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## Pussy Envy: Subversion of Androcentric Discourse in Valerie Solanas' SCUM Manifesto

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Pussy Envy: Subversion of Androcentric Discourse in Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto*

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
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## Introduction

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Radical writer Valerie Solanas is the author of the *SCUM Manifesto*, a withering text criticizing male supremacy and men and women's casual acceptance of the patriarchal social order. Imagining a society where the male race has been depleted and women live and govern harmoniously among themselves, Solanas declares in *SCUM*'s opening line, "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" (3). After working on *SCUM* intermittently between 1965 and 1967, Solanas would self-publish, distribute copies, and orchestrate public performances of the manifesto around New York City. What Solanas is best remembered for today, however, isn't her revolutionary text. In 1968, while continuing to promote *SCUM*, Solanas shot Andy Warhol, an infamous act that would follow her through a high-profile court trial, after which she vanished from the public eye and died in obscurity at the age of 52.

A common yet reductive reading of Solanas' *SCUM* in conjunction with the Warhol shooting gives the impression that the ideas she champions in the *SCUM* are merely ramblings of a crazy woman, rather than a significant text worthy of critical analysis. Such simplistic interpretations of *SCUM* directly equate the shooting and Solanas advocating in *SCUM* for a male genocide, failing to consider the complex and discursive arguments permeating Solanas' writing. While not everyone viewed Solanas and the *SCUM* in such a negative light — she had a small following of women and a few men who embraced her — much of her support dissipated

quickly in the wake of the shooting. On the other hand, the conflict can be credited with bringing visibility to *SCUM*, which, at the time of the shooting, was still being copied and passed out by Solanas on the street, yet to be published through a formal press. Although she would have objected to this label, the shooting cemented Solanas' status as a sort of counter-culture feminist icon. Her sudden notoriety introduced *SCUM* to a wider readership, in which she found both critics, including the likes of Betty Friedan, and a handful of devotees. In the fifty-plus years since, *SCUM* has been tentatively absorbed into the feminist canon, taught in gender studies classes, albeit within the context that it's to be studied as an experimental, not literal, piece of writing. Within feminist circles, Solanas has even garnered somewhat of a cult following as a symbol of female rage amid the ongoing struggle against patriarchy, a woman who wanted not to mediate, but to give men a taste of their own medicine, countering misogyny with brazen misandry.

When I told fellow students about my project, I found that the potential for nuanced interpretations of Solanas was being forfeited due to the common conjecture that she's merely a clinically-insane man-hater and a homicidal one at that. Perception of Solanas in the modern-day still stems from that one event: she is the woman who shot Andy Warhol. This notion propelled my impulse to defend Solanas as a writer, scholar, and critical theorist, and to promote reading *SCUM* as an innovative work of scholarship. My inquiry into *SCUM* is predominantly framed around a comparative reading of *SCUM* and the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, such as those outlined in his 1918 essay "The Virginity Taboo," in addition to scholarship examining Freudian psychoanalysis and Aristotle's system of biology, Aristotelianism. As a psychology student in the late 1950s into the early 1960s, Solanas presumably encountered the work of Freud and Aristotle

in her coursework. While I will provide a brief background on Solanas and the origins of *SCUM*, this project focuses on the influence of theory on *SCUM* as it manifests in text, rather than unearthing experiences from Solanas' turbulent and sometimes traumatic life and speculating on the effect they may have had on her writing. After identifying the influence of Freud and Aristotle's popular androcentric arguments on *SCUM*, I demonstrate how Solanas subverts these arguments to place women in a position of superiority over men. As a framework for my analysis, I draw on French philosopher Jacques Derrida's conception of "phallogocentrism" American anthropologist and feminist Gayle Rubin's construction of a "sex/gender system."

In her introduction to the 1968 Olympia Press edition of *SCUM*, which is the version I cite throughout this project, feminist critic Vivian Gornick writes that "power can be wrested from those who hold it in one of two ways: either war is violently waged and institutions are attacked, or institutions are ignored and counter-institutions are built. The struggle to reduce the power of the male structure and hand some of it over to women is one in which the latter method must be employed" (xxxiv). Solanas has taken the comparably more revolutionary route in *SCUM*. She doesn't attack the institution of patriarchy but, both literally and theoretically, obliterates it; in between her call for a male genocide, she coopts the androcentric theories of Freud and Aristotle to them false. Then, from the ashes of patriarchy, Solanas conceives of a new social order: a society led by women and devoid of men.



