where revolution can begin, which is to say that the totality is not a structure, a totalizing work of art, but a leap *of* history in which progress becomes obsolete as a framework for politics and economics, favouring instead the decadence of eroticism, the decadence of accepting death, the decadence of a creativity that is simultaneously individualistic and communistic. Unlike the family, the Family as affinity group is deeply

incoherent, leading to a situation in which "except for our core group, it was never entirely clear who was and was not a Motherfucker. […] If you spent enough time with us, and you wished to be a Motherfucker, and participated in our actions, you became part of the family."[402] The coherence of sexual repression, then, is set against the incoherence of sexual liberation, of shifting partnerships and nomadic practices that in principle implied the 'natural' stability of a healthy psychology that ultimately allows for a true exercise of democracy[403]. This implies, of course, like that baring of life to its most essential possibilities, the baring of the body as an assault on the aesthetics of the family at its most "protective", when its morality is at its most repressive with regards to the physical side of self-understanding, of knowing the needs and desires that extend from the skin.

Fig. 3.18. *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 1, no. 27, January 31 – February 6, 1969. Fales Archive, New

This is how UAWMF brandishes its own collectivity-as-sexuality in the form of a spread in *Rat* (fig. 3.18) that shows a collage of virile signs that, beyond

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[402] Osha Neumann, *op cit*, p. 58.
[403] The critique made by G.A.N and Osha Neumann of the group's actual sexual practices reveal, however, that the group never really reached this somewhat utopian Reichian constitution, remaining clearly within the confused confines of the counter-culture at large, in which sex became subsumed to an expression of rebellion easily co-optable by the (heterosexual) family form: open relationships, unstable partnerships (as a straightforward inversion of its repressed instance, adultery), and other relations that *never* lead to a community, preventing its political configuration ever from the start.

confirming the traditional discourse of masculinity in the avant-garde, enact "armed love" as sexual potency, as the base materialism of a revolution that aligns communication with *penetration* (the penis, the best-drawn element of the lower body, has a name: UAW/MF): "to be in tune with the earth" and "to not be afraid of fighting" and struggling becomes "the synthesis of old and new / or the synthesis of new and newer", a perverted dialectic in which the new fucks the old, the yin fucks the yang, and finds in the synthesis a pleasure that cannot help but bind love to its armament. The resulting contradiction pits the liberating quality of armed love as sexual organization against the patriarchal one-sidedness of its late, non-three-directional aesthetic, and the accounts of Osha Neumann, mentioned above, as well as Jonathan S in his letters to Max Blechman, illustrate a praxis in which the aesthetic, in the end favoured by the massive institutional support of the family, comes to codify love as male, as 'natural' struggle for a certain kind of domination. "My memories of the "Motherfuckers"", Jonathan says, "aren't too positive; for one thing, they were sexist in both an extreme anti-feminist and homophobic sense (Ben Morea's chosen insult for opponents was "faggot!" as I remember well.)"[404] The fist and the Castro-like smoking revolutionary, standing in as the torso and the head, reiterate the view of the body as weapon, except it is no longer erotic, coming instead to be *powerfully* derivative of an understanding of self through (male) activism, Black Mask's "creative men" at work, leaving their (female) partners behind to do all that is, in its un-creativity, clearly still a part of the Reality Principle and therefore of some importance but of lesser worth. Incoherence might be the only place, but it is at points like these where the group's composition seems to have, in a way, produced an identity that is altogether dependent on the political divide approached aesthetically, appropriations that do not, in the end, allow much room for difference and a communication that is truly erotic instead of being partially erotic, partially (male) warrior's honour.

3.3. Pop culture interventions: an anti-intellectual praxis

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[404] Jonathan S to Max Blechman, March 30, 1994. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 3, folder 1. Perhaps not coincidentally, Wilhelm Reich's own theories regarding sex-economy, while in principle feminist and therefore open to sexual otherness, regard homosexuality as the result of repression. In *The Sexual Revolution* there is no explicit homophobic comment, but it does treat homosexuality as a psychological deviation in the end.

As time passed, the theory of the group became ever more anti-intellectual, at first leaving behind the references to the art-world, then any references to figures like Reich, and finally writing less theoretical texts in favour of pieces that are, in essence, much more practical, applying all those lessons about art and politics into a way of writing that is both concise and poetic. Their anti-intellectuality seems to have parted from the rejection of the conventional committee politics of the Students for a Democratic Society as they organised demonstrations and actions while having discussions about different strains of Marxism[405]; the Motherfuckers could not withstand all the talk of organization that did not come to terms with a panorama much wider than that of civil protest. Therefore, the group simplified their language while never leaving behind all the theoretical premises seen so far, developing a more effective (and efficient) communication that seems to have pulled in a greater variety of people due to its application in territorial demarcation and appropriation in the form of, for example, 'free stores' and other community services provided by subdivisions such as the East Side Service Organization (complete with a copy of the corporate logo of oil company ESSO). Neumann:

> By the beginning of 1968, we had become a formidable presence on the Lower East Side. We ran free stores and crash pads. We organized community feasts in the courtyard of St. Marks Church. We propagandized against the merchandising of hip culture and shook down the psychedelic stores for contributions to our cause. We scammed and shoplifted. Communists took jobs in factories, to be close to "the people". Motherfuckers hung out on the streets to be close to *our* people, the "freaks" as we fondly called them. Communists went to work. We did as little work as possible. We roamed the streets in dirty black leather jackets, carrying in our pockets thin single blade "K-9" folding knives which we practiced whipping out and flipping open with one hand.[406]

In a sense, this is a continuation of the avant-garde approach to politics first enacted by Futurism, except that instead of attempting, in the end, to *institute* the vibrancy of modern politics into tradition, it follows a path of dissemination that is rooted upon an ancient aspect of war, in which

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[405] "The Motherfuckers were deeply suspicious of the doctrinaire Marxist cadre groups winning increasing influence in the student movement at the end of the 1960s. "We saw that SDS was becoming a real force for change," Morea recalls, "and that all these traditional left groups and Maoists like Progressive Labor were trying to take it over and control its direction." Timothy Scott Brown, *op cit*, p. 828. This is an issue that came to bear, for example, in the 1968 occupation of Columbia University. Regarding it, Osha Neumann states that "For the Motherfuckers the "issues" that had sparked the takeover [of Columbia University] were secondary. We were the vanguard of the new order, vandals of liberation, sworn enemies of all hierarchical institutions. We were contemptuous of all those who accepted roles within those institutions, students and faculty alike. We distrusted all intellectual activity that was not devoted to revolution, all thought divorced from action, all rationality that shut itself off from the surrealism of the unconscious. We had no respect for institutions of "higher" learning that shelter those within them from the "lower" learning of the street. We came to tear down the walls, not repair them." Osha Neumann, *op cit*, p. 84.
[406] *Ibid*, p. 69.

cultural influence is of equal importance to military presence. In the case of 1960s Lower East Side New York, this basically means a modification of pop culture in order for it to communicate the purposes of UAWMF in as clear a manner as possible. The "lower learning of the street", as Osha Neumann calls it, involves no museum entries and historical lessons, favouring instead the comic book and the identity politics of gangs that are, by and large, considered trash by an order born from a fascistic worship of bodily perfection, of organic cleanliness averse to the possibility of social malaise. These social mediations, objectified into the image of garbage, make for a use that is even more straightforward than that promoted by King Mob, which is to say much less concerned with spectacle and recuperation, a non-sophisticated conception of the relation between pop and capital that treats it as just another weapon to be acquired – Geronimo's rifle. However, UAWMF usually sets an inversion at work, provoking a rhetorical ambivalence in which context is everything, a series of jokes in which play – as a game of war and expression – recognizes ethical value as inherently political, thus defining and re-defining terms in opposition to images crafted by the State or society at large.

This is why in the first action of the group, in February 1968, entitled "WE PROPOSE A CULTURE EXCHANGE: GARBAGE FOR GARBAGE": garbage is the toxicity of Western culture seen as both disaster and boon, as apocalyptic end and mythical beginning, for it represents a demise wrought by capitalism and the key component of a commonality that originates in rejection. In the flyer / manifesto (fig. 3.19), it states "America turns the world into garbage / it turns its ghettos into garbage / it turns Vietnam into garbage / In the name of universal principles (democracy, human rights) / In the name of the fatherland (collie dogs, New England churchs [sic]) / In the name of man / In the name of art / In the name of money", while further down stating "But we are faced with a revolt of the garbage / A cultural revolution / Garbage fertilizes / Discovers itself".

Fig. 3.19. "We Propose a Culture Exchange", 1968. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

The rhetorical circle is evident, and is easily associated with the views the group had of the underground and the idea of the barbarian at the gates. In any case, the action consisted of collecting trash from the Lower East Side and transporting it to one of the city's newest symbols of artistic patronage and prestige, the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, which was a very important part of the 1955 plan to renew the area, situated throughout the wealthy Upper West Side. Under the terms of a culture exchange as simplified potlatch the action rhetorically regards the principles of America as both the producers of waste and the waste itself at its most physically *revolting*. It deceptively aspires to an idealism ("and we play as we make our garbage / Beethoven Bach Mozart Shakespeare / To cover the sound of our garbage making") while ignoring the very material consequences it destructively imposes on its environment: "is it not Lincoln Center where it belongs?" The other side of the page illustrates the joke by juxtaposing pictures of trash with those of an orchestra, its director, and an open-casket funeral; it is, in a sense, a jazz-like move in

which the answer to 'musical savagery' is to *savage* the classical tradition as much as possible, to establish a distance from it in the very forms and places of performance, returning the "favour" of notation and musicianship to 'high art' as the insults of improvisation and self-discipline. In other words, it is the carving of life out of the death that is tradition, a death that is not final but which continues in a bitter, rotten un-life (there seems to be no body in the casket) for which Good Music comes to be a sort of necromancy, an invocation of waste, the *true* reification of liberal idealism.

Yet, it is from this culture of trash where the Motherfuckers emerge, and they advance on it as tactical necessity in order to re-articulate its ideological content to their favour. There are two excellent examples of this in the form of a (c.a.) 1968 flyer entitled "Comrades, it's your turn to play" and a comic in which a character that will be familiar to the reader appears, the "ACID Agent of Lower-East Side Defense" (figs. 3.20, 3.21).

The image to the left, while apparently akin to Situationist détournement, is actually appropriation, and it plays the dynamism and melodrama of war-themed comic books to the end of illustrating a point about the futility of the anti-war movement as it gathers "for still another march". It makes no attempt to question the fundamental relation between spectator, image, and context (in the form of ideology critique), preferring instead to maintain it in order to *make sense* of the new configuration, replacing ideology with loosely connected anarchist slogans that integrate a political appeal based on play. Therefore, it turns the super-heroine on the bottom, who screams "SMASH THE BOSSES!" and "SMASH THE STATE!", into a representation of role-playing, into a contextual mediation (she is holding a brick, so she must be in a riot, or a march) that allows a whole imaginary of desires anchored on pop culture to come into being as part of, in this case, anarchist revolt. This is why UAWMF is not another "left sectarian" group: it is essentially *populist* in a way that connects the cultural elements of capitalism's working and middle-class youth as part of the same process of waste production from the culture industry, engaging with them through a common language. Pop culture, then, *is* to be trusted inasmuch it already constitutes a whole array of ready-made images that can be shaken off their alienating function. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that the second panel to the left is exactly the same used by Roy Lichtenstein in one of his major works, and that the evading pilot is made to say that demonstrators "listen passively to the same speakers giving the same speeches with the same slogans year after year..." – Pop Art is *the same* because its rebellion is compatible with the repetition of institutional structures, while a pink leaflet handed out in the streets of the Lower East Side is *different* precisely because it is incoherent, random but not left to chance, and opposed to any formalization into a stabilized tradition beyond that of political pamphleteering, if it even can be called as such.

The image to the right features the same character that is central to *King Mob 2 ½*, here identified as the 'ACID Agent', pretty much the original source of the English poster's bearded revolutionary. The character, created by Spain Rodriguez as the protagonist of "TRASHMAN Agent of the 6th International" published in the *East Village Other* from 1967 to 1970, enacts a hyper-violent

Fig. 3.22. Spain Rodriguez, "Trashman Agent…", *East Village Other*, 1968. Tamiment &Wagner Archive, New York.

fantasy of killing cops while remaining outside the law[407] (fig. 3.22). Rodriguez's affinity with UAWMF and New York's radical left led him to make both TRASHMAN and ACID in its support, another instance of propagating 'trash culture' in the favour of revolutionary consciousness. Even though they share a character's image (a character which nevertheless is not the same in each comic, as evidenced in their respective names), TRASHMAN and ACID have narrative forms that differ entirely. The former follows the conventions of sequential narratives, establishing a beginning (a character, usually a hero, already known, in a certain context), a problem to be solved (the force that opposes the hero attempts to destroy him or her) and a resolution in which the hero is victorious. The latter, in contrast, completely overturns sequentiality by operating like a Futurist artwork in which everything happens at once: the mass seems to cheer as the Agent breaks into the speaker's continuity to violently put down what would seem like fascist soldiers, blood sprays all over the background as the speaker turns around in surprise to see the fierce, black gaze of the Agent *staring back*. The linearity of reading is completely broken, suggesting instead that other great strength of comic books in terms of illustrating a narrative whole at once, like a historical painting that has no need to remain static at some point in time, granting the viewer a psychedelic total perspective in which the centre is

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[407]   See *East Village Other*, vol. 4, no. 4, December 27 1968. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, Collection TAM530, box 4, folder 20. The character of the Trashman was modelled after Morea. See Gavin Grindon, *op cit*, p. 32-33.

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constituted by an unmitigated vortex of violence. This is the Motherfucker's ethos: outside the mass and yet a part of it, the antagonist of the one who is limited to speaking about revolution, the abyss of pop culture that prowls the streets in defence of the community, purging it from the militarized presence of the police, as both an individual and communal entity. These two characters present a dialectic: the ACID Agent eschews guns, communicating his anger and creativity completely through the movement of his body, of his being, as weapon, while TRASHMAN appears like a radical superhero willing to use guns and enact a more traditional form of violent opposition.

To conclude this section, there is an image that synthesises these pop-cultural associations and maximises their presence as a path towards monstrosity, the holding of an inner contradiction so aesthetically intense it burns the skin off to reveal the truth of a violence that, in being hunted down, cannot help but attempt to inscribe itself on the environment as myth, as haunting, as a corrupting nightmare threat.

Fig. 3.23. *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 1, n/n, May 2-8, 1969. Fales Archive, New York.

The image (fig. 3.23) is a montage of *The Incredible Hulk* panels, speech globes, drawings and word interventions made by an (anonymous) author. It depicts the Hulk in a psychedelic struggle

that flows from inside to outside, morphing his body into a near-disintegrating mass of flesh and particles that angrily shouts against ideological deception ("the more I struggle – the tighter it wraps itself around me!!") only to be partially *consumed* and reconstituted by pain and anger (the dramatic cry "can't let leader murder all those innocent people!" is focused into the preparation for a great punch, "but the madder we motherfuckers get – the stronger we motherfuckers become!"). The outcome is the ultimate realization of such an expressionism of revolt: "now we will show you what power really is – !! – and it won't fail me now!!" It is followed by the word 'NEVER' made into an onomatopoeia of the fist, the Great Refusal materialized into a bodily violence that breaks base matter, that breaks the page as it directs straight towards the viewer. The psychedelic consciousness of the Hulk, in its expansion and retraction as it struggles against its own conditioning and the despair of social rejection ("they made us outcasts") comes into its final form as utter destruction of the Reality Principle, of the '4th wall' that crumbles in the face of the subjectivity of the Motherfucker as both pop-cultural garbage and revolutionary monster. The struggle develops like a bad acid trip – everything collapses and alchemically joins together, only to clearly emerge when the Hulk shows sadness and then rage in extreme forms, neatly re-drawing his face and body for the viewer to see clearly before he cracks the page open with his fist. It is at that point where he understands what "power really is" – a violent, terminal negation ("NEVER"), an apocalyptic war. And such a war, as an apocalyptic politics, can be thought of, at least in historical terms, through the prism of the sublime, or the lens of Romanticism as it deviated into the Gothic. As the pressure from the authorities increased, the Motherfuckers became ever-more sparse, and

> by 1969, it was becoming clear that the cultural weather was changing. The season of love, rage, and extravagant expectations was coming to an end. On the streets of the Lower East Side, hard drugs began to replace LSD. The young dropouts had a nervous ragged edge. We had opened up our free store as a nighttime crashpad. It would fill with drunks who'd wake in the middle of the night, and go after each other with broken wine bottles. Optimism was giving way to a tight-lipped struggle for survival. The emotional tone of the Motherfuckers darkened. Our stash of guns was a source of endless paranoia. We were constantly moving it from one hiding place to another.[408]

As the organization slowly collapsed, even after several arguably successful actions (their participation in the Columbia occupation, the attack on the Pentagon building, and their opening

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[408] Osha Neumann, *op cit*, p. 113.

of the Fillmore Theater to a free night[409]), the terms for its identity and the configuration of a subjectivity shifted once again, becoming aligned, once more, with the conspiratorial notions of the SI and King Mob. However, due to its tribal form, UAWMF followed a different path, in the sense that if the possibility of drawing a discursive outside/inside through war as politics was no longer an option (since the war was, in many ways, almost lost), the setting of revolt under an apocalyptic conspiratorial tone implied a break from the 'natural' element of Clausewitzian confrontation (as strategy, the mastery over nature by rational means, appropriation as pragmatic reversal), leaving only the holiness of the warrior, the totality as spiritual realization... basically, the *supernatural* aspects of the war against capitalism and socialism (as tactics, idealized love as idealized sexuality, the transcendence achieved by psychedelics, appropriation as a change in essence). No longer struggling for their homes since they had fallen piece by piece, the tight unity of the Motherfuckers had to recede in the face of relentless assault, and a flight for survival meant no longer being able to *stand and fight*. Actual presence gives way, in this case, to a phantom one, to the ghost of a force whose will went unfulfilled; the war, in its supernatural form, comes to be one for *souls* instead of lives, for *minds* instead of (materialistic) consciousness, for Romantic images of rural populations instead of the urban area of the Lower East Side. Under this interpretation, the transition from UAWMF to the International Werewolf Conspiracy is not only one of a change in name in the face of pursuit, but also one of organizational principles that reflect a much gloomier state of the matter, an even further descent underground, where the lights of police cars cannot reach. Where there was an open confrontation, now came to be an esoteric form of warfare in which the rhetoric of menace comes to be much more important than that of self-defence.

4. The International Werewolf Conspiracy

"The INTERNATIONAL WEREWOLF CONSPIRACY is the Hip Revolutionary Community in Action", says a spread in *Rat*, adding that it is "insanely hungry for the chance to discover how to live, and rabid for the blood and guts of the honkies and pigs who infect everything they see with

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[409]   Of all which more can be read in the various sources cited so far such as Neumman's autobiography, Iain McIntyre's interview with Ben Morea, or the anthology of texts and images *The Incomplete Works of Ben Morea & Ron Hahne*.
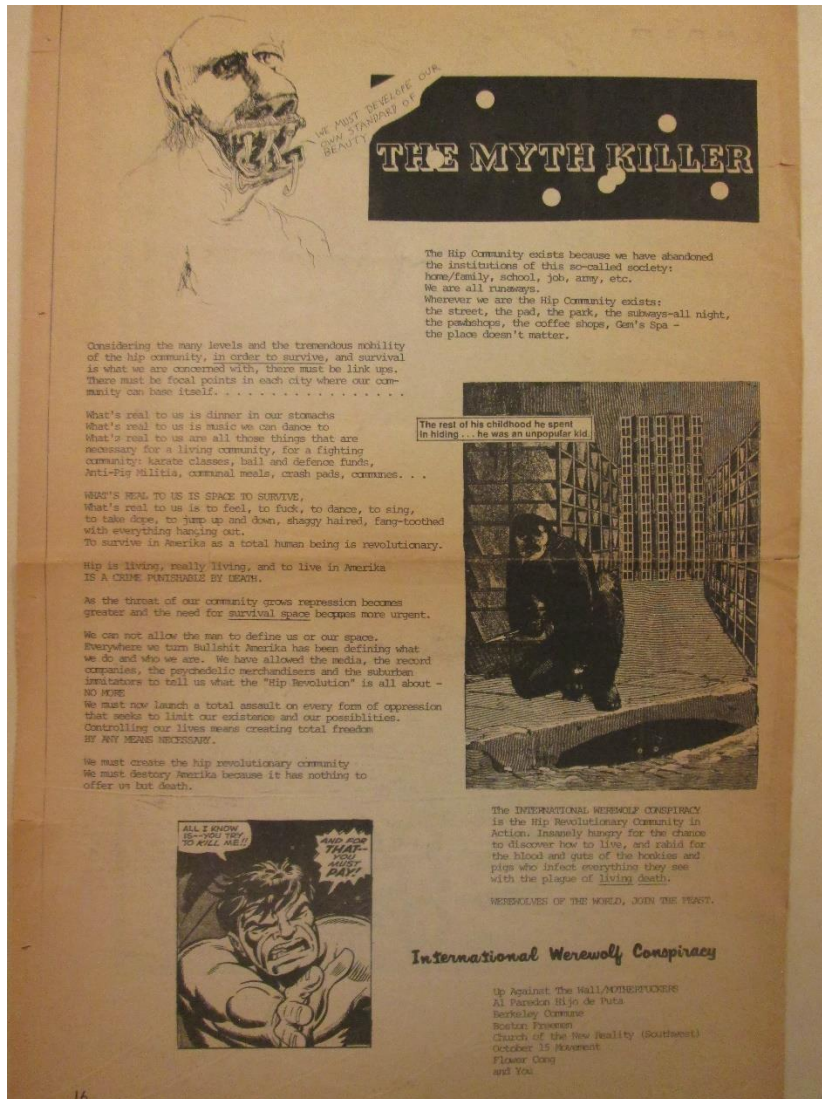
Fig. 3.24. *Rat Subterranean News,* n/v, n/n, November 15-28, 1968. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York

the plague of <u>living death</u>", ending with an uncanny call: "WEREWOLVES OF THE WORLD, JOIN THE FEAST." The spread (fig. 3.24), titled "The Myth Killer", enacts a Gothic move that is both comparable to and a source for King Mob's own, articulating a series of elements tagged by the idea of a revolutionary underground with a violence that could no longer be exerted within the terms of an open declaration of war. The closing image of the UAWMF magazine, a portrait of a fully armed (white) family, gives way to dungeons, killers, images of death and pop-cultural allusions to monstrosity: UAWMF was, in a sense, an entity that was able to politically build itself as singular, as an organization with an aesthetically specific program of revolt solid enough to enable the thought of seizing power through combat; the IWWC is the result of defeat, of power finally breaking up the constitutive elements of the group, forcing it to recalibrate the terms of its coming together as a wider, plural, much more expansive organization that must operate from the shadows. These shadows are located in the functioning of the conspiracy itself, in the *haunting* of places as it spreads like a contagion, and it represents a fundamental shift in the sense that the organization cannot remain associated with a specific place and time (over the months, subdivisions like ESSO stopped working). The appeal made in this set of images differs from those made earlier by UAWMF, not only in scope

but also at the discursive level, pinpointing that "wherever we are the Hip Community exists" – a logistic statement that must find resonance elsewhere, subsuming 'hip communities' within *a* 'Hip Community'. Territory becomes dislodged from the principles of this kind of revolutionary antagonism, inasmuch "everywhere we turn Bullshit Amerika has been defining what we do and who we are", an idea that turns territory into a psychedelic extension of a communal self. Gone is the classical Clausewitzian confrontation, in its place a conception of territory as an environment malleable by lifestyle, mind-power, and beliefs ("what's real to us..."), in other words, territory as no longer a purely politico-economic field but as an aesthetic-political one. This is why the monster declares that "we must develop our own standard of beauty", for territorial articulation is pre-determined by spectacle, by a cultural practice conceived as totalizing: myth. The Hip Community, then, becomes 'the myth killer' when it attempts to dislocate territory, to make it *relative*.

