

*Bataillean Surrealism in Mexico:
S.NO B Magazine (1962)*

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In 1965, Mexican writer Salvador Elizondo (1932-2006) published his first novel, entitled *Farabeuf o la crónica de un instante* (Farabeuf or the Chronicle of an Instant).¹ The volume is a labyrinthic story of dissolving identities and limit-experiences of pain and love. The titular character subjects his object of affection to surgical tortures inspired by the author's contact with the so-called *Leng t'che* picture of torment, arguably pivotal to the 1961 book by Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, which depicts a man being tortured to death through repeated cutting (Fig. 1). Yet, even before *Farabeuf* and essays that explicitly deal with Bataille's ideas, such as "Georges Bataille and Inner Experience," Elizondo was contributor and director of a small avant-garde magazine called *S.NO B*, which was aggressively oriented against nationalist culture, and whose run lasted only five months in 1962.² At only seven issues, it was published bi-weekly for about three months with the last number taking two more, finalizing its short, ephemeral life. The magazine was also conceived as a commercial enterprise, but as such it was an utter failure, selling no more than forty numbers.³ Nonetheless, *S.NO B* represents an extreme version of the anti-nationalist sentiment common to young artists and writers of the time; in this particular case, the discourse the periodical mobilized against state-driven terms of cultural expression was founded upon Surrealist tropes filtered by Elizondo's reading of Bataille, eschewing idealism at large. The Surrealism wielded by Elizondo, as will be further explored below, was anchored to the Bataillean conception of it as the "most puerile" act of insubordination, viewed, in complete rejection of the trappings of style, as a "state of mind" that transcends the limits of chance and holds concepts such as that of the marvelous in contempt.⁴ This version of Surrealism sidesteps over the decades-long insistence by André Breton (1896-1966) upon automatism, the revelations of the unconscious, and the explicitly revolutionary intent of that

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Fig.1. Salvador Elizondo, photograph reproduced in *S.NOB* #7, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

iteration of the movement. Instead, through Bataille, *S.NOB*'s Surrealism focuses on its romance with violence, on the sexual underpinnings of psychoanalytic categories, and a rejection of idealist conceptions of revolution. *S.NOB* included outspoken surrealist artists, but it utilized a Bataillean aesthetics articulated as a materialistic outlook that led them through paths much more explicitly violent, Gothic, and ambiguous than those outlined by Breton. *S.NOB* thus distances itself from the centrality of, for example, psychoanalysis or the marvelous. Moreover, the magazine set itself apart from the surrealist views of Mexico since the "International Surrealist Exhibition," presented in Mexico City in 1940, as well as nationalistic historiographical accounts that insisted that Surrealism had failed to develop in the country.⁵ This difference has three main dimensions. First, *S.NOB*'s Bataillean, anti-nationalist, anti-Revolutionary aesthetics openly contradict Breton's interpretation of Mexico's place in the surrealist imaginary; second, it equally

avoids the ethnographic approach developed by surrealist exiles such as Wolfgang Paalen and his *Dyn* magazine circle, who made Mexico City their home; third, and lastly, *S.NOB* also presents a case in which Elizondo and his collaborators forged a different incarnation of Surrealism within the heart of the rebellious wave of new, young artists that attacked the cultural nationalist paradigm in the 1960s.

Through a diverse array of collaborators, including surrealist artists such as Leonora Carrington and Kati Horna, *S.NOB* set out to oppose the closed-off nature of so-called Mexican official culture, which at the time was dominated by a cultural nationalism instrumentalized by the state apparatus since the 1920s. In visual terms, the project is best represented by the muralist avant-garde that emerged from the 1910-1920 Revolution, which based its claims of a new humanism upon the evolution of the Mexican identity essentialized in the concept of the “cosmic race” advanced by Revolutionary intellectual José Vasconcelos.⁶ The project entailed a historical evaluation of Mexico’s place in the modern world, and the knowledge produced by the muralists (in terms of the aesthetics of identity and its relation to modernity) was eventually wielded by the institutionalized Revolution as a tool of cultural unification through the representative means, the portrayal of the people.⁷ Against the grave, unified themes of nationalist productions and the limited networks of collaborators they represented, *S.NOB*’s diversity of international collaborators reflects an openness instituted from the outset, with an editorial line that rejected contemporary publication standards regarding quality, seriousness, or ideological position.⁸ The magazine was part of a wider crisis of the Mexican identity detonated in the late 1950s by challenges best represented by works such as visual artist Jose Luis Cuevas’ (1934-2017) essay “La cortina de nopal” (“The Cactus Curtain,” 1956).⁹ It also coincided with the period in which Mexico started to receive youth and mass popular culture from the U.S., in which young people across the country found weapons of identity-based revolt, whether in foreign cinema, music, or other culture industries. Such a crisis was a signal of the post-revolutionary state’s failure to provide a democratic heterogeneity of political positions, but also of its replacement, by and large, of political alternatives with an overarching image of national culture, monopolizing any and all expression under its guise.

The hegemony of Mexican revolutionary cultural discourse, concretized by the 1930s, meant that this crisis of identity was handled by regimes with a certain confidence in the stability of the referents of Mexican culture, established by the Revolutionary avant-garde and standardized by nationalist intellectuals and institutions. The resistance faced by the new wave of artists like Cuevas, later known as the “Rupture Generation,” was seemingly based on the assumption that hegemony would continue.¹⁰ It is necessary here to point out that throughout the essay, the capitalization of the word “Revolution” indicates not only a specific historical event but the workings of historiography, in which the institutionalization of the historical process into a state becomes inseparable from the process itself.

S.NOB was created in this context, whose cultural panorama in terms of art/literary periodicals was configured by subsidies from the state, whether through government institutions or university programs, all of which subjected texts to academic criteria of gravity, clarity and objectivity.¹¹ Elizondo's periodical was one of the few publications of the time that offered a space that was not supported by the state, attracting, as literary scholar Claudia Albarrán has detailed, "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."¹² Popular culture unmarked by the themes of Revolutionary discourse was a tool for the *S.NOB* writers and artists. Grounded in a *young* avant-garde knowledge of society, such as Hollywood films and jazz music, they enacted a Bataillean-surrealist opposition to Mexican culture, reversing the Revolutionary understanding of art as material *and* essential expression of the betterment of the nation. *S.NOB* took the apparently apolitical principle of the rupture to an extreme in which, by only discussing conventional politics in passing (rather than addressing it constantly, as was the tradition of nationalism), articulated a subversive position.¹³ 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* (The Plumed Horn, 1962-1969), but a materialism that is in many ways comparable to the initial Bataillean act of pulling the Surrealism of Breton et al. through the mud. This act promotes conflict with Idealism's own distancing from base matter, emphasizing, as the antidote to pure ideals, the materiality tied directly to disgust, horror, and other extreme affects. By directly dealing with murder, sacrifice, incest, and other topics deemed unsuitable for so-called good-quality publications as well as the values of the nation, *S.NOB* was promoting an inherently politicized style, beyond the conventional understanding of politics as well-defined ideological positions. Its Bataillean puerility is therefore heightened by the "sort of infantile lucidness, that clarity and capacity of protest possessed by those who seem to worry about nothing," as observed by literary scholar Anuar Jalife.¹⁴ In this sense, other relatively independent publications, such as *El rebilete* (Pinwheel, 1961-1971), *Diálogos* (Dialogues, 1964-1967), *Mester* (Trade, 1964-1967), or *Pájaro cascabel* (Rattlesnake bird, 1962-1967), provided a context in which, according to critic José María Espinasa, "*S.NOB* stood out for its distinct and somewhat extreme attitude regarding rejection of solemnity (more than seriousness)" as well as its "way of presenting itself to the public, with a provoking self-confidence and an extreme literary proposal."¹⁵

