

Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter

CATHERINE LORD

“As far as I’m concerned, the guy was a fucking saint.”¹ The fucking saint is Michel Foucault. The guy who wrote the sentence is David Halperin, whose *Saint Foucault: Toward a Gay Hagiography* is one of the most battered books in my library. I scribble and underline not because I revere Michel Foucault, or David, although I do, in different ways, but because I cannot resist a good polemic: Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis*, for example, Malcolm X on white devils, and Yvonne Rainer’s *No* to everything she could think of in 1965. To write a polemic is a formal challenge. It is to connect the most miniscule of details with the widest of panoramas, to walk a tightrope between rage and reason, to insist that ideas are nothing but lived emotion, and vice versa. To write a polemic is to try to dig oneself out of the grave that is the margin, that already shrill, already colored, already feminized, already queered location in which words, any words, any combination of words are either symptoms of madness or proof incontrovertible of guilt by association. Halperin’s beatification of Foucault is a disciplined absurdity, at once an evisceration of homophobia and an aria to the fashioning of a queer self.

You don’t get to be a saint without pulling off a miracle or two. Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* was, says Halperin, the “single most important source of political

1. David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 6. Though I recently wrote a catalogue essay on lesbian culture of the 1970s in which I annotated Louise Fishman’s *Angry Paintings* of 1973, neither Louise nor I ever got around to Valerie, the angriest woman of all. See “Notes Toward a Calligraphy of Rage,” in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007). In fact, I buried Solanas in a footnote. This text is something of an act of penance. I thank Matt Wrban and Anne Trowe for their archival prowess; Linda Theung, Kristine Thompson and Jen Smith for their research skills; Juan Vicente Aliaga, Frederikke Hansen, and Lena Hammergren for their help in procuring editions of *SCUM*; Jane Newman, Sheila O’Rourke, Jens Jonason, and Denise Spampinato for translations; Richard Meyer, Robbie Herbst, M. E. Strom, Benjamin Buchloh, Henry Rogers, and Andrew Perchuk for opportunities to present or publish versions of this essay; Judith Solanas Martinez for her emails, and Solanas’s son for his recollections, patchy and conflicted though they necessarily are. He told me, repeatedly, that he had an older sister who had been raised by another family. Fact or fiction, to her ghost I dedicate this essay.

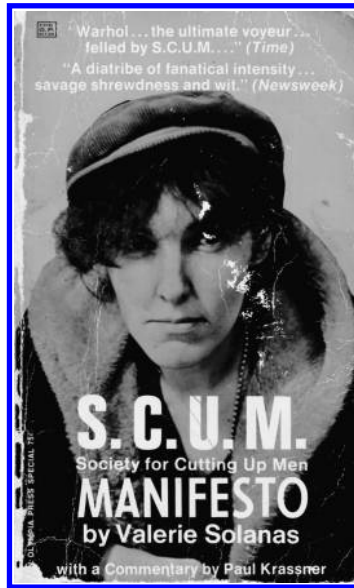
inspiration for contemporary AIDS activists.”² The men of ACT UP carried the book around with them in their jackets, Halperin recollects, though he is a thinker too perverted, in the most complimentary sense of the word, to specify whether the hottest guys were inspired to work for social justice by Foucault’s famously difficult prose or by the combination of distressed leather and the rectangular bulge of theory.

If political inspiration and book sales can be adduced to make a case for beatification, Valerie Solanas should make the grade. I offer a syllogism composed of four recreational generalizations. Queer theory would not have happened without ACT UP would not have happened without the feminist movement. The feminist movement would not have happened without Valerie Solanas. And, as even art museums have lately begun to attest, absolutely nothing in the twentieth century was more influential than the feminist movement.³ Solanas’s contribution to feminism, and to the history of sexuality, was a fifty-page document titled *S.C.U.M. Manifesto*,⁴ rushed into print in August of 1968 by Maurice Girodias of Olympia Press a few short months after Solanas went to 33 Union Square on the afternoon of June 3—and this is where the multiplication of legend begins—carrying either a brown paper bag that turned out to contain a gun and other miscellaneous items, or two guns, one in each pocket of her trench coat. (Although she was inconsistent in her usage, Solanas became intensely concerned with the difference between “S.C.U.M.” as an acronym and “SCUM” as a noun. From this point on, I will respect her wishes by using “SCUM” as a noun.) She put three bullets into Andy Warhol, and another two into art critic and curator Mario Amaya. She was aiming her last bullet at Factory manager Fred Hughes, who was by then on his knees, professing his innocence, of what it is not clear, when either the gun jammed or Solanas got into the elevator, or both. She was angry because Warhol had lost the only copy of a play she wished him to produce. Rumors circulate that the bullets were silver. Sometimes Solanas is said to have painted them silver, sometimes to have encased them in aluminum foil. Another syllogism, therefore: Solanas thought Warhol was a vampire, silver bullets kill vampires, Solanas wanted to make sure that Warhol stayed dead, sane people do not believe in vampires, Solanas was insane.

2. Halperin, *Saint Foucault*, p. 15. He refers to the 1978 English translation of Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

3. Curator Connie Butler’s *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution* made this claim in 2007, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. (In the MOCA installation of the show [March 4–July 17, 2007], two editions of *SCUM* sat in a vitrine next to Alice Neel’s iconic 1970 portrait depicting a prissy queen, the scarred flesh of Warhol’s upper chest sagging into small breasts above his medical corset.) Among the subsequent exhibitions re-evaluating issues of feminism are *Global Feminisms* (Brooklyn Museum of Art, 2007), *La Batalla de los Generos* (Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea, 2007), *elle@centrepompidou* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2009), and *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in Eastern European Art* (Museum Moderna Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2009).

4. Valerie Solanas, *S.C.U.M.: Society for Cutting Up Men Manifesto* (New York: Olympia Press, 1968). It will become clear that Solanas was intensely concerned with the difference between S.C.U.M. as an acronym and SCUM as a noun.



Cover of *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* by Valerie Solanas. New York. 1968.
 Photograph by Fred McDarrah.

Slippage is the Solanas effect. The inside of the Union Square factory, the Factory in which Solanas shot Warhol, was decorated “Hollywood modern in the 1930s,” according to Paul Morrissey.⁵ The old Factory, on East 47th Street, the space from which Warhol had just decamped, was celebrated for the silver paint and foil that photographer Billy Name applied to every possible surface, including walls, pipes, windows, and the trunk of lighting equipment in which the script of Solanas’s play lay buried for thirty years, until the trunk was returned to Billy Name, who discovered the script at the bottom, and then loaned it to the Warhol Museum, where it lay peacefully in a vitrine until, by chance, theater director George Coates wandered in and realized the significance of the document, a version of the story irritably contested by the Warhol Museum archivist,⁶ who nonetheless copied the script, enabling Coates to pro-

5. Morrissey is quoted in the *New York Times*, “Warhol Actress to Undergo Tests,” June 5, 1968, p. 50.

6. The exhibition of Solanas-related material, curated by Matt Wrban, was mounted at the Andy Warhol Museum between June 1998 and November 1999. Wrban questioned Coates’s version of the story in conversations we had at the Warhol Museum in 2007.

duce it, which he did, twice, in San Francisco, early in 2000, and in Manhattan the following year.⁷

The script is titled *Up Your Ass*, or, alternately, in Solanas's typescript, *From the Cradle to the Boat, The Big Suck, or Up from the Slime*. The trunk, still glittering with tin foil, is exhibited in the Warhol Museum.

The afterword to that first Olympia edition, written by libertarian and *The Realist* editor Paul Krassner, is titled "Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter."⁸ Clearly, in 1968, the intersection of her bullets and his flesh was more of a head-on collision than an attempted assassination, clearly we are still sweeping up the broken glass, but it is not at all clear who was playing "Wonder Waif" and who was playing "Super Neuter." Krassner's glib title suggests that Solanas and Warhol were, if not equally positioned on the freak register, at least *on* the same register. In the summer of 1968, in that still-swish-pre-gay-Betty-Friedan-is-all-we've-got-dyke-is-a-big-insult moment, both Andy and Valerie deserved their proverbial fifteen minutes. Stonewall would take another year. The bra burning that never happened at the Women's Lib demo at the 1968 Miss America Pageant had yet to be invented to make a better story. "Underground" was a space sufficiently large to accommodate Andy, Valerie, the Diggers, the Motherfuckers, Timothy Leary, the Yippies, the Panthers, the Redstockings, and old SDSers. "[T]he blond guru of a nightmare world," *Time* labeled Warhol, "photographing depravity and calling it truth . . ." ⁹ Though Warhol's work had been painted over at the New York World's Fair, though he had shown at the Guggenheim, and MoMA, and the Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in Paris, though he had cannily ditched the Stable Gallery for Leo Castelli, though he had been given a solo exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, though he was being reviewed in the *Village Voice*, *Artnews*, and *Artforum*, though he had been mocked by the West Coast Press as "Andy Peacemimple," Warhol had not quite dug himself out of the underground. In fact, his reputation and his sales were based on his history in and his ties to subcultures of the avant-garde.¹⁰

7. Coates's production was one of the lesser-known casualties of the National Endowment for the Arts "decency" restrictions on content which were pushed through Congress in the early 1990s. *Up Your Ass* was produced with private funding.