Of course, the community that settles within it is inscribed within yet another struggle, one that is constitutional in both individual and collective terms and which represents a step further in the condensation of Marxist ideas about consciousness into a pop-cultural intervention that speaks not of parties but of youth, not of the proletariat but the lumpenproletariat. It is at this point that it could be said that the IWWC had internalized the affinity group, in a manner that no longer theorizes its becoming (as Enlightened explanation), preferring instead to *move* it underground, to obscure it in the Romance of subjective transformation by the sublimity of self-effacement; its rationality finds an intense, irrational core.

DESTROY IT!

We begin by killing the enemy within us, within the hearts & minds of those with whom we would share our bodies & our lives. We come together in small bands with those who we have learned to trust, preparing for the long struggle with the enormous power of the institutions that repress us.
AN ACT OF DESTRUCTION IS AN ACT OF LIBERATION.

The function of the student movement is not to make demands on the university, but to destroy the existence of the "student" as a social role & as a character structure. YOU MUST DESTROY THE STUDENT WITHIN YOU. For only then can the struggle begin against the institutions & masters which have trained us for the submission & slavery in which we now participate. Our goal is not to win concessions, but to kill our masters & create a life which is worth living...& IN AMERIKA LIFE IS THE ONE DEMAND THAT CAN'T BE FILLED.

WCW

international werewolf conspiracy

Fig. 3.25. "DESTROY IT!", flyer, 1968. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

This leaflet (fig. 3.25) illustrates such a transformation, not only by way of pop images of physical prowess (cornered and threatened, the Hulk emerges ever more powerful, ever more angry) but also by reference to a false consciousness intuitively defined as "the enemy within us", by the reiteration of the (Romantic) dialectical moment in which self-destruction is conceived as self-liberation. The text evokes the function of the proletariat in Marxist theory (replacing it, in this case, with the student), but it would be more accurate to say that it reflects Reich's reading of social structure as psychological internalization; the key word of the struggle "against the institutions and masters" is, after all, "trained". When paired with the Gothicism of the werewolf's face-signature, the language of the master-slave dialectic becomes tinged with a literary darkness that refers to the monster as a human creation driven by a logic of divine subservience – difference and desire bound to the chains of Universal History, tortured into an instrument of need. So the monster *hungers* for life, one of its own as much as that of its masters, and since "IN AMERIKA LIFE IS THE ONE

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DEMAND THAT CAN'T BE FILLED", it seeks to satiate that hunger with life-giving death: first of alienated self, and then of alienating master.
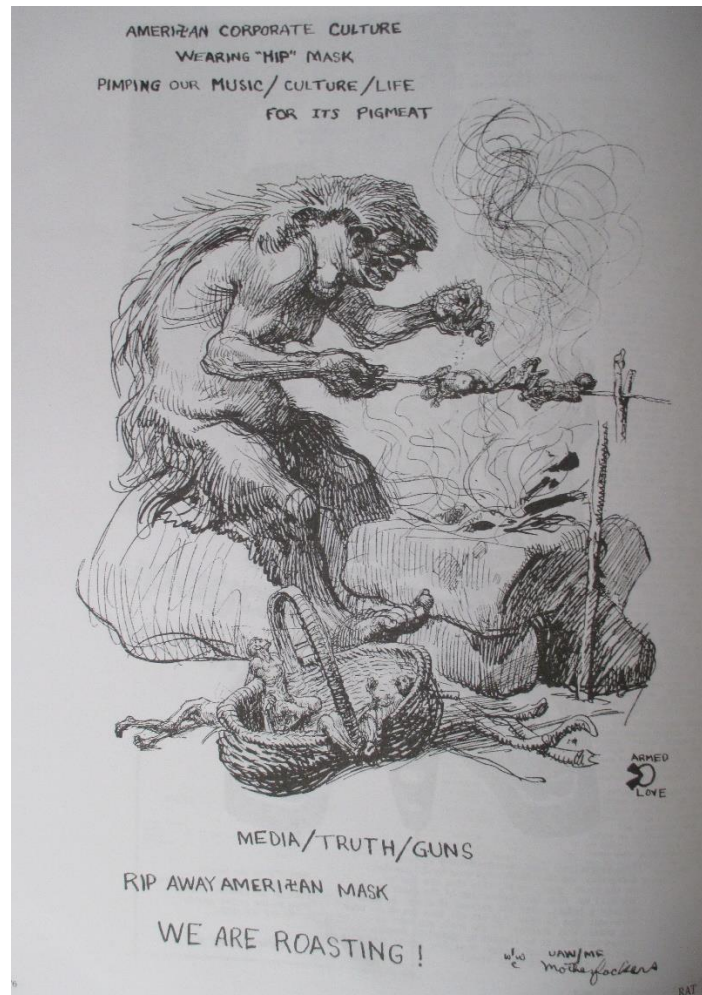
Fig. 3.26. *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 2, n/n, August 12-26, 1969.

The theme of satiated hunger, of the monster consuming its enemy in a festive moment of revelry, is one of the main elements of the IWWC's discourse, and its representation as a hairy werewolf-like giant (fig. 3.26), barbarous and primitive as it roasts some suffering diminutive men seals, in a way, the (deviated) nature of the *total* conspiracy of a multiplicity of organizations that originate in the *wild*, that, left to their own devices, will coalesce into an enormous force that cannot help but prey on its erstwhile culture-industry hunter. The image is disgusting: the brute adopts a relaxed

pose as the flesh of two impaled men chars; to "rip away" the "Amerikan mask" is to maim the body of society, to 'rip' it in the most visceral sense of the word, for the very existence of the monster as desire unbound legitimises its violence: transcendence is strewn with the bones of the 'masters'. At this point, the politics of the IWWC are very similar to those developed by King Mob in the third number of their magazine, which is why we will move onto what is conceivably its clearest 'manifesto' (fig. 3.27), in which the Conspiracy takes over the Motherfuckers and draws other groups under its demonic wings.

Fig. 3.27. *Rat Subterranean News*, n/v, n/n, 1969. Tamiment & Robert Wagner Archive, New York.

The design is such that the drawn face of the werewolf seems to irrupt out of the page as an incantation is made from its bone-filled mouth: "A MOTHERFUCKER IS A WEREWOLF", which when abbreviated presents an inversion of letters – an MF is a WF. This kind of linguistic game provides the setting for a rhetoric that works towards re-articulating the identity of the Motherfucker under a Gothic signal that, at least theoretically, subverts many parts of a past subjectivity and brings to the fore others that were minimized. The warrior, the affinity group, appropriation, war (politics), and aesthetics (collective and individual images of self)

acquire new meanings in the face of a *natural* force that aims to make the Motherfucker extinct; strength (physical and 'spiritual'), violence, and the self as society's Other come to the fore while self-defence, the territorial part of politics, and tribal forms of understanding affinity subside into the background. These last three parts come to be replaced by elements born of new configurations, giving way to *menace* (as the violence exerted by the image of an Other, a show of force that cannot be fully pinned down), the de-territorialisation implied in conspiracy, and an *animal affinity*, a wolf pack form of collectivity. These will be explained as we go over the parts that are given new meanings in the manifesto.

The warrior's re-signification is perhaps the most radical, because (he) has left the 'holiness' of honour and the defence of an overt way of life behind, transforming into an 'unholy' beast whose allegiances lie with those who share a hidden life based on a supernatural relation with the environment. This supernatural relation is grounded upon the uncertainty of identifying the werewolf, at the core of which is a fundamental lack to be filled only by revolutionary practice. Werewolves cannot be identified in daylight, nor can they identify amongst themselves (after all, in the context of late 1968 to look like a hippie was to invite police harassment) except in the act of coming together, temporarily, within the frame of contingent revolutionary action. The warrior provides a political frontier – he knows who the enemy is, and the enemy knows who he is – whereas his transformation into a beast dissolves said frontier by hiding it within, by dis-articulating the aesthetics with which the enemy visualizes (or hears) him: "when morning comes, there is silence." This is a further radicalization of the discourse surrounding praxis, since werewolves can only know each other at very specific moments (say, a demonstration, an attack, etc.), and have 'human forms' at every other time, finding in coincidence a basic condition for revolution, bringing the idea closer to what has already been explained as King Mob's approach to Trocchi's 'Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds'. Therefore, the affinity group disperses, becoming an inner configuration that constantly connects the monster's individual, isolated existence to a whole that only comes to make sense under specific augurs, augurs that to those who are not 'hip' mean horror and to those who are mean "it is time" (for action, or planning...). The very vagueness of such a concept obscures the previous rationality of the group as a sex-economic organization, leaving it forever open and drifting into a kind of collectivity that relies completely

on an infectious imaginary that can or cannot be realized. In a way, for it to work it needs a subtle system of signs, a tactical set-up that is learned in the midst of 'direct actions' as communicative aids that avoid police identification, a sort of extension of the moment of conflict to the body and its appearance so that even outside of demonstrations there is a *scent* of the revolutionary. This is another path to Vaneigem's erotic communication, except it highlights its *sensory* aspect over the sensual one by putting physical violence at its centre, by making Thanatos the vehicle of signification; werewolves might not be able to know each other by daylight but they share a taste for blood, and wherever it is spilled (assuming that it is always spilled first by oppressors) they gather, not as formalized tribe but as a pack. After all, the pack is smaller, closer, and represents an alternative affinity of cooperation that is performed with a certain elasticity (wolves might separate for miles during a hunt, but are able to reunite by *interpreting* the environment). In a Romanticization of it, the pack belongs nowhere, which is to say it is free to move as it pleases, it belongs everywhere, its territory shifting to suit its needs and desires: the affinity group is no longer tied to self-defence as defence of a home, but to a mind-set that heightens the senses in order to remain always one step ahead of its 'natural predator'.

As for appropriation, war, and aesthetics, they are brought together and transformed by means of a Gothic infusion of the esoteric, turning them into the most basic signifiers for mystery and a violent death. The first victim of the manifesto is Georges Sorel, who falls before a modification (or 'correction', as the early Situationist thought would have it) of his text to reflect the purpose of the IWWC; what is perhaps the original quote, in the context of how social sectors exert influence on governments, states that "the workers have no money but they have at their disposal a far more effective means of action -- they can *inspire fear*, and for several years past they have not denied themselves this expedient."[410] The IWWC's version, that "Hip Revolutionaries have the Power to inspire FEAR", does away with the phrase's wider context by integrating it in the word 'Power', and the replacement of the workers with 'Hip Revolutionaries' adds to it the focus previously developed by Black Mask and UAWMF regarding youth and the various representatives of the

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[410] Georges Sorel, *op cit*, p. 60.

lumpenproletariat[411]. This appropriation of the Sorel quote reflects a way of reading texts that differs from that carried out by past iterations of the group, *infecting* the text with the same lycanthropy that the 'new' Motherfucker carries in his or her blood, grasping a basic idea and re-identifying it with a context in which "we are the ultimate Horror Show... Hideous Hair & Dangerous Drugs..." Following from this, the 'atmospherics' focus on environments as sculpture, based as it was on artistic appropriation, changes towards the malleability produced by an idea of appropriation developed into a Gothic sickness that *ravages* the environment from within, transforming it each night into a fantasy of total decline. In other words, it both psychedelically extends 'the mind' onto objects as much as it gives them a kind of subjectivity of their own, one that escapes a rationalized understanding of the world: it re-formulates "the night", the "night wind", the "distance", into signals of an uncertainty so deep incomprehension is the only possible reaction (at least, for a mind that is neither 'hip' nor 'revolutionary'), thus creating "fear". This fantasy of a nature *alive and willing*, its mind set on death, captures the political intent of the IWWC as an organization as it started to assume the dispersal of its members and the mythological articulation it thought it needed to deploy in order to keep itself from falling apart. This political intent attempts to establish an indeterminacy that in the end, while having the same origin, contravenes the radically visible activism of UAWMF; by transferring the battle-lines to conspiratorial terms it appropriates the Cold War culture of paranoia and portrays the group as an *obscured* signifier, by which I mean an empty signifier aesthetically charged enough to invite spectators / readers / the non-hip to fill it not with their own demands or desires but their own pathological subjections to contemporary ideology – ""Where do they come from?" Who knows. "What do they want?" They won't say." By playing conspiratorial, the organization is able to lose its various centres and become a *phantasy*, both a spectre and a psychological effect that expresses the horror of a possible collapse of civilization as much as that of it already being under way, under the very (human, disconnected, too civilized) noses of – via Reich – the family structure... "the fat frightened giant gulps tranquilizers while his children grow hair and fangs and leave home to run with the wolves." This new identity cannot be armed in the same way it was before, it cannot be 'dressed for war' like the holy warriors of The Family, nor can it be nurtured in a 'healthy' sexuality

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[411]   Ben Morea: "We were always politically related to the I.W.W., but it was an old form of militancy based on the worker. We were from the non-worker generation, so to speak, but we liked the I.W.W. We related to the idea of the werewolf meaning the human who changes to his true nature, which is animal." Johan Kugelberg, *op cit*, p. 14.

dependent on modern sex-economics. Instead, as the image of the naked werewolf shows, it is an evolution of those ideas into a form that gives primacy to a nude body of aggression, a performance of "the Unknown" understood as a pervasive supernatural force that, like all things supernatural, is deeply embedded into a relationship with nature configured around a myth. In this case, that myth is the Cold War narrative of apocalyptic change (a disruption of capitalist nature and natural order) brought about by a revolutionary enemy within. Hence, the werewolf arises as a phantasmatic contradiction, killing myths by consuming them ("their stomachs sag with the weight of a satisfying feast") while remaining a myth themselves, reproducing dialectical thought under an opaque circumstance that is riddled with analogical operations, starting with the very inversion of the letters 'MF' to 'WF'.

To conclude this chapter, I will talk about a couple of images (fig. 3.28, 3.29) that in a way provide a closure of what the IWWC *represented* right before it withered away towards the end of 1969.
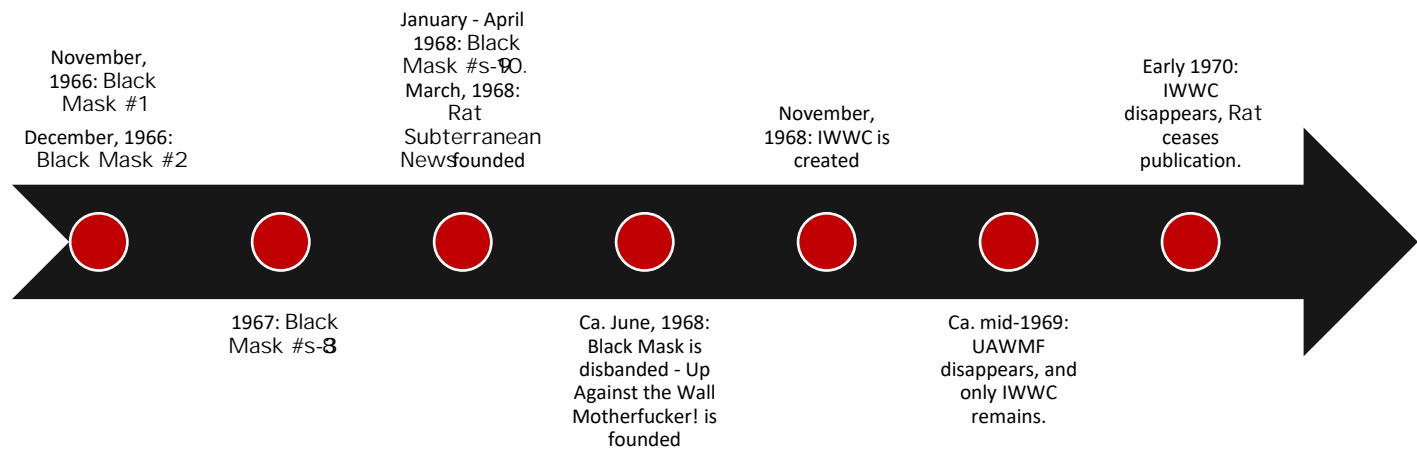

Fig. 3.28, left: *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 2, n/n, May 16-22, 1969. Fales Archive, New York. Fig. 3.29, right: *Rat Subterranean News*, vol. 1, n/n, November 15-28, 1968. Tate Archive, London.

Both images are esoteric, in the sense that they provide an elusive path toward the understanding of what the IWWC was, but also because they effect most strikingly the transformation that the werewolf underwent, from a sign with relatively stable meanings (the sexual, *human* body of the hip revolutionary, with the power to inspire) to a symbol with fragmented, multiple meanings (the naked aggression of the animal body of that same revolutionary, with the power to inspire fear). The Buddhist icon-like face on the left, drawn simply on a white background, appeals to an elevated consciousness in which the yin and yang occupy the place of the third eye, hinting at a conception of the totality that parts from the inner knowledge of the self and of the self's 'own people', those who share that animalistic affinity described earlier. While dualistic in a first instance, the image pretends to arrive at a serene whole that builds an 'integral identity' relying on a self-attained truth that feeds and is fed from a politicized, metaphorical collective ('a people'). In contrast, the burning skeleton to the right makes for a doom-laden throwback to Black Mask and the references to death, bringing into the aesthetics of the IWWC a Romantic logic of hellish retribution and liberation fashioned after medieval print iconography. This is, perhaps, the very tension at work throughout the entire revolutionary project of the collective ever since 1966 as it attempts to balance the rational, equalizing strain of its discourse with the activist, expressionistically violent side, first through Clausewitz, then through apocalyptic, esoteric warfare[412].

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[412] The kind that was also suggested by that other, brutal movement 'beyond politics': "The third incarnation [of the group first started as Black Mask was as the "IWWC" (Int'l Werewolf Conspiracy) [around late 1968-69, I think]. At that point, I think they were degenerating [I remember a violent argument I had with Ben about using the "werewolf" designation, since this was also the chosen tag for post WW-II Nazi youth cells in Germany]." Jonathan S. to Max Blechman, March 30, 1994. Brackets are not my comments, but part of the letter. Indeed, the "werwolf" plan began development in 1944 as an attempt to articulate a 'resistance force' in German territory occupied by the Allies. It did not achieve much, but it did wage a media war by means of a propaganda radio station called "Radio Werwolf". In a way, it phantasmatically created a threat that, while holding no actual (fire)power, did perturb the 'new order' established by occupation forces. For more information on this, see Stephen Fritz, *Endkampf: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Death of the Third Reich*. Lexington, Kentucky University Press, 2004.

FIG. C: BLACK MASK/UP AGAINST THE WALL MOTHERFUCKER/INTERNATIONAL
WEREWOLF CONSPIRACY TIMELINE

November,
1966: Black
Mask #1

December, 1966:
Black Mask #2

January - April
1968: Black
Mask #s-7-10.

March, 1968:
Rat
Subterranean
News founded

November,
1968: IWWC is
created

Early 1970:
IWWC
disappears, Rat
ceases
publication.

1967: Black
Mask #s-3-8

Ca. June, 1968:
Black Mask is
disbanded - Up
Against the Wall
Motherfucker! is
founded

Ca. mid-1969:
UAWMF
disappears, and
only IWWC
remains.

CHAPTER 4: S.NOB

1. Introduction

This chapter will be an overview of Mexican magazine *S.NOB*, which was published in 1962 for only a few months. It is not directly connected to the wider network of the Situationist International, but the purpose of including it in such a study is to close the links to a history built out of Surrealist, Dadaist, and Futurist base materials. *The Situationist Times* (ST) demonstrated the multiplicity of this commonality, one that the SI attempted, precisely in 1962, to close off because – to them – it bordered dangerously on fragmentation. The control exerted by the French section of the SI was seen by ST as a suppression of difference, a *totalitarian* gesture that failed completely to grasp the anarchy of an anti-organization founded on artistic principles; still, this closure had a ripple effect that is commonly seen as the labyrinthine path of the SI's political endeavour, one that had supposedly left art behind. A look through their two major publications, *Revolution of Everyday Life* and *Society of the Spectacle*, confirms otherwise, in the sense that aesthetics and politics become inextricably woven together in a language that cannot do without one or the other, but that indicates, as it did for *King Mob Echo*, a new approach to the problem of a society understood as irredeemably oppressive and unjust. If *King Mob Echo* and *Black Mask* are much closer to this assertive, planned and certain language of revolution, class war, and social structures, both *The Situationist Times* and *S.NOB* share a time of crisis of the SI (1962), in which the unification (the *totalizing*) of art and politics relies still on a language made to contemplate myriad possibilities that risk going nowhere, mired in uncertainty. If King Mob and Black Mask form the vanguard of a network that has embraced one form or another of artistic appropriation, Situationist Times and S.NOB could be described as a sort of *rearguard*: an effort that is not so much trying to 'leap out of history' or fulfil the ultimate war against capitalism but trying to *bend* history to its will, dissolving its boundaries to produce a kind of terror that is more philosophical than literary. It does not conspire, nor does it stand and fight – it is an abyssal fascination. *S.NOB* is born from this intent, an infernal rumble that, like all the other magazines, youthfully appropriates images and political frameworks to attack the contexts that have generated them. What makes the Mexican magazine stand out is its Bataillean undercurrents, very purposefully crafted by its participants, creating a kind of collectivity that more closely resembles the anti-organizational character of the ST. As will be seen, this collective is a fragmentary one, aiming for

the destruction of any and all totalities; in this sense, its most obvious contextual counterpart is *The Situationist Times*, which, while not exactly fragmentary, did aim for an internationalism that welcomed misinterpretation and difference, and which pushed the theoretical artistic basis of the SI the furthest[413]. Not only does this mean that *S.NOB* serves as the closure of this thesis' ring, it also points to a context in which the avant-garde strain that perhaps starts with Futurism developed in strikingly similar manners under completely different circumstances. In Mexico, the most recent upheaval had been a revolution (1910-1917[414]) that mixed all sorts of claims and demands from a mélange of upper and lower class social elements, proclaiming its leftist direction with pride over the course of 40 years, institutionalised into a Revolution that no longer allowed *fragments* in its midst. To confront it, *S.NOB* used strategies that point at the same kind of aesthetico-political logics used by the SI and those excluded by it, founded upon modernist artistic techniques that, used as rhetorical weapons, were able to tear into a discourse dependent on a very specific cultural and social configuration. The reason I chose this group over others such as *El corno emplumado*, which were also part of the counter-culture in Mexico in the 1960s (as will be seen below) is not only because *S.NOB* was not funded by the state in any way, but also because it claimed for itself an uncompromising avant-gardism whose direct influence was not the Mexican Revolutionary vanguard but the European one, more specifically, Surrealism, with which the other three groups in this thesis were also engaged with at a historical level.

In the 1950s, there was an interesting development in the Mexican cultural milieu: it *hardened* as much as it became *soft*[415]. The initial grand aspirations of the muralist avant-garde, with its post-Revolutionary claims of a new humanism derived from the evolution of the Mexican identity

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[413] By 'theoretical artistic basis' I mean the theoretical underpinnings of the techniques first developed by the early SI such as detournement and derive, with roots in aesthetics and artistic practices. By further exploring the concept of the situation, the ST took detournement and derive to a degree of sophistication that the SI did not have, simply because it focused on other, less clearly art-related concepts.

[414] According to traditional historiography. There are multiple discussions across the 20th century about the end of the Mexican Revolution, in which some authors contend that it ended in 1920, others in 1924, 1929, 1945, or even further.