As will be detailed below, the surrealist elements of the magazine grant it a particular force that is aimed not only against Mexican culture but wider conceptions of it, as systems of symbols, in the anthropological tradition of Clifford Geertz; *S.NOB* will never touch upon the concept of a total revolution or anything like it, as was the case with many other counter-cultural and avant-garde movements of

the time. This state of affairs is owed to the fact that in the context of early 1960s Mexico, revolt was intimately associated to Revolution, to conventional politics, programs and plans. A lack of these is perhaps key in the discourse of a magazine that wants to endeavor to create an 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.”¹⁶ 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* humorously attempts to transgress taboos and reject them completely through symbolic ambiguity. It thus drives a Bataillean stake through the heart of nationalism; as Albarrán puts it:

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 humor, 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]¹⁷

All these topics were typical of surrealist strains of thought, and the periodical gave older, well-established surrealist figures like Leonora Carrington a vehicle to explore more extreme versions of, in her particular case, sacrality, Mexican history, and the threatening violence of traditional children’s stories. The treatment of all these topics is also well within the domain of Surrealism, yet it veers into Bataillean territory where the shock of the new leads not towards the marvelous or the surreal, but to the limits of discourse and an eroticism deeply integrated with death.

The remainder of this essay will be divided into two parts. The first will overview the theoretical aspect of *S.NOB*’s revolt, based on the connection between Elizondo and Bataille as well as the elements that can be traced back to Surrealism. Elizondo’s approach to the magazine can be described as revolutionary, in the sense that its engagement with culture—and therefore society—is an avant-garde onslaught not only against the tradition of Mexican art but on tradition in general, western terms. It is not, however, revolutionary in a *strong* sense, with a program, a critical theory, and a radical-left sensibility for struggle; in Mexico these comprise a Revolution that in its mythology unifies and heals the social fabric, orienting it towards a bright future of progress and justice. Thanks to the 1910 Revolution, the Mexican context offers a relatively recent, aesthetically totalizing change that 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*, and it is reflected in the stark refusal of the left-right political divide in favor of something that could now be conceived as a surrealist strain of anarchism. The anti-utopian struggle of the group was defined in opposition to the nationalist view of history in which the self-realization of the nation would eventually lead to a better world. Thus, *S.NOB* is a work of anti-totalitarianism as much 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. It is important to note that by totality I mean the conception that the Surrealists derived from Hegelian thought and which refers to the ultimate realization of all interconnections of human life into a synthetic whole.¹⁸

The second part of the essay will show that this fragmentary conception arguably grows from Elizondo's own perspective on Bataille. The texts and images that compose *S.NOB* articulate a discourse that, while immersed in certain Surrealist topics such as terror, violence, and crime, do not tend towards a unified integration of an emancipatory project. On the contrary, the magazine dwells upon irresolvable contradictions, uncertainty and incompleteness in a way that, like the characters in *Farabeuf*, all of its elements persist at the edge of their own existence, "about to stop being what they are being."¹⁹ This is why the Bataille concepts of "the impossible" and "eroticism" will be helpful to approach the relationships between *S.NOB*'s elements.²⁰ Through the analysis of the first part of Kati Horna's photographic essay "Fetich de S.NOB," I hope to show how these two concepts were integrated into an aesthetic meant to disarticulate the idealism and ethical authority of nationalism. The aforesaid aesthetic culminates with Tomás Segovia's text on the true community of incest, developed as a counterpoint to social formations of a classical nature. By implicitly highlighting the "fraternity" component of the "freedom, equality, fraternity" formula of the French Revolution and key to notions of democracy in Latin America since the nineteenth century, Segovia affirms its erotic qualities, suggesting that it is perhaps only in incest where its promise is fully realized. Other elements of Bataille's oeuvre will be utilized to a lesser extent, in order to clarify aspects of the aforementioned relationships.

Elizondo as Director of S.NOB

Elizondo was not a beginner in the publishing world when at the age of 30 he took on the direction of *S.NOB*. He had previously worked along with artistic director Juan García Ponce (1932-2003) and subdirector Emilio García Riera (1931-2002) in the group gathered around the film review *Nuevo Cine* (New Cinema, 1961-1962). It is thanks to this connection that the project came to be financed by cinema producer Gustavo Alatryste (1922-2006), who had worked on *Viridiana*

(1961) and *El ángel exterminador* (The Exterminating Angel, 1962) by surrealist filmmaker Luis Buñuel.²¹ Elizondo and García came up with the magazine proposal that aimed to develop “a fun magazine” with “the intention to educate and use culture to scandalize as well,” especially with the aid of its tone, which “should honor the name [of the magazine].”²² The name *S.NOB* itself contains a double meaning: 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—which no longer existed in the country. That aspiration is built on two conflicting, fundamental lacks: economically determined recognition and the freedom from materiality that supposedly allows true understanding of art. 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 or her as one of their own, whether as a positive or negative image—an ambivalent one. This figure is deceiving by nature, and its type aims to reconcile its two opposing lacks by achieving false consciousness, in other words, by turning them into sources of fulfillment that remain hollow, that never truly fulfill. In *S.NOB*, this figure rejects the happiness of nationalist artistic values, craving for the base pleasures of tacitly forbidden thought.²³ This leads us to the other semantic face of the term: *sine nobilitate*, Latin for “without nobility.” Although the etymology of the term “snob” is in dispute, the division within the title of the magazine, marked by a period, seems to reference 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,” per the *Oxford Dictionary of Etymology*.²⁴

As receptor of a double meaning, the figure of the snob hovers *above* class and *seems* to have “good taste.” He or she simultaneously *belongs* to the lower class and lacks whatever “good taste” the person pretends to have; as an aesthetic category it serves the purpose of naming the game that *S.NOB* plays. This game amounts to the subversion of 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 and confusion to the point of disappearance.²⁵ In a context where artistic production was posited by the State as direct access to the totality, found in the nation, a fragmentary magazine like *S.NOB* aimed at a cut-up of the Freudian reality principle, an illusion made of pleasures that is *also* the truth—not opposed to it—and therefore capable of great violence towards falsehood. This view of the fragment and fragmentation could be related to the Romantic understanding of the impossibility of a “systematic horizon of knowledge,” as philosopher Stella Sandford put it.²⁶ However, against the Romantic conception in which the fragment is the potential site of experiencing the whole, which arguably informs André Breton's call for the creation of a new myth, in *S.NOB*, fragmentation rather serves the Bataillean purpose of affirming all myth's absence.²⁷ Thus the truthful experience of the absence of this myth is potentially conveyed by the gathering of fragments in collectivities that are *not* wholes, or that

function at a constant loss of meaning, best articulated by the artistic technique of collage.

Truth, in this instance, becomes a base joke that reveals the inadequacy of a totality. Appropriation as a tool to make truth emerge drives the magazine; in the first number, it takes the shape of an erotic communication centered on its negation of the *decency* of 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, associations of death and love that work in ways that seem trivial at first.²⁸ As Cervantez González explains,

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 Alatríste 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.’²⁹

While this quote ignores photographer Kati Horla’s 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 purposeful “mostly shadows” of a desire impossible to fulfill.³⁰ The illusion of naked women collapses into a provocation, into a second set of allures that reproduce themselves as interconnected challenges that lead to an endlessly unfulfilled desire. In other 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. 2).