## Chapter 1

### *A Brief Primer on Valerie Solanas and the Origins of SCUM*

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Following her high school graduation, Solanas left home in 1954 and enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park, as a psychology major (Fahs 30). To make ends meet during her undergraduate years, she worked as an assistant in the biology lab under a professor whose work specialized in animal learning and anatomy, which could have been the genesis of her interest in Aristotelianism, a system of biology founded on Aristotle's study of animal anatomy (31). In Breanne Fahs' 2014 biography of Valerie Solanas, *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote Scum (and Shot Andy Warhol)*, a fellow psychology major, Jean Holroyd, remembered Solanas, "We were bright, not rebellious... She was rebellious... She'd been on her own for a long time'" (Fahs 33). While rebellious and outspoken, Solanas was a driven and ambitious student, as well as an out lesbian who never cared to hide her sexuality, though she would sometimes sleep with men and even had an "occasional boyfriend" (33). Solanas' identity was not only unconventional in terms of the standards of womanhood in the 1950s but extremely complex and full of contradictions.

Aiming to pursue a career in evolutionary and biological psychology, Solanas enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Minnesota in 1958. After less than a year in the program, she grew disillusioned with the prospects of a fruitful career as a female psychologist, gleaning that most opportunities would go to her male peers (38). A young Solanas hitchhiked to California and took a few psychology classes at the University of California, Berkeley, before ultimately abandoning her graduate education (39). By 1962, Solanas has relocated to New York

City, where she lived out of a women's residence hotel and supported herself through prostitution, working on writing in her spare time (40). Solanas' experience as a member of New York's tight-knit community of sex workers — the majority of whom were queer — would later crop up in SCUM, among other works. In 1966, in tandem with working on the manifesto, she penned the stage play *Up Your Ass* — the complete title of which is *Up Your Ass or, From the Cradle to the Boat, or, The Big Suck, or, Up from the Slime* — along with a lesser-known short story for *Cavalier Magazine* entitled “A Young Girl's Primer on How to Attain the Leisure Class,” detailing the pursuits of a young woman in New York who funds her writing career by selling money and sex (44). Aside from SCUM, these works are possibly Solanas' only surviving pieces of writing, *Up Your Ass* being the more notable of the two, despite going unrecognized within the theater community until its first performance in 2000, over a decade after her death. Through the play's protagonist, lesbian prostitute Bongi Perez, Solanas tells the story of a hustling misandrist who believes that all heterosexual relationships are transactional and based on the exchange of sex.

It wasn't until 1967 that Solanas first encountered Andy Warhol and asked him for his help in putting together a production of *Up Your Ass*. Initially, she attempted to sell copies of the play for some extra cash, placing an ad in an October, 1966 edition of the *Village Voice* (Fahs 50). Solanas imagined that Warhol would be interested in the play even before meeting him, mailing him a copy sometime in late 1965 (50) While her letter went unanswered, Valerie arrived at The Factory in 1967, at which point Warhol politely took a copy of the *Up Your Ass*. Upon reading the play — which brims with explicit scenes detailing sex work, drag queens, and a murder — he found it so provocative that he initially feared Solanas may be a police informant,

such as those who had busted The Factory's events and arrested their attendees before (Fahs 79). To prove this was not the case, Solanas reportedly unzipped her pants and flashed her vulva to Warhol, saying, "Sure, I'm a cop and here's my badge" (79).

Over the ensuing months, Solanas hung on the fringes of Warhol's artistic circle, appearing with minor roles in two of his short films, *I, a Man* and *Bikeboy* (Fahs 92). Living and working out of the Chelsea Hotel, Solanas had since self-published the *SCUM* and was distributing copies and orchestrating public performances of it around the city. Another hotel resident, publisher Maurice Girodias of Olympia Press, had shown interest in Solanas' writing and asked for more, offering her \$500 upfront in exchange for royalty rights (97). Solanas, however, was suspicious of Girodias' intentions and grew paranoid over the idea that he now owned her writing and planned to run off with it. This paranoia coincided with Warhol brushing off her repeated attempts to make contact with him, although he had initially entertained the possibility of producing *Up Your Ass* and was still in possession of the play's script. Solanas held the belief that Warhol carelessly misplaced the manuscript, though it would later be retained in the 1990s by the Andy Warhol Museum, discovered in a forgotten trunk in The Factory (49).

Solanas began the search for another producer to bring *Up Your Ass* to fruition. On June 3rd, 1968, she reportedly asked the front desk of the hotel to call for Girodias, perhaps to hash out their informal deal, but was told that he had left the city for the weekend. Growing increasingly frustrated with the power player with whom she had handed over her work, Solanas appeared at Lee Strasberg's Actor's Studio looking for the famous director (113). Unable to reach him, she then showed up uninvited at the Brooklyn apartment of producer Margo Feiden, a member of Warhol's intimate circle (114). In 2009, Feiden recalled to James Barron of *The New*

*York Times* that Solanas had attempted to convince her to put on the play. When Feiden told the distraught Solanas that she wouldn't stage it, Solanas reportedly responded, "Yes you will produce the play because I'll shoot Andy Warhol and that will make me famous and the play famous, and then you'll produce it" (116) Feiden recalled that around noon, Solanas handed her a folder containing the script before showing her a gun, again insisting that she would shoot Warhol. Once Solanas had left, Feiden made several phone calls trying to inform authorities about the shooting plan. She called her local police precinct, the Police Headquarters of Manhattan, and the mayor's office. Her calls went either unanswered and unreturned, or in one case, the police officer who picked up asked her if she even knew what a real gun looked like (117).