[415] The terms are taken from political theory, particularly the meaning ascribed to them by Joseph Nye in his 2004 book *Soft Power*. Their meaning can be summarized as follows: hard power is the capacity of coercion held by a state, whether through force or other means (such as economic ones), while soft power is its capacity for co-optation and attraction through, for example, cultural ties or diplomatic exercises. When I say that the Mexican cultural milieu *hardened* as much as it became *soft*, I mean that it acquired a very distinct capacity to coerce *and* to co-opt, as will be seen in the next few paragraphs.

essentialized in the concept of the 'cosmic race'[416], had been reduced by this time to a crude, dogmatic discourse on nationalism that functioned more as a system of exclusion than a true form of revolutionary thought. Fully integrated into the workings of the State, the kind of knowledge produced by the muralists (in terms of the aesthetics of identity and its relation to modernity) was wielded by the institutionalized Revolution[417] as a tool of cultural unification through representative means. At first, the goal was determined by Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos' Hegelian vision of an 'end of History' achieved by the particularities of modernity in Latin America, but by the 1950s the goal had shifted entirely to a sort of cultural 'safekeeping' that, through the mythic sentimentalities of nationalism, found in said knowledge a sacred common ground that would guarantee the stability of the State itself. This meant that any of the myriad possibilities opened up by avant-garde practice that were not compliant with the Revolutionary articulation of very distinct cultural elements[418] were closed off, not so much through censorship (as would befit the paranoia of the government after 1968) but through simple acts of public shaming within the very intellectual environment from which artists emerged. One of the early emblematic examples of this was the controversy around the literary group Contemporáneos ("Contemporaries") from 1928 to around 1933, in which the group, committed to a cosmopolitan direction of vanguardism (one that arose from the same source material in Vasconcelos' cultural project as made concrete in post-Revolutionary Mexico's educational programmes), was subjected to multiple public attacks from nationalist writers and artists that, in the name of the *people*, defended the Revolution's capacity to extend its mythology. This was still a time, of course, in which such mythological power was vital to the continuity of the Revolution[419], and therefore the

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[416] See José Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica* from 1925.

[417] From here on out, the distinction between 'Revolution' and 'revolution' is to be made: that the term 'Mexican Revolution' indicates not only a specific historical event but also the *proper name* for it implies the ideological workings of historiography – its institutionalization into a State through, among many things, the writing of its history. Therefore, during this chapter, every time the word 'revolution' is used as a proper name (capitalised), it means the 'Mexican Revolution' as well as its State form, which have become, in a way, almost inseparable from each other.

[418] Among these elements are, for example: images of contemporary, traditional indigenous cultures as truthful communities, liberal values as the path towards a new State, a re-evaluation of pre-Columbian Natives based on a purely negative portrayal of the Spanish and the Conquest, mestizo ('mixed race') cultural achievements as forms of tradition, modernization as progress (economic and social), avant-garde thought (to revolutionize art is to revolutionize humanity), a preoccupation with universal history, national sovereignty, regional autonomy, and so on and so forth.

[419] There is an entire historiographical debate on the issue of exactly when did the Revolution end. There are three main interpretations: it ended with the creation of the Constitution in 1917; with the end of the armed conflict in 1922; or with the transformation of the Party of the Mexican Revolution into the Institutional Revolutionary Party. The view taken here is more long-term, in the sense that the discourse of the Revolution (articulated into a definitive form during the 1920s) was maintained throughout the decades as the basis of the functioning of the State up until the adoption of neoliberalism, which replaced it in the early 1980s.

assault against Contemporáneos served perhaps as a process of 'purification' that more clearly defined the political frontier, one that would quickly become stabilized into a *hard*, unmovable force constantly reinforced in public discourse. Such a force quickly and constantly neutralized (artistic) dissidence, whether by economic means (like selective funding of artistic practice), political pressure or intellectual discrediting, without having to resort, generally, to outright censorship and persecution.

By 1956, this 'official culture' no longer needed to aggressively stake its claims to truth, in the sense that it had been safely integrated into a national identity that had successfully occupied the Mexican territory. This meant, additionally, that the exclusionary apparatus that had been configured around fundamental questioning of its claims (such as the Contemporáneos case) was now the standard from which every art was immediately measured and judged. In a way, this standardization made concrete a certain confidence on the part of the State in the stability of Mexican culture, and it is from this subtle, automatic effectiveness at reinforcing the status quo, this *softening* of its power, that a new wave of confrontations arose. In that year, visual artist José Luis Cuevas wrote "La cortina de nopal" ("The Cactus Curtain"), an essay in which he protested the closed-off nature of 'official culture' by portraying it as an analogue of the Iron Curtain: a wall of Revolutionary nationalism prevented anyone from looking at something other than its representations, whether trying to look outside or inside of what it covered. Cuevas' essay was mostly an indicator: in the span of a few years, the dissidence that would have been previously subjugated entirely by shaming exploded into a new set of practices that consciously battled Revolutionary discourse in a wide scale; the State's reaction, in accordance with its standardized, soft forms of pressure, was not as directly confrontational as it had been when the political frontiers were yet to be fully defined, and it worked its way through positive reinforcements of by now traditional representations of what culture is or should be[420]. This is not to say that this new wave of artists, later known as the Rupture Generation[421], did not meet any resistance whatsoever (they

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[420] See Elizabeth Anahí Cervantes González, *Índice y Estudio Preliminar de la revista S.Nob*. BA dissertation, Mexico, UNAM, 2010. p. 12.

[421] The concept of the 'Rupture' is a common feature of the historiography dedicated to the avant-garde from the 1950s in Mexico, having appeared ever since 1982 with Rita Eder's "La ruptura con el muralismo y la pintura Mexicana en los años cincuenta", which was part of the government-sponsored book *Historia del arte mexicano*. It was further reinforced in 1988 with the exhibition *Ruptura 1952-1965* at the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil in Mexico City. While

did suffer public attacks, although were for the most part ignored by institutions), but that the form in which the resistance was configured was seemingly based on the assumption that hegemony would continue[422]. This context provided a ground different to that in which past offerings of alternative visions of a Revolutionary avant-garde worked upon, in terms of a freedom to develop new ideas on art that, while hinged on the rejection of the Revolution's general claims, was now independent from it.

As in the rest of the Western world, the post-war period in which this ground was conformed was one of quick economic development and the expansion of mass popular culture, of which Mexico's urban centres, particularly Mexico City, fully participated in. Elizabeth Cervantes proposes to see, in this sense, magazines like *S.NOB* as part of the rapid growth of youth culture in the country, which, paired with the rebellion of the Rupture, found weapons of revolt in foreign cinema, music (like rock n' roll), and other culture industries that in many ways subtly rejected the nationalist outlook[423]. In other words, it is along with this Rupture that a counterculture, with the historical underpinnings that tie the term to the 1960s, was born, spreading new ways of thought upon which State-sanctioned programmes had a very reduced influence:

> *S.NOB* is inserted in a cultural panorama that is somewhat rigid and quite traditional. […] In those years, it lived alongside very formal periodical publications that were subsidized, in their majority, by universities or by government institutions that employed a demanding edition committee in charge of evaluating the quality of texts, making them go through strict academic criteria such as gravity, clarity, or objectivity.[424]

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the term had been used to describe the situation under which the 1950s avant-garde broke with its 1920s precursor, it was Teresa del Conde who conceptualized it as an entire generation of artists who had grown discontented with the nationalist project, in her 1999 essay "La aparición de la Ruptura". Thus, she turned the simple descriptor of a 'rupture' into the concept of 'Rupture' in order to categorize a wide array of artistic activity in the 1950s and 1960s.

[422] This interpretation could explain, for example, the fact that many countercultural efforts of the early 1960s opened up by the 'Rupture' were financially supported by the State. When hegemony was actually threatened by the 1968 worker and student movements, the reaction was immediately felt: the massacre in Mexico City became a signal of oppressive militarized practices that came to include outright censorship as part of its defence mechanisms. State-supported countercultural magazines like *El Corno Emplumado* ceased to exist due to financial retirement in the best of cases, and to bans (even persecution, if there was any hint of connections to the radical left) in the worst. See Peter Watt, "The *Invisible Tyranny* of the Mexican Media: Tlatelolco and Beyond", in *Sincronía*, no. 52, Fall 2009. Available online at http://sincronia.cucsh.udg.mx/wattfall09.html ; accessed on May 29, 2015.

[423] Elizabeth Cervantes, *op cit*, p. 15.

[424] ""*S.NOB* se inserta en un panorama cultural un tanto tradicional y acartonado. […] Por aquellos años, convivía con publicaciones periódicas muy formales que eran subsidiadas, en su mayoría, por universidades o por instituciones de gobierno que contaban con un exigente consejo de redacción encargado de evaluar la calidad de los textos, haciéndolos pasar por criterios académicos muy estrictos, como la seriedad, la claridad, o la objetividad."", translation

This view is useful to build a sense of the intellectual panorama under which *S.NOB* was conceived: first, because it was never supported by the State, unlike other countercultural magazines before 1968[425]; second, because it adopted popular culture in manners not too dissimilar to those of the Situationist-inflected collectives (as a matter of *young* avant-garde ways of knowing the social)[426]; third, because it was consequently experimental, in the vanguard sense of subjecting artistic thought to the experience of its limits as discourse; fourthly and finally, because it inverted *classical* Revolutionary terms by presenting an opposition to culture via an opposition to Mexican culture, reversing the Revolutionary understanding of 'what art does' and pointing it, like a Surrealist revolver, back against itself.

S.NOB, took the "apolitical" principle of the Rupture to an extreme in which, by only talking about conventional politics in passing (as against talking about it all the time, as was the tradition of nationalism), articulated a position that is dangerously subversive. The magazine's refusal to address concrete political issues does not result in the ambiguous idealism of more beat-oriented publications like *El Corno Emplumado*, but a materialism that is in many ways comparable to the initial Bataillean act of pulling Surrealism through the mud. As will be seen, the Dada and Surrealist elements of the magazine grant it a very particular force that is aimed not only against Mexican culture but wider conceptions of it; *S.NOB* will never touch upon the concept of a 'total revolution' or anything like it, because, in the context of early 1960's Mexico, to talk of revolt was to talk of Revolution, of conventional politics, of programmes and plans. A *lack* of these things is

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mine. Claudia Albarrán, "La revista S.NOB: Laboratorio experimental de una generación", in *Revuelta*, no. 4, 2005, pp. 63-67. p. 64.

[425] Or funded by National University-incorporated systems (which are, in many ways, extensions of the State by virtue of being public), such as *El Corno Emplumado*, *Pájaro Cascabel*, *Academus*, *La Palabra y el Hombre*, etc. There are few traces of self-published magazines in the 1960s, although some of the aforementioned ones like *El Corno* did stumble out of the government's favour and into private funding for several numbers, particularly after 1964, when the authoritarian-inclined Gustavo Díaz Ordaz assumed the presidency of the country.

[426] "Varios de los que respondieron al llamado de *S.NOB* eran escritores inexpertos que se habían cansado de tocar puertas o habían sucumbido ante el poder de la censura o estaban a punto de abandonar la escritura, cansados de atender juicios y a ciertas exigencias editoriales excluyentes y, a veces, muy poco definidas."; "Various of those who responded to the call of *S.NOB* were inexpert writers that were tired of knocking on doors for work or who had succumbed to the power of censure or were about to abandon literature, tired of attending judgement and certain editorial exigencies that were alienating and sometimes very ill-defined." *Ibid*, p. 65. Such is the case of Jorge Ibargüengoitia, a writer of satire that nonetheless made the collages and photomontages for the covers of the magazine, and who also modified the majority of the image footnotes in some joking way or another.

perhaps key in the discourse of a magazine that wants to endeavour in avant-garde revolt, and thus it deploys its violence through absence, through limit-experiences, through the dissolution of boundaries that Bataille conceived of as *the impossible*[427]. In the eroticism of its cultish form (as hebdomadario or "hebdomadaire", which translates as both 'weekly' and the person who, in Catholic mass, officiates the ecclesiastical procedures of the chorus or the altar), *S.NOB* proves to be humorously compelling in its dedication to a transgression that does not confirm the taboo it breaks, driving a very Bataillean stake through the heart of nationalism: "the magazine evidences the opening that Mexican literature suffered towards themes that were practically *virgin* at the time, such as eroticism, incest, torture, suicide, scatology, black humour, alcohol, drugs and new artificial paradises, terror and panic as forms of knowledge and the vindication of violence, cruelty, and crime; themes that generated controversy in different places of our culture [...] [emphasis mine]"[428]

This chapter will be divided, primarily, into two main parts. The first one will overview the theoretical aspect of *S.NOB*'s revolt, based on the connection between Salvador Elizondo, who was the magazine's director for the entirety of its short run (June-October 1962), and Georges Bataille, whom Elizondo had read at about that time. The connection is literary, and Elizondo would later model his novel *Farabeuf* (1965) on Bataille's last writings, as a specific take on the photography of Chinese torture ('Leng t'che') published in *The Tears of Eros* in 1961. However, it is possible to extract several Bataillean 'lessons' from *S.NOB* as a whole, which might hint at a very early reading of *Tears* by Elizondo or at least a very similar theoretical approach that can be traced back to Surrealism. Such an approach is essentially revolutionary, in the sense that its engagement with culture (and therefore society) is an avant-garde onslaught not only on the tradition of Mexican art but on tradition in general, Western terms. However, there is an important distinction to be repeated here: *S.NOB* constitutes a set of contradictions that are not to be dialectically solved, that are not reflective of the confrontation between life and death so dear to the anarchist ethos of the last two

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[427] As will be explained further below by means of the 1947 text *The Impossible* as well as secondary sources from authors such as Jean-Michel Besnier and Amy Reid.

[428] "la revista evidencia la apertura que se da en las letras mexicanas hacia temas casi vírgenes hasta ese momento, como el erotismo, el incesto, la tortura, el suicidio, la escatología, el humor negro, el alcohol, las drogas y otros novísimos paraísos artificiales, el terror y el pánico como formas de conocimiento y la reivindicación de la violencia, de la crueldad y del crimen; temas que generaron controversia en distintos ámbitos de nuestra cultura [...]" *Ibid*, p. 66.

collectives analysed in the course of this thesis – it is not revolutionary in a *strong* sense, with a programme, a critical theory, and a radical-left sensibility for struggle, because these comprise, in Mexico, a Revolution that in its myth unifies and heals the social fabric[429]. As against France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the Mexican context offered a very recent, aesthetically cataclysmic totalizing change that already pretended, in principle, to achieve the 'end of History', and which in its totalizing tendencies had come to successfully merge avant-garde thought with a modern mass political formation. If one follows somewhat strictly the terminology of this historical interpretation, then the kind of struggle in which the artists around the Rupture were engaging was a *counter-revolutionary* one, and it is reflected in the stark refusal of the left-right political divide in favour of something that could now be conceived as anarchist in the Surrealist strain. Therefore, there are many proximities to the Situationist network, inasmuch they constitute late avant-garde movements that in some cases, like that of King Mob, led an intense, but ephemeral life. Yet, the entire contextual and theoretical backdrop to *S.NOB* produced a work that is as much anti-totalitarian as it is anti-totality: it *desires* fragmentation, and in so doing comes to embody it, a fragmentation that is both a celebration of individuals coming together to create and a call for the death of *ultimate* collectivities, like the one the Mexican state came to represent. As will be seen, it is an elitist-populist drive to liberate, which is why the question of organization will acquire here a series of elements that might set it against the answers offered so far, and yet will complement them in various manners. Hence, Bataille's 'impossible' will be paired with his 'eroticism' as a way to approach the irresolvable contradictions crafted by *S.NOB*, which would be insufficiently explored by the critical theory-oriented means used so far. As a way to historicise this account, Salvador Elizondo's own perspective on Bataille will also be crucial to the interpretation of the magazine as a whole, and it is what will initially set off the fuse, coursing into Bataille and into the second part of the chapter. In it, the idea of 'infernal politics' will be forwarded as a way to conceptualize the workings of the magazine regarding the main questions of this thesis: the relationship between aesthetics and politics and its consequent effects on the organization of groups as represented by the discourses configured in their texts and images. Due to the somewhat elusive nature of Bataille's thought, this task will be carried out by constantly referencing *S.NOB*

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[429] I would like to remind the reader about what Asger Jorn thought *myths* did, particularly in regards to fascism.

itself, putting its fragmentation to use so as to do it justice, instead of attempting to provide an explanatory framework followed by the analysis and interpretation of the works.

2. Theoretical Hells: Georges Bataille and Salvador Elizondo

In order to establish *S.NOB*'s own style of negation, focus will shift now on Elizondo as the director of the magazine. I do not want, however, to grant him an importance that would seem to overrule the collectivity seemingly produced by the publication; his function as director is a curatorial one, as a position from which to articulate a certain discourse that nevertheless "[respects] not only the ideology, but also the writing forms of its collaborators, even when they are opposed to the rules of good writing [...]"[430]. This last quote could be misleading – in many ways the texts in *S.NOB* are there *because* they were opposed to the 'rules of good writing', which, of course, comprise a reduction of contextual demands that in this case are very closely related to Mexican nationalism. The quote also suggests the deceptiveness with which the magazine can be characterized, and which works within the terms of Elizondo's foray into Bataillean ideas.

For this section, the texts used will be, primarily, Elizondo's *Teoría del Infierno* ("*Theory of Hell*") (a collection of Elizondo's essays from 1959 to 1972) as well as Bataille's *The Impossible* (1947) and *Tears of Eros* (1959). The reason I chose these two texts by Bataille is, first, because of Elizondo's own reading of *Tears of Eros* around 1960-1961 and the clearly erotic currents that the magazine took under his direction; second, *The Impossible* as a conceptualization of the relationship between the 'inner' and the 'outer' of any social construct is quite close to the operations of Elizondo's own 'theory of hell'. The 'theory', like the 'impossible', is a literary approach to complex philosophical thought, and it is worth drawing these two texts together considering Elizondo's closeness to Bataille's work up to and including the time of the publication of *S.NOB*. Compounding Bataillean eroticism and 'the politics of the impossible' in *S.NOB*, as will be seen below, gave the group a radical avant-gardist edge not present in comparable publications of the same period in the country.

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[430] *Ibid*, p. 65.

2.1. Elizondo as Director of S.NOB

Elizondo was not a beginner in the world of publications when, at the age of 30, he took on the direction of *S.NOB*. He had previously worked along with Juan García Ponce (artistic director) and Emilio García Riera (subdirector) in the group conformed around the film review *Nuevo Cine* (1961-1962). It is thanks to this connection that the project came to be financed by cinema producer Gustavo Alatriste[431], who had worked on *Viridiana* (1961) and *El ángel exterminador* (1962) by surrealist film-maker Luis Buñuel (the latter of whom is promoted in more than half of the magazine's run). The proposal this group made for *S.NOB* was deceivingly simple: to "construct "a fun magazine" with "the intention to educate and use culture to scandalize as well", especially with the aid of its tone, which "should honour the name" [of the magazine]"[432]. The name itself contains a double-entendre: on one side, it denotes, in this context, the labyrinthine middle-class aspiration to the high-cultural claims that the bourgeoisie had developed primarily in relation to aristocracy, an aristocracy that, of course, did not exist as such in the country since the 19th century. It is no more than an aspiration, it is a desire built on two conflicting, fundamental lacks: economically determined recognition and the freedom from materiality that supposedly allows true understanding of art[433]. A snob reifies existing hierarchies by representative means, in terms of a self-fashioning that tricks both higher and lower classes into thinking of him/her as one of their own, whether as a positive or negative image (or both). This figure is deceiving by nature, and it aims to reconcile its two opposing lacks by *achieving false consciousness*, that is to say, by turning them into sources of fulfilment that will nevertheless remain forever hollow. *S.NOB*'s version is, however, a Sadean one that instead of wanting to reach the happiness of nationalist artistic values

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[431] *Ibid,* p. 63.

[432] "Construir "una revista divertida", con "la intención de educar y usar la cultura también para escandalizar", sobre todo con ayuda del tono, "éste debería hacer honor a su nombre"." Elizabeth Cervantes, *op cit*, p. 37.

[433] This is, of course, deeply related to the issue of the 'two modernities' described by Matei Calinescu in his book *Five Faces of Modernity*: the (economic) bourgeois modernity based on the conceptual apparatus of progress and its 'other', the (aesthetic) romantic modernity that is based on the negation of said apparatus and tends to focus on much less economically driven theories of liberty and self-realization. See Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1996, p. 41. The two fundamental lacks mentioned above could be seen as possibly conciliatory in the sense that, under the view that divides modernity in two, those who would seek such freedom from materiality could do so based on the infinite accumulation of material wealth itself, an accumulation that plays out in such a manner that eventually becomes automatic, thus 'liberating' the rich from work. At least in theoretical terms, this is a path through which the desire of the snob becomes both attainable and impossible.

craves for the base pleasures of tacitly forbidden thought[434], which leads us to the other side of the term: *sine nobilitate*, Latin for "without nobility". Although the etymology of the term is in dispute[435], the division within the term itself in the title of the magazine would seem to be a reference to this version of its origin, the early use of which meant "a lower-class person, or a person lacking in good breeding, or good taste"[436]. As a double-entendre, which is not to say a word with two contextual meanings but a word that means two things at the same time, the figure of the snob hovers *above* classes (never actually transcending them, desiring their reinforcement) and *seems* to have "good taste", simultaneously *belonging* in a decisive manner to the lower classes and lacking whatever "good taste" it pretends to have; as an aesthetic category it serves the purpose of naming the game this collective plays, a tactical positioning that appropriates the desire to achieve false consciousness as a device to question its most basic assumptions and shift them towards the perverted. The game is, in a way, détournement by any other name, a way to subvert conventions by using them against themselves, although *S.NOB*'s route through Bataille and Surrealism leads not to a synthesis or a concrete critique of ideology but to further fragmentation, further confusion, to the point of disappearance[437]. In a context where artistic production was posited by the State as direct access to the totality (of the cosmic race, for instance), a fragmentary magazine like *S.NOB*, full of *dirty little tricks*, did not aim at a true totality beyond the spectacle but at a stranger, perhaps sadistic cut-up of the reality principle, an illusion made of pleasures that is *also* the truth – not opposed to it – and therefore capable of great violence towards falsehood.

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[434] "It does not mean that they preferred the most notable figures of the Mexican cultural environment, but that they sought the assimilation of "more elevated" literary values than those in circulation. From their perspective, they decided to cover themes rarely treated but common to their tastes and predilections, such as eroticism, sexual liberation, and torture." Elizabeth Cervantes, *op cit,* p. 39. "No se quiere decir que prefirieron a las figuras más notables del ámbito cultural mexicano, sino que buscaron la asimilación de valores literarios "más elevados" de los que circulaban. Es decir, desde su perspectiva, decidieron abordar temas poco tratados pero comunes a sus gustos y aficiones, como el erotismo, la liberación sexual y la tortura."

[435] See the entry for "snob", in the Oxford Dictionary of Etymology, available online: https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/snob. Accessed May 24, 2015.

[436] *Ibidem*.

[437] "We wanted to make a literary magazine, but not strictly literary. In reality the numbers did not have defined criteria, neither in the political or in the ideological, which in those years resulted quite weird because the world was completely ideologized. We wanted to be snob anarchists." Salvador Elizondo, quoted in Elizabeth Cervantes, *op cit*, p. 40. "Queríamos hacer una revista literaria, pero no estrictamente literaria. En realidad los números no tenían criterio definido, ni en lo político ni en lo ideológico, lo cual en esos años resultaba bastante extraño pues el mundo estaba completamente ideologizado. Nosotros queríamos ser anarquistas snobs."

Truth, in this instance, becomes a base joke or dirty trick that comes to reveal the inadequacy of a totality. The use of appropriation to bring truth forth drives the magazine ever since the first number as an erotic communication centred on the negativity of its fundamental *indecency* before conventional communication. As such, it *violates* the received order of things, it overwhelms the senses and breaks restraints through the connection of tears and laughter[438], associations of death and love that work in ways that seem trivial at first:

> The pictures of nude and semi-nude women appeared in the entire publication (in the cover of the first number, the section called "The feminine cinema-face", in drawings, as well as in etchings that accompanied texts outside and within sections), but more stably in "S.NOB Fetish". When *S.NOB* was planned, Gustavo Alatriste suggested to Elizondo and company that the magazine acquire the style of *Playboy*, and while in the end it was not to be, the authors did think about including a specific space for clothe-less women, which gave birth to "Fetish". However, Elizondo lamented the result at some point: "unfortunately [the pictures] were very dark, and instead of showing naked women it showed mostly shadows and they seemed to be more artistic than they were."[439]

While this quote ignores photographer Kati Horla's[440] own role in this game and presents another set of problems, it serves to illustrate the appropriation of pop culture as erotic signifier, one that leads to the possibly purposeful "mostly shadows" of a desire impossible to fulfil – the illusion of naked women collapses into a 'mere' provocation, into a second set of allures that reproduce themselves as interconnected provocations that lead to an endlessly unfulfilled desire. In other

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[438] Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, translated from French by Peter Connor. San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1989, p. 32-33

[439] "Las fotos de mujeres desnudas y semidesnudas aparecían en toda la revista (en la portada del primer número, la sección "El cine rostro femenino", en dibujos, así como en grabados que acompañaban textos fuera y dentro de las secciones), pero de manera más segura en "Fetiche". Cuando se planeó *S.Nob,* Gustavo Alatriste sugirió a Elizondo y compañía que la revista tuviera el estilo de *Play Boy,* y aunque en realidad no fue así, sí se pensó en incluir un espacio específico en el que aparecieron mujeres sin ropa, razón por la cual nació "Fetiche". Sin embargo, en alguna ocasión Elizondo se lamentó: "lo malo es que salían muy oscuras y en lugar de mostrar mujeres desnudas, mostraba puras sombras y parecían más artísticas de lo que eran." Elizabeth Cervantes, *op cit*, p. 46. This statement reveals one of the common threads already visible in these magazines: women are relegated to the background. Still, the pictures, by Kati Horna, reveal her own resistance to simple objectification, pointing at an entire set of strategies – also based on appropriation – perhaps directly tied to those followed by women close to the Surrealist movement. See, for example, Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Surrealist Black Humour: Masculine/Feminine", in *Papers of Surrealism*, issue 1, winter 2003, pp. 1-11.