The cover is printed in red and black, the title appearing in large serif font against a red field occupying a bit less than the top third of the layout; the bottom two-thirds bears a photograph of a woman in black and white. 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. Read through a Batailleian lens this bodily movement hides any features that would render 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

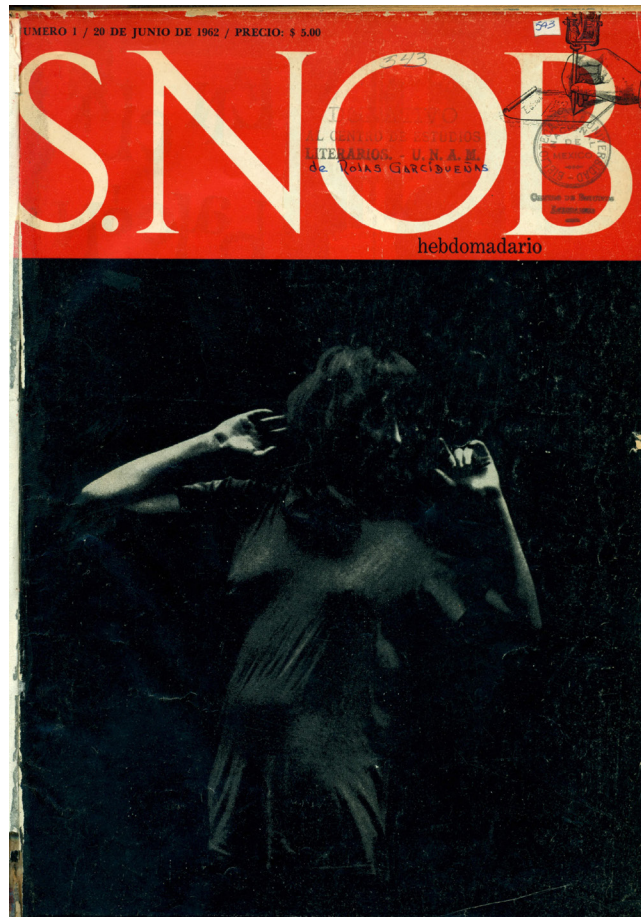


Fig.2. Kati Horna, *S.NOB* #1 cover, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

Les larmes d'eros (The Tears of Eros). What is intended, perhaps, as straightforward objectification, turns into its extreme other—as a sort of *universal* subjectification—through perceptual tensions that cannot find resolution. 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 image's eroticism, in this sense, departs from the Bretonian idea of a convulsive beauty and its romantically transgressive, even revolutionary, potential. Instead, through Horla's ambiguous lens, it prevents the build-up of passion; its tone quiet, somber, and meditative, deviating attention from an object of desire towards the nature of desire itself. This desire, instead of holding a seed of drastic change in human relations, functions more like an abyssal mirror from which to peer into the self-erasure implied in wanting to be indistinct from the world. Thus, the surrealist drive towards love and passion elicited by the wild

objectification of women becomes, here, neutralized by the interaction between image and spectator, exploiting the Bataillean interweaving of death at the heart of eroticism. Breton's conception of eroticism as a "privileged place, a theater of provocations and prohibitions in which life's most profound urges confront one another," a counterpart to the death drive, is turned on its head.³¹ For Bataille, the death drive and eroticism are interwoven, a relationship in which the former is subsumed into the latter. Instead of a theater where the life of desire takes place, Horla's erotic photograph points towards a theater where all those profound urges share a common origin, as well as a common destiny, in death. Eroticism is, then, not the aesthetic site of struggle between reason and desire, the dialectic suggested by Breton in the above quote, but the aesthetic site where these concepts cross-contaminate each other and lose their respective boundaries.

Another important element regarding eroticism in *S.NOB* is Elizondo's particular relations with cinema and literature. Art historian 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* No. 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*, 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."³² By integrating texts, photographs (such as that of Leng t'che, the Chinese form of torture also known as death by a thousand cuts, taken from Bataille's *The Tears of Eros*, Fig. 1), and Chinese ideograms, Elizondo attempts to forge a fragmentary *whole*. While the text of "Morpheus or the decadence of sleep" in *S.NOB* 7 seems to be, on an initial reading, an explanation of what drugs and "artificial paradises" mean in a philosophical and widely historical view, it is in the perspective of the whole that the text seems to try and question the limits of mind and body.³³ The Chinese characters for "opium" and "not being" that accompany the text, each enlarged to fill a half column (the latter character forming the root of the former), 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 of an explanation that ends up articulating metaphors. The collage drives 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. This presents readers with a distinct opposition to the idealist concept of organicism that emerged from Romantic thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, the total projection of Revolutionary nationalism. This was best exemplified in Mexican politics by the works of founding intellectuals like José Vasconcelos, Alfonso Caso, or Leopoldo Zea, who saw in the Hegelian self-realization of the nation a fulfillment of the

philosophy and history of freedom, particularly from colonial oppression.³⁴ Against the truth claims of a unified social body with a utopian, permanent singular aesthetic and political direction, *S.NOB* offers collage and montage as a reminder of the *dismemberment* that erodes what Bataille called, in “Hegel, Death and Sacrifice,” the “pure beauty of the dream” of any such singularity.³⁵ What *S.NOB* suggests is that if truth has a meaning, it can only have it beyond any claims of totality and purity. The attempt of cultural nationalism to preserve a practically unchanging total image, sourced in the myth of the Revolution, prevents what the French author refers to as the action of negativity, the understanding and reflection upon the imprint of death.³⁶ In a way, the Revolutionary myth is already a form of death, marked by continuity, except it is blissfully unaware of its own state, thus presenting itself as life.³⁷ Revolutionary nationalism fills the actual absence of myth with representations of historical fulfillment: as long as the nation exists, its members will never truly die. This is why *S.NOB*’s aesthetic and political task adopts the surrealist key of the Bataillean erotic, in the sense that it must not only reveal the truth behind the revolutionary myth—that there is none—it must also revel in that truth, finding “approval of life even in death,” suggesting that as long as the nation exists, its members will never truly live.³⁸

Elizondo had probably seen a use of fragmentation and collage already in this register among the works of the English-language literary avant-garde, albeit in different form. While, as Esteban King notes, 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,” there is another possible path to this profoundly sensual anti-totalizing approach in the work of James Joyce.³⁹ Literary scholar 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 [...] which the author ties to Elizondo’s readings of Joyce and Ezra Pound.⁴⁰ 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* no. 1; the notes through which Elizondo explains every name and every linguistic difficulty end up being longer than that first page of the book itself, which can be connected to collage in two consecutive ways. The first connection relies on the radical conflation of reasoning 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. The second connection develops the activity of veiling 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 as with “Morpheus,” it does prevent the successful application of any kind of rationality to unify its multiplicity. 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. As literary scholar Jonathan Eburne argues, Elizondo’s translation of Joyce “stresses the immanence of the universal to the particular” (the romantic fragment), but, as one more part of the magazine as such, it further destabilizes any notion of the universal. Eburne suggests that Elizondo’s version of Joyce articulates a distrust for the scope of “grand metaphysical schemes.”⁴¹ In the context of *S.NOB*’s emergence it is not difficult to link such a stance to the opposition against Revolutionary nationalist history-making.

For instance, in a 1966 interview with Elena Poniatowska, the young Salvador Elizondo represents himself as a Dada—and perhaps proto-punk—provocative figure:

EP: And are you, Salvador, interested in none of the country’s problems?