After leaving Feiden's apartment around two o'clock, Solanas arrived at The Factory armed with the gun. For another two hours, she rode the elevator up and down while waiting for Warhol to arrive, after which the two entered the studio together. Warhol went to answer a ringing phone. Solanas seized her opportunity, and shot at him three times in total, hitting him on the third try (120). The trajectory of the single bullet ripped through Warhol's stomach, liver, spleen, esophagus, and both of his lungs. Believing Warhol to be dead, Solanas turned and shot Mario Amaya, the British gallery owner Warhol was meeting, in the hip before fleeing from The Factory (120). Warhol was briefly pronounced dead and then revived, immediately undergoing five and a half hours of emergency surgery. Fahs writes that "the following day, Tuesday, his condition was listed as critical, with doctors giving him a fifty-fifty chance of survival" (121). He eventually recovered after multiple surgeries, including the removal of his spleen, and a two

month stay in a hospital, though he would have to wear a surgical corset that held his organs in place for the rest of his life.

A *New York Daily News* article written by Frank Faso, Martin McLaughlin, and Richard Henry and published on June 4th, 1968, a day after the shooting, recalled the sequence of events: “Andy Warhol, 36-year-old pop artist, maker of underground movies and darling of the avant-garde set, was critically wounded at 4:30 p.m. yesterday when one of his female film stars barged into his sixth-floor Union Square office and, without a word, fired a barrage of bullets at Warhol and a business associate.” One woman who spent time at The Factory described Solanas as “a strange character.” Solanas, the woman said, had supposedly “been bothering Andy a long time... Andy kept turning her off, but he was just too nice a guy to give her a complete brushoff” (Faso, McLaughlin, Henry).

Solanas, meanwhile, was unapologetic about her decision to shoot the famous pop artist, although she turned herself in to the police later the same day, identifying herself as the woman who shot Warhol (Faso 123). A cop told the *New York Daily News* that Solanas “handed him a .22 revolver and a .32 automatic and told him: ‘The police are looking for me. I am a flower child. He had too much control over my life’” (Faso, McLaughlin, Henry). She was admitted to a psychiatric hospital, where she was ultimately determined to be mentally unstable, and then transferred to a prison ward within Queens’ Elmhurst Hospital to await trial. First appearing before a court in mid-June, when the trial commenced on June 28th, she has been indicted on all charges — of illegally possessing a gun, assault, and attempted murder. Two months later, in August, she was diagnosed as being psychologically insane and moved to the Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, where she remained until January 1969. Come June, she

finally stood trial and was sentenced to three years in prison, of which she served one. The shooting ultimately failed to accomplish what Solanas allegedly told Feiden — the shooting didn't make *Up Your Ass* famous. But if not for the attack, *SCUM* may have very well been forgotten in history; instead, Solanas was thrust into the spotlight, and *SCUM* went along with her.

## Chapter 2

### *Appropriation of Androcentric Discourse in the Manifesto Genre*

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The manifesto genre is used as a form of protest, an act of resistance against an ongoing struggle against long-standing established practices; it functions to illustrate the wrongdoings perpetrated by individuals and organizations that hold power and to present alternative strategies for liberation and equality. Within oppressive systems, the manifesto is written to point out that simply because a certain practice is dominant, that doesn't equate to it being morally right. In "Manifesto as Theory and Theory as Material Force: Toward a Red Polemic," Teresa L. Ebert defines the manifesto as "the space in which concrete social contestations are articulated as abstract ideas" (554). The manifesto "puts in question the existing economic and social arrangements and intervenes in the alienated forms of knowledges and practices that have, by the agency of power, become familiar and commonsensical and thus have assumed the shape of natural modes of knowing and acting in the world" (554). Although feminist scholars have ruminated on *SCUM*, it's largely been excluded from philosophical and psychoanalytical discourses, despite its relevance to those subject fields. With genre and form coming into play, Ebert explains "the manifesto and polemic are, as might be expected, marginalized in mainstream discourses and treated in the academy and knowledge industry, in general, as modes of non-knowledge" (553). (The overarching marginalization of the manifesto operates in tandem with Solanas' marginalization from second-wave feminism, however self-imposed that exclusion may be.) What is commonly accepted, the manifesto points out, typically only services a particular ruling class. While the ruling class refuses to relinquish its power — unwilling to

downgrade its status and superior living conditions — the comparably larger oppressed classes are also reluctant to enact change, even if it will benefit their conditions. Manifestos may be distributed to recruit members of marginalized groups to the ranks of organizations and movements by engendering one's feelings of discontentment with the conditions of their oppression while sparking hope that these conditions are malleable.