[440] Her name is of some significance: she was actually Kati Horna, but everywhere in *S.NOB* she signs as "Kati Horla". The most straightforward interpretation is that it is a reference to Guy de Maupassant's 1887 short horror story "Le Horla", in which an invisible creature that lives in certain objects and can sway humans' minds terrorizes the main character. As Kati Horla, her work analogically becomes about an invisible haunter of Culture, stalking myths and driving them insane.

words, it is a sensuality that constantly suggests death, an aroused consciousness of the flickering nothing at the heart of the shadow. Such is the nature of the cover of the first number of *S.NOB* (fig. 4.1):
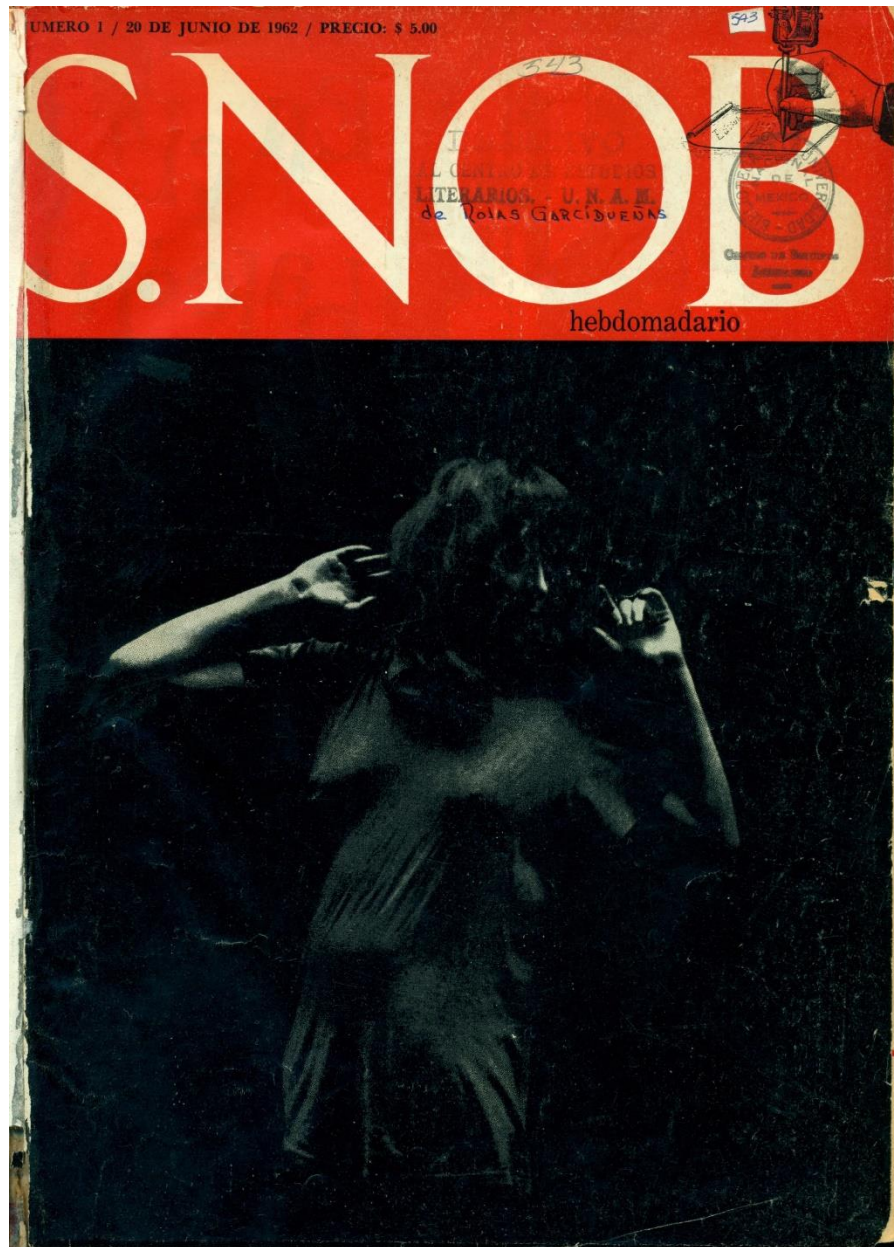

Fig. 4.1. *S.NOB #1* cover, 1962. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas (IIF), Mexico.

The woman's attributes are barely visible, and the darkness that engulfs her makes the use of the sources of light as important as her dance-like pose. This bodily movement, read through a Bataillean lens, hides any features that would rend the woman recognizable as an individual, turning her stark presence in the void into an abstraction not too dissimilar to the pre-historic depictions of women so prized by the French author in *Tears of Eros*. What is intended, perhaps, as straightforward objectification, turns into its extreme other (as a sort of *universal* subjectification) not by analogical procedures but by perceptual tensions to which release seems to be simultaneously the point as well as pointless. To desire the woman in the image is to desire *woman*, a construct that in its sheer impossibility forces a consciousness of death, of desiring nothing by desiring something that does not, and will never, exist.

The satire of the 'inaugural article' of the first number, written by Jorge Ibargüengoitia, reverses the tone of the cover image, but it does so in a black-humorous way that retains much of the eroticism. After all, the article is a parody of an important news item from an equally important foreign paper (the *New York Herald Tribune*), a story on an invented female model called "Pampa Hash" (perhaps a word-play on 'papa hash', or hash potato). The article makes constant jabs at both nationalism and the lifestyle of the emerging, affluent middle class from which most of the magazine's authors came from; it conflates the macho posturing of nationalists with the snobbish outlook of the Rupture artist, turning both into stereotypes of pretensions: where the nationalist would take the government's money *(the people*, the public...)*, the anti-nationalist takes it from a private, foreign-sounding foundation; where both of them should think in Spanish, the nationalist would think in some indigenous language, while the other thinks in English; both are antagonists to the poor (they hold the "enmity of the waiters"[441]) in holding the value of life as truthfully measured by money (the better aligned with a cause, the more money you will receive), and so on. The article's companion images twist these jokes with a *malicious* eroticism: the first image (fig. 4.2) represents a statue of a woman by Joseph Durham, a 19th century decorative sculptor for the British aristocracy, while the second image is the suggestive photo profile of a woman in underwear possibly taken from *Playboy* magazine (fig. 4.3).

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[441] Jorge Ibargüengoitia, "En busca de Pampa Hash", in *SNOB #1*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 3.

Fig. 4.2, left, "Pampa Hash". Fig 4.3, right: "El glamour de pampa", *S.NOB #1,* 1962. IIF, Mexico.

By putting them in dialogue with the text, the sort of discourse that emerges is one in which the woman forever in escape in the text is used as mere illustration, setting off the gender relation produced by the emptiness of the male ego as the void of a cultural vision whose idealism is akin to a failed sexual advance. Thus, humour is the avenue through which a truth is exposed without it being stated outright, de-programming the author's revolt, or at least directing its self-acknowledged impotence towards the dissolution of the ideological; it is not *critique* because it does not assume a rational form, nor does it offer any alternatives, but it does "[cast] doubt upon the immutability of the real" and "[affirms] the existence of something beyond the control of

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contingent reality"[442], which is, in this case, a field that escapes both nationalism and the Rupture as nodal points of explanation of the totality, and which is constituted by an art that is primarily *vital*. This vitality, while stemming from the avant-garde desire to end the separation between art and life, takes nevertheless a route that already sees such a separation as non-existent. The avant-garde formulation conceives the end to the separation as strictly a matter of historical development (an activity that is progress-oriented, life-affirming, and death-denying); since this alternative route sees the relationship between art and life as immanently erotic, it pushes the limit of the avant-garde formulation because it does not omit death as integral to life. The black humour mobilized in articles like the one written by Ibargüengoitia works, therefore, to highlight a vitality that hinges on the erotic, as a sensual tension, instead of rationalizing its deadly components, like the Futurists did (and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker after them), into warfare.

Another important element regarding this erotic approach is Elizondo's particular relations with cinema and literature. Esteban King argues that, for Elizondo, both art forms were deeply intertwined, and that this is reflected in the article "Morfeo o la decadencia del sueño" ("Morpheus or the decadence of sleep"), included in *S.NOB* #7, the last number of the magazine, published in October of 1962. King locates in this article the first instance of a technique that Elizondo would later use in his novel *Farabeuf*, and which consists of deploying cinematic montage as a way of making sense out of literary collage based on "superimposed components and discourses, originated in contexts that were incompatible and that as a group permit a wide range of readings"[443]. By integrating texts, photographs (such as that of Leng t'che, taken from Bataille's *The Tears of Eros*), and Chinese ideograms, Elizondo attempts to strike a fragmentary *whole*, an understanding that does not solely rely on the Surrealist explosion of the text's meanings into the unknown (luring rationality into losing itself) but on the basic aesthetic *sensibility* of the reader and the possibility of its self-realisation regardless of Reason (an irrational way of making sense of the world, avoiding sheer madness). While the text seems to be, on an initial reading, an explanation of what drugs and 'artificial paradises' mean in a philosophical and widely historical

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[442] J.H. Matthews, "Intelligence at the Service of Surrealism: Breton's *Anthologie de l'humour noir*", in *Books Abroad*, vol. 41, no. 3, summer 1967, pp. 267-273, p. 271.
[443] Esteban King, "Salvador Elizondo y Apocalypse 1900", in http://coloquiocine.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/esteban-king.pdf , p. 5; accessed on May 26, 2015.

view, it is in the perspective of the whole that it seems to attempt to reproduce such a meaning as vital provocation of the reader's mind and body: "Within the narrow limits of sober sensations [the individual] is autonomous, but a moment comes when reality, the world, is insufficient to fill, through her senses, the void that surrounds her inside the "human group" to which she belongs. It is then necessary to widen the register of senses, hone them so as to transcend the wasteland that surrounds them and glimpse an exuberance that is always beyond."[444] The Chinese ideograms for "opium" and "not being", the latter of which forms the root of the earlier, detonate an intuitive line of thought that links the photography of the torture (and the ecstasy of the man that in ceasing to be finds extreme pleasure) with the logical language that articulates no syllogisms but metaphors, driving straight to the limits of every element into a whole that feels broken, incomplete, irredeemably inconsistent, and therefore *true*: it does not program, it does not constitute a closed (false) totality, it is not, then, *spectacular*.

We do not need to go so far into *S.NOB* to appreciate this kind of experiment, however, since it is one that Elizondo had probably seen as part of the English-language literary avant-garde, albeit in different form. While he "left it very clear in his *Precocious Autobiography* that [Soviet filmmaker Sergei] Eisenstein and the aesthetics of montage were very important in his literary production"[445], there is another possible path to this profoundly sensual anti-totalizing approach in the work of James Joyce. Brian L. Price has conceived of Elizondo's literary enterprise as one informed by a "search for purity of expression and contemplation", defining "his concept of "pure art" as that which is uncontaminated by external concerns, […] where the constitutive elements have "no other character than that which is strictly poetic or plastic""[446], which the author ties to Elizondo's readings of Joyce and Ezra Pound. Still, this concern with form is not so straightforward, as can be seen in his translation of the first page of *Finnegans Wake,* found in *S.NOB #1*; the notes through

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[444] "Dentro de los estrechos límites de la sensaciones sobrias [el individuo] es autónomo, pero llega un momento en que la realidad, el mundo, es insuficiente para llenar, a través de sus sentidos, el vacío que lo rodea dentro del "grupo humano" al que pertenece. Es entonces necesario ampliar el registro de los sentidos, agudizarlos de modo que puedan trascender el yermo que los rodea y vislumbrar una exuberancia que siempre está más allá." Salvador Elizondo, "Morfeo o la decadencia del sueño", *S.NOB #7*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 4.
[445] Esteban King, *op cit*, p. 6.
[446] Brian L. Price, "A Portrait of the Mexican Artist as a Young Man: Salvador Elizondo's Dedalean Poetics", in https://www.academia.edu/3323355/A_Portrait_of_the_Mexican_Artist_as_a_Young_Man_Salvador_Elizondos_D edalean_Poetics , p. 5; accessed on May 25, 2015.

which every name and every linguistic difficulty is explained end up being longer than that first page of the book itself, which can be connected to the aforementioned experiment in two consecutive ways. The first connection relies on the radical conflation of consciousness with its opposite in the concept of the 'stream', an irresolvable tension that results in a language that is more attractive for its aesthetic qualities than for its meanings, a language that is resolutely resistant to reason but not to intuition, to a primary way of making sense out of it in sheer perceptual ways. The second connection develops the burying of meaning in an apparently infinite set of explanations, a gigantic accumulation of data that nevertheless fails the purpose of rationally ordering the text, and in its failure *occults* the 'reality' of it as something beyond logical and conventionally poetic understanding. These two links form a chain that focuses on the rupture of totalities, and while it does not make use of more 'purely visual' elements like "Morfeo...", it does prevent the successful application of any kind of rationality (dialectical, analogical, syllogistical) to unify its multiplicity into 'a something'. In the context of the confrontation between the Revolution and the Rupture, this moves Elizondo's work into the terrain of the anarchic, a fundamental rejection of unities that *needs* the counter-Revolutionary to position itself as beyond politics, and this is a principle that can be easily extended to *S.NOB* as well. In a 1966 interview with Elena Poniatoswka, the young Elizondo represents himself as a Dada (perhaps very proto-punk) provocative figure:

> **Elena Poniatoswka**: "And are you, Salvador, interested in none of the country's problems?"
>
> **Salvador Elizondo**: "No, none of them. No, I am repulsed by even thinking about it. I believe in aristocracy and those things."
>
> **EP**: "What things?"
>
> **SE:** "I believe that the maximum tragedy of Mexico was the fall of the Hapsburg Empire in Mexico. It was absolutely cretinous to kill Maximilian! We would be much better with Maximilian than with Benito Juárez! … I am also with Porfirio Díaz. He did many things, didn't he? I think he introduced, even if merely indirectly, good manners in the tables of Mexican families."[447]

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[447] "**EP:** "¿Y a tí, Salvador, ninguno de los problemas del país te interesan?
SE: "No, ninguno. No, me repugna además pensar en ello. Yo creo en la aristocracia y en esas cosas.
EP: "¿Cuáles cosas?"
SE: "A mí me parece que la tragedia máxima de México fue la caída del Imperio Habsburgo en México. ¡Fue absolutamente cretino matar a Maximiliano! ¡Estaríamos mucho mejor con Maximiliano que con Benito Juárez! … también estoy con Porfirio Díaz. Hizo muchas cosas, ¿no? Yo creo que introdujo, aunque no sea más que indirectamente, los buenos modales en las mesas de las familias mexicanas.""

This counter-Revolutionary discourse borders on the ridiculous: the polemical ambiguity of "those things" implies an articulation of strictly anti-Revolutionary elements taken to a humorous extreme, in which he can speak of dead figures as if they were still alive ("we would be much better...") and give an enormous importance to something that is conventionally understood as utterly meaningless ("good manners in the tables of Mexican families"). The coherence of Elizondo's rant depends entirely on the reader's knowledge of Revolutionary self-representation, and his use of techniques like literary collage and montage become an avenue to, first and foremost, irritate the Revolutionary avant-garde and its project, and more profoundly to reveal its totalization as a form of ideological subjection. To add to Price's argument, the 'purity' of his concept of art therefore shares a certain proximity to that of more rational endeavours like Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory, although it is a purity born from the contamination already implied in the rejection of all things Revolutionary: these oppositions are already *clean*, equally well-defined as such. Elizondo's art holds, instead, the anarchic task to reveal just how impossible that cleanliness is, how ridiculous it becomes in the face of the erotic, of love and death as the vibrancy at the core of vitality.

"The world of lycanthropes is the extension of man where love best develops and where instinct most terribly debates and protests against solitude. To be a lycanthrope is to wake up one morning, look at hands full of blood and not remember what has been done. Nonetheless, the previous night, in the forest, a woman (the one from the portrait) has been killed, torn apart by a wolf."[448] This excerpt, from an article in *S.NOB #1* entitled "¿Ha practicado usted la licantropía?" ("Have you practiced lycantrhopy?"), is full of a Gothic literary imagery (the woman in the portrait, the forest, love as an instinct against solitude) that *invites* horror and the performance of monstrosity as a kind of access to a true pleasure principle, a pleasure principle that violently incorporates death

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Elena Poniatoswka, interview with Salvador Elizondo, published in the pop-cultural magazine *Novedades* in August 1966. Available at http://www.lamaquinadeltiempo.com/elizondo/sobre3.htm . Accessed on May 25, 2015.

[448] "El mundo de los licántropos es la extensión del hombre donde mejor cabe el amor y donde más terriblemente el instinto se debate y protesta contra la soledad. Ser licántropo, es despertarse una mañana, mirarse las manos llenas de sangre y no recordar lo que se ha hecho. Sin embargo, la noche anterior, en el bosque, una mujer (la del retrato) ha muerto destrozada por un lobo." Juan Manuel Torres, "¿Ha practicado usted la licantropía?", *SNOB #1*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 9.

(self-erasure in transformation, the murder of the other as instinctual devouring born of love) as essential to the feeling of life. Of course, this feeling is antithetical to social order as conceptualization of humanity itself ("the wolf-man is a misanthropic artist that desires love"[449]), and by remaining at the very edge of such a conceptualization in the embrace of its opposite (the inhuman, or in other words, the bestial), the wolf-man is an impossibility that cannot be resolved: "unfortunately, death, which is to say the triumph of reason, will deny him his last amorous opportunity."[450] This pairing, death as reason with life as irrationality, acquires meaning in the bloodstains splashed over the article's 'cover', blood that essentially represents life and death happening at the very same time. The triumph of reason might deny the wolf-man's desire, but it is the invitation to practice this vitality that leads lycanthropy into its deadly cycle; while its inherent violence breaks ideological continuities (in a similar way to the Motherfucker's werewolf), the wolf-man fails to commune in a manner that does not kill, falling into a trap that turns it into the cinematic trope from which Juan Manuel Torres, author of the article, takes the figure. In its violently infinite capacity to love it is also infinitely impotent, leaving little room for something other than its radical individuality as a loneliness that is *complete*. That is why there is no wolf-woman – instead of communicating its impossibility, the 'wolf-man' presents itself as definition, as something with a narrative beginning and an ending. Regardless, there is an erotic intent behind this text, one that blasts its ego-driven murder as seductive practice of something that radically opposes any and all forms of community, of organization, fitting into place as part of the multi-faceted rejection of Revolutionary values.

In "Georges Bataille y la experiencia interior" ("Georges Bataille and Inner Experience"), Elizondo interprets the French author's writings to portray a reduction of all "transcendental activity" to eroticism, and that "the importance of this idea resides, especially, in the fact that the author's conception of the erotic is founded, essentially, in the fact that eroticism, more than a form of originating new human beings, is a method of internal discipline that pretends consciousness to overcome the ineluctable possibility of death through its imitation in the sexual act."[451] By reading eroticism in this way, as an "internal discipline", he can deploy it as a kind of connective element

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[449] "El hombre-lobo es un artista misántropo que quiere el amor.", *Ibid,* p. 10.
[450] "Desgraciadamente, la muerte, o sea el triunfo de la razón, le impedirá su última oportunidad amorosa." *Ibidem.*
[451] Salvador Elizondo, *Teoría del infierno,* Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013, p. 74.

in consciousness, one that, like the wolf-man, finds itself radically modified not only in terms of the mind but also the body, merging both into a monstrous mass. When thinking of *S.NOB* as a magazine and a collective, this reading becomes important to interpret its relationship not only internally, but externally too. The Revolutionary community (the Mexican State) comes to lack any truly erotic qualities, opting for a machismo whose virility denies love *and* death by conceiving them as merely mechanical, as sentimental operations of attachment and detachment; its overwhelming presence (the totalization of its aesthetics and politics into a State) constantly negates the possibility of conforming an 'outside', so, like King Mob, suddenly surmising the true totality implies traversing the material ideological formation *from* which the group comes (the urbanism of London, the Revolutionary murals). One of the paths they conceive of to destroy the totalizing community is through appropriation, and both King Mob and *S.NOB* came to portray themselves, through their magazines, as yet another instance of pop cultural trash. However, at the point where King Mob becomes a conspiracy (a shadow collectivity, a hidden truth), *S.NOB* becomes an impostor (a gathering of individuals for which truth is unattainable) which seeks to corrupt not through the spreading of a virulent ideology critique but through seduction, an awakening of "internal discipline" in the allure of sex and death. By emphasising eroticism, *S.NOB*

Fig. 4.4. *¡HOLA!*, 1962. Uncredited photograph taken from todocolecciones.net

subtly dissolves the Revolutionary constitution, it tempts readers with a vitality that the sentimentalism of the State can never achieve. Thus, the magazine dresses itself provocatively, as if it was the imported Spanish weekly *¡HOLA!* (Fig. 4.4) imitating its format in having (somewhat) regular sections on astrology, reviews, and 'social events' that parody their pop origins by being highly intellectualized and self-mocking. Its internal discipline, its humorous consciousness of the erotic, offers a twisted form of something highly familiar, an unreasonable culture that does not reconcile the (social) low with the high as adulation (celebrity facts, fashions, etc.), instead erasing those definitions to offer a vision of hell collapsing into heaven, of utter baseness and utter idealism, like the blood that stains Elizondo's introductory poem to "Have You Practiced Lycanthropy?".

The section "Du côté de Chez Snob" ("Aside the House of Snob"), which recurs in all of the magazine's numbers, might give a hint at the kind of collectivity such a discipline offers. I have chosen only the first instance, of the first number, because as an introduction to the authors of *S.NOB* it is more conceptually rich than the other entries in later numbers. The section can be summarized as follows: it is written anonymously, and it describes relations and events amongst the writers and their friends, like a completely self-referential version of 'socials' articles in newspapers. The first "Du côté..." has a very Dada/Surrealist construction, full of invented words and the pretension of a gravity that results ridiculous ("Soireé de la generalia de los consistorios" is the name given to the event described, which translates as "Soireé of the generality of consistories"), as well as situations that, to someone who did not participate directly, seem simply nonsense. What makes it stand out is the imagery associated with the text, stills from the 1932 movie *Freaks* (fig. 4.5).

Fig. 4.5. *S.NOB #1*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

The event is played as a Surrealist motif around which the collective congregates, and the form such a thing takes is not conspiratorial, tribal, nor conventionally artistic, but circus-like. If we conceptualize this gathering as sideshow, it becomes a kind of organization that, like the mob, is too multiple, too heterogenous to conceive as anything other than a monstrous unity, except it channels its menace of violence into an extreme aesthetic disruption: every member is radically individualized by the abnormality of their traits, and thus their gathering does not imply the promise of material destruction that the mob, in its 'normalization' of its members into a collectivity that has no form, comes to represent. Rather, the queerness itself constitutes an anarchic inquiry into fixed identities that seem *wholesome*, suggestively breaking down the question of 'who we are' into atoms so disparate it becomes useless to even ask. In other words, it conceives a collectivity at the limit (a unique group made of unique individuals, or a singularity made of singularities), at the extreme point in which impossibility resides. It is not a coincidence, after all, that the circus was at its inception perceived as an attack on all things artistic and 'civilized'[452], that it was seen as base appeal and base reversal of the human into the bestial – a popular, deranged attack on Reason. A S.NOB, so to speak, is a freak, and a freak subverts everything by virtue of existing: in the grave normalcy established by the Revolution and its adaptation to the Rupture, *S.NOB* stands out for being grandly, fascinatingly ridiculous[453].