SE: 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.⁴²

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 and give enormous importance to something that is conventionally understood as utterly meaningless, e.g., “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. Thus, his use of techniques like literary collage and montage become first and foremost an avenue to irritate the revolutionary avant-garde and its project, and more profoundly to reveal its totalization into the image of the nation. Adding to Price’s argument, the “purity” of Elizondo’s concept of art is born from the contamination already implied in the rejection of all things Revolutionary: for the Revolution, oppositions are clean, well-defined as such. Elizondo’s art, created in the service of no one, holds, instead, the

anarchic task of revealing just how impossible that cleanliness is, how ridiculous it becomes in the face of the erotic.⁴³

One of the consequences of this view is that the practice of collage suffers a small but significant alteration between the pages of Elizondo's periodical. While surrealist collage attempts to point towards a superior construction of reality, in which, as art historian Elza Adamowicz suggests, "the surreal is located at the point where the fragments of the real are reshuffled to produce new configurations out of the debris of the old," in *S.NOB* the collage holds a slightly different intent.⁴⁴ It retains the effect of producing new juxtapositions, but instead of finding the surreal, tied to the concepts of the marvelous and the unconscious, the Bataillean edge of *S.NOB*'s collage attempts is to prod the very limits of the real, inasmuch as the real comes to be configured by discourse—which is where the concept of the impossible, as will be seen below, is of great relevance. Collage's erotic qualities emerge from the act of violence committed upon reality as it is dissected and put together again, the discontinuity of its individual elements violated: as Bataille stated with regards to the erotic, "only violence can put everything at risk."⁴⁵ *S.NOB*'s collages are not meant to explore higher realities, but to threaten, like a raised knife, the constitution of a reality colonized by the nationalist imaginary.

In "Georges Bataille y la experiencia interior" ("Georges Bataille and Inner Experience") Elizondo interprets the French author's writings as portraying a reduction of all "transcendental activity" to eroticism. *S.NOB*'s editor expounds,

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.⁴⁶

By reading eroticism in this way, as an "internal discipline," he can deploy it as a connective element in consciousness, one that merges mind and body into a monstrous mass. When thinking of *S.NOB* as a magazine and as a collective, this reading becomes important for interpretations of its relations 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 and the totalization of its aesthetics and politics into a state constantly negates the possibility of conforming an "outside." Thus, suddenly surmising the true totality implies traversing the material ideological formation *from* which the group comes, as in the example of the Revolutionary murals. One of the strategies *S.NOB* develops to destroy the totalizing community is

appropriation, portraying yet another instance of low pop cultural products. *S.NOB* becomes an impostor which seeks to corrupt through seduction, an awakening of the aforementioned internal discipline in the allure of sex and death. By emphasizing eroticism, *S.NOB* 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!*, imitating its format in having somewhat regular sections on astrology, film reviews, and society that parody their pop origins by being highly intellectualized and self-mocking. The magazine's internal discipline, its humorous consciousness of the erotic, offers a twisted form of something highly familiar, an unreasonable culture that does not reconcile the low in society with the high as adulation, in the form of attention to celebrity facts, fashions, etcetera. Instead, *S.NOB* erases those definitions to offer a juxtaposition of base materialism and idealism at once. Therefore, while *S.NOB*'s appropriation is of art-historical significance in the Mexican context, as literary scholar Begoña Alberdi Soto has argued, it is not limited to it, and it is important to note this appropriation's wider, perhaps even more significant, political implications.⁴⁷

However *S.NOB*'s opposition to the nation and nationalism at large differs from Bretonian Surrealism in at least one major element: internationalism does not follow from it. While Surrealism under Breton was eminently an international movement, preoccupied with the freedom of the world, *S.NOB*'s Bataillean version provides little in the form of a comparable internationalist discourse. Nevertheless, it is significant that practically half of the magazine's contributors were exiles, living in Mexico City; while internationalism is of little interest to the aesthetics of *S.NOB*, there is a definite collective configuration that rejects the closed nature of nationalist collaborations. In a sense, it is one more rejection of the idealism of progressive internationalism, tending to configure totalities as well.

The Impossible and Eroticism

At this point I wish to further develop the Bataillean concepts of "the impossible" and of eroticism. It is worth quoting the preface of *L'Impossible* (The Impossible) fully in order to make sense of how the term is being used in the present essay:

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 to which we accede only in forgetting the truth of all these things, only by accepting disappearance.⁴⁸

The impossible is the opposite of the real, perhaps understood as the reality principle, and something that 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 singular act of experiencing God—a never-ending brilliance so absorbing it becomes a void. This impossible act of pushing the self to the limit erases both God and the mystic by virtue of melting the absolute earthliness of the body with its heavenly counterpart in the mind, transpiring neither in one camp nor the other, but at the very limit; situated at the point where one pole opens to the other, the activity violates them both. The acceptance of disappearance is linked to the “headlessness” which Benjamin Noys has identified as being at the epicenter of Bataille’s secret society *Acéphale*: the lack of a head symbolizing loss.⁴⁹ This acceptance is a constant that marks as immediate failures any and all attempts at securing unity. For all limits, all borders are essentially porous.

The opening article of *S.NOB* No. 2, “Cuentos de Arrabal: En contrapunto a la obra pictórica de [Alberto] Gironella” (“Stories of Arrabal: In Counterpoint to the Visual Works of [Alberto] Gironella”), displays two visually austere images to accompany the excessiveness of the surrealistic text, full of dismemberments, madmen, and ugly beasts that provoke strange transformations. The text was written by Fernando Arrabal (1932-1958), whose surname presents readers with a humorous play on words, since the word “*arrabal*” in Spanish refers to an unorganized growth of houses and stores at the edge of cities and urban geography normally associated with lower classes.

The black and white reproductions of two works by Alberto Gironella (1929-1999) augment the inherent baseness of the story in various ways. The first image (Fig. 3), which occupies the whole of the page opposite the first page of text, seems to plunge the spectator into violence. Its concrete-like irregular background texture is peppered with pieces of cloth that not only appear 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 primary form of cruelty, a passionate—yet disciplined—praxis of uselessness, of needless disproportion. Still, the lower-right corner almost breaks through this solid mass and reveals a part of a hand, initially as contrast, an assurance that there is something human to this point of view. As the text builds up it becomes evident that this warmth, this humanity, is exactly the source of such horror. This leads us to another work, which appears after article’s text (Fig. 4). It mixes the same techniques but instead covers most of the space with paint, which, due to the nature of black and



Fig. 3. Alberto Gironella, work reproduced in *S.NOB* #2, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

white printing, seems violently opaque. The painting features a mask-like human head at the bottom and a rope-like plaque looming behind it which are slowly overcome by darkness, similar in format to Francisco de Goya's last black paintings.