Some may envision the revolution, but are fearful of retaliation from the ruling class or think that a total restructuring of power, in which all members of society are equal, is unachievable. Addressing these uncertainties, the manifesto functions as a roadmap, offering up a plan of strategies to transform ideas into tangible revolutionary actions. Decades or even centuries in the aftermath of when a manifesto was written, contemporary discourses may still reject absorbing a manifesto into the canon of a certain oppressed group. Ebert cites Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' contested *Communist Manifesto* as an example of the continual resistance to manifestos, in spite of the philosophers' critiques on capitalism still being relevant to economic conditions today (Ebert 553). "The mainstream resistance to these manifestos is no more a matter of authorial insight than is the canonic absorption of more favored manifestos — rather, the cultural incorporation or resistance to specific manifestos is an effect of the historical conditions with which they engage" (555). In the years surrounding *SCUM*'s publication, feminist thinkers and organizations, such as Betty Friedan and the National Organization for Women, were protective of how feminists were represented in news and media. Solanas not only embodied but embraced the negative stereotypes of feminists: she was a misandrist, as well as a lowly sex worker.



Fahs details how *SCUM* was swept under the rug in the wake of the Warhol shooting, writing that “when the shooting of 1968 is given as Valerie’s fifteen minutes of fame, the *SCUM Manifesto* serves as its footnote” (Fahs 55). The title of the biography itself — *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote Scum (and Shot Andy Warhol)* — harps on the common reductionist perspective of Solanas that fails to take her seriously as a radical writer and thinker, and thus, dismisses the intricacies of *SCUM* as a political text. On the conflation of *SCUM* and the shooting, Fahs contends that the “pairing resolves any form of contradiction that may arise when comparing her life and work, as the contradictions between the manifesto and Valerie’s life, between theory/satire and practice, are masked by the overly reductive formulation of Andy Warhol shooting equals *SCUM Manifesto* in practice” (55). The second-wave feminist movement’s reaction to *SCUM*, which they only bothered to comment on after Solanas’ shooting of Warhol, highlights its self-consciousness around how it was perceived by the rest of the country and the desire to appear as ‘tame’ women who were merely adversaries to patriarchal power structures but not than a violent threat in order to further their own goals. “No action of the board of New York NOW, of National NOW, no policy ever voted by the members advocated shooting men in the balls, the elimination of men as proposed by that *SCUM Manifesto!*,” Betty Friedan, founder of the National Organization for Women, announced on the organization’s behalf after the shooting, per Marybeth Hamilton’s article “Remembering 1968: The S.C.U.M. Manifesto for the Society for Cutting up Men.” At no point in *SCUM* does Solanas actually write anything about “shooting men in the balls,” demonstrating that Friedan’s and the larger feminist movement’s dismissal of *SCUM* was hinged entirely on the shooting and their desire to distance NOW from it so as to not hurt the feminist cause. Friedan’s response is almost ironic,

considering that *SCUM* preemptively calls out women for their complacency with society's sexism.

NOW's then-president Ti-Grace Atkinson, however, was a surprising advocate of Solanas, calling her "the first outstanding champion of women's rights" and enlisted civil rights lawyer Flo Kennedy to represent her in court (Fahs 137). The two women even visited Solanas in prison. In August 1968, three months after her arrest, Solanas wrote Atkinson, rebuffing her help:

"I know you, along with all the other professional parasites with nothing of their own going for them, are eagerly awaiting my commitment to the bughouse . . . I want to make perfectly clear that I am not being committed because of my views or the *SCUM* Manifesto. . . . Nor do I want you to continue to mouthe [sic] your cultivated banalities about my motive for shooting Warhol Your gall in presuming to be competent to discourse on such a matter is beyond belief. In short, do not ever publicly discuss me, *SCUM*, or any aspect at all of my care. Just DON'T" (142).

Not long after she publicly defended Solanas, Atkinson would resign from NOW due to backlash from fellow organization members and her falling out with Solanas (155). Similar to Solanas, Atkinson took issue with the comparably passive approach of feminist groups, who tended to paint sexism and patriarchy as a civil rights issue instead of something far more drastic. Yet Solanas tended to lump second-wave feminists — Friedan and Atkinson alike — together with Warhol, deeming them all opportunists who wanted to take advantage of her work without understanding its true meaning. "*SCUM* is not for you," Solanas wrote in one letter responding to Atkinson, according to Hamilton. "*SCUM* is for whores, dykes, criminals, homicidal maniacs." A valuable tenet of *SCUM* as a feminist text today is precisely that Solanas refused to refer to herself as a feminist and sought to distance herself from the second-wave feminists of the 1960s

and 70s, yet Atkinson's defense of Solanas in the wake of the Warhol shooting highlighted how she was still embraced by some of radical feminists within the movement who agreed with her revolutionary vision.

The shooting also complicated how historians and feminists contextualize Solanas within or against the second-wave feminist movement. In the weeks following the shooting, she grew increasingly paranoid and became even more hostile towards Atkinson's attempts to provide her with legal aid. At the time, Atkinson would give interviews to media outlets on Solanas' behalf, which created the idea, to Solanas' chagrin, that she identified with the second-wave feminist movement. "Your gall in presuming me to be competent to discourse on such a matter is beyond belief. In short do not ever publicly discuss me, *SCUM*, or any aspect at all of my care. Just DON'T," Solanas wrote to Atkinson in one of her last few correspondences (Fahs 142).