2.2. The Concept of the Impossible

The grand ridiculousness of *S.NOB* is articulated as an excess that in the rejection of any kind of identity derives into the loss of the self, and this incredible fragmentation can be captured by the headless concept of the impossible. By headless I mean what Benjamin Noys, in overviewing the secret society *Acéphale* (of which Bataille was a founder), refers to as symbol of loss[454], as a *constant* that marks any and all attempts at securing unity as immediate failures – all limits, all

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[452] See Marius Kwint, "The Legitimization of the Circus in Late Georgian England", in *Past & Present*. Oxford, vol. 174, no. 1, 2002. Also, Samuel Collings' etching from 1785 entitled *The Downfall of Taste & Genius or The World as it Goes*, in which art and good taste are chased out by a *revolting* stampede of grotesque and ridiculous figures, animalized humans and humanized animals that destroy everything in their wake.

[453] There is one further possible connection that might be too difficult to prove: the 'freak scene' to which the Motherfuckers refer to, the US counterculture that at the time adopted all sorts of identities that attempted to negate the ones issued by the State. This would shed another interpretive light on the identity of the S.NOB, but to trace such a connection remains beyond the scope of this thesis.

[454] Benjamin Noys, *Georges Bataille: A Critical Introduction*, London, Pluto Press, 2000, p. 46.

borders are essentially porous in their reflection of a possibility to think of something that lies beyond them. The term has, evidently, an elusive multiplicity of implications, of which perhaps the second most relevant here is one connected to the more general project of *Acéphale* as an anti-fascism that seeks to *penetrate* fascism's own inner 'life'[455]. It is an exploration of "the possibilities of human existence that from now on can be situated *beyond* the formation of *monocephalic* societies."[456] It is an anti-fascism that opposes all political camps and definitions by extracting the vitality that so weakly throbs at the core of its enemy: "the only society full of life and strength, the only free society, is the *bi* or *polycephalic* society, which offers fundamental antagonisms of life an explosive way out that is nonetheless limited to the richest of forms. The duality or multiplicity of heads tends to realize in one very movement the *acephalic* character of existence, because the very principle of the head is the reduction to unity, *reduction* of the world to God."[457] In its mythical scope, *Acéphale* "looked to the secret society […] to release the energies condensed in the 'head' in a flowing away that would no longer be controlled by the secret society. [Bataille] dreamed of a society with a plural dispersion of power, a society of fluid exchanges and willing loss rather than a society of accumulation."[458]

These points can be connected to the collectivity of the freakshow *and* the figure of the impostor. When it comes to the earlier, the form it takes both objectively negates and affirms divinity in the utter destruction of normalcy and the consequent offering of a vision of what lies beyond it. In making a singularity out of everything, the freakshow withdraws the boundaries of the communal,

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[455] While it could be contended that *Acéphale* represents a retreat from the political after the failures of *Contre-Attaque,* I follow authors such as Nikolaj Lübecker, Jean-Michel Besnier, Amy Reid, and Benjamin Noys in arguing that *Acéphale* was indeed a retreat, but not from politics, only from fascism. Based on the idea of the tragic man and a confrontation with death, *Acéphale* is arguably geared towards the question of community, which is, in a very elementary manner, a question of politics. Lübecker: "To fall back on secret societies is a desperate reaction to a desperate political situation. However, in the [context of the question of community] the point is that radical exaltation takes us away from fascism. In Bataille's analysis *fascists do not go all the way.*" Nikolaj Lübecker, *op cit*, p. 48. Its relationship to *Contre-Attaque* is not oppositional but complementary. See Jean-Michel Besnier, Amy Reid, "Georges Bataille in the 1930s: A Politics of the Impossible", in *Yale French Studies*, no. 78, 1990, p. 169-180.

[456] "Les possibilités de l'existence humaine peuvent dès maintenant être situées *au-delà* de la formation des sociétés *monocéphales.*" Georges Bataille, "Propositions", in *Acéphale*, Facsimile edition, Paris, Jean-Michel Place, 1995, p. 18.

[457] "La seule société pleine de vie et de force, la seule société libre est la société *bi ou polycéphale* qui donne aux antagonismes fondamentaux de la vie une issue explosive constante mais limitée aux formes les plus riches. La dualité ou la multiplicité des têtes tend à réaliser dans un même mouvement le caractère *acéphale* de l'existence, car le principe même de la tête est réduction à l'unité, *réduction* du monde à Dieu." *Ibidem.*

[458] Benjamin Noys, *op cit*, p. 47.

paradoxically existing and falling out of existence at every passing moment. Its monstrosity becomes polycephalic as it reveals "fundamental antagonisms" that do not resolve but richly explode into a sort of essential, infinite creativity: "[man] is free to look like everything that is not him in the universe. He can discard the thought that he or God impedes everything else of being absurd."[459] When it comes to the impostor, what Bataille envisioned for the secret society (and which is in many ways carried out by King Mob) also becomes half-true in the distance taken from conventionally understood politics. The violent opening that the impostor carves out of positioning itself serves to reveal the terrorizing sleight of hand that allows for a subjectivity to *become* another and be both simultaneously: subjectivity itself is absolutely relative, it is the whim of the head appearing to cover everything there is. Yet, as long as the rest of the body believes it, the law and the constitution it establishes does not seem an imposition, and so the impostor, by suggesting the existence of more than one head, by suggesting the horror of uncontrollable forces, destabilizes whatever discourses it pretends to impersonate. Jean-Michel Besnier summarizes by saying that "the politics of the impossible […] calls for a revolt against anything that pretends to be completed, full, transparent, and necessary. It calls for a refusal of waiting, a refusal of the patience which endures the randomness of the world."[460] The impostor, in this way, simply claims "I am everything but I must be *nothing*".

This inverted relationship in which filling the world with knowledge ends up merely suggesting the abyss it is terrified of was consciously explored by Bataille in *The Impossible*, the preface of which is worth quoting in full in order to make sense of how the term is being mobilized here:

> Humanity is faced with a double perspective: in one direction, violent pleasure, horror, and death – precisely the perspective of poetry – and in the opposite direction, that of science or the real world of utility. Only the useful, the real, have a serious character. We are never within our rights in preferring seduction: truth has rights over us. Indeed, it has every right. And yet we can, and indeed we must, respond to something which, not being God, is stronger than every right, that *impossible*

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[459] "[L'homme] est libre de ressembler à tout ce qui n'est pas lui dans l'univers. Il peut écarter la pensée que c'est lui ou Dieu qui empêche le reste des choses d'être absurde." Georges Bataille, "La Conjuration Sacrée", in *Acéphale*, p. 3.

[460] Jean-Michel Besnier, "Georges Bataille in the 1930s: A Politics of the Impossible", in Allan Stoekl (ed.), *Yale French Studies 78: On Bataille,* New York, Yale University Press, 1990, p. 179.

to which we accede only in forgetting the truth of all these things, only by accepting disappearance.[461]

The impossible is the opposite of the real (perhaps understood as the reality principle) and something that, like the head, has rights *over us* can only be revolted against by thinking of its limits, and therefore of the point at which it disappears. That is perhaps why the book begins with quotes by mystics that reference blood, desire, pain, and pleasure in the single act of experiencing God – a never-ending brilliance so absorbing it becomes a void. This impossible act erases both God and the mystic by virtue of melting the absolute earthliness of the body with its heavenly counterpart in the mind, residing neither in one camp or the other, but in the very limit that in its opening of one to the other violates them both.

In *S.NOB #2*, the opening article, "Cuentos de Arrabal[462]: En contrapunto a la obra pictórica de [Alberto] Gironella" ("Stories of Arrabal: In Counterpoint to the Visual Works of [Alberto] Gironella"), displays two relatively simple images to accompany the excessiveness of the surrealistic text, full of dismemberments, madmen, and ugly beasts that provoke strange transformations. As (musical) counterpoint, the two visual works aid the baseness of the story in various ways. The first image, which occupies the whole of the opposite page, seems to plunge the spectator straight into a violent tone, with its concrete-like irregular background texture peppered with pieces of cloth that not only seem to be painted over, cut up and crumpled, but are also stapled to it. The illogical positions of the staples, as well as the numerous threads that suggest tearing, seem to constitute a very primary form of cruelty, a passionate – yet disciplined – praxis of uselessness, of needless disproportion. Still, the lower-right corner almost literally breaks through this solid mass and reveals a hand, initially as contrast, but as the text builds up it becomes evident that this warmth, this humanity, is exactly the source of such horror. This leads us to the painting, which also mixes the same techniques but instead covers most of the space with paint, which, due to the nature of black and white printing, seems violently opaque, the human head being slowly

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[461] Georges Bataille, *The Impossible*, translated from French by Robert Hurley. San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1991, p. 10. This perspective is also interesting to compare to Asger Jorn's own views on *truths*.

[462] The author's name is Fernando Arrabal, but there is a humorous play on words here: an 'arrabal' refers, in Spanish, to an unorganized growth of houses and stores at the edge of cities that is normally associated with lower classes. As the city claims more territory, these 'arrabales' turn into neighbourhoods, therefore falling into place as part of a wider urbanistic 'plan'.

overcome by a pitch blackness. Its emptiness drains its subjectivity without turning its humanity into an object, while the cord that seems to be pasted above it, in its materiality (and its shape) becomes reminiscent of something organic, almost as if it had captured said humanity. Along with the text, these images present a disintegration (of the mind, of the body, of the *head*) that does not allow their dreamlike Surrealistic construction to veer off into the fantastic, staining any strand of ideal realization with the crudeness of a "great yellow toad"[463], of a city (that high icon of modernity) whose patchwork seems to reek of death and dirt. Everything here is on the verge of disappearance, and it is this verge what makes the thought of 'pure art', 'national art', or any other totalizing concept as *partially* false, revealing not only their incompleteness but also their (authoritarian) refusal to think of their own death, their own finitude. The truths they claim are then resisted at this very edge, and *S.NOB's* own position in the Mexican cultural horizon of the time would seem to be right at this limit in which there is a rejection that overflows with disparate elements, from Elizondo's excessive anti-Revolutionary stance ("I believe in aristocracy and those things") to the magazine's black humour and its self-representation as circus. In pretending to be something else it stands as deeply ambiguous in its relationship to culture, and its content is so heterogeneous it is practically foolish to attempt to fully articulate all of it, resonating with Bataille's *Impossible*: "reason cannot resolve the ambiguity: extreme happiness is possible only at the moment I doubt it will last; it changes on the contrary into heaviness, from the moment I'm certain of it."[464] This is an example of how in his book "associated terms oppose or resemble each other, but their combined confrontation authorizes reversals and inversions into their contraries"[465], which is another important aspect of the impossible, how, in the experience of the limit, things dissolve into each other, as mentioned in the case of the mystic.

A fragment of *S.NOB* that furthers this point is the regular section authored by Alejandro Jodorowsky, "Science Fiction", which is written in a style that mimics that of journalism and op-eds. If one takes the (non-philosophical) pursuit of truth as the principle behind all sorts of journalism, then Jodorowsky's section constantly pushes this pursuit into fantasy, into making

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[463] Fernando Arrabal, "Cuentos de Arrabal", in *S.NOB #2*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 4.
[464] Georges Bataille, *The Impossible*, p. 116.
[465] Marie-Christine Lala and Robert Livingston, "Conversions of Writing in Geroges Bataille's *L'Impossible*", in Allan Stoekl (ed.), *op cit*, p. 243. These associated terms could be said to acquire a *topological* relationship, perhaps.

connections that, instead of revealing some basic fact, throw them into further confusion. It is a mystifying exercise that stems from a Surrealistic intent to dislocate the function of reason, to lure logic into making the most nonsensical claims to truth. ""Reality", if you have a trained eye", says Jodorowsky in *S.NOB #6*, "jumps out every morning with its marvellous *unreality* when reading the newspaper." He continues:

> ""Unreality" is a term "pejorativicized" by the delirious rationalism of certain "learned" citizens. These desktop intellectuals speak often of mythology, but in doing so refer to some pages in mummy-encyclopedias, without more action in life than a dog's tooth forgotten at a stadium. But happily for others, mythology is something living: the cosmogonies and ancient gods breathe, traverse daily the pages of *El Universal* or *Novedades*."[466]

In articles such as the one quoted, the author traces *freak* events, strange occurrences and coincidences around the world by scouring different newspapers and offering a more general interpretation that fantastically fits everything together. This unification, though, is a paranoid fragmentation disguised as clear lines of thought, masking enormous leaps in logic by *sounding reasonable*, by exploiting series of facts to create a sense of plausibility that gradually builds up into something completely *out of its mind*; in its trickster argumentation, it switches expectations around[467]. These kinds of scenarios not only ridicule the journalistic quest for truth (as *quest*, as legend, as something that under the very terms of such a quest would be inherently false) but also play with language in a way that reveals that truth as unattainable because its totality is always already in escape. It is obviously unsatisfactory, and the style of 'science fiction', itself an irresolvable tension, makes such obviousness blunt: the reader follows the argument and accepts its intelligibility while knowing, simultaneously, that it is essentially unintelligible. By referring

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[466] "La "realidad", si se tiene el ojo acostumbrado, salta cada mañana con su maravillosa *irrealidad* al leer el periódico. "Irrealidad" es un término "peyorativizado" por el racionalismo delirante de ciertos ciudadanos "cultos". Estos intelectuales de escritorio hablan a menudo de mitología, pero al hacerlo se refieren a unas páginas de enciclopedias-momias, sin más acción en la vida que un diente de perro olvidado en un estado. Pero felizmente para otros, la mitología es algo vivo: las cosmogonías y los dioses antiguos respiran, atraviesan diariamente las páginas del *Universal* o el *Novedades*." Alejandro Jodorowsky, "¡Temblores, faldas cortas, y mosntruos del subsuelo!", in *S.NOB #6*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 31. *El Universal* and *Novedades* are both Mexican newspapers. The recurrence of the mythical as something living cannot be overstated: it is present in every group except perhaps for King Mob, which followed a more traditional interpretation of it.

[467] Suppose life exists below [20 kilometres beneath the surface of the Earth, where the pressure reaches 9000 atmospheres and temperature is high enough to melt rock] – not an organic life, by the way, but a life based on a partially condensed matter, a matter in which the layers of electrons are few or completely lacking –. For such creatures, even the rock at 25 kilometres deep would not offer more resistance than water. And us, and our entire world, would be for them as impalpable as ghosts. For them our entire universe […] are no more than a foggy film. […] I immediately remembered the incredibly limited scale of pressure and temperature under which the human race lives. It was us, and not them, the monstrously abnormal beings! Because almost all matter in the universe has a temperature of thousands, even millions of degrees..." *Ibid,* p. 33.

to scepticism as a "delirious rationalism", Jodorowsky is only shifting the tables of his rational delirium, reading less like a form of discrediting and more like a way to trace the edge of rationalism, the point at which his delirium structures itself logically so that the reader's logic de-structures into delirium. This way, the collapse of reason is not really a full-on irrationalism, but an impossible, irreconcilable procedure that turns one into the other, that makes them flow into each other with a low-key violence that is immediately expended upon reading by ultimately reaching no facts, no truths, no illumination, but no falsehood, no darkness either... by reaching nothing at all. In other words, where delirium and rationality would normally be opposites, in Jodorowsky's series of texts they do not even hold a dialectical relationship; they easily become one another by means of linguistic and rhetorical games. These games consist of giving delirium a rational voice so that the reader is rationally convinced to believe in something excessively fantastical, collapsing rationality and delirium through the process of reading and image association. Thus, this collapse does not imply the revelation of a truth, nor does it lead towards absolute fantasy – its end-point is a limbo in which everything is simultaneously meaningful and meaningless. In parallel with philosophical pursuits of truth, the desire to know constantly redraws limits: as knowledge is attained, as desire is fulfilled, they *move away* (because, if historical research itself is anything to go by, there is always something else to know, something else to desire). So, desire and knowledge become infinite (perhaps elusively so), coming together 'precisely' in this impossibility: "there where things are ventured, each element ceaselessly changes into its contrary. God suddenly takes on a "horrible grandeur." Or poetry slips into embellishment. With each effort that I make to grasp it, the object of my anticipation changes into its contrary."[468] *S.NOB*, available at your nearest newsstand, also slips in and out of opposing desires, like Jodorowsky's paranoid texts: self-fashioned as pop magazine, it solely treats transgressive themes (possibly obscene to *everyone*), bringing both into contact, once again, not as ideology critique, but as affirmation of a negativity – knowledge and desire forever one step away, together in impossibility[469].

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[468] Georges Bataille, *op cit*, p. 161.
[469] "Pleasure is at hand as long as whoever pursues it has discernment enough to differentiate it from torture. Intoxication – like memory – is the attempt to reconstruct a broken world without having to turn to analytical reason, which solders little fragments as it goes." "El placer está al alcance de la mano siempre y cuando quien lo persigue tenga el discernimiento suficiente para diferenciarlo de las torturas. La intoxicación – como la memoria – es el intento de reconstruir un mundo roto sin tener que recurrir a la razón analítica que va soldando pequeños fragmentos."
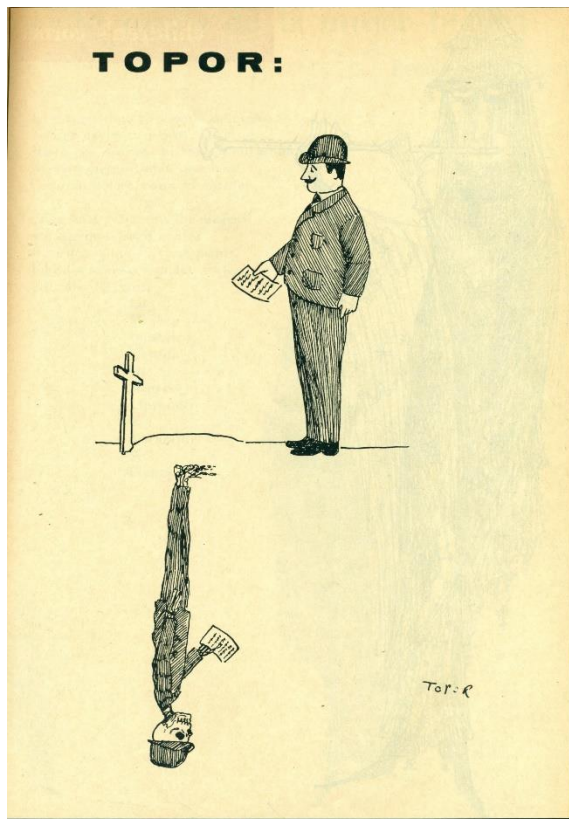
Fig. 4.6. Topor cartoon, *S.NOB #4,* 1962. IIF, Mexico

3. Eroticism

In *SNOB #4*, there is a cartoon by French illustrator Roland Topor[470] that depicts a well-dressed gentleman standing before a grave holding a piece of paper with something written on it; vertically opposed to him stands a skeleton that is doing exactly the same (fig. 4.6).

The mirror-imaging conveys a black humorous message: the dead lecture us as much as we lecture them, the dead celebrate us as much as we celebrate them, they fill *our* graves, but we fill *theirs*. The man's expression could seem to be a sad one, but there is no need for him to be so, because he is already dead anyway, and the dead have no use for expressions because they are constant reminders of life. This silent dialogue between death and life overturns the lines that might separate them, making their relationship an impossibly complex one, since, after all, the cartoon could be easily turned on its head. It is another way of reading Guy Debord's line on the world being upside down[471], a way that asks not how things ought to be (a matter of life) but how things have ceased to be (a matter of death), and which attempts to re-establish death as one of the key elements to a vital (and vitalist) avant-garde revolt. In *Acéphale*, this task implied traversing the death-cult of fascism to re-articulate 'vitality' as something that does not simply end lives, an articulation that

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Salvador Elizondo, "Morfeo o la decadencia del sueño", *S.NOB #7*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 2.

[470] Who, along with Jodorowsky and Arrabal, both of whom contributed to *SNOB,* founded the Panic Movement in 1962, a theatre collective that attempted to bring forth Surrealism by means of violent, and violently symbolic, performances. In 1965, for example, one of them involved the sacrificing of geese and the crucifixion of a chicken. There is a parallel between the Panic Movement and *S.NOB*'s own forms of self-representation, in terms of the carnival, the circus, the freakshow that detonates a highly erotic excess. This highly interesting connection between *S.NOB* and the founding of the Panic Movement remains to be studied, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.
[471] Guy Debord, *op cit*, p. 7.

depends on the conceptual charge of eroticism. In many ways *S.NOB* also understands this moment of impossibility integral to the erotic[472], and so continuously deploys ways to re-think sensuality as something other than adoration of the head (God, fascism, nationalism, all Great Discourses that deny death its place at the side of life).

If eroticism is a kind of *game* in which taboo and transgression move spirally in and out of each other[473] as underpinned by sexuality, then the sort of effect sought by groups like *Acéphale* and *S.NOB* is an impossible one in which purity gives way to contamination and back to purity again, in which an excess of life in sexual passion grants a consciousness of death, of dissolution, in orgasm and so on. It is a movement that Denis Hollier, referring to *Documents*, connects as follows: "at the very moment that science, in the name of the neither-high-nor-low, claims to appropriate the low, something happens to it. Science is dirtied by its object. Lets itself be contaminated by it. The object fails to keep its distance, abandons its reserve, overflows onto the page which describes it."[474] In *The Tears of Eros* Bataille bases eroticism on the consciousness of finality[475], and the consequence of it is not only to become a core element of a true *humanism* but also the implicit conformation of history as such, independent of classical anthropological lines of thought in its total re-ordering of life around the tension between accumulation and expenditure. Eroticism as a movement is related then to energy not only as resource but also as communication, a non-linguistic (headless) articulation between beings that are not necessarily in the same 'level', so to speak, and who would require to establish more conventional *communion*. In other words, such a thought of death, which comes to mirror life, makes all other contacts between opposites inherently dirty, unclean, mixed and complex in ways that often cannot be rationalized, to the point that the result of many of these encounters is the identity of its elements (as in Topor's mirroring

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[472] "The violence of spasmodic joy lies deep in my heart. This violence, at the same time, and I tremble as I say it, is the heart of death: it opens itself up in me! The ambiguity of this human life is really that of mad laughter and of sobbing tears. It comes from the difficulty of harmonizing reason's calculations with these tears.... with this horrible laugh..." Georges Bataille, *Tears of Eros,* p. 20.

[473] "The spiral of transgression is another way into the *labyrinth* of thought. It indicates that transgression puts itself and the limit into play in a way that cannot be *spatially organised in terms of two separate spaces, nor organised temporally in terms of before and after*. It scrambles these points of co-ordination, as did sovereignty, in a whirl of movement where the points are both retained and lose their solidity." Benjamin Noys, *op cit*, p. 96. Emphasis mine: once again, it could be described as a topological relationship.

[474] Denis Hollier, "The Use Value of the Impossible", in *October,* vol. 60, spring 1992, pp. 3-24, p. 16.

[475] Georges Bataille, *op cit*, p. 31. See also Nadine Hartmann, "Eroticism", in Mark Hewson, Marcus Coelen, *Georges Bataille: Key Concepts*. New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 139.

of life and death): "from the most unspeakable to the most elevated"[476] – and the latter is, after all, also unspeakable. The example of science given by Hollier is illustrative of appropriation, a term that has been one of utmost importance throughout this thesis. Appropriation in this *vital* path is one that goes beyond the economic understanding of a property reversal or its political counterpart in reconfiguring frontiers, and reflects erotic movement in re-connecting very different objects and subjects as related, in a very last instance, to life and death, joy and horror.