Along with the text, these images present a disintegration of the mind, the body, the *head*. That function does not allow the works' dreamlike surrealistic construction to veer off into the fantastic, staining any strand of Ideal realization with the crudeness of what Arrabal pictures as a "great yellow toad," of a city whose patchwork seems to reek of death and dirt.⁵⁰ Everything in both paintings and the text is on the verge of disappearance, and it is this limit 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. The truths they claim are then resisted, and *S.NOB's* own position in the Mexican cultural horizon would seem to be a rejection that overflows with disparate elements, from Elizondo's excessive anti-Revolutionary stance, e.g., "I believe in aristocracy and those things," to the magazine's black humor. In pretending to be

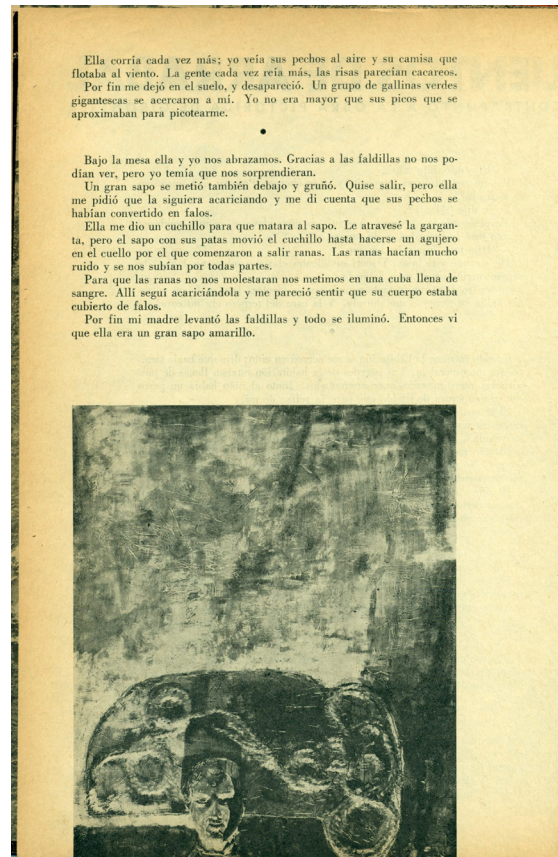


Fig. 4. Alberto Gironella, work reproduced in *S.NO B #2*, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

something else the magazine develops an ambiguous relationship to culture, and its content is so heterogeneous that it is impractical to attempt to fully articulate it as a whole entity, resonating with Bataille's *Impossible*.⁵¹ "Associated terms oppose or resemble each other," in Bataille's volume, according to literary scholar Marie-Christine Lala, "but their combined confrontation authorizes reversals and inversions into their contraries."⁵² In the experience of the limit, objects and subjects dissolve into each other.

If eroticism is a kind of *game* in which taboo and transgression spiral in and out of each other as underpinned by sexuality, then the effect sought by *S.NO B* is an impossible game in which purity gives way to contamination and back to purity again.⁵³ In *Eroticism* as well as in *The Tears of Eros* Bataille bases eroticism on the consciousness of finality, making the relationship between opposites inherently dirty, unclean, mixed and complex in ways that often cannot be rationalized. Opposites become identical, traversing "from the most unspeakable to the most elevated"—the latter being also unspeakable.⁵⁴ After all, eroticism tends towards the

confusion of distinct objects, and in this continuity or non-distinction is to be found the experience of death; the appropriations made by *S.NOB* through collage and impersonation are erotic inasmuch as they fix upon the paradox of an individuality assimilated to the whole.⁵⁵

S.NOB's initial approach to images of women was challenged by Kati Horna, whose photographs, purposefully or not, were quite dark in print, meaning that their eroticism was far more Batailleian than conventional. In the section "Fetichisme de S.NOB" ("S.NOB Fetish"), which appears four times throughout the entire run (Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 7), Horna and Berna Lucero (who is credited as the photographer in *S.NOB* No. 6) crafted photo-essays based primarily on the female body. As the name suggests, it posits the objectification of a subject, but by traversing Surrealism into the Batailleian 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 puts *everything* at risk. Because of this, the eroticism of the fetish neither attempts a critical distancing nor leads to a simple collapse of object into subject as part of a rationalizing or de-rationalizing process. As Denis Hollier suggests, instead of signaling 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.'⁵⁶

By de-naturalizing the Freudian concept of the fetish, in which the object of desire is rooted in aware self-alienation, Bataille radicalizes it back to its religious connotations. He had laid down these terms already in "La conjuration sacrée" ("The Sacred Conjunction") in *Acéphale* magazine (Headless, 1936-1939), which worked as the organ of the secret society, developing its theoretical and aesthetic side. In that article, the society stated: "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."⁵⁷ In other words, it is a religiosity that, having cut its head off, does the same to the objects it binds. This conception of the fetish perhaps does not tread the path of the surrealist object nor its previous step in the process of commodification, or at the very least is not limited by them.⁵⁸ Under this interpretation, "S.NOB Fetish" and the women who produced it postpone the particular promise of a fulfillment of these two modes of the concept of the fetish, by dissolving its straightforward sexualization into an erotic set of relations that constantly references the headless religiosity that drives them.⁵⁹

With this in consideration, I will offer an interpretation of the first edition of “S.NOB Fetish” relative to Elizondo’s reading of Bataille and his directives for the magazine. The first “Fetish,” entitled *Oda a la Necrofilia* (“Ode to Necrophilia”), is composed of a series of images in which a funerary room seemingly transitions from dawn to dusk, presenting a woman’s body from complete cover to near-nudity.

As fetishes these photo-essays concentrate on the simultaneous, ghostly presence and absence of women, suggesting that their bodies hold divine or transcendental qualities manifested, or rather objectified, through eroticism. As Freud stated in *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality), the fetish can be characterized by the religious-like fervor that it evokes in those for whom it is an object of desire.⁶⁰ Here, the fetish is represented in surrealist terms that purposefully confuse subject and object in a site where their limits are already, culturally and patriarchally speaking, confused: women’s bodies. Whereas, as asserted previously, Elizondo and other men in the planning phase of the magazine referred to *Playboy* as a model for its style and format, Kati Horla’s photography carefully highlights the transitional element of the surrealistic play of subject and object—the fetish is not solely an objectification. Her lens exploits the Freudian suggestion that the fetish is a psychological substitute that compensates for the realization of the lack of a female phallus, in the sense that the repression involved is invariably entangled with a contradiction.⁶¹ As Henry Krips offers by way of example, “we know that fur is not pubic hair, *but even so*, in a way that is never clearly specified, we know that it is.”⁶² The themes that guide Horla’s series metaphorically assimilate the opposition of death and life into the opposition of subject and object, carving a Bataillean path that centers such relationship as an erotic one.

In this sense the series is characterized by oppositions, the first of which is the black clothing as a void that indicates a presence (Fig. 5). This is set against the white covers of the funeral arrangement topped off by an anthropomorphic mask, indicating absence (Fig. 6). Yet, the dead body played by a living model 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 darker, but unravels instead, revealing the woman’s body and making the ghostly presence of the white sheets/mask combination more apparent (Fig. 7). The third one is in the name of the piece, “Ode to Necrophilia,” in the sense that all its sexual innuendo, visible in Fig. 7, as a woman’s brassiere 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 (Fig. 8): in the love of death desire comes to be granted. During this transition, the photographs establish a dynamic in which the fetish relationship is two-fold:

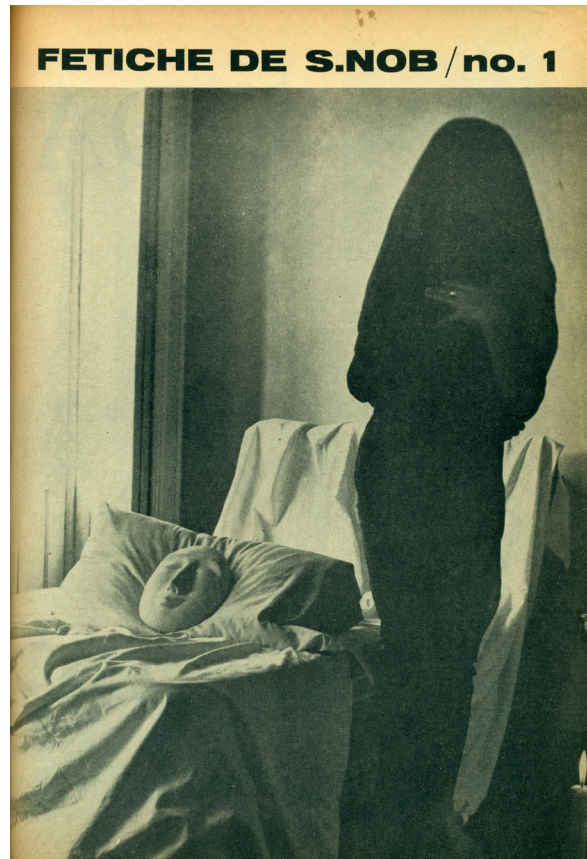


Fig. 5. Kati Horna, part of “Fetich de S.NOB #1,” in *S.NOB* #2, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

inasmuch as 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 already uncertain. 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 interpretation suggests an existence beyond discourse but never really reaches it, because it is constrained by its secondary function as an artwork. Therefore this fetish is sensual, but not in a way that leads us back to nature or into inexplicable 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 a reconciliation thereof.