8. Paul Krassner, "Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter," introduction to *SCUM*, 1968, pp. 87–105. Krassner's excruciating afterword was never reprinted in English, though it appears in the German translations of 1969, 1983, and 1996. Krassner began editing *The Realist* in 1958, claimed a circulation of 100,000 by 1967, shut it down in 1974, and resurrected it, in honor of Ronald Reagan, between 1985 and 2000. See "Paul Krassner: The Realist," in Jeff Kiseloff, *Generation on Fire: Voices of Protest from the 1960s, An Oral History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), pp. 64–80.

9. Quoted in Leah Hackleman, "Plastic Man versus the Sweet Assassin," in *Sexual Artifice: Persons, Images, Politics*, ed. Ann Kibbey, Kayam Short, and Aouali Farmanfarmanian (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 128.

10. A draft of Warhol's ditching letter, dated May 1964, handwritten by someone other than Warhol, emerged from Time Capsule 12 at the Warhol Museum: "The Stable Gallery is conducted, from what I can tell, with tremendous constraint and decorum which is nothing to complain about except that I expected something different." David Bourdon, "Andy Warhol," *Village Voice* (October 3, 1964), p. 21; David Antin, "Warhol: The Silver Tenement," *Artnews* 6 (Summer 1966), pp. 47–48, 58–59; Thom Anderson, untitled review, *Artforum* (June 1966), p. 51, 58; Art Seidenbaum, "Andy Peacemimple Puts a New Complexion on Night Life," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1966, p. 3.



SCUM Manifesto.
Darmstadt. 1969.

“SCUM,” it is said, stands for the Society for Cutting Up Men. Solanas, it is said, was its founder and only member. Maybe. She did use the phrase “society for cutting up men” when she interviewed Warhol late in 1967, in the letters she wrote him during this period, and in a poster she asked Warhol to put up at the front of the Factory. But the abbreviation doesn’t appear in the title of the manifesto she typed. Rumors circulate that Girodias himself came up with the words to translate SCUM into an acronym,¹¹ thus making a word produce an organization the existence of which proved that Solanas was so crazy she had invented something no one else would join. The more interesting question is in what sense, and with what resonance, “scum” existed. It is an epithet repeatedly directed to the panhandlers, hookers, queens, and lesbians in *Up Your Ass*, but the question is who had the wit to turn an insult into an organization, to repurpose a four-letter word? Solanas? Warhol? A superstar with a mouth on her? Solanas herself, ten years after the collision, claimed SCUM not as an organization but as a “literary device.” “It’s either nothing or it’s just me,” she explained. “I thought of it as a state of mind . . . women who think a certain way are in S.C.U.M.”¹²

11. Dana Heller, “Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure,” *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001), p. 168. Heller is paraphrasing an email from Jane Caputi, who, with two other women, interviewed Solanas in 1975.

12. Howard Smith and Brian Van der Horst, “Valerie Solanas Interview,” *Village Voice* (July 25, 1977), p. 32.

Let us take the writer at her word, then, and try as best we can to separate intelligence from disintegration while giving credit to the power of both. Once Girodias made the text available, *SCUM*-the-state-of-mind could neither be unsaid nor rendered unfunny. Once printed, *SCUM* triggered a flood that caused other bodies of water to overflow their assigned channels. *SCUM*-the-state-of-mind, *SCUM*-the-literary-device, linked a set of synapses, and in so doing created a distributed network of resistance, a schema for feminist rage.

Manifestos, as a genre, represent a group to itself by staging their anger, by scripting a performance that imagines a future by speaking in the future tense. The manifesto produces an affinity group by inhabiting the first-person plural. As Janet Lyon writes, “The manifesto provides a foothold in a culture’s dominant ideology by creating generic speaking positions; the nascent audience interpellated by ‘we’ is then held together as a provisional constituency through a linguistic contract.”¹³ Scripts that travel as far and as fast as *SCUM* require lucid, taut, persuasive, fighting prose. Humor helps. Not only was Solanas a deft writer, she was a scathingly funny writer with a fine ear for the idiotic. She understood the necessity of a succinct lead: “Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.”¹⁴ She understood that a list can produce a call to revolution, as when, for example, she enumerates her dislikes: “. . . men who intrude themselves the slightest way on any strange female; real estate men; stock brokers; men who speak when they have nothing to say; men who loiter idly on the street and mar the landscape with their presence; double dealers; flimflam artists; litter bugs; plagiarizers; men who in the slightest way harm any female; all men in the advertising industry . . .”¹⁵ She was a master of the declarative sentence: “Although completely physical, the male is unfit even for stud service.”¹⁶ She understood cadence: “To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he’s a machine, a walking dildo.”¹⁷ She knew how to tweak her subordinate clauses: “Every man, deep down, knows he’s a worthless piece of shit.”¹⁸ She grasped the revolutionary power of women’s laughter: “[T]he male is, nonetheless, obsessed with screwing; he’ll swim through a river of snot, wade nostril-deep through a mile of vomit, if he thinks there’ll be a friendly pussy awaiting him.”¹⁹ She was agile enough to lob a rhetorical question and make the pitch

13. Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Cornell: Ithaca and London, 1999), p. 24. Lyon’s is a more optimistic version of Avital Ronell’s description of the “non-place” from which Solanas wrote. See “Deviant Payback: The Aims of Valerie Solanas,” in Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 15.

14. Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 31. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from *SCUM* refer to the 1968 Olympia edition.

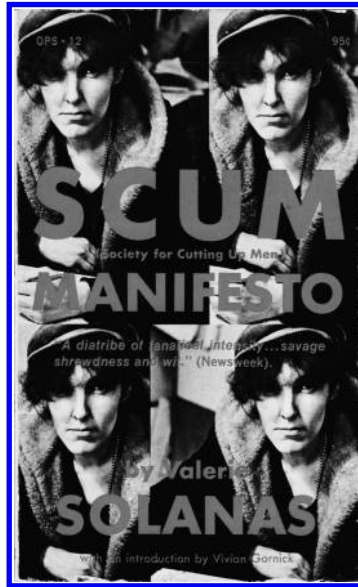
15. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 33.



SCUM Manifesto.
New York. 1970.

look easy: “Should a certain percentage of men be set aside by force to serve as brood mares for the species? Obviously this will not do.”²⁰

In the weeks after the shooting, when publisher Maurice Girodias banged out his introduction, he presented *SCUM* as a “contribution to the study of violence,” outed Solanas by observing that she was not “excruciatingly boring” like other garden-variety militant lesbians, trashed feminists for abdicating their own rights, and compared Solanas to Jonathan Swift.²¹ In the 1970 “revised edition” of *SCUM*, Girodias cut the talk about satire, ditched most of his anti-feminist, homophobic, and racist musings, trashed Krassner’s essay, and commissioned from Vivian Gornick an introduction intended to convert feminism into cash. Gornick recounts

20. Ibid. p. 68.

21. Ibid. p. 11. Where to begin with Girodias’s bigotry?—so 1968, so quietly disappeared, so deftly sanitized by the 1970 edition. Of Solanas herself: “She could have been attractive, but obviously did not want to be” (p. 11). Of black power and feminists: “[W]hen Rap Brown advocates violence, he is merely attempting to fight one evil, inherent to male character and to male politics, with the same evil. Violence . . . is congenitally repugnant to any normal, healthy, and well-balanced woman. By accepting, by promoting, violence, women fall again into the trap of imitation” (p. 24). Of lesbian feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson’s support of Valerie: “Her aristocratic Southern nostril sniffed enviously those ghetto smells” (p. 25). Page numbers refer to Maurice Girodias’s publisher’s preface to the 1968 version of *S.C.U.M.*

that when Solanas shot Warhol, Women's Liberation politicians disowned her. "We do not hate men," they reassured. Just one year later, Gornick continues, the same "perfectly respectable ladies" reversed their position. "Like hell we don't."²²

As consciousness rose, so did the market for radical feminist publications. In 1970, Vintage published Robin Morgan's anthology *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, William Morrow published Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex*, and Doubleday brought out Kate Millett's bestseller *Sexual Politics*.²³ In the 1970 edition of *SCUM*, Girodias's new jacket copy cut to the chase: "Only three years ago we used to make fun of Valerie Solanas . . . today every one of her words rings like a prophecy . . . [SCUM] has suddenly become the Charter of all female revolutionaries . . . a resounding piece of polemic that will change the course of our destiny."