Both the public's and the feminist movement's reception of Solanas and *SCUM* can be viewed within the overarching trend of manifesto writing that was defined by male-dominated political movements. Set against the New Left movement taking place in America over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, manifestos — for instance, "Platform and Program" of the Black Panthers and "The Port Huron Statement" by the college campus-based Students for a Democratic Society — notably exclude the mention of women's issues, produced by movements that were male-governed and sometimes lacked female representation entirely (Pearce 307). The aforementioned manifestos discussed class, capitalism, nationalism, and race, but failed to recognize patriarchy and women's oppression as a social issue, which continued to normalize the domination of male power structures and marginalized the female members in their respective organizations. With *SCUM*, Solanas appropriated the manifesto genre and endowed it with a new

sense of purpose outside of the patriarchal context. Throughout the text, she identifies issues with patriarchy, male sexuality, heterosexual relationships, and men, in general, and provides solutions in the form of militant guerilla tactics against the male species. Solanas declares that “just as humans have a prior right to existence over dogs by virtue of being more highly evolved and having a superior consciousness, so women have a prior right to existence over men” (Solanas 36).

It’s only logical that “the elimination of any male is, therefore, a righteous and good act, an act highly beneficial to women as well as an act of mercy” (Solanas 36). Moreso, to disrupt the patriarchal system, women should immediately “declare themselves off the money system, stop buying, just loot and simply refuse to obey all laws they don't care to obey” (39). Solanas’ militant proposals are similar to the politically disruptive and assertive rhetoric of the Black Panthers and other groups of the New Left movement, explains scholar Kimber Charles Pearce in *The Radical Feminist Manifesto as Generic Appropriation: Gender, Genre, And Second Wave Resistance* (Pearce 307). Pearce contrasts the manifesto, influenced by male writers and male-run political organizations, with the feminist appropriation of symbolism-heavy imagery and tactics originally used by anti-Vietnam protestors to rail against bodily oppression.

Gornick notes in her introduction to *SCUM* that Solanas’ writing, “full of the narrow, icy insights of the genuine outsider,” “reads like the early writings of Malcolm X” (Gornick xxvi). Endorsing the likeness, she continues, “who else, indeed, should Solanas sound like? Women and blacks are, after all, the true outsiders of this society, and Malcolm X and Valerie Solanas are the quintessential black and female outsiders” (xxvi). Gornick compares Malcolm X’s writing about “white devils” to Solanas’ assertion in *SCUM* that “men are a biological abortion” — readers of

either text couldn't see past the shock value to understand their authors' evaluations of an unequal society (xxvi). The appropriation of symbolic imagery in SCUM demonstrates how the manifesto genre can be endowed with a new sense of purpose under a different political cause. For several reasons, this appropriation is not without controversy, one being that it subjects the rhetoric of feminist issues to the language and imagery associated with patriarchy, the very discourses that feminists sought to circumvent by writing their own manifestos in the first place.

Pearce proposes that "those who have rejected appropriation view the feminist use of patriarchal forms as a perpetuation of oppression." She references women's history author Gerda Lerner, who "has stated the position: 'revolutionary ideas can be generated only when the oppressed have an alternative to the symbol and meaning system of those who dominate them'" (Pearce 308). Lerner's perspective conceives of the manifesto as a genre that's inherently masculine, in which the exclusion of women is a central quality. Meanwhile, scholars in favor of feminists' appropriation of the manifesto envision it as a means of weaponizing the ideological tools that men have used to uphold patriarchy against them. The function of the feminist manifesto is to present ideologies that are empowering to women in a format familiar to men. Feminist scholar and political scientist Jo Freeman, according to Pearce, "confirmed the value of appropriation to the women's liberation movement of the 1960s as providing a strategy for the promotion of (1) the growth of a pre-existing communications network [of the New Left] which was (2) co-optable to the ideas of the new movement." Solanas' approach reflected these strategies with its unique style of humorous, crude, and anti-masculine prose, yet differed from rival feminist manifestos and other texts in the angle through which it entered the multi-sided debate over patriarchal oppression. Brenda Robinson Hancock coined the phrase "affirmation by

negation" in 1972 to describe a particular mode of argument in the women's liberation movement, in which feminism was defined by what it's not, according to Pearce (309). Authors would recount the violent history of male supremacy to show its consequences instead of formulating their own radical feminist ideology. The goal of this was to rouse readers to rally in opposition to male supremacy, rather than aspire to a feminist vision for a restructured and equalized society. Most women could relate to these experiences and so these manifestos would appeal to feminists across the spectrum of radicality. With *SCUM*, Solanas purposefully avoided appealing to the larger pool of female readers because, as well as with men, she took issue with most women, deeming them to be passive bystanders or enablers in their patriarchal oppression. Solanas cultivated a set of views that would never have the effect of gently luring housewives and stay-at-home mothers to join the feminist movement. *SCUM* is violent because Solanas recognized male supremacy as a literal and omnipresent violence. *SCUM* didn't seek to inspire women or inform them of the history of wrongdoings committed against them but rather, to take action and viciously upend male supremacy.