A last point remains to be made here about eroticism and Elizondo’s magazine. Unlike most other fragments that appear in *S.NOB*, an essay by Tomás Segovia (1927-2011) entitled “Defensa e ilustración del incesto” (“Defense and

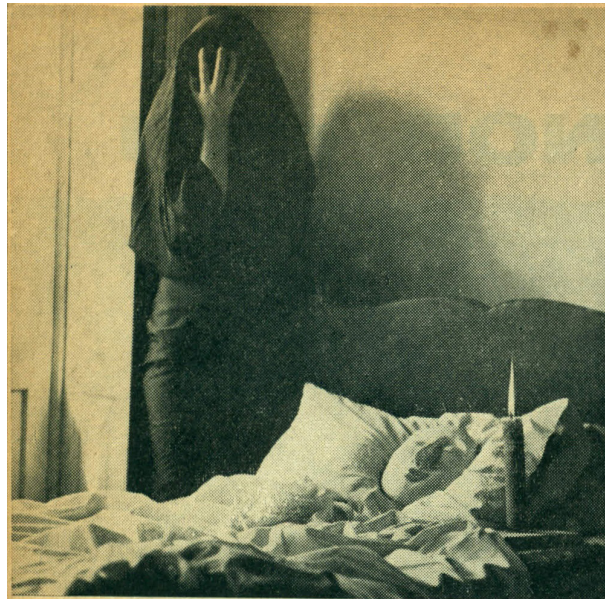


Fig. 6. Kati Horna, part of “Fetich de S.NOB #1,” in *S.NOB #2*, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

illustration of incest”) comes very close to “pure” theory. Segovia’s essay appeared in three parts, published in *S.NOB* Nos. 4-6. It is a theory of love that is framed erotically, and while it is close to Surrealist texts, it perilously walks a Bataille line by appropriating Marxist language as the material, indecent base upon which to build a radical vision of love.⁶³ The essay perverts the meaning of aristocracy as a modern social category, twisting its anti-modern character into serving libertarian purposes that are even from the beginning of the text erotically charged with impossibility. Consider for instance Segovia’s assertion: “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.”⁶⁴ *S.NOB* habitually entangles its reader in a deceitful ambiguity, and this essay is no exception.

Segovia cleverly leaps back to early Romantic political philosophy when he reverses Jean Jacques Rousseau by saying that revolutions constitute a quest for “natural hierarchy,”⁶⁵ under the ideal limit of which

the complete disappearance of social injustice 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 ‘essence,’ or their existential choice, or whatever, and their inequality with respect to others would be measured only by that development.⁶⁶



Fig. 7. Kati Horna, part of “Fetich de S.NOB #1,” in S.NOB #2, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

For Rousseau, political, scientific, and social revolutions have established a “progress of inequality,” driving humanity ever farther from the natural state, where “inequality is practically non-existent.”⁶⁷ For Segovia, who uses almost the same terms as the Swiss philosopher, those same revolutions represent missed opportunities to establish a “natural hierarchy” that would definitively end social stratification. In this regard, Segovia’s predilection for nature and a sense of just natural laws follows from his understanding of Romanticism as the radicalization of Enlightenment philosophy; as literary historian Juan Pascal Gay notes, Segovia understood this as the “decisive moment of contemporary humanity.”⁶⁸ For Segovia, the positions of the artist and writer defend and promote freedom, thus mixing a variety of Romantic approaches that nonetheless part from the Rousseauvian conception of a natural inequality and the free state of nature.

The next step in the process of ending of alienation, Segovia maintains, is *self-appropriation*, the consequence of which would be a detachment from use-value.⁶⁹ This would enable the self to move into a final realization of true social value, its



Fig. 8. Kati Horna, part of “Fetich de S.NOB #1,” in *S.NOB #2*, 1962, ink on paper. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Mexico City, Mexico

suggestion of absolute self-determination a radically democratic transition. He proceeds to discard socialism because of its emphasis on production, and he 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. 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 stateless 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. As Segovia states, “[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].”⁷⁰ For him, poetry is the only way to experience what is yet to come into existence, or, in other words, to approximate impossibility. This poetics is born of the symbolism of what Segovia says is the

“fraternal couple,” the natural anti-natural movement of which makes both love and poetry “antisocial and revolutionary.”⁷¹

Segovia ends the second installment of the essay by stating that fraternal love is a sincere communication among equals, which, by having its basis on a radical inequality, comes to border on the truly unique, insofar as every couple develops a language of their own.⁷² 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 incomplete, leaving, rather, an interplay of opposites that continuously penetrate one another. An equality based on inequality would not stand critical scrutiny. Nevertheless, what is interesting here is not so much the theory itself but how it is built in collage-like flow from one contradiction to another, contradictions which, while they remain unresolved, *make sense* of love as prelude to revolution. The third and last installment of the essay includes the titular “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.’”⁷³ It is an erotic tension that quickly overrules any thought of love as social contract, in a way, conventionally fetishized.⁷⁴ The essay’s conclusion confirms Segovia’s traversal of what are in principle reactionary views and values. By doing so, he enacts the same kind of *stripping* and cutting of the head that *Acéphale* took upon as its most fundamental task. The passage is worth citing in full:

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, 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.⁷⁵

While the objective is, in the end, entirely against fragmentation, since it wants to resolve *the* contradiction, and it wants to move from darkness into light, it does not cease to be one more fragment in *S.NOB*. It stands amid a myriad of other forms of revolt that comprise a highly erotic heterogeneity that is always in dissipation, always expanding and contracting, ascending and descending.

Conclusion

Through Salvador Elizondo's direction, *S.NOB* magazine became a vehicle for Surrealism of a strain that deviated from the Bretonian current. It is unique both in the context of 1960s avant-garde magazines as well as in terms of surrealist periodicals because it is framed by Bataillean ideas. Immersed in the cultural conflicts of the second post-war in Mexico, the impossibility of discursive unity in *S.NOB* attacks the totality represented by the cultural nationalism of the Mexican Revolution. The magazine functions, as in Elizondo's understanding of Bataille's conception of inner experience, as a challenge to everything without having, in Bataille's words, "principles either in a dogma (a moral attitude), or in science (knowledge can be neither its goal nor its origin), or in a search for enriching states (an experimental, aesthetic attitude)."⁷⁶ *S.NOB* seemingly has no other concern nor goal but itself, and by attempting to draw readers into this realm through subterfuge—presenting itself as something that it is not—it attempts to undermine the entire apparatus not only of Mexican culture but culture at large. The magazine is not made to convince or to lead rationally towards critique, but to implant in the reader's mind, by all means necessary, including rational ones, a sense of uncertainty and fragmentation that would, in the last instance, destroy the confidence and safety of all cultural referents.

