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# INTRODUCTION

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## I.

Valerie Solanas (1936–1988) is renowned today for the ingeniousness of *SCUM Manifesto*, but at the end of her life she was primarily notorious for having shot Andy Warhol back in 1968. The assassination attempt was caused in part by Warhol having lost the script of *Up Your Ass* she had presented hoping he would produce her play. When she eventually realized he had no intention of doing that, she got furious about not even getting her script back. Warhol survived, and Solanas got her sentence—life went on.

In time, people taking new interest in Solanas assumed that this had been the only copy, and that it had vanished along with any possibility of knowing more about the contents of *Up Your Ass*.

A lingering image of Solanas has been of her delusionally pacing up and down the streets of Greenwich Village in the 1960's and 70's, trying to hawk her self-published photo offset copies of the radical-feminism-pioneering *SCUM Manifesto* to unresponsive or condescending New Yorkers<sup>1</sup>—she might just as well have been the coolest one on the block in any given film with

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1 Being somewhat nuanced by Solanas herself in a letter to the editor (published in Vol. VII, No. 5, 1977) of the feminist newspaper *Majority Report*, which had claimed that Solanas was “back on the streets of Lower East Side peddling a new printing” of *SCUM Manifesto*: “I was out one night (in the West Village, not the Lower East Side) peddling Manifestoes just as an experiment to see how well they’d sell on the street.”

aspirations of depicting big city coolness—not unlike the protagonist Bongi Perez in her play.

Over the years, her *Manifesto* has, in its own right, generated theatre productions and new editions from publishers and presses, but it was Mary Harron's 1996 movie *I Shot Andy Warhol* that first presented a broader view of Solanas' life in relation to her concepts and worldview—although, as the title implies, with a climactic focus on the Warhol incident. The movie also brought SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) back to life for a new and more accepting time, but the general public didn't bother to investigate the source text and get a full-bodied appreciation of the dynamic humor and unfailing literary style of the *Manifesto*. There are many parallels to *Up Your Ass*, and those who fail to notice the satirical intentions of Solanas in *SCUM Manifesto* will surely reconsider after familiarizing themselves with the comic style of her play.

Throughout the fluctuating course of public opinion over the decades, Valerie Solanas by default has continually been all too easily (re)deemed a wannabe who at any cost wanted to be warmly welcomed and incorporated into either the women's rights movement at large, or the collective cultural sphere Andy Warhol created with The Factory—that she was ruined by envy of inclusiveness of the one or the other kind. The complexity of Solanas as a person wasn't broached until 2014 when Breanne Fahs published her thorough biography *Valerie Solanas; The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (and Shot Andy Warhol)*.<sup>2</sup>

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2 A highly recommended read, and, with few objections, crucial to the outlining of this text.

Although Solanas in fact did participate in a few film projects realized by The Factory (and complained about her lousy salary), the play *Up Your Ass* was not at all written with Warhol and The Factory in mind. Solanas worked on the manuscript for the major part of the 1960's, and already in 1962 showed a first draft to theater companies. When she first sent a copy to Warhol in 1965 they had not yet been introduced. Solanas was just looking for a stage bold enough to produce a play this controversial.

The dedication and acknowledgements in *Up Your Ass* is a testament to where she found her primary driving force within society at that time:

I dedicate this play to ME  
a continuous source of strength and guidance,  
and without whose unflinching loyalty, devotion  
and faith this play would never have been written.

*additional acknowledgements:*

Myself—for proofreading, editorial comment,  
helpful hints, criticism and suggestions and an  
exquisite job of typing.

I—for independent research into men, married  
women and other degenerates.

The notion that Solanas invested her hopes and efforts in having the play widely spread, rather than in becoming fused into the Warhol circle, is additionally illuminated by a 1966 ad she placed in *The Village Voice*, a New York weekly, offering copies of the play for sale (she used one of its alternate titles, “Up from the Slime,” as the main title was considered indecent for print in the ad section).

This also suggests that we must refer to *Up Your Ass* as being a published work. Solanas made a first edition in 1965 and a second in 1967.

A copy of the 1965 edition was sent to the Library of Congress in Washington for registration at the Copyright Office. Breanne Fahs describes this document as “a carbon copy” of Solanas’ typed original, including “numerous typographical errors carefully corrected in her hand using white tape and blue ink.”

The first edition was equivalent to “print on demand.” The play was still being revised and Solanas made new copies when needed. It’s hard to say if Solanas succeeded in selling the play in its first edition, especially considering the audacious price of ten dollars a copy advertised in 1966. She charged just one dollar and fifty cents for the photo offset (mimeograph) second edition in 1967, having printed a larger number of copies at once, and she sold *SCUM Manifesto* for anything from twenty-five cents to two dollars.

A third literary piece by Valerie Solanas from this period is a story first published in a 1966 issue of *Cavalier* (a Playboy-style magazine), and the fact that she herself regarded “A Young Girl’s Primer on How to Attain to the Leisure Class”<sup>3</sup> an important piece—one she categorized as non-fiction—can be deducted from her inclusion of it in the 1967 edition of *Up Your Ass*.

In spite of the itinerant homelessness that was her everyday life in 1960’s New York and her transient lifestyle in the following decades, Solanas managed to retain

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3 “The Leisure Class” is a term coined in 1899 by economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen, who made use of it in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* to depict people so wealthy they didn’t need to work.