"Invitación al Crimen" ("Invitation to Crime"), an article in *S.NOB #4* written by Juan Manuel Torres, rewrites the Gothicism of "¿Ha practicado usted la licantropía?" in a less poetic manner that lays its terms as a sort of rational proposal pushed to the limits. The image with which the article opens is a collage with a photograph of a possibly ancient cadaver, a drawing of a Victorian gentleman taking notes, some enlarged pieces of prints, etchings, or drawings, with a bright red core 'opening' at the centre (fig. 4.7).

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[476] *Ibid,* p. 206.

Fig. 4.7. *S.NOB #4*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

This fragmented imagery can recall 19th century crime stories, and in many ways it grants the article a seriousness that falters throughout the text, but that in faltering opens up the possibility of horror much more directly in remaining decidedly ambiguous, essentially unreadable as anything fully serious or fully ironic. Torres invents the character of a British writer called Clarence J. Bottom (which itself constitutes the pairing of two extremes; the royalty of 'Clarence J.' with the baseness of 'Bottom'), who writes in a dry style that comes off as ridiculous: "I have said many times that in murder are found all the pleasures. I have even petitioned for it to be seriously considered as licit expression, of course, preceded by adequate norms that turn it into a healthy sport; but now I must predicate by example so that young people believe in me."[477] Supposedly

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[477] "He dicho muchas veces que en el asesinato se encuentran todos los placeres. He pedido incluso que se le considere seriamente como una expresión lícita, desde luego con una reglamentación adecuada que lo convierta en un deporte sano; pero ahora debo predicar con el ejemplo para que los jóvenes crean en mí. "Juan Manuel Torres, "Invitación al Crimen", in *S.NOB #4,* 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 6.

writing in 1817, a decade before Thomas de Quincey, whom it is ironically appropriating, wrote "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts", this fictional account cleverly reflects that historical edge in modernity through which Enlightenment *poured* into Romanticism, and in which the Gothic story[478] came to signify a sort of self-reflexive descent into hell circumscribed within ethical reactions against the skyward imperatives of Reason. "Invitación" basically satirizes a satire and walks into a ridiculous extreme where the more obviously humorous (Bottom wrote a book called *Blood and Blood and More Blood*) nevertheless reads like an ardent fall-from-grace: "I love women profoundly, and that is why I want to destroy them. I wish to return them to nature and the best way for that is passion. I want to save them both poverty and the hospital. I want to create for them the happiness of an instant, the happiness that they would not dare face by themselves."[479] This part is followed by a dark painting from an unknown artist in which a half-naked woman (given the stereotypical setting, one can assume she is a prostitute) suggestively poses for the viewer, sub-titled "The Destroyable Woman". In the objectification of women, as both products of nature *and* modernity (as 'creatures' and 'beings'), the equation of crime and love becomes possible by the paradox of a humour that pretends distance but that in its satirical double-stepping back (a procedure that shocks both the naïve and the 'cultured') – in the context of the seductively deceptive shape of *S.NOB* – comes to hold a certain gravity. As sensual objects of discourse, women become signifiers of both death and life, of the essential excess of a seemingly simple desire that arouses a 'delirious rationalism'.

This last point can be related back to the magazine's initial plan regarding images of women, one to which Kati Horla, by making the photographs (purposefully or not) in a way that turned them darker in print, gave a great depth. In the section "Fetiche de S.NOB" ("S.NOB Fetish"), which appears four times throughout the entire run (numbers 2, 4, 6 and 7), she and Berna Lucero (who is credited as the photographer in *S.NOB #6*) crafted photo-essays based primarily on the female

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[478] There are various other instances of Gothicism throughout *S.NOB*, such as Leonora Carrington's "Children's Corner", in which she writes stories for children full of base materialism and suggestions of death, or the fact that in *S.NOB #1* there was a translation of the first part of Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk*, one of the most scandalous tales of the Gothic style.

[479] "Amo profundamente a las mujeres y, por eso, quiero destruirlas. Deseo devolverlas a la naturaleza y el mejor camino para ello es la pasión. Quiero ahorrarles el hospital y la pobreza. Quiero crearles la felicidad de un instante, la felicidad que por sí mismas no se atreverían a afrontar." *Ibidem.*

body; as the name suggests, it posits the objectification of a subject, but by traversing Surrealism into the Bataillean aesthetics of the entire project, it could be said that the movement of eroticism pushes the object-subject distinction to the limit of an experience that, like the mystic's own, puts *everything* at risk. Because of this, it neither attempts a critical distancing nor leads to a simple collapse of one into the other as part of a rationalizing or de-rationalizing process; instead of signalling alienation or undercurrents of the unconscious,

> it unleashes real desires, in real spaces, with real objects. Not for an instant does Bataille oppose, as Marxists do, fetishism and use-value (for him there is no fetishism of the commodity); when he evokes fetishism, it is, on the contrary, always against merchandise. The fetish is the irreplaceable, untransposable object. "I challenge," writes Bataille, "any art lover to love a canvas as much as a fetishist loves a shoe."[480]

By de-naturalizing the concept of the fetish (a Marxist move, if anything), the French writer radicalizes it *back* to its religious connotations, understood in the terms laid out in *Acéphale* when it states: "WE ARE FEROCIOUSLY RELIGIOUS [...] [:] the world to which we have belonged does not propose anything to love outside of every individual insufficiency: its existence is limited to its commodity"[481]. In other words, it is a religiosity that having cut its head off does the same to the objects it binds, and so this conception of the fetish perhaps does not tread the path of the Surrealist object[482] nor its 'previous step' in the commodity, or at the very least is not limited by them. Under this interpretation, "Fetiche de S.NOB" and the women who produced it postpone the particular fulfilment of these two modes of the concept[483] by dissolving its straightforward sexualization into an erotic set of relations that constantly references the headless religiosity that drives them.

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[480] Denis Hollier, *op cit*, p. 22.
[481] "NOUS SOMMES FAROUCHEMENT RELIGIEUX […] [:] le monde auquel nous avons appartenu ne propose rien à aimer en dehors de chaque insuffisance individuelle: son existence se borne à sa commodité." Georges Bataille, "La Conjuration Sacrée", in *Acéphale*, p. 2. It is also worth noting that the word 'religion' itself, from the Latin *religare*, indicates a kind of binding – to bind the earthly *back* to the divine.
[482] "The erotic allure of the object as commodity." Johanna Malt, *Obscure Objects of Desire: Surrealism, Fetishism, and Politics,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 104. This is easily seen in "¿Ha practicado usted la licantropía?", "En busca de Pampa Hash", "Invitación al crimen", and other pieces in *S.NOB* written by men.
[483] "The female body as a sexualised vessel and object of erotic pleasure designed for masculine consumption." See Sabina Daniela Stent, *Women Surrealists: Sexuality, Fetish, Feminity, and Female Surrealism,* PhD Thesis, United Kingdom, University of Birmingham, 2011, p. 141.

With this in consideration, I will offer an interpretation of "Fetiche de S.NOB" as inserted in the context of Elizondo's reading of Bataille and his directives for the magazine. The first "Fetiche" is entitled *Oda a la Necrofilia* ("*Ode to Necrophilia*"), and is composed of a series of images in which a funeral room seemingly transitions from dawn to dusk, marking a woman's body from complete cover to near-nudity.

"Fetiche de S.NOB #1", in *S.NOB #2*, 1962. IIF, Mexico. Fig. 4.8, upper left. Fig. 4.9, upper right. Fig. 4.10, lower left. Fig. 4.11, lower right.
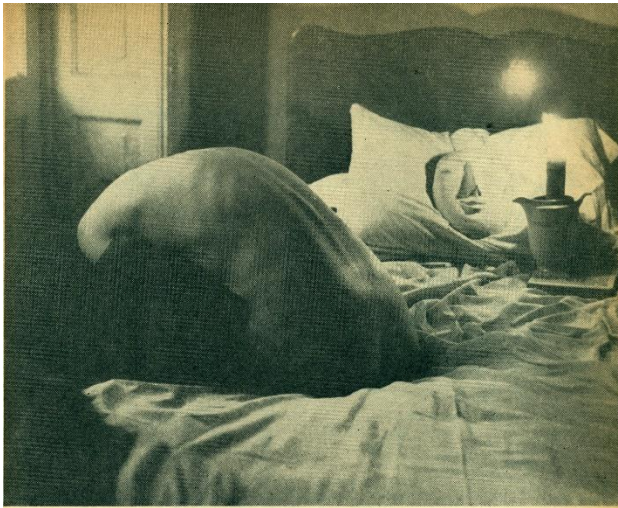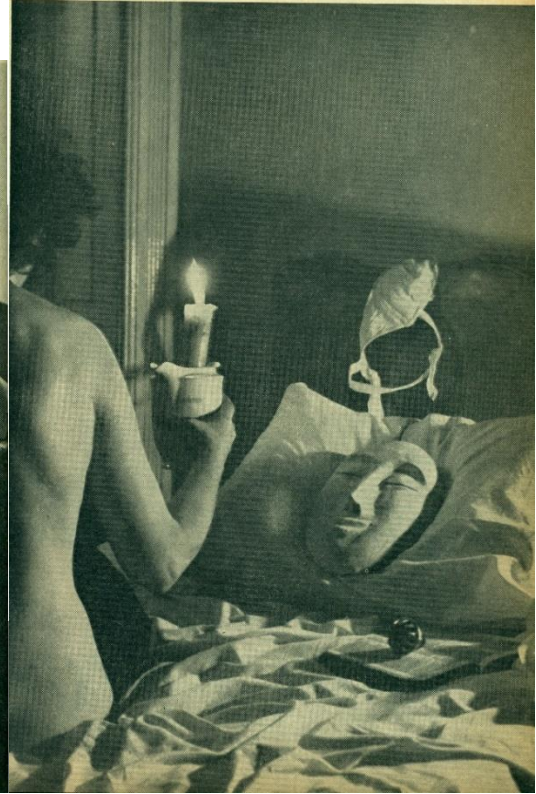
Fig. 4.12, left; Fig. 4.13, right, "Fetiche de S.NOB #1"

The series is characterized by oppositions at every turn, the first of which is the black clothing as a void that indicates a presence, as against the white covers of the funeral arrangement topped off by an anthropomorphic mask, indicating absence. Yet, the 'dead body' is not completely absent, because the void that mourns it seemingly clings to something that is not there – a ghostly remain,

a lingering aura, initially directing the meaning of 'fetish' away from the woman (whose gender can really only be determined in retrospect) and towards the non-existent body. The second opposition is based on light, since the progression of the series plays on what seems like a day/night duality in which, as night comes, the void does not become even darker, but unravels instead, revealing the woman's body and making the ghostly presence of the white sheets/mask combination more apparent (an impossibility in and of itself). The third one is in the name of the piece, in the sense that all its sexual innuendo (visible in the fourth picture, as a woman's bra hangs over the mask) is both heightened by the revelation of the nude body and neutralized by the final focus falling solely on the absent dead: desire is granted (as love of death) as much as it is denied (as death of love). During this transition, the fourth, fifth and sixth photographs (figs. 4.11, 4.12, 4.13) establish a dynamic in which the fetish relationship is two-fold, inasmuch we see the woman fetishizing an absent dead body and in this fantasy we, in turn, fetishize her; nonetheless, even as her body is revealed she does not lose the quality of a void completely, and in her faceless, gestural mourning we are also meant to lose her, to reproduce the loss of something that we cannot even know if it exists beyond a simple, anthropomorphic (non)presence. In an erotic reading of the images, everything about them exudes impossibility, the reversal of terms into their opposites in ways that do not lead to any kind of rational or psychoanalytical solution. This fetish is utterly sensual, but not in a way that leads us back to nature or into unexplainable madness – it is fundamentally *understandable* as portrayal of love and death, of joy *in* horror, indecent and violent, and it cannot be reduced to object, subject, or both as one. Its deception, in a last instance, lies in being only a work of art, not a true fetish. It is erotic, but only half-heartedly so – it might be incredibly counter-Revolutionary, but it cannot reach the ferocity its religious undertones (as funeral, as mirror-imaging of heaven and hell) demand of it, just like *S.NOB* was not really a hit in either pop or art circles in the end.
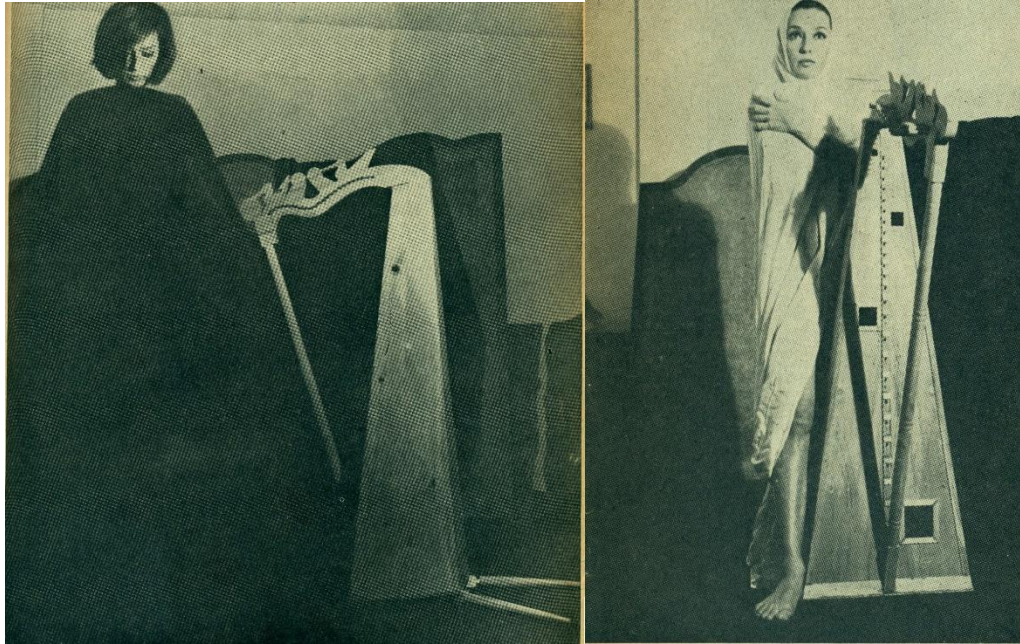
Fig. 4.14, left; Fig. 4.15, right. "Fetiche de S.NOB #2", in *S.NOB #4*, IIF, Mexico.

The other "Fetiches" draw out their religious implications more explicitly, but I will once again concentrate on the second one only due to the richness of the material. "Fetiche no. 2" (figs. 4.14, 4.15) is entitled "Impromptu con arpa" ("Impromptu with harp"), which could recall the famous Franz Schubert musical series of the same name. In it he attempted to capture a divine moment of inspiration ("the mystery of the rose cross") as "romance between heaven and earth"[484]: the composer wrote the pieces as

> hymns to the romance between the feminine face of God, the Divine Sophia, and the wanderer [the solitary figure of man as knight in endless quest]. First she is hidden, only a memory, yet her attraction is erotic and powerful. In the second of these impromptus she is a mother, a figure from the distant past, still radiant in her effect upon the wanderer. She has awakened him to the meaning of life and will shepherd him through death.[485]

Schubert's pieces resolve in the acquisition of wisdom (not knowledge) and higher consciousness, but if we relocate the meaning of the impromptu and its Romantic sensuality to Kati Horla's piece, it can be interpreted as a kind of poetic fragmentation. Proportions are dismantled in a Surrealistic juxtaposition of bodies – *instrumental* or otherwise – whose objectivity, even if purportedly

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[484] Frank Ruppert, *Franz Schubert and the Mysterium Magnum*, Pittsburgh, RoseDog Books, 2009, p. 364.
[485] *Ibid,* p. 382.

'natural' (the harp is emphatically traditional, classical), is ruptured by their iconic gravity, which plays with sexualisation as that religious moment of truth between subject and object where the believer feels, indeed, a romance with the divine. Surrounded by iconoclasms, this "Fetiche" drives Catholic imagery to its sensual extreme, intermittently playing with bodies as intertwined in a game of love and death that would seem natural if it was not for the bourgeois room interiors. This produces a sense of 'inner life' that does not assume any elements of class critique, if only because it crosses and uncrosses the social at another, *lower* level grounded on the representative taboos of Catholic ethics, which even the fiercely secular Revolution was unable to undo in Mexico. It is transgressive that God has the face of a woman, and that her saints *can be undressed* like the impromptu strips down the Mystery to 'mere' musical intelligibility. A vital relationship ensues: the fetish becomes integral to life, and "life is this tumult [on the verge of explosion] that the difference between taboo and transgression produces […] [;] the explosions are the effect of transgression as the opening of taboos."[486] That explosion, under the terms of this religiosity, is a vital excess of death and life, the saint as both eternal stillness and contingent willpower, traced by a femininity that cannot be conceptually contained.

A last point remains to be made here about eroticism. There is an essay written by Tomás Segovia, divided into three parts (*S.NOB #4-#6*), and which is entitled "Defensa e ilustración del incesto" ("Defence and illustration of incest"), that, unlike most other fragments in the magazine, comes very closely to being 'pure' theory. It is a theory of love that is framed under the sign of the erotic, and while it is closer to a Surrealist text, it perilously walks a Bataillean line by appropriating Marxist language as dirty, indecent base[487] upon which to build a radical vision of love that is not

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[486] Benjamin Noys, *op cit*, p. 86.

[487] Marxist language had been absorbed into the State's cultural discourse ever since, among other things, the muralists – especially Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros – as well as many nationalist artists became communists. Also, during the 1930s there was a nation-wide effort to institute a "socialist education" that fell by the wayside after WWII, but that nevertheless left an important mark in the country's left-leaning intelligentsia. See David L. Raby, "La "Educación socialista" en México", first published in *Cuadernos Políticos*, no. 29, Mexico, Editorial Era, July-September 1981. Available at http://www.cuadernospoliticos.unam.mx/cuadernos/contenido/CP.29/29.8DavidRaby.pdf; accessed on May 28, 2015. Needless to say, most of the writers of *S.NOB* were born during this period, and the government that covers the year of the magazine's publication, that of president Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964), under which a national programme of social security was implemented, is conventionally seen as left-leaning as well. Therefore, Marxism, to a middle class counter-Revolutionary artist close to the Rupture, was more than just an embarrassing discourse: it reeked yet of the State. As for anarchism, the kind *S.NOB* brandishes comes more from Surrealism than any kind of classically anarchist Mexican milieu, like the newspaper *Regeneración*, which never attracted much (if any) attention

Fig. 4.16, "Evidently incestuous Egyptian family", insert from *S.NOB #4*, IIF, Mexico.

too dissimilar to that propounded by Raoul Vaneigem. The essay perverts the meaning of 'aristocracy' as modern social category to twist its anti-modernity into serving libertarian purposes that are, ever from the beginning of the text, erotically charged with impossibility: "incest is one of the ideal poles of every love. It represents noble purity, or the fidelity of an original purity, as can be clearly seen in the incestuous marriages of Egyptian pharaohs."[488] (Fig. 4.16) Once again, *S.NOB* entangles the reader in a deceitful ambiguity that initially appears as one thing and ends up really being another, and this essay is no exception. Segovia, in this way, cleverly leaps back to very early Romantic political philosophy when he reverses Jean Jacques Rousseau by saying that revolutions constitute a quest for "natural hierarchy", under the ideal limit of which "the complete disappearance of social justice will permit the apparition in plenitude of that other injustice: "natural" inequality, real, pure. It would be the end of "alienation", each and every one would develop freely their

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from artists. Still, as befits certain strands of Surrealism, particularly the Bataillean strain, *S.NOB's* foray into counter-Revolution implied a re-appraisal of libertarian thought, particularly in relation to fascism. Thus, it is in *S.NOB #1* that Alvar do Mattos (Colombian poet Álvaro Mutis) writes an *in memoriam* of French writer Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, who was already widely known as a proponent of fascism in the 1930s and a collaborationist during the occupation of France during the war. In the article there is, of course, no mention of fascism at all, but it does posit La Rochelle, and by extension his terrible choice of political commitment, as sorts of appropriators of socialism. Nationalism and socialism together already represent an impossibility that does not lead to liberation (a glimpse of infinite *life* and its eroticism) but to its opposite (a glimpse of infinite death alone); however, pro-Nazism and even the very tendency towards the mythical that the Revolution had engendered were not entirely incompatible. José Vasconcelos himself, one of the great articulators of the Revolutionary project, became a supporter of Nazism by 1940 (see Mauricio Pilatowsky, "El acercamiento de José Vasconcelos al nazismo y su dirección de la revista *El Timón*", in *Estudios* no. 110, vol. XII, autumn 2014, available at http://biblioteca.itam.mx/estudios/100-110/110/000258487.pdf ; accessed on May 28, 2015) . It is not my interest here to treat the issue of Nazism in Mexico: suffice it to say that an article like Mattos' reads more like a curatorial attempt to position *S.NOB* as a counter-Revolutionary instance of shocking State discourse than an actual apology for fascism, especially because no article like Mattos' was ever printed in the magazine again. I believe, instead, that it is much more appropriate to talk of the sort of libertarian revolt implied in every aspect of *S.NOB* in more 'acephalic' terms which attempt to traverse fascism to overcome it; Bataille and Breton's counter-appropriation of it in *Contre-attaque* was, after all, accused of being fascist itself in numerous occasions. See Gavin Grindon, "Alchemist of the Revolution: The Affective Materialism of Georges Bataille", in *Third Text*, vol. 24, issue 3, May 2010, pp 305-317, p. 312-313.

[488] "El incesto es uno de los polos ideales de todo amor. Representa la pureza noble, es decir la fidelidad a una pureza originaria, como se ve claramente en los matrimonios incestuosos de los faraones egipcios." Tomás Segovia, "Defensa e ilustración del incesto", in *S.NOB #4,* 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 36. In other words, one of the dirtiest taboo acts humanity holds in common is actually a metaphor for purity.

"essence", or their existential choice, or whatever, and their inequality with respect to others would be measured only by that development."[489] The next step in the end of alienation, Segovia maintains, is *self-appropriation[490]*, and a consequent detachment from use-value to move into a final realization of true social value, radically democratic in its suggestion of absolute self-determination. He proceeds to discard socialism for its emphasis on production, and states that fraternal relations are *naked* relations, previous even to society, and therefore free from alienation: this is a horizontal kind of incest, not a vertical one that seeks the patriarchal or the matriarchal, both of which presuppose already a form of social contract. His conclusion is that the incestuous society would truly serve "to each according to his or her needs", because in such a state needs, by being radically individual, are therefore also unequal. Hence, every step the author takes, Romantic at heart, moves him closer to the cutting of the head and into a political theory that, for all its flaws, is closer to a non-State-sanctioned discourse of anarcho-communism than a hierarchical one. This 'differential' communism based on a natural inequality would be the result of what can be described as an erotic mass movement: "[all] love is revolutionary", and "lovers feel persecuted, or at least malevolently invigilated, by a society from which they have deserted. […] Their love will always be a symbolic attempt on society […] as long as its motivation is not solely and exclusively social [as it is in marriage]."[491] For him, only poetry is the way to experience what is yet to come into existence (in other words, to approximate impossibility), and it is a poetry born of the symbolism of the "fraternal couple", the 'natural' 'anti-natural' movement of which makes both love and poetry "antisocial and revolutionary"[492]. Segovia ends the second part of the essay by stating that fraternal love is a sincere communication among equals that by having its basis on a radical inequality of another sort comes to border on the truly unique, insofar every couple develops a language of their own[493]. This is how the element of purity plays out as an 'aristocratic' code through which to read this theory of love, which nonetheless falters at every turn *as theory* because its logic is not completely fleshed out, leaving, rather, an interplay of opposites that continuously, perhaps

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[489] "En el límite ideal, la desaparición completa de la injusticia social permitirá la aparición en plenitud de la otra injusticia: la desigualdad "natural", real, pura. Sería el fin de la "enajenación", cada uno desarrollaría libremente su "esencia", o su elección existencial, o lo que sea, y su desigualdad con respecto a los otros se mediría únicamente por este desarrollo." *Ibid,* p. 38.