Eroticism is the other key for approaching the Bataillean currents of *S.NOB*, interrelated with the dissolution of limits enacted by the thought of the impossible. The magazine continually suggests the experience of the limits of the self and others, whether through the "Fetish" series or in the defense of incest as the most just form of structuring community. The subject-object duality becomes, through sensuality, a question of life and death in which the solely life-affirming, progress-based, virtuously non-erotic, narrative of the Mexican Revolution comes undone as folly. The Mexican Revolutionary muralist avant-garde saw art as a site of production of a new human, and of a nation, of the proletariat, etcetera, whereas the eroticism of *S.NOB* conceived of art as a site of waste, where every text and image bleeds meaning for the sake of nothing other than *experience*. *S.NOB*'s failures themselves reflect the qualities of both impossibility and the erotic, from the too artistic images of naked women, as Elizondo saw them, to the magazine never becoming a pop-cultural phenomenon. Despite *S.NOB* leaving no great imprint on Mexican culture at large, it does represent one of the first instances—if not the first—of a truly Bataillean manifestation of Surrealism in the country. In any case, key terms and associations from surrealist practices such as psychoanalysis (and the unconscious), the marvelous or even the concept of convulsive beauty are here replaced with Bataille's baser terms, which additionally enact a significant distance from the various narratives of Surrealism in Mexico crafted ever since the "International Surrealist Exhibition" of 1940.⁷⁷ Furthermore, *S.NOB* can be conceived of as revolutionary, but not in the sense that the Surrealists' approach to communism gives meaning to the word, nor in that of the Mexican revolutionary avant-garde's understanding

of aesthetics and politics. The magazine rejects both in order to craft a libertarian discourse anchored in Bataillean terms, attempting and failing to disseminate itself through popular means that the revolution's cultural referents understood as counter-revolutionary, such as its "women's weekly" format.

1 Elizondo was born in Mexico City in 1932, and after studying in France and working as a cinematographer, he turned to literature, participating in a diverse set of ventures which included *S.NOB* magazine. He is best known for his novels, such as the Bataille-oriented *Farabeuf* (1965) and *El hipogeo secreto* (1968), but he wrote numerous short stories like *Narda o el Verano* (1966), *El grafógrafo* (1972), and *Camera Lucida* (1983). His oeuvre includes essay books like *Cuadernos de escritura* (1969) and essay compilations such as *Teoría del infierno* (2013). He died in 2006 in Mexico City. See John Bruce-Novoa and Rolando Romero, *Salvador Elizondo* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009).

2 “Georges Bataille y la Experiencia Interior.” While individual Latin American writers like Elizondo or Julio Cortázar integrated Bataille ideas in their works of the 1960s, systematic Spanish translations of Bataille begun till the 1970s, primarily by Spanish editorial houses. Elizondo himself participated in this wave with a translation of *Madame Edwarda*, published in 1977 by a Mexican company. However, the presence of Bataille’s ideas as part of artistic projects in Mexico remains scarce, beyond the possible comparisons with Surrealist publications such as *DYN* twenty years before *S.NOB* and Elizondo’s literary ventures.

3 Elva Peniche Montfort, “El cuerpo en la revista S.nob.” In *Desafío a la estabilidad: procesos artísticos en México 1952-1967*, ed. Rita Eder (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México / Turner, 2014), 232.

4 His conception on the “most puerile” act of insubordination can be found in Georges Bataille, “Surrealism from Day to Day,” in *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, ed. Michael Richardson (London: Verso, 1994), 47. On the “state of mind,” see p. 55.

5 See Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico de México* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1969).

6 Vasconcelos was Secretary of Public Education (1921-1924) during the Álvaro Obregón government, but however short his tenure, he was crucial in the articulation of cultural nationalism that would permeate Mexican life for the rest of the 20th century. He was one of the architects of the government-supported mural project that employed artists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco. In 1925, right after he made fundamental changes to the country’s education system, he published *La raza cósmica (The Cosmic Race)*, an essay in which he argued that the Hegelian self-development of consciousness found its next stage in the racial mixture of Latin America – progress in the region was the key for the ultimate fulfillment of Spirit. His vision of cultural nationalism was thus informed by the ideal of a renewed world led by the “mixed races” of the Americas, of which Mexico, thanks to its revolutionary process, would be a prime example. See José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica* (Mexico: Porrúa, 2001).

7 The goal at first, outlined by Vasconcelos’ Hegelian vision of an ‘end of History’ achieved by the particularities of modernity in Latin America, had shifted, by the 1950s, into 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. The possibilities opened by avant-garde practice in relation to the country’s social upheaval were slowly cut off by the Revolutionary articulation of immensely distinct cultural elements, mostly through acts of public shaming, as in the case of the controversy surrounding the literary group Contemporáneos (1928-1933).

8 Begoña Alberdi Soto, “Desviar la tradición: El arte de apropiación de la revista mexicana S.NOB,” in *Revista de Humanidades*, no. 37 (2018): 20.

9 Cuevas’ essay was a polemic against nationalist enclosure of culture at large. It formulated the identity of an artist rejected by society because of his refusal to produce an art tied to the themes of the Mexican nation recurrent since the 1920s. Such an identity opened the possibility of rebellion for visual artists, but also for other cultural producers, and it was one of the main tools that Elizondo and his collaborators used in order to attack cultural nationalism. This is where the figure of the snob becomes relevant, as will be touched upon further on.

10 The concept of the Rupture is a common feature of the historiography dedicated to the avant-garde from the 1950s in Mexico, having appeared 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 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. Regarding the continuation of hegemony, 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 defense 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.

11 Claudia Albarrán, "La revista S.NO.B: Laboratorio experimental de una generación," in *Revuelta*, no. 4 (2005): 63-67.

12 Such is the case of Jorge Ibarguengoitia, 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. See Claudia Albarrán, "La revista S.NO.B," 65. As for periodicals supported by the state, this includes counter-cultural publications 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 favor and into private funding for several numbers.

13 The historiography of Mexican art, whether written by critics, artists themselves, or art historians, treats the Rupture as a plural movement of "independents," as painter and sculptor Manuel Felguérez put it. This independence was codified as an opposition to the heavily politicized, discursively leftist positions of cultural nationalism and its consecrated figures, like Rivera, Siqueiros, and Orozco. See Manuel Felguérez, "La Ruptura: 1935-1955," originally written in 1987, now available at: http://www.revistaimagenes.esteticas.unam.mx/la_ruptura. Accessed December 1, 2020.

14 Anuar Jalife, "Salvador Elizondo, editor snob," in *Cámara nocturna: Ensayos sobre Salvador Elizondo*, ed. Daniel Orizaga Doguim (Mexico: Fondo Editorial Tierra Adentro, 2011), 79.

15 José María Espinasa quoted by Anuar Jalife, "La figura del artista en la revista S.NO.B." In *Salvador Elizondo: Ida y vuelta. Estudios críticos*, ed. Claudia L. Gutiérrez Piña and Elba M. Sánchez Rolón (Guanajuato, Universidad de Guanajuato, 2016), 90-91. There were numerous other literary magazines in play at around the same time, such as *Letras Patrias* (with a nationalist bent) published since 1954, or *Metáfora* (1955-1958), *Estaciones* (1956-1960), *Punto de Partida* (1966), with University-funded competitors like the aforementioned *Corno Emplumado*, *Academus* (1964-1968), and *La Palabra y el Hombre* (1957-1965). Of course, the panorama included government-backed efforts such as the *Revista de Literatura Mexicana* (1940), which prompted the playful, independent production of the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* (1955-1969), in which many S.NO.B collaborators were featured. For even more examples, see Anuar Jalife, "La figura del artista," 89-90.