A bit of biography, then. Solanas was born in Atlantic City in 1936. Her father was a bartender, her mother a dental assistant. Either her father or a friend of the family abused her sexually. For a dime, she sold neighborhood kids insults to be hurled at other people. In high school, she beat up a boy who was bothering a younger girl. After that she hit a nun. She got pregnant, maybe by a married man, maybe by a sailor, maybe both, they are hardly mutually exclusive. She had a child when she was fifteen, still in high school. She and her son lived with a middle-class military couple outside Washington D.C., until she was dispatched to attend the University of Maryland. The couple paid her tuition. She never saw her son again. She continued to peddle language—dirty limericks for ten bucks a pop. She waited tables and panhandled. She may have had sex for money. She used the letters-to-the-editor column of the college newspaper to taunt male students into embarrassing themselves with protests about women's equality.²⁴ She had a grade

22. Vivian Gornick, "Introduction," rev. ed. (New York: Olympia, 1970), p. xxiv–xxv. Gornick is wrong; as will be seen later, Ti-Grace Atkinson, Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz and Flo Kennedy immediately rushed to Solanas's defense. See Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years, 1960–1975* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2001), pp. 136–37. The text of Atkinson's statement to the press on Solanas is held by the Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, Mass. in the as yet uncatalogued Ti-Grace Atkinson papers.

23. The market was short-lived. In "The Feminist Time Forgot," *The Guardian*, London, June 23, 1998, Millett recounts that she has been unable to get an academic job, and that she made her living selling Christmas trees in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

24. The tidbits about selling insults and tormenting sexist men at the University of Maryland were communicated by Solanas's sister, Judith Martinez, email to the author, May 14, 2007. With the exception of material specifically attributed to Martinez, I take most of my biographical information, multiplications, and inconsistencies included, from Mary Harron, "Introduction: On Valerie Solanas," in Mary Harron and Daniel Minahan, *I Shot Andy Warhol* (New York: Grove Press, 1995). Harron did a staggering amount of research for a documentary on Solanas before she was persuaded to fictionalize the film. I also rely on the following: Judith Coburn, "Valerie's Gang," *Express* (November 19, 1999), pp. 8–9, 11, 13, 16, which makes use of an extended interview with Martinez; Gornick, "Introduction"; Freddie Baer, "About Valerie Solanas," in *SCUM Manifesto* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1996); James Harding, "The Simplest Surrealist Act: Valerie Solanas and the (Re)Assertion of Avantgarde Priorities," *The Drama Review* 45, no. 4 (2001), pp. 142–62; Melissa Deem, "From Bobbitt to SCUM: Re-memberment, Scatological Rhetorics, and Feminist Strategies in the Contemporary United States," *Public Culture* 8 (1996), pp. 511–37; Heller, "Shooting Solanas"; Hackleman, "Plastic Man"; and Taylor Mead, "The Shooting of Andy Warhol," <http://www.altx.com/interzones/meade/shot.html> (accessed October 10, 2006).



SCUM Manifesto.
Paris. 1971.

point average of 4.4. She may have peed in her roommate's orange juice. She may have put the orange juice back in the fridge. Stories multiply.

In 1958, she was admitted to a graduate program in psychology at the University of Minnesota. She noticed that men got all the research money and jobs. "The purpose of 'higher education,'" she correctly observed in one of the few autobiographical moments of *SCUM*, "is not to educate but to exclude as many as possible from the various professions."²⁵ She dropped out after a year or so, say around 1960. She moved to Berkeley, where she audited a few classes and befriended a panhandler, a relationship that probably taught her a few vital survival skills and sparked the ideas for *Up Your Ass*.²⁶ The combination of Minnesota's entirely male psychology department and Berkeley's refinement of that form of refusal known in the 1960s as "hanging out" laid the groundwork for a critique that linked economic exploitation to systemic misogyny. Whatever Solanas did later in the way of hustling, sex, and language should be linked to her analysis of the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism.

After Berkeley, she floated, between men, between states (she told one

25. Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 54.

26. Martinez, email to author. The panhandler may have been Geoffrey Le Gear, who paid Solanas's bail in December of 1968, and who wrote both Warhol and Girodias on Solanas's behalf. Solanas folder, Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

interviewer she had panhandled in Texas),²⁷ and perhaps between women. “A woman,” she wrote, in what one can only hope is another autobiographical reference, no matter how horribly wrong it all went later, “. . . knows instinctively that the only wrong is to hurt others, and that the meaning of life is love.”²⁸ By 1965, she had landed in Greenwich Village, where she panhandled, shoplifted, turned tricks, and wrote like a fiend. (The typescript of *Up Your Ass* carries a copyright notation of 1965.) In February of 1966, she dropped Warhol a polite note asking for the return of the play. Tongue in cheek, she had dedicated it to herself—for “unflinching loyalty, devotion, and faith,” “independent research” into “men, married women, and other degenerates,” as well as “an exquisite job of typing.”²⁹ Warhol found *Up Your Ass* a “wonderful” title, but judged it “so dirty”—a much-quoted, but, all things considered, an utterly preposterous line—that he concluded Valerie “must have been a lady cop” trying to entrap him.³⁰ In the summer of 1966, she published “A Young Girl’s Primer, or How to Attain to the Leisure Class” in the counterculture magazine *Cavalier*, which regularly featured a column by Krassner.³¹

In October of 1966, Solanas ran a small ad in the *Village Voice* advertising copies of *Up from the Slime* (aka *Up Your Ass*), return address the Chelsea Hotel. Maybe she still believed the script was temporarily misplaced. Perhaps because of the script debacle, Warhol hired Valerie for a bit part in *I, a Man*. She plays skinny, jittery, angry, funny butch—“her own role in life,” as Girodias observed.³² She’s butch with a mouth on her, butch on her way to the girlfriend stashed upstairs, butch whose backtalk trounces Tom Baker, the guy trying to score a quick fuck. When Baker comes on to Solanas, she tweaks his titties and accuses him of rape. Warhol gave her \$25.00 for playing the part, almost twice as much as he is said to have given her when she came in for a handout, which she did regularly.³³

In the spring of 1967, Solanas appeared on the *Alan Burke Show*. The Rush Limbaugh of the day, Burke mocked her as a lesbian. She responded with obscenities, no doubt imaginative, and stormed out. The episode was never aired, but the fact of Burke’s invitation suggests that Solanas was legible, or could

27. Robert Marmorstein, “A Winter Memory of Valerie Solanis [sic],” *Village Voice* (June 13, 1968), p. 20.

28. Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 53.

29. Quotes from *Up Your Ass* are taken from Billy Name’s manuscript copy, Warhol Museum Archives.

30. Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, 1980), p. 341.

31. *Cavalier* retitled the text “For 2 Cents: Pain” (July 1965), pp. 38–40, 76–77. The same issue featured Timothy Leary, Ray Bradbury, Dick Gregory, and Michael Harrington.

32. Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 16.

33. Thanks to Jennifer Doyle for bringing this dialogue to my attention. Solanas: “Your instincts tell you to chase chicks, right?” Baker: “Right!” Solanas: “My instincts tell me to do the same thing.” Baker: “Oh. Wow.” Solanas: “Why should my standards be lower than yours?” See Jennifer Doyle, “I Must Be Boring Someone,” in *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 79. The information on handouts is from Paul Morrissey, “Pop Shots,” *Vogue* (May 1966), p. 152.



SCUM Manifesto.
New York. 1991.

be made legible, as a controversial and countercultural figure.³⁴ In August of 1967, Girodias signed her to write a novel, and gave her the munificent sum of \$500.³⁵ Sometime after October, she advertised *SCUM* in the *Voice*, and did her best to interview Warhol, around and between Morrissey’s business machinations and Viva’s rambles. (Solanas was hardly the only person to have trouble steering the conversation when Viva was around: “. . . if only she would shut up, you could fuck her,” Mary Woronov observed later, “but she never did.”³⁶)

Warhol does Drella—vacant, affectless, withholding, needling. He baits Solanas with the possibility of her going into fashion (“you’re trim . . . you’re very pretty”).³⁷ He assures her that he speaks about SCUM in his lectures. Despite Warhol’s skill at deflecting questions, Solanas gets in her digs. She calls him “uptight” and “prudish.” She accuses him of being afraid of SCUM: “You’re in the

34. The Solanas episode was never aired. For the Berg story, see Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 231.

35. “We are not interested in anyone famous, or half-famous,” proclaims Girodias’s solicitation, “Notice to Unknown Writers,” inside the 1968 edition. “Our function is to discover talent.”

36. Mary Woronov, *Eyewitness to Warhol* (Los Angeles: Victoria Dailey Publisher, 2002), p. 15.

37. The quotes in this and the following paragraph are taken from the transcript of an undated, late 1967 interview, “Valerie Solanis [*sic*] Interviews Andy,” Warhol Museum Archives. Victor Bockris recounts the Max’s Kansas City incident in *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* (New York: Bantam, 1989), p. 212.

men's auxiliary but you're by no means on the escape list." She tells him "a girl up front"—that is, in the part of the Factory that Paul Morrissey arranged to resemble a business office—was one of her recruits. She nails Warhol as a business tycoon and a cheapskate. "We're not tycoons, Valerie," he protests. "It's art." Replies Solanas: "All the contracts and shit like that—you call that modern? Percentages, nets and grosses and all that? Did you ever feel you were going to die penniless? Andy, how often do you count your money? . . . What do you use for stimulation when you think you need it? Bankbooks?"