[490] *Ibidem.*

[491] "Su amor será siempre un atentado simbólico a la sociedad en la medida en que no se enajene totalmente a ella, es decir en la medida en que su motivación no sea única y exclusivamente social." Tomás Segovia, "Defensa...", in *S.NOB #5,* 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 33.

[492] *Ibid*, p. 35.

[493] *Ibidem.*

infinitely, penetrate each other. An equality based on inequality would not really stand critical scrutiny, but what is interesting here is not so much the theory itself but how it is built in collage-like manners that flow from one contradiction to another, contradictions that are not solved but which nevertheless *make sense* of, in this case, love as prelude to revolution. The third and last part of the essay consists of the "Illustration", which Segovia crafts around the life and works of Thomas Mann, to whom he ascribes the thought of love as "tension between the two principles, the dark and feminine, the luminous and masculine, "the Sacred and the Splendid"."[494] It is clearly an erotic tension, one that quickly overrules any thought of love as social contract, torn away from eroticism and, in a way, conventionally fetishized[495]. The essay's conclusion is worth reproducing in full, if only because it will possibly remind the reader of other magazines seen so far, and will possibly confirm the author's traversal of what are, in principle, reactionary views and values, the same kind of *stripping* and cutting of the head that *Acéphale* took upon as its most fundamental task. Segovia:

> Only the true, profound, fraternity that cannot be bought can save Western love from its fatal crack. The Christian fraternity, the workers' fraternity, the fraternity maybe of *delinquency or crime* [emphasis mine], and possibly even biological fraternity, if it is not purely external. But also the fraternity cemented in the great personal adventure of discovering in the concrete other the radical person. More so: even collective or general fraternities have to be internalized, reinvented as personal adventure if they are to be cemented on concrete love, if they are not to remain upon abstractions incapable of supporting our real weight, and which will once more precipitate us in our contradiction.[496]

While the objective is, in the end, entirely against fragmentation (it wants to resolve *the* contradiction, it wants to move from darkness into light), it does not cease to be one more fragment

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[494] "Es la tensión de los dos principios, el oscuro y femenino, el luminoso y masculino, "lo Sagrado y lo Espléndido."" Tomás Segovia, "Defensa...", in *S.NOB #6* , 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 39.

[495] It is a "complementary duality" that if accepted by the fraternal couple it will "no longer live the negative purity of in-contamination, demonic purity, but live the living purity, the purity that is not a mutilation of darkness, but the very movement of darkness to the light." – "No vive ya la pureza negativa de la incontaminación, la pureza demoníaca, sino que vive la pureza viva, la pureza que no es la mutilación de lo oscuro, sino el movimiento mismo de lo oscuro hacia lo luminoso." *Ibidem.*

[496] "Sólo la verdadera, profunda, insobornable fraternidad puede salvar al amor occidental de su grieta fatal. La fraternidad cristiana, la fraternidad obrera, la fraternidad quizá de la delincuencia o el crimen, y es posible que hasta la fraternidad biológica, si no es puramente externa. Pero también la fraternidad cimentada en la gran aventura personal de descubrir en el otro concreto la persona radical. Es más: incluso las fraternidades colectivas o generales tienen que ser interiorizadas, reinventadas como aventura personal si han de cimentar el amor concreto, si no han de quedarse en abstracciones incapaces de soportar nuestro peso de realidad, y que volverían a precipitarnos en nuestra contradicción." *Ibidem.*

amidst a myriad of other freakish forms of revolt that comprise a highly erotic heterogeneity that is always in dissipation, always expanding and contracting, ascending and descending.

4. Infernal Politics

The fragmentation that *S.NOB* is and represents has a very characteristic theoretical relationship to its 'outside', as we have seen. Its deceit carves a space that seemingly intends not so much to 'bomb' culture in critique and cosmopolitanism but to remind it of the certainty of its death. It does not really intend to be a new, solid political articulation, and in this sense it resembles the most nihilistic instances of Dada as a carnival of negation. What it does articulate is a set of counter-Revolutionary values that eludes the trap of conventional politics by attempting to position itself at their very limits, and from this place it seductively calls out for culture and the politics it is tied around to *look below*. Thus, if the entire structure of the State is understood as 'heavenly' in its demands for idealization, abstraction, and unity, then one of the forms an opposition can take could be precisely one based on the idea of reminding it that the sun has already blinded its eyes and burned its skin. By presenting itself in sensuous terms, disguised as one more "woman's weekly", *S.NOB* becomes an attractive object that does not reinforce any kind of ideological union but tempts everything heavenly to fall back, to plunge into the underworld and its fragmentary un-reason. It does not speak of a totality beyond, because it is in many ways much more interested in the limit itself, in impossibility, and in the context given that means an aesthetics built on an eroticism that violently carves new eyes into the heavenly for it to look at its *own* boundaries. Elizondo: "What we are doing when we invent hells is to glimpse or contemplate our own possibilities, from a point of view […] contained within a sphere that does not transcend the limits of the ego, the possibilities inherent to the contemplation of said possibility as one of transcending the limits of the own ego."[497] What this baroque formulation entails (and all hells are fundamentally baroque, as we will see) is that hell is a creative source that enables us to think of transcendence in *human* terms, because to think of heavenly transcendence is to become pure *head*, to free the self from the body, a violently *inhuman* (perhaps even anti-human) act. Hell

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[497] "Lo que estamos haciendo cuando inventamos infiernos es atisbar o plantear nuestras propias posibilidades desde un punto de vista […] contenido dentro de una esfera que no trasciende los límites del yo, las posibilidades inherentes al planteamiento de esa posibilidad como posibilidad de trascender los límites del yo propio." Salvador Elizondo, *Teoría del infierno*, p. 13.

"synthesises the sinister character of the world that surrounds us […] [by being] exclusive to things such as flesh and torture"[498]; it is a *natural* extension of the body's properties because it is a place of mostly corporeal torments[499]. In a Catholic context such as Mexico's, corporeal torment is something that is immediately associated with institutional forms of structuring community, in the expectation of discipline and punishment when it comes to the formation and rupture of communal bonds. While the issue of Church and State is not relevant here, it does bear some importance to say that, like most modern projects, the Revolution is an upward movement (which is to say progress-based, heavenly-oriented) of which its very conditions of possibility are dependent on the idea of ever-widening, ever-deepening institutions.

Because of its grounding ties to bodies, hell is in principle an exercise in self-consciousness (as self-regulation) that comes to be institutionalized as the damned 'outside' of civilizatory/rationalized/idealized endeavours, a punishing wilderness that comes to represent an affirmation of whatever else institutional values it is connected to: hell is yet another figuration for incorruptibility, for perfection. Elizondo, however, prefers to start by cutting the head off, and so, via Dante Alighieri, returns to hell its primordially erotic character when he analyses the Italian poet's Canto III, in which he reads the inscription at the gate of the underworld, as a baroque conception of a hell created out of more than 'Justice' – it is also created out of 'primal love'[500]. This idea serves to connect a certain sensuality with the relationship between hell and heaven (for love without sensuality, under this view, is only death), in which bodily aspects become irruptive of heavenly processes that refuse them through the *virtue* of being inhumanly transcendental. An exploration of the concept of hell – in more metaphorical terms, the descent into it – becomes an exploration of this high-low relationship in a way that does not presume the incapacity of the human before the divine. On the contrary, it "convokes the image of the lyric singer that descends to Avernus in search of a gift that will grant access to divinity by means of sacrifice; to access a superior poetic condition."[501] This sacrifice implies a subjection (to pain, to a trial) that *affirms* the humanity of the seeker, and humanity as distinct category seems to be a very subtle version of the

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[498] "[La noción de infierno] sintetiza el carácter siniestro del mundo que nos rodea […] [al ser] privativo de cosas como la carne y la tortura." *Ibidem.*
[499] *Ibid,* p. 15.
[500] *Ibid,* p. 17
[501] *Ibid,* p. 18

consciousness of desire and death that Bataille speaks of in *Tears of Eros* as what properly constitutes it. This is what the French author calls "diabolical"[502], and it is a very basic link between love and death as conforming a relationship that is saddled between joy and terror. Furthermore, Elizondo expands on this relationship by observing that punishment consists of an exposure to terror (infinite stillness) itself, and realizes that in conceiving of hell as a *community* of the condemned the sharing of torture makes such terror not only diminished at a very essential level, but also sublimated into nothing other than the *pleasure* of being with others[503]. This impossibility creates an institutional vacuum: to descend into hell is not only to *remember* eroticism but also to negate the ideology that kept it locked away. The devil, so to speak, is in the limits, and *S.NOB* is infernal because it does not explain and does not program (it is not Revolutionary); it confuses and fragments, and its erotic approach provokes the desire of its enemy to drag it to the limit in which it can be conceived as both 'high' (snobbish) and 'low' (*sine nobilitate*). An infernal politics is about the extremity of the descent into hell, the dirtying of the ideal with the thought of death, to create vital earthquakes that shatter the pillars that maintain order, throwing the remains into a violent, furious form of freedom that has little to do with conventionally political divisions.

In *S.NOB #3* there is a very specific form of practice of this descent, in a section unique to that issue that was called "The City", and which was divided into two parts. The first part is José de la Colina's "Método de aprovechamiento terrorífico" ("Method of terrorizing exploitation"), which stems from the avant-garde reappraisal of individual relations with cities. It is framed as an invitation "to those who, like me, still resist to be perfect civilized citizens, rational and pragmatic, so as to not renounce the dark fatherland, that of essential shuddering, of the deepest and most secret heart, I would propose a terrible and beautiful game, a method of communion with the otherness of things and of ourselves, a subtle mechanic of *revelation*."[504] The essay has a visual counterpart in photographs by Kati Horla, which depict hellish places where extremes touch, and

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[502] Georges Bataille, *Tears of Eros*, *p*. 23.
[503] Salvador Elizondo, *op cit*, p. 20.
[504] "A quienes como yo siguen resistiéndose a ser perfectos ciudadanos civilizados, racionales y pragmáticos, por no renunciar a la patria oscura, la de los estremecimientos esenciales, la del corazón más profundo y secreto, quiero proponer un juego hermoso y terrible, un método de comunión con la otredad de las cosas y de nosotros mismos, una sutil mecánica de la *revelación*." José de la Colina, "Método de aprovechamiento terrorífico", in *S.NOB #3*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 10.

in which there is a distinct focus on the traces of Mexico City history that reflect wider historical discourses in conflict. This is how a sensuously baroque facade has been partially demolished and closed down by straight-lined cheap modern materials upon which the legend "FOR SALE" can be read (fig. 4.17):

Fig. 4.17. "The City", in *S.NOB #3*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

This gate's inscription becomes humorous when compared to Dante's version, if only because the strangeness that results from the decay is still particularly disturbing in terms of a rational composition, of simply making sense. "The objective is to descend again to the regions of fear and anguish, to the domain of the deepest infantile terrors […] [To] cure, for some hours at least, the

chronic mediocrity of the perfect citizen. This is why it is essentially *revolutionary*."[505] While comparable to Situationist psychogeography, this method takes a different turn by not becoming theory, by remaining first and foremost a game that in reconfiguring the city as a Gothic other comes to temporarily 'vandalize' its logic into ceding its repressed horrors; by attaching a mystical element to it (in revelation), de la Colina inserts the scope of the beyond, of that which architecture finds unspeakable. By not becoming a theory, the method cannot offer a critique outside of the moment it is enacted, and in its mystical connection pretends to offer not a re-ordering of the city (a kind of urbanism) but a sudden dislocation of the mind, grounding itself on the sensuous understanding that searching for hidden histories implies the possibility of an encounter with death. If the baroque itself is already hellish ("what is sobriety if not the fear of everything that is not lasting[?]"[506]), to *wander* through its ruins as a point of focus for terror is to glimpse into the truthful abyss that lies at the centre of architecture and history, the void from which they run away by building unities, by making sense. The revelation, in this sense, works both ways: as loss in absolute knowledge, and as the absolute knowledge of loss (fig. 4.18):

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[505] "Se trata de volver a descender a las regiones del miedo y de la angustia, al dominio de los más profundos terrores infantiles […] Curar, por unas horas al menos, la crónica mediocridad del perfecto ciudadano. Por ello, es esencialmente *revolucionario.*" *Ibidem.*

[506] Georges Bataille, *Tears of Eros,* p. 96.

Fig. 4.18. "The City", *S.NOB #3*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

"This whole baroque world, unmasked of the unity that had been imposed by human custom and heart, will once again show the diabolic character, anguished, non-conformist, that is proper to everything baroque."[507] As with Elizondo's concept of the diabolic, the usage of the term here refers to its literary form (the baroque as a *Paradise Lost*), but it is in the collage of the arts that *S.NOB* finds the revelry of revolt, and therefore it is not so strange to find here the term directly

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[507] "Todo este mundo barroco, desprendiéndose la máscara de unidad que le habían puesto la costumbre y el corazón humanos, empezará a mostrar el carácter diabólico, angustiado, inconforme, que hay en todo lo barroco." José de la Colina, *op cit*, p. 15.

associated with displacement, deformity, the non-coincidence of forms as the *truth* revealed by terror. As an infernal game, this method shifts the principles of community-making towards their complete disappearance, and the only alternative it offers is precisely an identity amongst the damned, a collective condemnation that asserts an acephalic religiosity by sharing an eroticism that is antithetical to normative forms of coming together. As in the fourth photograph of the essay, pictured above, the ruins of the baroque come to signify a very urban kind of decay, one in which nature is contained by the architectural forms themselves, or in other words, that is not creeping over civilization but that has fallen *from* it. It is human in a way that different ruins are not, and it is because of this humanity that it portrays history as an impossible act, as a surrealist juxtaposition of visual elements that 'makes sense', but mostly in the discovery of a very passionate failure – an excess of rationality that falls over into an excess of feeling.

The second part of "The City" is a text (with images) by Leonora Carrington, called "De cómo funde una industria o el sarcófago de hule" ("On How an Industry Smelts or The Rubber Sarcophagus"). It tells a Surrealist tale that re-creates the city as a vaguely post-technological landscape in which a society *purely* comprised of aristocrats and intellectuals live, deploying sci-fi tropes to satirize Revolutionary values of all sorts: it posits the future establishment of a monarchy in Mexico that, in accordance with the pre-modernity of the concept, banishes mass technologies and replaces them with magical rituals of pre-Columbian inspiration. Modern institutions are a matter of archaeology, as are nation-states, although 'industry' remains; finally, the Cold War divide (and the orthodox Marxist 'alternative' to the Revolution) is mocked by making the figure of Josef Stalin into a gift-shop relic (handed over by Queen Elizabeth II of England to Carrington, the narrator) of a Catholic saint ("canonized in 1958"[508]) with medicinal properties that can only be activated by 'antique 20th century' means. The medicine, a "main exportation of the country"[509], is called "Apostalin", a play on the word 'apostate', indicating, with a very swift, wide strike, that the purported secularism of both Revolutionary and orthodox Marxist values is but a transposition of Catholicism that makes a mask out of modernity. By humorously describing a sort of future globalization ("Norwegian enchiladas canned in Japan") that is actually

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[508] Leonora Carrington, "De cómo funde una industria o el sarcófago de hule", in *S.NOB #3*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico, p. 18.
[509] *Ibidem.*

a pre-modern fantasy ("the Black King of the north, New York I", decreed the "law of De-electrification of the Americas"[510]), Carrington destabilizes the narrative of progress that rests at the very base of grand unities like the State, and she subtly adorns the tale with the optimistic view of the *only* victor in their equally grand confrontation: industry. However, the setting (a cemetery) as well as the accompanying image direct such optimism literally into a grave.
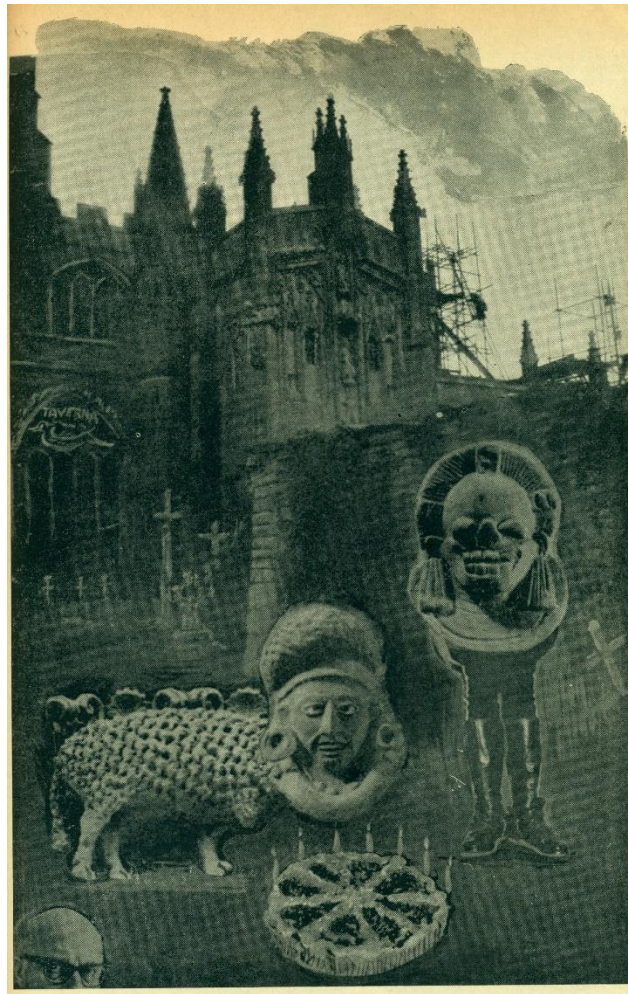

Fig. 4.19. "The City", *S.NOB #3*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

The 'picnic' that takes place at the cemetery, between the narrator and her aristocratic friends (one of whom has the name of a volcano at the outskirts of Mexico City and another who is named after the democratic, once official name of Mexico City, Federal District). Carrington writes: "I thought

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510 *Ibid,* p. 16.

profoundly on the most aristocratic place to enjoy the company of these gentlemen and given the vulgarity of restaurants to which their costly meals anyone can assist by paying, and the uncomfortability of rurality with its open and proletarian character, I decided at last to invite them to an ancient and beautiful cemetery near to the ruins of the Latin American Tower."[511] The mechanics of this tale will, by now, appear obvious: this 'aristocratic' (wilful, freakish, religious) descent into hell forces Revolutionary discourse to come into contact with death, not only in its overcoming by 'industry' but also in remembering the radical incompatibility of many an element in its discourse, which entailed the synthesis of a modernity based on a dialectic between the Western and the pre-Hispanic. Under the shadow of an apparently ruined, obscure neo-Gothic cathedral, impossible human forms feast over the remains of the Revolutionary project, consuming death, walking upon it. Nevertheless, the cathedral has been beheaded: a sign above its entrance reads "TAVERNA", or tavern – this fantastical descent is, indeed, counter-Revolutionary because it questions and undermines the fundamental unified premises of the Mexican Revolution, which makes it *revolutionary* in its disarticulation of the Mexican political panorama into its basic form as an incredibly fragmented series of ideological components[512].

The infernal qualities of "The City" take the Mexican capital as a beacon of progress and prods it towards a deadly extremity, one that kills its political environment at an individual (as game) as well as collective (as fantasy) level. It brims with the baroque, with the *immoderate* suggestions of things that do not last at all, of the sensory and sensuous intuition that sheer joy emanates from the ruins that order refuses to acknowledge as *memento mori*. Terror and the moment that proceeds it (that time and space long after the 'end of History') come together perhaps not to annihilate the Revolution but to more sinisterly whisper to "us" that its end, too, will come.

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[511] "Pensé profundamente en el lugar más aristocrático para gozar de la compañía de estos caballeros y dada la vulgaridad de los restaurantes a cuyas costosas comidas cualquiera puede asistir pagando, y la incomodidad del campo con su carácter abierto y proletario, decidí por fin invitarlos a un antiguo y hermoso cementerio cerca de las ruinas de la Torre Latino Americana." *Ibidem*. The Torre Latino Americana is a skyscraper in Mexico City finished in 1956, and which at the time received praise as the tallest building in the world (excepting the United States). In multiple ways it represents the hope and promise of the Revolutionary project in stability (one built on granting death to others while denying the possibility of its own), and in a very subtle manner the self-realization of its cosmological reach in assuming the role of a Latin American beacon second only to the US in cultural scope.

[512] A major detail has completely eluded me: the half of the head of the man that with the weird 'new humans' looks directly at the viewer. I was unable to recognize him, and so my interpretation of the image falters because of it, but I do not necessarily see that as something that devalues my work – it *negates* it, and that is not bad at all.

To conclude this section on *S.NOB*'s 'infernal politics' and the chapter as a whole, I will analyse two more covers: *S.NOB #3* (fig. 4.20) and *S.NOB #7* (fig. 4.21). The first is perhaps the magazine's most conventionally political of its images, repeated within *S.NOB #3* as part of Salvador Elizondo's article "Akbar del Piombo y el Culto a los Héroes" ("Akbar del Piombo and the Hero Cult"), which reviews artist Norman Rubington's (a.k.a. Akbar) collage-novels *Fuzz Against Junk & The Hero Maker*[513].
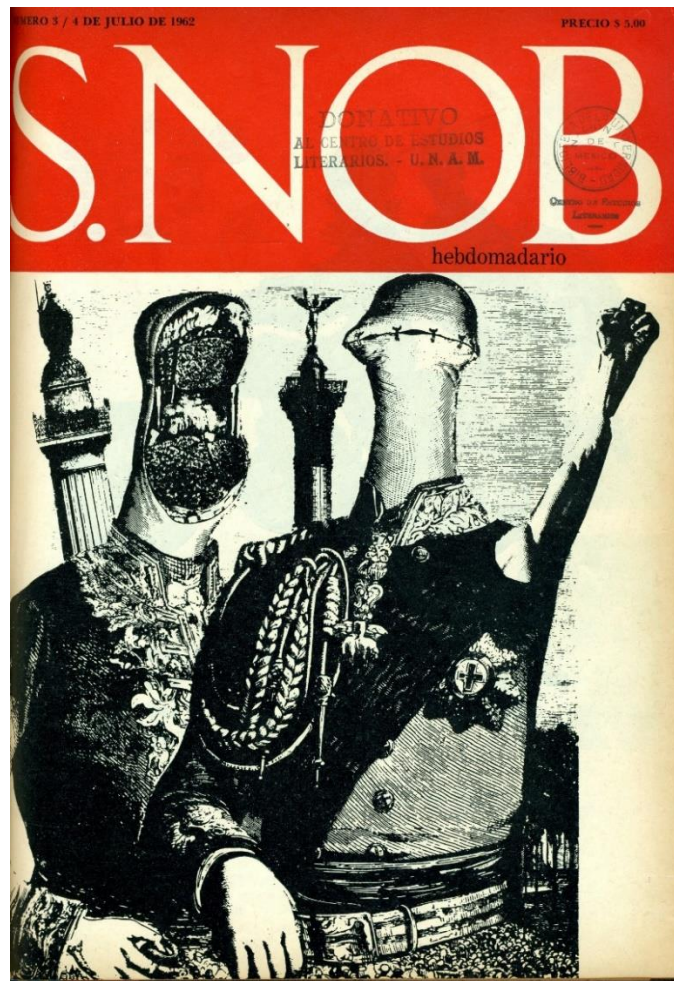

Fig. 4.20. Cover of *S.NOB #3*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

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[513] The American Rubington used collage in the same way Max Ernst did when crafting narrative-based image books, except Rubington was fully dedicated to satire and transgressive, erotic themes. Under the pseudonym 'Akbar del Piombo' he wrote and illustrated pornographic books that nonetheless kept a razor-sharp edge of political commentary, such as *Fuzz*, which makes a complete joke out of the internationalized 'war on drugs'. For more information, see the Norman Rubington website, at http://www.normanrubington.com/index.html ; accessed on May 31, 2015.