16 See Georges Bataille, *The Impossible*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991).

17 Albarrán, "La revista S.NO.B," 66.

18 See Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 286-288. As Jay's book argues,

the concept of totality first advanced by Hegel has a particular place in Marxist thought, including the Surrealists' various approaches to it.

19 Salvador Elizondo, *El hipogeo secreto* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001), 51.

20 The concept of eroticism will be explored further later, but for now, suffice to say that it is taken mainly from his book on eroticism (first published in 1957), as well as *The Tears of Eros* (published in 1961). See Georges Bataille, *El erotismo* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1997); also Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, trans. Peter Connor (San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1989).

21 Albarrán, "La revista S.NO.B," 63.

22 Elizabeth Anahí Cervantes González, "Índice y Estudio Preliminar de la revista S.Nob" (BA diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010), 37.

23 "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." Cervantes González, "Índice," 39.

24 See the entry for "snob" in the Oxford Dictionary of Etymology, available online: <https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/snob>. Accessed May 24, 2015.

25 "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 Cervantes González, "Índice," 40.

26 Stella Sandford, "The dream is a fragment: Freud, Transdisciplinarity and early German Romanticism", *Radical Philosophy* (Jul-Aug 2016). Available in: <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/the-dream-is-a-fragment>; accessed January 22, 2020.

27 "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." Nikolaj Lübecker, *Community, Myth, and Recognition in Twentieth-Century French Literature and Thought* (London: Continuum, 2009), 78.

28 Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, 32-33.

29 Cervantes González, "Índice," 46. Translation is mine. 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): 1-11.

30 Kati Horna's nickname is of some significance: everywhere in *S.NO.B* 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.

31 André Breton, quoted in *Investigating Sex: Surrealist Discussions*, ed. José Pierre (London: Verso, 2011), 200.

32 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.

33 "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." Salvador Elizondo, "Morfeo o la decadencia del sueño," *S.NO.B* #7, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, 4.

- 34 See Nemesio González Caminero, "La Filosofía Mexicana de la liberación según Leopoldo Zea," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, Vol. 41, No. 2/3, (1985): 161-180.
- 35 Georges Bataille, "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice," trans. Jonathan Strauss, *Yale French Studies*, No. 78, (1990): 16.
- 36 Bataille, "Hegel," 17.
- 37 For more on Bataille's development of the continuity/discontinuity relationship to life/death, see Bataille, *El erotismo*, 17.
- 38 Bataille, *El erotismo*, 15.
- 39 Esteban King, "Salvador Elizondo," 6.
- 40 Brian L. Price, "A Portrait of the Mexican Artist as a Young Man: Salvador Elizondo's Dedalean Poetics," in *TransLatin Joyce. Literatures of the Americas*, ed. Brian L. Price, C.A. Salgado, J.P. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 187.
- 41 Jonathan Eburne, "Dante, Bruno, Vico, S.Nob: The Wake in Mexico," *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (2015): 336, 338.
- 42 Elena Poniatowska, 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.
- 43 Anuar Jalife, "La figura del artista," 106.
- 44 Elza Adamowicz, "Hats or Jellyfish? Andre Breton's Collages." In *André Breton: The Power of Language*, ed. Ramona Fotiade, (Exeter: Elm Bank Publications, 2000), 83.
- 45 Bataille, *El erotismo*, 21.
- 46 Salvador Elizondo, *Teoría del infierno* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013), 74.
- 47 Soto Alberdi, "Desviar la tradición," 36.
- 48 Bataille, *The Impossible*, 10.
- 49 Benjamin Noys, *Georges Bataille: A Critical Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 46.
- 50 Fernando Arrabal, "Cuentos de Arrabal," in *S.NOB #2*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, 4.
- 51 "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." Bataille, *The Impossible*, 116.
- 52 Marie-Christine Lala, "Conversions of Writing in Georges Bataille's *L'Impossible*," in *Yale French Studies 78: On Bataille*, ed. Allan Stoekl (New York: Yale University Press, 1990), 243. These associated terms could be said to acquire a *topological* relationship, perhaps.
- 53 "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." Noys, *Introduction*, 96. This idea of contamination and the relationship between high and low, present already in *The Impossible*, is common throughout various stages of Bataille's writings. As noted by Denis Hollier, Bataille applied this idea to science and epistemology in *Documents*, but the idea also works analogically when referring to the relationship between life and death found in eroticism. See Denis Hollier, "The Use Value of the Impossible," *October*, Vol. 60 (spring 1992): 16. There is no clear evidence that Elizondo was familiar with earlier works by Bataille, but the depth of his reading of *Eroticism* and *The Tears of Eros* is reflected in the reproduction of key discursive themes from the Batailleian oeuvre such as the high-low relationship, the conceptions of myth and totality, and the life-death relationship. They can all be found in his direction of *S.NOB* and in his wider literary practices in the 1960s.
- 54 Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, 31. See also Nadine Hartmann, "Eroticism," in *Georges Bataille: Key Concepts*, ed. Mark Hewson and Marcus Coelen (New York: Routledge, 2016), 139, 206.

55 Bataille, *El erotismo*, 29-30.

56 Hollier, "The Use Value," 22.

57 "NOUS SOMMES FAROUCHEMENT RELIGIEUX [...] [i] 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 Conjuración Sacrada," *Acéphale*, 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.

58 "The erotic allure of the object as commodity," Johanna Malt, *Obscure Objects of Desire: Surrealism, Fetishism, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 104. This is easily seen in other pieces in *S.NOB* written by men.

59 "The female body as a sexualized vessel and object of erotic pleasure designed for masculine consumption." See Sabina Daniela Stent, "Women Surrealists: Sexuality, Fetish, Femininity, and Female Surrealism" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2011), 141.

60 Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company, 1920); (eBook edition: 2005), 22.

61 Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism (1927)," in *Freud: Complete Works*, ed. Ivan Smith (Digital edition, 2011), 4537.

62 Henry Krips, *Fetish: An Erotics of Culture* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 8.

63 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," *Cuadernos Políticos*, No. 29 (Mexico, Editorial Era, 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 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*," *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," *Third Text*, Vol. 24, Issue 3 (May 2010): 305-317, 312-313.

64 In other words, one of the dirtiest taboo acts humanity holds in common is actually a metaphor for purity. Tomás Segovia, "Defensa e ilustración del incesto," in *S.NOB #4*, 1962, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas: PN778, Mexico, 36.

65 Segovia, "Defensa," 38.

66 Ibid.

67 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), 65, 71.

68 Juan Pascual Gay, "Reuniones, dispersiones. Notas sobre ideas literarias de Tomás Segovia", *Nóesis*, vol. 23, no. 45 (2014), 238.

69 Segovia, "Defensa," 38.

70 Ibid., 33.

71 Ibid., 35.

72 Ibid., 35.

73 Ibid., 39.

74 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." Segovia, 39.

75 Ibid.

76 Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 7.

77 All of them tied, in one way or another, to Mexican nationalism. Whether in the idea of Mexico's "revolutionary essence" promoted by André Breton, or in the simplistic opposition of the "nationalists vs. cosmopolitans" trope of Mexican cultural histories of the mid-century, to the idea of the permanence of the "fantastic" in Mexican art promoted by Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, the place of Surrealism in the country has been closely associated to the development of Mexican modernity. See Luis M. Castañeda, "Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico: Changing Perceptions, 1940-1968," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, Vol. 3 (2009). *S.NOB* goes beyond these problems, not because it is unconcerned but because it is articulating its revolt in Bataillean terms that ultimately destroy, or at the very least fragment, the subject's dependency on identity, whether national or otherwise.