In the course of the conversation, Viva learns that Warhol will get \$50,000 for the next project, while her share will be \$1,500. She is incredulous. Though Viva had already humiliated Solanas by calling her a "disgusting dyke" in Max's Kansas City, Solanas lends help in the form of acid asides, then hustles Warhol for money to help her promote "SCUMMY" events. These wouldn't be lectures, she explains, but a "lot of interaction with the audience." Wheedles Solanas: "For you it would be nothing, but for me—I have nothing—I can't afford anything."

Warhol promises to think about it.

"Talking to him was like talking to a chair," Solanas said later.³⁸

The slide down begins around August of 1967. Solanas had, more or less, finished *SCUM*. When Girodias refused it, Solanas sold mimeographed copies across from the Women's House of Detention on Greenwich Ave. She made men pay twice as much as women.³⁹ In the first of her gradually more incoherent but nonetheless hilariously pointed letters to Warhol, she tells him *I, a Man* should have been called *The Endless Drivel*, and criticizes him for hacking up her scene: "Were you symbolically & sadistically cutting me up? Getting revenge on me . . .?" She was evicted from the Chelsea. It was a cold winter. She tried, occasionally and improbably, to shelter with people she knew even slightly—Girodias, for example, and Robert Marmorstein, the *Voice* reporter, who recalls that she would sit in his car to warm up. Early in 1968, she got across the country, somehow, with a box of manifestos, and landed at her sister's house in San Mateo, her hair so long and so matted that her sister put her in the bath and cut it off.⁴⁰

Solanas fired off a few letters to Warhol from San Francisco, calling him a

38. Quoted in Bob Colacello, *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 32.

39. Herron, "Introduction," p. xvii; Claire Dederer, "Cutting Remarks," *The Nation*, June 14, 2000. For Solanas's other interactions, sex was \$25, conversations were \$6. The Radical Feminists, in their 1968 pamphlet *Notes from the First Year* (available in the Tamament Collection, New York University) appropriated this strategy: women paid fifty cents, men paid one dollar. In Solanas's letter to Warhol of August 1, 1967, she says she has "just about finished [*SCUM*] . . . I'll be selling it on the street within a few days" (Solanas folder, Warhol Museum Archives).

40. The letter to Warhol is dated August 24, 1967. One can easily deduce that she was on the street in the winter of 1967. Girodias, "Preface," pp. 16–17, recounts that she asked whether she could move in with him, as does Marmorstein, "A Winter Memory of Valerie Solanis," p. 29. In her conversation with Marmorstein, Solanas says that she is staying "with some old dame," but tries to convince him to take her on as his roommate. Coburn, "Valerie's Story," p. 11, describes her arrival in California.



SCUM Manifesto.
*Edinburgh and
 San Francisco. 1996.*

toad, linking him with Girodias in a conspiracy of multimillionaires, and telling him to shove it, well, “up your ass,” when he offered her a plane ticket back to New York. She browbeat her sister Judith into giving her money for the bus.⁴¹

Then the bullets.

Solanas was charged with assault, judged incompetent, then competent, released temporarily then re-institutionalized for making threats against Warhol.⁴² She was released again in 1971, only to make more threats and bounce in and out of mental institutions. She dropped so far out of sight that some assumed she had died. In 1974, French feminist scholar Françoise d’Eaubonne sculpted a tomb for Solanas in a eulogy titled, “Une Rose pour Valerie.”⁴³ Greatly exaggerated rumors of Solanas’s death in no way impaired her talents as a forensic bibliographer. In September of 1977 she fired off a long letter to Jörg Schröder of Merz Verlag that included a complete list of every bootleg of all or part of her

41. Solanas to Warhol, February 10, 1968, Warhol Museum Archives, and Coburn.

42. See the *New York Times*, “Warhol Assailant Is Sent to Bellevue,” June 6, 1968, p. 50; and “Warhol’s Assailant Ruled Incompetent,” August 17, 1968.

43. Solanas called Warhol to threaten him, along with Girodias, Howard Hughes, and Robert Sarnoff of NBC. Ultra Violet, *Famous for Five Minutes* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988), p. 186. Françoise d’Eaubonne, “Une Rose pour Valerie,” in *Le Féminisme ou la mort* (Paris: Pierre Horay Editeur, 1974), cited in Michel Houellebecq, “Postface,” in Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto: Association pour tailler les hommes en pièces* (Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 2005), p. 111.

text in English, French, German, and Italian.⁴⁴ She wanted apologies and she wanted boatloads of money. Somewhere around this time, Shulamith Firestone found her a small room on 3rd Street. Solanas was living on welfare. Firestone recalls her as “slight, fair, aging . . . [but] . . . always with a poor girl chic,” wearing “little white socks and her collar up.”⁴⁵ In 1979, her mother, having entirely lost track of her daughter, filed a missing persons report.⁴⁶

Because visibility is central to the surveillance and proclamation of deviant sexuality, fashion is central to queer theory. Fashion may even be queer theory. Firestone is describing the costume of an earlier generation of sexual dissidents, the pre-Stonewall butch. The crucial detail in her reportage is that Solanas did not care to present herself as a feminist, much less a “lesbian,” as defined either by the homophile culture of the late 1950s and early 1960s *or* by the liberation visibility of the 1970s. The former had enormous class anxiety about the “rough and tumble” butches who wore pants, especially men’s pants. The latter favored jeans and flannel shirts.⁴⁷

Which is to suggest Solanas’s outsider relationship to every liberation movement of the 1960s. Though we can now make her legible as a feminist and a lesbian, those identities, as we understand them, were not ready for occupancy in the 1960s. Solanas missed the celebrations that added to the gender glossary the keywords we now consider familiar. She was AWOL when women’s liberation hit the streets. She missed her book party because she was incarcerated in an institution for the criminally insane. She was in prison for the coming-out party that was Stonewall.

In other words, the gender Solanas lived and the sex she practiced resonated in a world of meaning that differs in important ways from the queer culture we now inhabit. In the first place, she was already comfortable with the word “queer,” though her comfort with the term would have endeared her to few in those movements professing to liberate women and homosexuals with images of normalcy and happiness. Bongie Perez, the prostitute/panhandler/backtalker and sardonic anti-heroine of *Up Your Ass*, flaunts “khaki pants, a loud, plaid sports jacket and tennis shoes.” She describes herself as an outsider: “vivacious, dynamic, single and a queer.”⁴⁸ Earlier

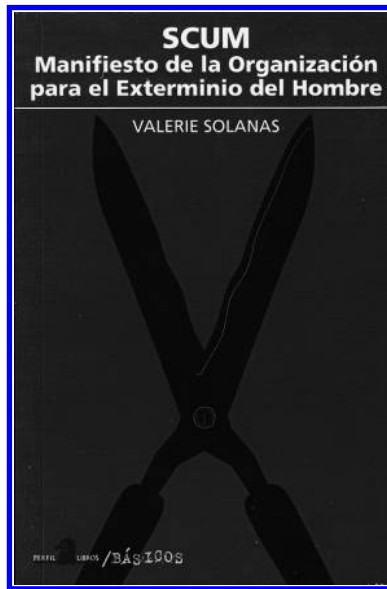
44. The letter, dated September 4, 1977, is reprinted in English in the 1996 German edition of *SCUM* (Augsburg: Maro Verlag), pp. 105–10.

45. Shulamith Firestone, in “I Remember Valerie,” *Airless Spaces* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1998), Firestone makes it clear that she had no use for Solanas: “I thought it was a big mistake to recognize Valerie as one of us, a women’s liberationist, let alone to embrace her book as serious feminist theory” (p. 130).

46. Dorothy Moran, quoted in Rowan Gaither, “Andy Warhol’s Feminist Nightmare,” *New York* (January 14, 1991), p. 35.

47. The 1955 founding statement of the Daughters of Bilitis specifically banned cross-dressing at meetings: “If slacks are worn they must be women’s slacks.” Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006), pp. 6–7. See also Caroline Jones’s periodization of Warhol’s gear in relation to masculinity and to business attire: workshirt to black turtleneck to leather. See Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 240–43.

48. *Up Your Ass*, “Billy Name manuscript copy.”



SCUM Manifesto.
Buenos Aires. 1997.

codes of homosexuality were not always evident, particularly to feminists who lacked—stereotypes often contain a grain of truth—either a sense of humor or curiosity about earlier gender roles. Without a trace of irony, Firestone recounts that Valerie rolled her own cigarettes: the brand was Big Top.⁴⁹ The discerning reader might conjure the kind of bar femme Solanas liked—and again, one can only hope—from one of Bongi’s rants: “You know what really flips me? Real low-down, funky broads, nasty, bitchy hotshots, the kind that when she enters a room it’s like a blinding flash, announcing her presence to the world, real brazen and public.”⁵⁰

Solanas was not just a working girl, but a working-class queer who was either behind the times or ahead of her time or who never actually had a time or whose fifteen minutes turned out to be more like five. Whichever, whatever, the margins from which she sniped cut surprising swathes. The fuel that drives *Up Your Ass* is sheer incredulity at the sad fact that some must work for a living while others enjoy “leisure.” Solanas’s contempt for men as a class is matched only by her contempt for the class structure of capitalism. By the time she wrote *SCUM*, she had solved the problem of inequality by promoting automation and a mass program of

49. Firestone, “I Remember Valerie,” p. 131. In one of the scattered, possibly autobiographical references in *SCUM*, Solanas suggests an expansive queer life for a woman: “SCUM gets around . . . they’ve seen the whole show . . . the fucking scene, the dyke scene—they’ve covered the whole waterfront, been under every dock and pier—the peter pier, the pussy pie . . .” Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 62.