The image reproduces del Piombo's style of collage – itself based on Max Ernst's techinque – and very directly references the modern image of the State par excellence: the Leviathan. The two main monstrous figures are composed of drawings of military uniforms, towering over the masses of people that constitute them, with two monuments at their backs (the one on the right strikingly resembles the 'Angel of Independence' in Mexico City). The image is subtitled, within the article, as "Political Heroes (Rightist to the Left, Leftist to the Right)"[514], so identifying modern conventional politics founded on the exact same source, ideologically compromised in their dependence on each other. The 'rightist', which is dressed in early 19th century military attire, has its head violently torn apart by an opening gigantic maw in which can be seen, not very clearly, some sort of spatial division into four levels, intermittently clear and dark, as if it was a geological map of the planet's layers. The monument behind it, with a monarch at the top, is slanted – it is not 'right'. The 'leftist', in late 19th century – perhaps Porfirian – clothing (a part of which, pinned by an Iron Cross, resembles German uniforms) has its maw sewn shut, and an erect arm with the first closed aims at the sky in defiance. Its corresponding monument, the 'Angel of Independence', *is 'right'*, both spatially and in terms of alignment with the vertical axis of the image. On a first reading, the image intends to break apart the standard understandings of the political left and right by switching around signifiers and finding a common constitution, pummelling the Leviathan into two treacherous aspects; one speaks in strata, horribly agape in its hellish depiction of something unknown but that seems terribly painful, while the other cannot speak at all but does break out in a grandly recognizable political gesture of rally, its pain emanating from its silence. Through their attire, both figures are located as previous to the Revolution, which dispensed with aristocratic military uniforms (tied to the Porfirian regime it initially broke out against) and adopted an austere, modern dress, and yet the context is evidently contemporary, heightened by the review of del Piombo itself, which issues a critique against heroism as pretension to eternity: "when a society is infected by the virus of heroism, a frenzied pursuit of immortality – of the laurels – leads its components to institute a State in which the Chief is the reflection of an idea that comprehends, in

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[514] Salvador Elizondo, "Akbar del Piombo y el Culto a los Héroes", in *S.NOB #3,* 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, p. 24.

its sole person, every instance of national heroism."[515] The 'hero cult' is therefore, in its aspirations to the everlasting, a death cult, because only in death can infinite, unchanging stillness be found, not in life. The entirety of the article seems to suggest the fascistic tendencies of the Revolution towards a totality that will not end, a deadly cosmology whose modernity serves to confuse political stagnation with variety, justice with democracy, militarism with freedom, and so on. However, on a second reading, it is from this confusion that *S.NOB* arises, and its deceit consists of apparently finding itself aligned with the 'rightist to the left', with its twisted sense of the aristocratic as 'pure' revolt, as the counter-Revolutionary opposition to endless progress and conventionally political problems; the hell in the mouth-head of the figure is the truth that is kept shut in its counterpart's own body. Yet, the satirical attack on both of these political positions, as mixed up and disorienting when appearing at their most symbolically *solid*, reveals the deceit of the group's alignment, a laughter that stems from nihilistic disbelief (in causes, in sides) tied to an anarchistic, acephalic push through these ideological formations to dissolve them from within by means of a vitality that renders them, in the disarray of their political elements, ridiculous. In other words, this is an infernal view that in dragging concepts into its descent, into the field of an unbridled eroticism that makes movement between extremes possible, dis-articulates their intended totality.

The cover of *S.NOB #7* is a drawing by Leonora Carrignton that depicts a lizard-like monster covered by esoteric-looking ideograms, lines, and sets of numbers. The monster, like a cross between a bird and a reptile and drawn in black ink, holds between its hands an indication of movement (two lines of arrows), while the esoteric symbol that comprises the whole of the 'grammar' written in red presents a further occultation of the drawing as secondary layer. In a way, the cover is a cipher, an incomprehensible image that both wants to remain hidden and demands *work*, the labour of intelligence to make sense *out* of it. Carrington, by the 1960s, had immersed herself in esoteric literature and the tradition of Western occultism with the aim of revealing rejected knowledges directly tied to femininity as a divine source of power[516]. The image reflects

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[515] "Cuando una sociedad queda infectada por el virus del heroísmo, una desaforada persecución de la inmortalidad – de los laureles – lleva a sus componentes a instituir un Estado en el que el Jefe es el reflejo de una idea que comprende, en su sola persona, todas las instancias del heroísmo nacional." *Ibid,* p. 25.

[516] See Janice Helland, "Surrealism and Esoteric Feminism in the Paintings of Leonora Carrington", in *RACAR: revue* , vol. 16, no. 1, 1989, p. 53-61.

Carrington's engagement with such material, beginning with the creature, conceivably a wingless dragon, which in the mixture of Jungian psychoanalysis and occult symbolisms she favoured at the time can be understood as both the unconscious and the fixity of elemental states in alchemical procedures. This figure is thus essentially paradoxical, but it is precisely through alchemy that these opposites find themselves conjoined; the sigils and symbols that pass through the creature seem to correspond to no traditional alchemical writings, instead working like a deconstruction of them into fragments re-integrated into new, alien shapes. The numerological table that accompanies them, like the dragon's multiple, feminized *ergons* or eyes turned towards eternity and the divine, suggests a labyrinthine, playful relationship to time as one more element in the formula that interpenetrates the creature as if it was its spiritual, abstract form. While the patterns in the table and the similarity of the signs and symbols to those of alchemical treatises and certain languages (the two lines of 'letters' bear resemblance to, for example, Hebrew letters) are immediately identifiable, the lack of a 'master key' with which to decode the significance of this magic renders them inaccessible. This lack is not, however, born from a void, but from a wealth of meanings – "Carrington's meandering interest in a wide range of esoteric material [leads to a situation in which] there is no […] stable framework in which the manifestations of these components in her work can be anchored."[517]

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[517] Kristoffer Noheden, "Leonora Carrington, Surrealism, and Initiation: Symbolic Death and Rebirth in *Little Francis* and *Down Below*", in *Correspondences*, no. 2, vol. 1, 2014, p. 39.
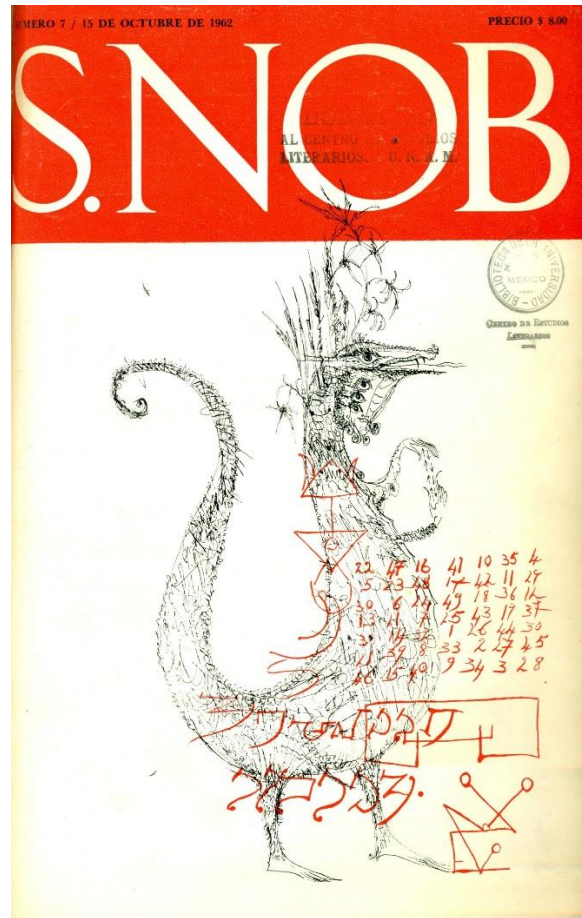
Fig. 4.21. Cover of *S.NOB #7*, 1962. IIF, Mexico.

The dragon, after all, is also commonly associated with the devil, and the simplicity of the image (everything can be clearly distinguished) is a feature that can fool the viewer into attempting to labour *the* meaning into existence. However, following the infernal politics drawn by Elizondo, this cover acquires a divine ambivalence: through analogical thinking and the mystic's approach the reader could intend to find the truth, but which, if maliciously made pointless (the devil's trick, the serpent's seduction), the reader would be reduced into the anguish of unsolvable puzzles, into a sort of self-inflicted form of torture that tends towards the nihilistic realization that, perhaps, there is no truth at all. In this sense, the drive towards sensuous extremes makes for what Elizondo understood for a 'collectivity of the damned', an understanding beyond politics that comes closer to religion as foundation of social relations, in the Bataillean sense of religion as a ferocious experience of the limits of the self and others (eroticism), an irreducibly vital form of coming

together that emphasizes the fragmentation of the totality, instead of the other way around – it is a process of dis-articulation, of differentiation, of dislocating the 'mastery' of History over the social. The kind of collective that an infernal politics produces is, therefore, one like *S.NOB*: it never actually coalesces as a group, and is perhaps more interestingly built *on* the tension between the individual and the collective, the impossibility of the freakshow that does not conceive of that relation as dialectical, but as an erotic one in which the terms both fuse and separate. Like King Mob, it does not exist and yet it does, except in this case the theories that feed *S.NOB* do not lead only to the lament of failure to affirm a presence, they lead to a laughter, the Bataillean "laughter which seamlessly turn[s] into sobbing"[518] that in its vital closeness to pain disappears as fast as it appears, leaving no great imprint on Mexican culture at large, and violently forced into silence after the events of 1968.

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[518] Benjamin Noys, *op cit*, p. 26.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the variously incendiary discourses that the artist collectives of Situationist Times, King Mob, Black Mask, Up Against the Wall Motherfucker & International Werewolf Conspiracy, and S.NOB crafted through their magazines, I hope to have shown not only how they challenged their respective contexts as well as the wider world-system by extension, but also how it is possible to follow a re-evaluation of the concept of the avant-garde that underlines their activity. By starting with a hypothetical, theoretical assumption that they are effecting the avant-garde dissolution of the art/life divide, the nodal point of organization laid bare the relationship between the aesthetic, the political, economic, and sometimes even the epistemological in a much more concrete level, I believe, than if I had focused solely on questions of poetics or sociality. Because this assumption is hypothetical, it allowed me to approach groups such as ST and S.NOB as clearly political entities, even when their organizations cannot be as easily ascribed this particular position of the avant-garde (according to Peter Bürger) as the UK and US groups. The source of the SI's dismissal of the ST as just an art group is to be found upon a pragmatically-oriented view of the art/life divide as one comparable (maybe even equivalent) to the theory/practice one, in the sense that they depend upon the prevalence of the separation between the abstract and the concrete. Integrating these two 'poles', for Bürger and materialist avant-gardes such as the SI, implied redrawing this relationship into now conventionally identifiable political activity and the rejection of specialized fields of action under institutional constraints. This view, however, narrows down the possibility of understanding the political in objects or productions that do not subsume that relationship under a militant lens closely tied to *action*. The ST and S.NOB are highly politicized endeavours that do not take this shape because they do not subsume the art/life divide into a question whose resolution must be conventionally political first and foremost, easily attachable to a political position, whether left or right. Instead of programmatic aesthetic projects, ST and S.NOB are much more open and fragmentary in nature, and what would seem a distant relation to politics because of a refusal of the conventionally political is continually underlined by fierce political commitments, whether in the ST's affirmation of the 'Situationist

movement' not in divergence with the SI but in parallel with it or in the contextual positioning of S.NOB towards an artistic milieu not altogether diverse or free.

It thus enabled me to reaffirm the vastness and the radicalism of the ST project, for example, without falling into the historiographical trap first incited by the SI, under which the ST and everything around it is just (politically inclined) art of no true revolutionary value. My work follows the latest scholarship in rejecting the conventional view of the 1962 split, but extending this rejection to the split of 1967 as well, in the sense that groups like King Mob enable a re-conceptualization of the limits of the SI, which is why I have chosen the title of this thesis to be *Situationist Margins*. It is closer to the efforts of scholars such as Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobssen in their recovery of the works of the Scandinavian section of the SI as well as those of the SSI, thus growing the field of study of the SI to include groups conventionally thought of as almost unrelated, completely different projects. Additionally, comparative research into radical groups actually unrelated to the SI but belonging to the same timeframe such as S.NOB can reveal interesting parallel projects: in a way, what I have done by studying these 'margins' is to fundamentally question the idea that the SI is a monolith, and that its artistic bases have no political value after 1962.

The SI, of course, haunts this entire thesis, its techniques and avant-gardism recurrently appearing in key moments of the confrontation between the collectives and History. While the thesis the reader is currently holding is not intended as another history of the SI, it once was, and the objective was to keep drawing out the network that constituted *one* international revolutionary vanguard in the 1960s, and which was extremely conscious of its time and space. The shift resulted from the constant subdued whispers of other, equally powerful ghosts – Bataille, the Surrealists, the Futurists: the revelations that they made were concerned with multiplicity, with the impossibility of that initial unity I thought the SI developed and which they prodded me to open up to its own limits. Therefore, the *presence* of the SI became its opposite, hopefully not to its detriment but to its benefit as the possibilities of conceptualizing other Situationist practices follow its very own heretical approach to critical theory. In essence, the result follows what Frances Stacey denominated a Situationist archive, "where those commemorated were not reduced to a dead

correlate of the present, frozen in perpetuity, but salvaged in a more revitalized form, ideally as a constantly shifting, eruptive force in the present and for the future."[519] In other words, the spectres of those commemorated are past vitalities topologically in contact with the here and now; the absence of the SI represented an opportunity for the research to grow towards the unexpected. It presented an opportunity to dislocate assumptions and throw the SI into play as one more equal in the field of 1960s revolutionary vanguards, removing the authority that historiography has granted to it over the decades since, and which stems from the SI's rigor as an organization, as its self-disciplining as both an ideal and material construct.

One other important aspect of this overview is that the focus on organization as discursive nodal point allowed me to take some distance from individual narratives such as those that have formed around Guy Debord, who has come to dominate the scholarly landscape of knowledge about the SI. While not doing away with the individuals in these stories altogether, I tried to follow the avant-garde logic of a collectivity that rejects 'genius' and 'inspiration' altogether, and which stems from a core vanguardist question about the interaction between the one and the many, or the aesthetic and the political, to make a Jornian analogy. King Mob holds this question to heart, and it is foundational in its attempts to contaminate a million minds with insurrection, resolving it through a theory of revolutionary criminality that reconciles the unique and the common with an antagonism versus the pure uniqueness of the bourgeoisie and the pure commonness of the proletariat. To destroy capitalism and power meant, to them, destroying the compromised connection between those two grand narratives, to let the lumpenproletariat emerge from the dustbin of history and take its rightful place as the 'true inheritor of Dada'. King Mob's disappearance meant that the question of sociality implied in organization was very difficult to sustain as a dialectic, and it *spiralled* out of control.

Black Mask and its transformations attempted to keep control by understanding the question as a matter of mass psychology, and the mobilization to solve it as a clear-cut form of waging war. This enabled the articulation of an opposition grounded not only in the *superficial* differences between

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[519] Frances Stacey, *op cit*, p. 19.

popular organizations and the State, but also in its consequent constitutional incompatibilities; while the earlier was to be performed into an identity whose definition was expressionistic, personal, and creative, the latter *works* its elements into the minds and bodies of people. In other words, Black Mask, UAWMF and the IWWC kept identity at the centre of their revolt, a permanent critical stance that Romantically demanded honour, allegiance, love and trust in equal measure so as to form both a 'street gang' and 'a people'. King Mob was open about the physical violence to be enacted upon the existing order, which it politicized through the lens of the Gothic; nevertheless, out of all the groups, including the SI, the US collectives truly ventured into the development of a violent praxis based on the premises of class war *and* the wars waged by states, positing the idea of the world as a territory occupied by capitalism, against which only the violence of an inner revolution (the result of which is a critical identity) and an outer one (the result of which is a direct change in the environment, in other words a rebel form of urbanism) would be comparable in quality.

S.NOB viewed this occupation as an expression of the aesthetics of the nation state, coming to articulate a *revolting* discourse that undermined the nationalism of the Mexican Revolution and mocked it at every turn. Where the State offered closure and totality, S.NOB responded with fragmentation and aperture. In its transgressive positions, such as the development of the fraternité in the French Revolutionary formula within an exploration of relationships of incest as necessarily, *naturally* equal and free, S.NOB's aim to explode the Mexican Revolutionary state nevertheless has consequences for all states, since their very modernity determines the overarching attempts to wholly make sense, of themselves and of the world. The Mexican collective showed an alternative path to the SI's and its international networks, in terms of developing a radical artistic project that draws upon Surrealism and Dada without privileging them as its point of origin. Instead, S.NOB's work, as fully realized and political as that of the SI without relying on much more than other artistic and philosophical avant-gardes for its activity, points towards the ways in which these revolutionary processes emerged from an intellectual milieu perhaps particular to the 1960s vanguard itself.

The result is that all of these groups implicitly invite a fundamental questioning of what it means to be avant-garde, and they deploy concepts and principles related to more than just aesthetics and politics in a period not coincidentally dismissed by Peter Bürger shortly after as an imitation, as 'neo-avant-garde'. For example, S.NOB can be successfully identified as a vanguardist movement, but it needs to be placed within the context in which the Mexican Revolution had directed the post-WWI avant-garde as part of its own philosophy of history. Therefore, S.NOB's relationship to the concept is a subversive one, and it is significant that in comparison to the other three groups of this thesis, there is a striking similarity between them to the extent that only the SI turns out to explicitly dedicate efforts to define its position when it comes to the avant-garde. In this sense, the revisionism about the period (by Foster, Buchloh, and others) that led Bürger to reconsider and expand his terms is not as helpful as it may first seem, simply because it does not take into account these vanguards' consciousness of their historical development as such. I believe we can call these movements, including the SI, 'avant-garde' because they are constantly engaging with what that means exactly, and while they do share many aspects of Bürger's analysis when it comes to the social contract, their historicity opens other avenues of interpretation that do not rely entirely upon abstraction. This is the case of the ST's operations, for example, which do not fit entirely with the concept of the avant-garde, but which nonetheless are positioning themselves within its historical framework and are therefore changing it in subtle ways, becoming something very much like the avant-garde but ultimately different (a détournement), which is why I used the concept of the 'rearguard' to better define them.

Throughout the thesis I asserted that the productions by these collectives are aimed at a mass audience. In order to more formally delineate this claim, I need to clarify that the ST's publications never came in more than 2000 copies, with a similar situation for the rest of the groups, which did not *reach* a mass audience at all. The fact that they did not have a mass audience, as well as the fact that they did not have the means to very widely publish their magazines, does not invalidate an argument that parts from the aesthetics (and consequently the politics) of each and every one of them: the *form* they take is that of mass-produced publications of various kinds, and at various points (which were touched upon in each chapter) the artists either meant to make their productions

as widely accessible as possible through pricing or distribution, or they simply appropriated the formats of popular periodicals.

Another outcome of the work of this thesis is hopefully a possible re-vitalization of collectives that I believe are quite important for understanding the period's revolutionary vanguard activity better, if only because the historiography interested in the crossing of radical aesthetics and politics has focused much more on the SI than anything else. Of course, radical thought is not exclusive to these avant-gardes, and it is present in movements such as those of a few conceptual artists and early neo-dada/pop art. However, most never did articulate as revolutionary organizations, and focused much more on a critique of the art-world and its institutions. Fluxus could be included in this history of revolutionaries, although its political commitments varied heavily from community to community; still, the SI's aversion to everything Fluxus (whereas conceptual art and pop were not very worthy of commentary) reveals an opposition in which there is something at stake, a contested territory, for example, in happenings or John Cage's experiments with silence and ambience against unitary urbanism – in Situationist terms, a reductively artistic critique of capitalism versus an integrated, fully fleshed critique. Scope is one of the most important aspects of this confrontation, which is why I believe that both the ST and S.NOB, which are the most conventionally artistic out of the four groups analysed in this thesis, provide projects that are just as comprehensive and revolutionary as the SI's without relying on a composite of more conventional political theories and artistic ones. The same cannot be said for most of the Fluxus groups, which is why a comparison would be somewhat out of place, but that does not mean that it is not possible, or perhaps even necessary, in the future.

Following from this, many other small revolutionary avant-garde groups from the period remain to be studied. Scholarship is starting to develop around the German Gruppe SPUR by authors such as Diedrich Diederichsen, but most of its activities both before and after being expelled from the SI are yet to be the subject of wide analysis. Franklin and Penelope Rosemont's *Rebel Worker*, which later spawned Charles Radcliffe's *Heatwave*, has mostly been the subject of little study, mostly by the Rosemonts themselves or as part of works with more general subjects such as Joanna Pawlik's *Negotiating Surrealism: Post-war American avant-gardes after Breton* (2008), which

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means they are a little-explored valuable source of knowledge about internationalized radicals of the time in the spirit of Surrealism. Another group that has been overlooked by historiography is the American section of the SI, which produced a single journal in the style of the French one in 1969. The American and Scandinavian sections were the only ones that produced magazines akin to those of the French, but whereas the Scandinavian *Situasionistisk Revolution* (directed by J.V. Martin) for the most part reproduced texts by Debord, Vaneigem, and the other French Situationists, the *Situationist International* (by Bruce Elwell, Robert Chasse, and Tony Verlaan) contained mostly original texts and images. I believe it would be important to do what Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen have done for the Scandinavian section, and recover the existence of the American section through thorough new research. From Mexico, magazines such as Alejandro Jodorowsky and René Rebetez's atypical science-fiction run of *Crononauta* (1964, two years after *S.NOB*) represents more research avenues that so far have been approached by few scholars and which possibly also represent the revolutionary scope of an avant-garde. Extending to Latin America, another useful comparison to be made with these movements would be with Colombian Nadaísmo, which, much like the SI, sprung forth from a particular mélange of existentialism and other philosophical currents like Nietzsche's vitalism. A hypothetical magazine was proposed alongside the manifesto in 1959, but their visual and textual works were scattered through various sources as the decade went by (including Mexican counter-cultural review *El Corno Emplumado*), coming together only in the production of *Nadaísmo 70* (1970-1971). Studies such as these can be framed under the logic of a 'global (art) history' or international (art) history, the practices of which have become fairly common to other historical disciplines but that are yet to be applied to art history.

In any case, I hope to have shown that comparative studies such as this reveal a richness that plays out from the limits of each component, and that the mixed methodology of discourse, artistic, and historical analysis provides a way to study these avant-garde groups that parallels their own philosophical and methodological concerns. Thus, my approach was thoroughly historicist, although allowing for certain flexibilities in terms of secondary sources that nevertheless I tried to adjust as well as I could to the requirements of contextual closeness.

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Situationist Times: Jacqueline de Jong, Asger Jorn, Nöel Arnaud, Max Bucaille, Dieter Kunzelmann, Helmut Sturm, Heimrad Prem, Hans-Peter Zimmer, Gordon Fazakerley, Peter Schat, Piero Simondo, George Hay, Pierre Alechinsky, Reinhoud D'Haese, Anton Ehrenzweig, Edward Mazman, Lech Tomaszewski, W. Lietzmann, HLC Jaffé, Aldo Van Eyck, Lars-Ivar Ringbom, HC Doets, Julius Scwabe, GR Hocke, Luc de Heusch, Virtus Schade, DG Emmerich, Pol Bury, Karl Pelgrom, Jim Ryan, René Bertholo, Guido Biasi, Samuel Buri, Lourdes Castro, Martin Engelman, José Gamarra, Klaus Geissler, Theo Gerber, Maurice Henry, Mariano Hernández, Peter Klasen, Ulf Trotzig, Wifredo Lam, Lea Lublin, Paul de Lussanet, Milvia Maglione, Alejandro Marcos, Cristina Martínez, Roberto Matta, Lucio del Pezzo, Hannes Postma, Antonio Saura, Antonio Segui, Arne H Sorensen, Yasse Tabuchi, Topor, Jack Vanarsky, Jan Voss.

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*These are mostly the members that are mentioned in the sources used in this thesis, but by no means is the list definitive. There were many people who participated in these endeavors that are evidently not mentioned and whose names are much more difficult to track down, particularly in groups as purposefully unconcerned with names as the US and UK collectives; a genealogical research of that kind would probably make for another thesis project altogether.

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[520] See David Wise, "A Critical Hidden History of King Mob", in http://revoltagainstplenty.com/index.php/archive-local/95-a-hidden-history-of-king-mob-conclusion.html; accessed January 12, 2017.