"Western philosophy [is] pervaded by binary oppositions..." Iddo Landau observes in "How Androcentric Is Western Philosophy?" "...Reality and appearance, essence and accident, presence and absence, serious and playful, literal and metaphorical, signified and signifier, transcendental and empirical, and nature and culture. The first and second terms in each of these dichotomies form a hierarchy" (53). Perhaps the most consequential of these hierarchical binaries in philosophy is that of masculine and feminine. And when posited in direct opposition to one another, which they nearly always are, the masculine has everywhere been the focus of

Western philosophers; philosophizing the feminine has been at best an occasional afterthought. Situating the categories of masculine and feminine within the recurring hierarchical dichotomies of Western philosophy, Landau advances feminist critiques of the androcentrism that predominates across the philosophical tradition. French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who is most often associated with founding the methods of deconstruction, would agree not only that Western philosophy is androcentric, but that binary oppositions in philosophy, in general, are inhibiting. Traditional philosophers, he argues, emphasize an autonomous subject that limits one's understanding of an otherwise layered and complex field. Derrida identifies logocentrism and phallogocentrism as two recurring features in traditional philosophical texts: logocentrism uses language to describe a perceived reality, whereas phallogocentrism is focused on the phallus as a symbol of male domination. Combining the two terms "logocentrism" and "phallogocentrism," a critique of "phallogocentrism" is launched by second wave French feminist philosophers such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, which exposes the ways patriarchal power structures are the very foundations of Western culture and thought, and are emblemized in the centrality of the phallus in Lacanian psychoanalysis as the "master signifier." Male philosophers, from Aristotle to Freud, advance phallogocentric perspectives by investing the phallus as a marker of biological superiority to assert men's authority over women.

Although the concept of phallogocentrism is deployed in the critique of patriarchy, Derrida sought to detach the concept from an explicitly feminist motive. In a filmed interview in 2000, transcribed and translated into English by Carole Dely, Derrida says that "before any feminist politicalization, it is important to recognize this strong phallogocentric underpinning that conditions just about all of our cultural heritage" (Dely 5). At the center of how gender is

organized within society, the dominion of the phallus precedes the foundational texts of traditional philosophy, having been in place before the invention of the written word. He views phallogocentrism in philosophy as symptomatic of a greater socio-historical supremacy of the phallus across Western culture. As a deconstructionist, rather than feminist, Derrida calls into question the dominance of any given system of philosophical thought, particularly a model that hinges entirely on a hierarchically constructed conceptual opposition. In the case of traditional philosophy, men and women are posited at opposite ends of the phallic binary, yet the logocentric approach of male philosophers centralizes an understanding of the male (phallic) experience. Hence, women are theorized only in relation to men. Derrida surmises that an incomplete understanding of women isn't just a pattern among a few traditional philosophers, but a structural defect of a philosophical tradition that replicates societal phallogocentric paradigms. Opening philosophy up to the possibility of multiple, synchronous discourses, Derridean deconstruction poses the question of what knowledge could be gleaned if theory also attempted to reflect the experiences of women.

French feminist thinkers and writers of the *écriture féminine* have embraced Derrida's critique of phallogocentrism as masculinist and repressive of women's experiences, a relationship reflected in philosophy, literature, and the intersections of the two fields. Introduced by Hélène Cixous in her 1975 essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," the term 'écriture féminine,' can be loosely defined as a genre that advocates for women writers writing themselves. As a practice of *écriture féminine*, women writers should also seek to deviate from masculinist or more traditional modes of writing in favor of new styles and language. Premised on the idea that language itself is structural, reflective of a self-contained culture, *écriture féminine* is often



studied as a component of post-structural feminism, which applies feminist literary analysis to examine the construction of gendered social roles and hierarchies. The genre has focused particularly on removing the female body from a masculinist phallogocentric context, and reinscribing it with its own sexuality and sense of femininity.

Cixous and fellow French philosopher Catherine Clément collaboratively reexamine history, literature, and philosophy through the lens of *écriture féminine* in their 1975 *The Newly Born Woman (Theory and History of Literature)*, musing on the possibilities of an intellectual and academic culture where the phallus is not centerstage. In regard to “phallogocentrism,” Cixous and Clément maintain that “history has never produced or recorded anything else—which does not mean that this form is destinal or natural” (83). Noting that we are “presently living in a transitional period,” Cixous and Clément employ Derridean deconstruction to envision a future shift away from old ideologies of gender, allowing for a radical restructuring of gender roles (83). “Let us simultaneously imagine a general change in all the structures of training, education, supervision—hence in the structures of reproduction of ideological results. And let us imagine a real liberation of sexuality, that is to say, a transformation of each one’s relationship to his or her body (and to the other body), an approximation to the vast, material, organic, sensuous universe that we are” (Cixous and Clément 83). The result, the authors predict, would imbue “femininity” and “masculinity” with new meaning. As it pertains to these concepts, the logic of differentiation would no longer be organized around “the opposition that remains dominant.” The terms “femininity” and “masculinity” may still signify different meanings, but not in explicit opposition to one another. With “masculinity” no longer paramount, “femininity,” as a result, won’t be devalued based on it merely existing outside of the bounds of traditional masculinity.