50. *Up Your Ass*. “Billy Name manuscript copy.”

“unwork.” Her fascination with automation not only reflects the obsessions of the day but parallels Warhol’s conception of the advantages of the assembly line.⁵¹ Solanas’s proposals for “unwork,” however, had nothing to do with the blandishments of flower children. Hippy men, she said, wanted to flee cities where there was at least “a bare beginning of civilization” to get “free pussy” and string beads out in the cow pastures.⁵² It is abundantly clear that, with the exception of drag queens, Valerie detested ladies of all sexes. She excoriated women too timid to sign up for the sexual revolution: “Daddy’s Girl . . . is not only unable to see the empty shell behind the façade, but accepts the male definition of himself as superior, as a female, and of herself, as inferior, as a male, which, thanks to Daddy, she really is.”⁵³ She also manifested withering contempt for leftie demonstrations and the first rumblings of women’s liberation. “SCUM will not picket, demonstrate, march, or strike to achieve its ends. Such tactics are for nice, genteel ladies who scrupulously take only such action as is guaranteed to be ineffective . . . SCUM will not subject itself to getting rapped on the head with billy clubs.”⁵⁴

Despite Solanas’s contempt for ladies, remarkable feminists have paid her tribute. Though some of them didn’t get around to it for a decade or two, or even three, Solanas is not a memory that fades. Florence Kennedy and Ti-Grace Atkinson immediately rushed to her support, hailing her as an important spokesperson for women’s liberation. In 1968, socialist Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz, sitting in a café in Mexico City, en route to Cuba to join *that* revolution, happened to see a newspaper headline that read, “Super-Woman Power Advocate Shoots Andy Warhol.” She blasted out of Mexico “like a rocket,” thrilled to learn that “a woman shot a man because he was using her.”⁵⁵

“What a mind Valerie has,” Dunbar-Ortiz wrote, having visited her in jail. “I think of her more as Rimbaud than Che.” In 1970, Pauline Oliveros composed a work titled *To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe, In Honor of Their Desperation*. Vivian Gornick compared Solanas to Malcolm X and Céline, Christine Rochefort to Frantz Fanon, Françoise D’Eaubonne to the Marquis de Sade. In “Goodbye to

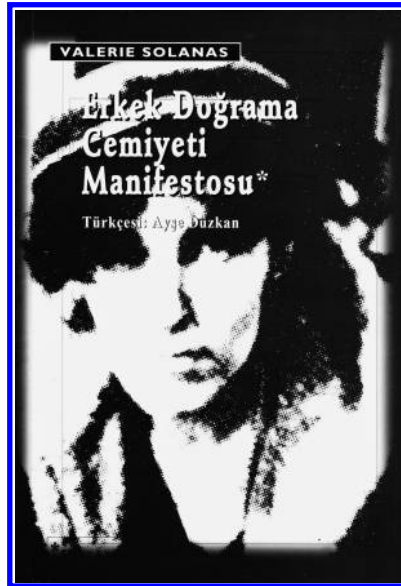
51. Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, pp. 205–09.

52. Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 48.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

55. Dunbar-Ortiz landed in Boston. Days after she arrived, she and a fellow anti-war counselor placed a newspaper ad: “ANNOUNCING the formation of the FEMALE LIBERATION FRONT FOR HUMAN LIBERATION.” Dunbar-Ortiz had been on her way to Cuba, and she remained torn about the decision, writing her husband a few weeks afterwards, “I haven’t rejected Che in admiring Valerie Solanas.” In Boston, Dunbar-Ortiz and her feminist group, sold pamphlets on the street and, in a familiar strategy, charged men twice as much as they charged women. Later in the summer, Dunbar-Ortiz and her posse used selections from *SCUM* to disrupt a women’s lib planning session in Maryland. “I believed that a radical feminist lay behind the mask of each of the women at that conference, and I was proved right.” Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman*, pp. 119, 138–39.



SCUM Manifesto.
Istanbul. 2002.

All That,” an annotated screed against the “male-dominated-cracked-glass version of the American nightmare,” Robin Morgan observed that Valerie was incarcerated because she shot a “used decadence salesman.”⁵⁶ Margaret Harrison produced a drawing titled *The Little Woman at Home* (1971), depicting a dominatrix wearing crotchless lingerie, one spike-heeled boot resting upon a Brillo box. In the early 1970s, when Valerie was still behind bars, Jill Johnston took to quoting Valerie in her *Village Voice* dispatches. “Valerie,” said Johnston, “was very advanced.”⁵⁷

In 1976, after the French edition of *SCUM* had gone out of print, and in the same year that Delphine Seyrig not only made feminist film history in Chantal Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman* but founded the Centre Simone de Beauvoir in Paris, Seyrig and documentarian Christine Roussopolos made a video to keep in circulation *SCUM*-the-literary-device. Wearing skirts, the two women face each other across a small table in someone’s apartment. Books are everywhere, the air is thick with cigarette smoke. While Roussopolos clatters away on an old manual type-

56. Robin Morgan, “Goodbye to All That” (1970), repr. in Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 129–30. I thank Richard Meyer for this reference, and for our arguments about Solanas.

57. Jill Johnston, “Their Inappropriate Manhood” (1972), repr. in *Admission Accomplished: The Lesbian Nation Years* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1998), p. 120.

writer, Seyrig dictates *SCUM*, punctuation and all, demonstrating that a nightmare of French pedagogy cannot incarcerate a feminist polemic. In the background, a small black-and-white television plays news footage of the wars men were conducting in the 1970s, including police violence in Argentina and the suppression of a women's protest march in Belfast.⁵⁸

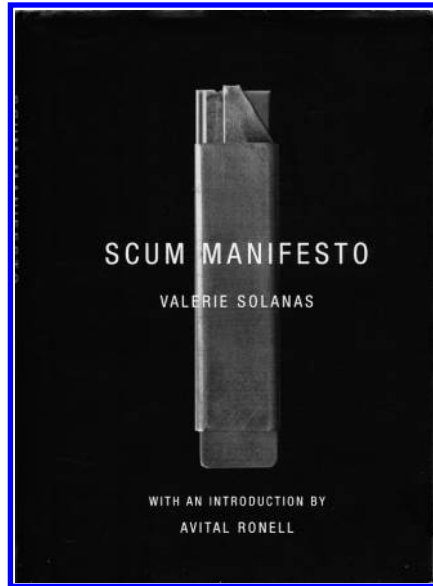
Much later, Carolee Schneemann credited Solanas with accelerating the "issues that would carry feminist theory and practice into our present moment," and Yvonne Rainer acknowledged Solanas for helping her think her way through to feminism. An excerpt from *SCUM* was published in the catalogue of the landmark 1995 exhibition *A Different Light*, from whence it officially made its way into *haute* queer theory.⁵⁹ An accidental encounter with *SCUM* in a bookstore generated Mary Harron's film *I Shot Andy Warhol*. The electronic music duo Matmos have rendered a tribute. Valerie has her own MySpace site and a Facebook page. She is listed on Honorary Heartless Bitches. Artists such as Jeannie Simms, Trina Robbins, punk goddess Alice Bag, Diane Dimassa, Jennifer Worley, and Wu Ingrid Tsang have all put Solanas to use. The lead sentence of the manifesto, reworked to substitute queer for woman, serves as the call-to-arms for La Eskalera Karokola, a women's collective that occupies a house in a working-class neighborhood of Madrid as a public space for feminism. Solanas's name has tripped off the lips of one of the *L-word* lesbians. Swedish author Sara Stridsberg used Solanas's story as the basis for her novel *Dromfakulteten*, published in 2006 and selected as winner of the Nordic Council Literature Prize. The French translation, which appeared in 2009, was accorded an almost reverential reception in *Le Monde*.⁶⁰

In impossible circumstances, *SCUM* theatricalizes the rage that allows an oppositional collective to at once imagine and ironize itself. Since the *New York Post* first bootlegged the text, *SCUM*'s travels and translations have demonstrated a network of resistance that has moved across continents and generations. Excerpts of *SCUM* have been included in countless anthologies of queer and feminist theory. The full text has appeared in (at least) nine English, three German, three

58. The video is available from the Centre audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir, 28 place Saint-Georges, 75009 Paris.

59. Carolee Schneemann, "Solanas in a Sea of Men," in Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), p. 90, 91. Rainer, "Skirting," in *A Woman Who...Essays, Interviews, Scripts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 122. Nayland Blake, Lawrence Rinder, Amy Scholder, eds., *In a Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995); Harron, "Introduction," pp. vii–viii.

60. Stridsberg's introduction to her translation of *SCUM* (translated for me by Jens Jonason) is both tribute and canny analysis. She praises Solanas's "genius" and offers the following: "Men are neither addressed—they are the objects of the text, they are the problem and the disease to be diagnosed and understood, they are the deviants, the defective—nor asked whether they like Valerietopia or not." Sara Stridsberg, "Översättning och Förord," *SCUM Manifest* (Stockholm: Modernista, 2006). For the reception of the French translation of Stridsberg's novel, see Nils C. Ahl, *Le Monde des Livres*, September 4, 2009.



SCUM Manifesto.
New York. 2004.

French, three Italian, two Spanish, one Czech, one Hebrew, one Swedish, and one Turkish edition. The Croatian translation appeared in 2005.⁶¹

Neither Valerie nor any member of her family ever made a penny off the manifesto.⁶²

This is as good a moment as any, then, to lay out a few basics about performance theory. Because I write about Solanas does not mean that I am Solanas, or even that I would have liked Solanas, and certainly not that Solanas would have tolerated me for more than three seconds, facts which I feel compelled to specify

61. The *New York Post*, July 21, 1986, actually scooped Girodias by reprinting almost the entire *SCUM Manifesto*. I confess here that over the last few years, I have used the Internet to assemble my own collection of the various translations and editions, thus driving up the price of *SCUM*. Among the editions, in order of appearance in this essay, are: Olympia Press, New York, 1968, with commentary by Paul Krassner; März Verlag, Darmstadt, 1969, trans. Nils Lindquist; Olympia Press, New York, 1970, with an introduction by Vivian Gornick; La Collection Olympia, Paris, 1971, introduction by Christiane Rochefort, trans. Emanuelle de Lesseps; Phoenix Press, London, 1991; AK Press, Edinburgh and San Francisco, 1996, including Freddy Baer, "About Valerie Solanas," based on Matriarchy Study Group edition (London: 1983), which in turn is based on earlier American edition (Baltimore: Dialectical Materialism Press: n.d.); Buenos Aires, Editorial Perfil, 1997, trans. Ana Becciu; *Sel Yayincilik, Istanbul, 2002, trans. Ayse Düzkan; Verso, London and New York, 2004, with an introduction by Avital Ronell; DataArt+, Zagreb, 2005, trans. Marijana Ivekovic-Pontoni; Mille et une nuits, Paris, 2005, with an introduction by Michel Houellebecq, trans. Emmanuelle de Lesseps; London, Olympia, 1970, cover notations by Solanas.

62. Judith Solanas Martinez, email to the author, June 3, 2007.

because it is much trickier for a dyke to write about Solanas than it is for a fag to write about either Foucault or Warhol. A dyke writing about Solanas puts another nail in her own coffin with every word. “Don’t,” said the man at the bookstore where I bought my fifth copy of *SCUM*, “shoot any good artists today.”

The man was young and it wasn’t the sort of bookstore with an intellectual at every cash register, but if we can all agree by this time, contrary to that feminist adage popular several decades ago, that pornography is not the theory and rape not the practice, it follows that the ideas articulated in *SCUM* did not cause Solanas to make an attempt on a man’s life. The shooting derived from the logic of psychic disintegration, *not* from the logic of satire. To insist upon a feminist reading of *SCUM* is neither tantamount to condoning murder nor a dismissal of queer theory.

Solanas’s particular contribution to third-wave feminism was thinking the male sex out of existence. She understood that “male sex” is coterminous with neither “man” nor “men.” Whatever she may have taken from Simone de Beauvoir, whom she dismissed, along with Jean Genet, as a windbag,⁶³ she put to use in forging the feminist wedge that would render visible the repression achieved by equating gender and sex. Solanas had made this conceptual move by 1967, before the Redstockings or the Furies or Firestone or Gayle Rubin. She got there while Kate Millet was still polishing the footnotes for the dissertation that eventually became the bestseller *Sexual Politics*. Unlike any of these women, Solanas would never have been caught dead using words like “denaturalize” or “reinscribe” or “rhetoric” or “imaginary.” Her “guttersnipe idiot mind,” in Paul Morrissey’s phrase,⁶⁴ preferred “shit” and “shitpile,” “pussy” and “snot,” “fucking” and “faggots” (whom, as a matter of fact, she rather liked). She welcomed them, along with journalists who would further her cause and men who gave their property away, to the Men’s Auxiliary of *SCUM*.

But Solanas’s riffs backfire when they lie dead on the printed page, the voice of the reader being their only hope of animation. This makes it all the more important to retrieve the fragments of Solanas’s career in performance, to function as “an archivist of deviance,” in Jennifer Terry’s formulation.⁶⁵ Solanas’s riffs were staccato, efficient, practiced, tenacious. She chain-smoked. She rocked forward, then backward, always with grace, prodding the air with her finger. She performed for her life, and she never stopped performing, whether she was selling conversations, hustling johns, or hustling Andy, who was, after all, just another john, and who also understood that nothing in life is free.

63. Morrissey, “Valerie Solanis [*sic*] Interviews Andy,” Warhol Museum Archives.

64. See Taylor Meade’s conversation with Morrissey, <http://www.altx.com/interzones2/meade/shot.html> (accessed October 10, 2006).

65. Ronell, for example, in “Deviant Payback: The Aims of Valerie Solanas,” p. 15, calls *SCUM* an “indefensible text.” Really? I venture an educated guess that at one point or another, every woman in the world has uttered, if only to herself, but probably not, either the exact wording or the generic equivalent of at least one of Valerie’s phrases. Jennifer Terry, “Theorizing Deviant Historiography,” *Differences*, 3, no. 2 (1991), p. 57.



SCUM Manifesto.
Središće, Croatia. 2005.

“SCUM” meant low life, Solanas insisted ten years after the shooting, when she reproached a translator who rendered it as “sperm.”⁶⁶ *SCUM* is the manifesto of a low life, a strategy for inhabiting both the first person and a collective. As the 1960s lay dying, a low life performs for her typewriter. SCUM writes her artist’s statement: “. . . [O]nly completely self-confident, arrogant, outgoing, proud, tough-minded females are capable of intense, bitchy, witty conversation.”⁶⁷ In “A Young Girl’s Primer,” SCUM transcribes herself into being, skirmishes with herself in her room at the back of the Chelsea Hotel, perfects the comebacks she should have made while selling her manifesto, puts Betty Friedan in her place,⁶⁸ explains her price points (\$6.00 an hour for conversation, \$25.00 for watching lesbian sex), polishes her panhandling gambits, and demonstrates her skill at

66. “Valerie Solanas an Jörg Schröder: Contact man of the mob,” letter from Solanas dated 4.9.1977, *Valerie Solanas: Manifest der Gesellschaft zur Vernichtung der Männer* (Augsberg: Maro Verlag, 1996), p. 109.

67. Solanas, *SCUM* (1968), p. 56.

68. Morgan Ahern describes two old firehouses in New York that served as political hotspots in the late 1960s. The downtown one, on Wooster Street, “was the all-inclusive one for Gay, Lesbian, and street people.” The uptown one, says Ahern, was for the “more exclusive, elitist, upper class, educated NOW people . . . Betty Friedan hated people like Valerie and used people like her to take public positions on Lesbians [*sic*] and others she did not approve of.” Interviewed by Don Paulson in “Valerie Solanis [*sic*],” *Seattle Gay News*, October 14, 2005, p. 7.

dangling fantasies of lesbian sex around the Hotel Earle on Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street, or Sheridan Square, or on a foray uptown around Radio City, or back in the Village, where she's lumped with "Betsey and Eileen—necking it up as usual," and they're all called "SCUM." By a waiter. As she did as a girl, Solanas hooks with language. Sex is the fallback position. "What do I get for fifteen cents?" says the john. "How 'bout a dirty word?" offers Solanas.

"That's not a bad buy. Okay, here. Now give me the word."

"Men."⁶⁹

In *Up Your Ass*, set on "the sidewalk," the memorable anti-heroine Bongi Perez cruises "broads," relishing the challenge when they are attached to a man. "You got a twat by Dior?" she says when one of them refuses to give her a kiss. Bongi encounters one "Daddy's Girl" after another, each worse than the one before. Extended episodes feature an insufferable cad with pretensions to French cooking and a homemaking instructor teaching "integrated fucking." The narrative is punctuated with cameo appearances by assorted spades and chicks, cats and fashionista queens with an eye for the runway. "She is without a doubt the most garish, tasteless faggot I've ever run across," says one Miss Collins. "1965 and she's wearing wedgies."