To study *SCUM*, it's necessary to understand that Solanas was not a feminist, at least not in the traditional sense. Her work has been lumped in with other feminist writings because they share the common goal of liberating women from the oppression of patriarchy, but beyond Solanas' outright rejection of the 'feminist' label, her mode of discourse in *SCUM* is androcentric, especially in comparison to *écriture féminine*. *SCUM* was written just a few years before Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa." Both works respond to and criticize a similar phallogocentric paradigm in philosophy and psychoanalysis, yet their approach to arguing for essentially the same cause — to decenter the phallus — are drastically different. Something Solanas does share with Cixous and Clément, among other proponents of *écriture féminine*, is that their work is rooted in Derridean deconstruction. But instead of working outside of the phallogocentric paradigm, which *écriture féminine* urges women writers to do, Solanas crafts her argument within it. In *SCUM*, she assumes the place of male philosophers, namely Aristotle and Sigmund Freud, to revise phallogocentric theories and prioritize female genitalia over the male phallus. Pearce refers to "the making over of the substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics of a rhetorical genre" as "generic appropriation" (307). As a rhetorical tactic, generic appropriation "may take the form of parody, rhetorical hybrids, or as with radical feminist manifestoes, mimicry performed to acquire an authoritative voice within an established order of representations" (313). Solanas arguments in *SCUM* often parody androcentric psychoanalysis and in her call for women to overthrow men, mimic the violent strategies that men have historically used to gain and retain positions of power. By editing the phallogocentric structures that make up traditional philosophy to serve her own argument, Solanas demonstrates an acute awareness of how dichotomies of masculinity and femininity operate in society to form

gender hierarchies. In *The Newly Born Woman*, Cixous and Clément utilize Derridean deconstruction to argue for the dissolution of oppositional gender in favor of the equal coexistence of masculine and feminine, in which “difference would be a bunch of new differences” (Cixous and Clément 83). What makes *SCUM* so radical is that Solanas brushes off the notion of gender equality. She poses the question of why women should settle for gender equality when they can achieve a future of female supremacy.

### Chapter 3

#### *Before Solanas' "Pussy Envy," Freud Coined "Penis Envy"*

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In "The Weaker Seed the Sexist Bias of Reproductive Theory," Nancy Tuana provides a framework for Solanas' arguments in SCUM using the history of Aristotle's reproductive theories in his writings from 384 to 322 BC (Tuana 35). Tuana proposes that the Greek philosopher was the first to use scientific investigation and rationalization to argue for women's inferiority. Aristotle invented a system of biology based on his scientific studies of animals, which he then expanded to include the biological difference between the sexes. Aristotle held the belief that heat is central to animals' development. Heat is necessary for animals to grow and develop into fully-fledged beings and the less heat an animal had, the weaker it would be. Following this logic, he surmised that innately women produced less heat than men, thus making them comparably weaker. Tuana declares that "the belief that woman is colder than man is a central premise of Aristotle's biology" and that philosopher "employs it to account for numerous alleged physiological and psychological differences between women and men, and to justify the perception of these differences as 'defects'" (36). Not only are they frailer and weaker, but Aristotle thought that women's defects in heat resulted in their brains being smaller. Human men, in comparison, were thought to have the largest and most developed brains out of all mammals.

Aristotle intertwined his theory of heat deficiency with his views on reproduction, maintaining that men's semen was derived from blood. Though semen is white, not red, the color discrepancy could be attributed to the heat used to concoct it. "Female semen," the term he used

to refer to menstrual discharge (not actual ejaculation), is not transformed and still resembles blood when it's emitted, a testament to the lack of heat in women's bodies (Tuana 36). Despite menstruation being an indicator of the ability to reproduce, Aristotle saw menstrual blood itself as impotent: "[I]t is plain that the female does not contribute semen to the generation of the offspring. For if she had semen she would not have menstrual fluid; but, as it is, because she has the latter she has not the former" (37). Women are unable to transform their blood into "seed." It is the man who carries the fetus inside of him and places it into a woman's womb during intercourse. Aristotle here echoes the words of Aeschylus' Apollo: "[t]he woman you call the mother of the child / is not the parent, just a nurse to the seed, / the new-sown seed that grows and swells inside her. / The man is the source of life" (39). Women merely provide some of the material out of which the fetus will be created, relegating them to an inferior role in the reproductive cycle.