It's all about the backtalk. Whichever mouth Solanas puts it in, she is "queen of the quip," in her sister's phrase.⁷⁰ One of the Daddy's Girls is delighted to have found a lovely little yellow "turdlet" for dinner. "The turd's for me," she says to Bongi. "Everyone knows that men have much more respect for women who're good at lapping up shit." Proclaims one of Bongi's friends, "I'm one of society's rejects, a wed mother . . . There oughta be a special home for wed pregnant girls; as it is, we not only have our pregnancies to put up with, but husbands too."⁷¹

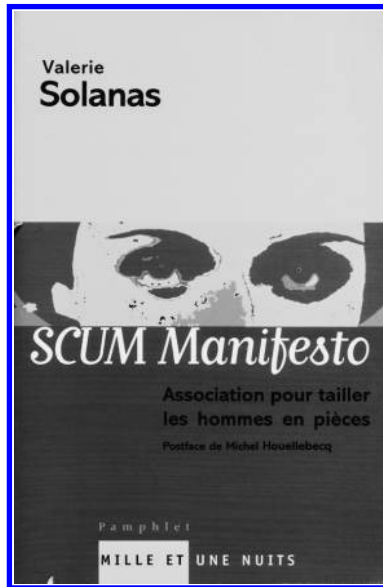
If we can accept that Solanas did not care to define herself as a feminist, another context better calibrates the dialogue she performs: the intersection of the nascent porn industry and the free-speech movement, both of them cottage industries that emerged in the mid-1960s amidst police cleanups, harassment, arrests, movie busts, and lawsuits. Maurice Girodias, Solanas's publisher, had recently arrived in New York from Paris, in debt and under attack for obscenity violations in France. Having previously published Pauline Réage, Vladimir Nabokov, Henry Miller, and Samuel Beckett, Girodias was hedging his bets in a market he did not understand, trying to reproduce a French cocktail of "deliberate pornography, novels that had erotic scenes . . . and a few [novels] that had nothing to do with sex at all." Rather fuzzily, he hoped his audience would include America's increasingly visible homosexual audience. Girodias relied on a stream of "DBs" (code for "dirty books," in the parlance of Olympia's often anonymous porn writers) that supported the literary side of his operation.⁷² When he signed

69. All quotes from Solanas, "A Young Girl's Primer."

70. Judith Martinez, email to author, May 15, 2007.

71. *Up Your Ass*, Billy Name manuscript copy.

72. See John de St. Jorre, *Venus Bound: The Erotic Voyage of the Olympia Press and Its Writers* (New York: Random House, 1994), p. 274.



SCUM Manifesto.
Paris. 2005.

Solanas, Girodias must have been gambling on making her one of his DB regulars.

Paul Krassner, Solanas's other publishing contact, was a satirist and prankster whose biggest coup was publishing a spoof about LBJ fucking Jack Kennedy's corpse. In the counterculture world that supported Lenny Bruce, the Fugs, the Panthers, Ed Sanders, Timothy Leary, and the Theatre of the Ridiculous, both Solanas and Warhol had a cultural function as sexual rebels and practitioners of tactical obscenity. Both, in a sense, were dilettante pornographers. If one current of '60s culture was busy improving the art of love, Valerie and Andy occupied themselves with the craft of fucking, which they understood as basic, ubiquitous, and comic. Both were cynical about the claims of "high" art, but their reservations came from entirely different understandings. Solanas anticipated much of the discourse of the women's art movement: "We know that 'Great Art' is great because male authorities have told us so [O]nly those with exquisite sensitivities far superior to ours can perceive and appreciate [*sic*] the slop they appreciate."⁷³ Warhol was no less jaded: "After I did the thing called 'art' or whatever it's called, I went into business art . . . being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art."⁷⁴

If Warhol won the war between business and art, Solanas at least put up a good fight. The shooting, argues James Harding, was "a carefully orchestrated and

73. Solanas, *SCUM*, p. 58.

74. Quoted in Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, p. 203.

radically disturbing aesthetic performance” that should be set in the context of avant-garde assaults upon capitalism and patriarchy. Harding claims Solanas as “the orchestrator and agent of perhaps the most provocative and profoundly subversive moment of American avant-garde performance in the 1960s.” She demonstrated, he argues, that the elimination of the criteria for high art so celebrated in the 1960s was, in fact, a fiction.⁷⁵

Solanas stands accused of a list of disasters. She was a writer who hardly published, was too crazy to be published, or whose self-published manuscripts looked too funky to be plausible. (But it was, after all, the '60s. Technologically speaking, perfect reproduction via the Xerox machine was not an option. Solanas's typescripts, her mimeo copies of *SCUM*, and her awkward posters were no more amateurish than the piles of stapled pamphlets, chapbooks, broadsides, clumsy diagrams, and ratty amateur flyers that spread word of the counter culture.) The list of disasters goes on: Solanas was not a lesbian; she was a lesbian; she was a failure as a lesbian; she was a hooker; she was a skanky hooker; she had hairs between her eyebrows; she didn't comb her hair; she used makeup; she didn't use makeup; she was poor; she was profligate; she had no sense of humor; she was hilarious; she was hilarious about the wrong things; she had the bad judgment to pick on an artist who would become important; she was clueless about the workings of the art market; she missed; she was a lousy shot; and she showed no remorse.

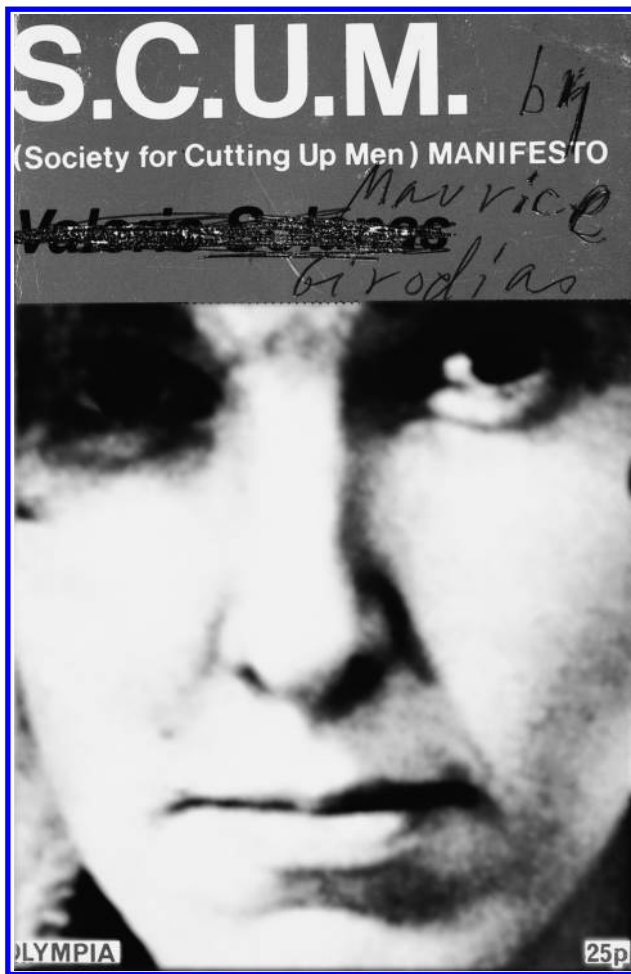
A decade after the shooting, Solanas told the *Voice* that she regretted she hadn't done more target practice but she was not the only person to fire off a gun in the Factory. The fact is, however, she missed the side of the proverbial barn—from five feet away.⁷⁶ By the time she got to Andy, William Burroughs had already shot his wife, and Norman Mailer had stabbed his. Louis Althusser had yet to strangle Héléne, and Carl Andre had yet to weather charges of pushing Ana Mendieta out the window. The only woman to survive was Adele Morales, Mailer's second wife. Did the critical reputation, credibility, or perceived contribution of *any* of these men suffer more than a temporary glitch?

Long after her death, Valerie provokes transparent disgust, profound anxiety, and what she herself would have termed “pussy envy.” Wayne Koestenbaum excoriates those who see “a feminist, oedipal, or revolutionary meaning in Valerie's homicidal act.” An art historian colleague recently sputtered: “I know you think Valerie Solanas was a genius, but it wasn't very nice of her to shoot Andy.” Michel Houellebecq, in the process of dismissing feminists as lovable bitches, accuses her of “overt Nazi fantasies.”⁷⁷

75. Harding, “The Simplest Surrealist Act,” pp. 144, 146.

76. “I consider it immoral that I missed,” she stated. “I should have done target practice.” “Valerie Solanas Replies,” *Village Voice* (August 1, 1977), p. 28. The other shooter, a woman who wandered into the factory in 1964, may have been Harriet Teacher or then again may have been one Dorothy Podbur. Versions multiply. Whoever the shooter was, her act was recouped by Warhol, who titled the wounded paintings *Shot Marylins*. See Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, p. 436n203.

77. Koestenbaum is quoted in Doyle, “I Must Be Boring Someone,” p. 73. Michel Houellebecq, “Postface,” pp. 91, 97.



S.C.U.M. Manifesto (*with cover notations by Solanas*). London. 1970. Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, New York Public Library.

Acute as these reactions are, none of them account for what is apparently a lingering desire to have been important enough to have been at the center of a guttersnipe's aim. May Wilson, who lived next door to the Chelsea, used to keep Valerie's laundry bag under her bed. She would pull it out, "fold the cloth to show the outline of a gun, and explain with a wink that the stiff object was Valerie's laundry." This is her son's description. He adds that the pistol might have killed his two small children.⁷⁸ On her way to the Factory, having failed to find Girodias, Solanas encountered Krassner, who gasped afterwards: ". . . she could've shot *me* right there . . ." Duh. "For all I know," he remarks nonchalantly in his postscript, "she had bought the gun with the money I lent her."⁷⁹ (Tellingly, there's not a word of sympathy or apology to Warhol from either Girodias or Krassner in the get-well cards catalogued in the Warhol Museum.) In the late 1980s, filmmaker Ed Emshwiller remarked that when he got back to *his* New York apartment late on June 3, he found a message from Valerie on his answering machine. It has taken me almost twenty years to realize the obvious: in 1968, people did not have answering machines in their apartments.⁸⁰

"He was so difficult," said Paul Morrissey. "She was so offbeat."⁸¹ In the exact period when the sexual revolution was reshuffling political identities, neither Solanas nor Warhol chose anything on the menu. Not only were they illegible, they declined to name themselves. Neither would allow their sexual practices to be constrained in any way by prevailing social mores. Neither of them would have found the idea of sexual preference or sexual orientation anything but a linguistic tedium and a cosmic joke. As artists, neither of them produced work that can be explained by any binary construction of object choice.

"It was poetic injustice," writes Krassner, "that Warhol should be the first practical extension of her philosophy, for he is apparently asexual. You'd have expected her to go after some exploitative stud."⁸² Girodias reports in the introduction to the first edition of *SCUM* that Valerie showed him a beaver shot sent by one of her admirers, and seemed anxious to "compare notes" on girl friends. Nonetheless, said Girodias, "she did not give me the impression of being a lesbian," adding, "She did not look quite like a woman but neither like a man."⁸³ Ultra Violet, née Isabelle Collin Dufresne, who threw on a Chanel suit before she rushed down to the Factory

78. William S. Wilson, 2004 preface to "Prince of Boredom: The Repetitions and Passivities of Andy Warhol" (orig. pub. *Art and Artists*, March 1968) <http://www.warholstars.org/andywarhol/articles/william/wilson.html> (accessed August 24, 2007).

79. Krassner, "Wonder Waif," pp. 92–93.

80. Emshwiller, then my colleague at the California Institute of the Arts, made this observation to me in one of our conversations in the late 1980s.

81. Herron, "Introduction," p. xiv.

82. Krassner, "Wonder Waif," p. 94.

83. Girodias, "Puublisher's Preface," p. 16.

after the shooting, mocked Solanas's attire. "She wore dark shoes," recalled Ultra, "khaki trousers, a sweater, and a dark blue work cap. We called her Valerie Barge Cap." Warhol himself noticed that Solanas was "wearing pants more like trousers" on the day of the shooting, and remarked that he had never seen her in a dress. Directly after the shooting, Viva told the *Times* that Solanas "wore men's clothes, slacks and jackets and hats. She had long hair, but she wore it tied up short because she said it was 'too feminine' when it hung down."⁸⁴

"I haven't got the time for sex of any kind," Solanas told the *Voice* in 1967. "I'm no lesbian." These remarks are often adduced to simplify Solanas's sexual predilections. In 1977, interviewed again for the *Voice*, she called it this "serious libel . . . [It] gave the impression that I'm a heterosexual."⁸⁵

In other words, wherever the factories in which we may imagine gender and sexuality to be constructed, it is certain that Valerie and Andy did not come off the same assembly line. Solanas may have been a proselytizer for automation, but she ended up doing piecework in a sweatshop. Warhol founded a mom-and-son operation that turned into a queer family factory and then mushroomed into a transnational corporation. Valerie was a peon. Andy was the boss.

I shall end by returning to performance, to an impossible archive of shards—the representational flotsam and the gestural calligraphy offered by a brilliant, butch, funny, poor, queer working girl. I neither want to refuse interpretation because the evidence is scarce nor excise the lesbian from the domains of "femininity" and "masculinity."

—In a 1958 photograph of the residents of Carroll Hall, taken at the University of Maryland, Valerie stands out, a mote of butch fury upon a sea of dresses and pearls and circle pins. Jaw set, she stands beside a woman wearing a plaid shirt. She has only just tucked in her own plaid shirt.⁸⁶

—She wore "some disturbingly feminine-looking clothes" to dinner at El Quixote when Girodias signed her up. "I thought," he says, "I could even detect lipstick—a faint trace—powder . . . eye shadow?"⁸⁷

—For one split second of the strobe section of *I, a Man*, Solanas flashes a smile: triumphant, soft, almost winsome, available. This is emphatically NOT Valerie Barge Cap.

—In a snapshot made by her sister, probably in Berkeley in 1968, shortly before the shooting, Solanas sits in the shade of a tree, wearing bell-bottoms and a striped shirt. She is thin, and she looks down at her hands, also thin. She looks anything but tough.⁸⁸

84. Ultra Violet, *Famous for Fifteen Minutes*, p. 169. Viva is quoted in Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, p. 342.

85. "Warhol Gravely Wounded in Studio, Ad Actress is Held," *New York Times*, June 4, 1968, p. 36. Quoted in Robert Marmorstein, "A Winter Memory of Valerie Solanas," *Village Voice*, June 13, 1968, p. 32; and Baer, "About Valerie Solanas," p. 56.

86. Terrapin Yearbook (Baltimore: University of Maryland, 1958), p. 281.

87. Girodias, "Publisher's Preface," p. 15.

88. Coburn, "Valerie's Gang," p. 16.

—Fred McDarrah, chronicler of the Beats and Greenwich Village during the 1960s, produced the most familiar image of Solanas: uncombed hair falling into her eyes, brimmed cap, upturned fake fur collar. The photograph is usually understood to be a portrait, that is to say, the trace of a soul stolen from a primitive, rather than as a low life's collaboration with a freelancer. The image has migrated, usually uncredited, from one edition of *SCUM* to another. In the first version, the cover designer rendered McDarrah's photograph in high contrast red and black, referencing those silk screens which themselves declined any notion of an original. Over time, the portrait multiplies, shrinks, changes colors, and melts into forgery.

—Warhol later said he wished the cameras had been running on the afternoon of June 3, but even photographic documentation probably couldn't forestall the multiplication of versions. It is said that Solanas's hair was combed and that she wore lipstick, even mascara, perhaps a dress, or a yellow turtleneck, or a black turtleneck, or a blue turtleneck, or a yellow sweatshirt, or a yellow blouse, or trousers, meaning men's pants, or khaki pants, or tennis shoes, or torn sneakers without socks, and a trench coat. The bag that may have contained a gun also contained her address book, and what is quaintly described as a sanitary pad. Valerie was premeditating her own media image. "Read my manifesto," she said to the *New York Post* after she turned herself in to the police, "and it will tell you what I am."⁸⁹

—"Slight, fair, aging." That was Solanas in the mid-1970s, around the time she went to the New York Public Library and took a ballpoint pen to *SCUM*.⁹⁰ On the cover, she replaced her name with Girodias's. Inside, she scrawled a note to the effect that her next book, the real book, *her* book, would be called *Valerie Solanas*. She altered the back cover copy to destroy any proposed connection between the Women's Liberation movement, and the shooting. She deleted the periods between the letters of *SCUM*, doing her best to repossess a text intended not as the document of an organization but as an incitement to a state of mind. The corrected *SCUM* now sits defended behind several sets of locked glass doors in the Rare Books Room of the New York Public Library.

—In the mid-1970s, a friend of Firestone's described Solanas on Saint Mark's place, covered with sores, panhandling, wearing only a blanket. She had been living on the street for three months.⁹¹

—Two hookers still living in her "hellhole of a welfare pits of a hotel"

89. Quoted in Harding, "The Simplest Surrealist Act," p. 147. Harding suggests that the pad was a "profoundly rich" symbol of women's experience, and that Solanas may have intended to use the pad as a bandage for Warhol's wound, a theory that seems to me beyond improbable. A menstruating woman crazy like a fox readying herself for public exposure (remember the address book) would not want blood all over her clothes.

90. Laura Winkiel turned up this intervention. See "The 'Sweet Assassin' and the Performative Politics of *SCUM Manifesto*," in *The Queer Sixties*, ed. Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 74.

91. Firestone, "I Remember Valerie," p. 132.

describe the woman they remember from the 1980s—slim, pretty, on meth. She would, they said admiringly, “go hooking in a great silver lamé dress.”⁹²

—A week before she died, Solanas was sighted at her typewriter in her single room by the building superintendent of her Tenderloin hotel in San Francisco. She was surrounded by the pages of a manuscript. Her body was found on April 25, 1988, about a week after she had succumbed to a long struggle with poverty, Warhol, and pneumonia.

Meth, 1988, San Francisco. Why not junkie pneumonia?—which is to say AIDS, which is to say that Solanas fell between the cracks of yet another revolution.⁹³

92. Bruce Boone, “Look on My Works, Ye Mighty, and Despair, or, Valerie Solanas in Silver Lamé,” *Dwan* 22 (October 1997).

93. Whatever Valerie was writing has disappeared. After her daughter’s death, Dorothy Moran, Solanas’s mother, burned the manuscripts and ephemera in her possession. Coburn, “Valerie’s Gang,” p. 8. Solanas’s sister lost whatever remained of Valerie in Florida hurricanes. Email from Judith Martinez to the author, June 3, 2007.