For Aristotle, the biological inadequacy of women is exemplified in a comparison of the genitals of the genders and the inability of women to produce "seed" due to the lack of heat in their bodies. Moreso, if a woman who is deficient in heat is indeed successfully impregnated, the fetus will be a girl. "[Aristotle] insists that woman is a mutation, resulting as she does from some defect in heat. The female is, as it were, a mutilated male" (40). In the sub-section "Suppression of Individuality, Animalism (domesticity and motherhood), and Functionalism," Solanas directly responds to Aristotelianism's reliance on animal studies to draw conclusions about male and female biology and sex roles. Although Aristotle compares men and women to animals, men are determined to be the superior mammal to human females and animals alike. (The comparison is less belittling for men because it speaks to their dominance in the sex/gender system.) "The

reduction to animals of the women of the most backward segment of society — the 'privileged, educated' middle-class, the backwash of humanity — where Daddy reigns supreme, has been so thorough that they try to groove on labour pains and lie around in the most advanced nation in the world in the middle of the twentieth century with babies chomping away on their tits,” Solanas fires back, criticizing educated, middle-class women who embark on the path of motherhood rather than pursuing a career or more intellectual endeavors (Solanas 15).

Solanas may be unfaltering in *SCUM*'s critique of men, but this section is one of several instances in *SCUM* that reveals the complexity of Solanas' relationship with her female adversaries, many of whom have opted to marry and have children. Solanas sees mothers as willful victims of patriarchy, complicit in their oppression. Mothers think of themselves as contributing something important and worthwhile to the world by having children, but really all they're doing is laying around waiting to have babies and then laying around breastfeeding once the babies are born. Solanas isn't shy about her disapproval of motherhood and the image she constructs of a woman breastfeeding is degrading, yet she'll never blame women as much as she blames men. The bounds of women's potential have been minimized to motherhood because long before, her value was made so little that it could be equated with animals. Deprived of bodily integrity and the ability to use her brain, children are the most valuable thing a woman can contribute to society, the indoctrination of the idea so “thorough” that it has even penetrated the minds of privileged, educated women (15). Of course, this discourse is one-sided: Solanas calls these women out, yet they can't be bothered with her, or with feminism in general.

Aristotle would leave an imprint on Austrian neurologist Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, and another one of Solanas' adversaries targeted in SCUM. Similar to Aristotelian biology, Freudian psychoanalysis has been used to oppress women and relegate them to a sexual minority, a concept outlined by Gayle Rubin in her essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy of Sex.'" Rubin breaks down Freud's theories, namely the Oedipus complex and "penis envy," against the backdrop of the "sex/gender system," which she defines as the "set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (Rubin 159). She then applies the rubric of the "sex/gender system" to Freudian psychoanalysis to examine the lasting impact of women's conformity to male-dominated social structures. Arguing that his theories have enabled the rationalization of contemporary sex roles, the prevailing "sex/gender system," Rubin first points her reader to the characterization of the psychoanalytic unconscious of men and women in Freud's infamous Oedipus complex, a supposedly universal period of male adolescent sexual development when young boys lust after their mother. While Freud mainly focuses on male sexuality, he identifies a "pre-Oedipal" phase of childhood, in which children of both sexes are, per Rubin's rehashing, "psychically indistinguishable," "bisexual," and demonstrative of "the full range of libidinal attitudes, active and passive"... "And for children of both sexes, the mother was the object of desire" (Rubin 186). Glibly, Rubin goes on to sum up details of the ensuing Oedipal drama as "the boy loved his mother, but gave her up out of the father's threat of castration" (185) Although both genders would be conditioned to adhere to impulsive heterosexuality, as well as emulate gender-appropriate masculine and

feminine behaviors, the “pre-Oedipal” sexuality of the young girl being directed at her mother challenged the idea of a biologically fixed heterosexuality. The girl’s “feminine development,” that’s to say, her heterosexuality and assuming of the subservient gender role, had to be explained (187).

Freud argues that adult sexuality is formed by psychic development, not biology and that girls mature into adult women by unconsciously renouncing the masculine elements of their personalities (Rubin 187). Rubin observes that “when the child leaves the Oedipal phase, its libido and gender identity have been organized in conformity with the rules of the culture which is domesticating it” (189). Per Rubin’s assessment of Freudian psychoanalysis, “femininity,” as in one’s maturation into the appropriate female sexuality and gender identity, isn’t a biological reflex but a process of gendered conditioning. A “pre-Oedipal” adolescent girl’s ascent into “femininity” is propelled by her unconscious jealousy of the male penis, a phenomenon Freud terms “penis envy” (187). (The Freudian theory of “penis envy” in psychoanalysis parallels that of the Aristotelian idea of half-formed female in biology, both of which demote women to a sub-human role on the basis of their genitalia.) Operating within the Oedipus complex, the girl unconsciously develops a sense of gender dysphoria due to her “penis envy.” Unlike the clitoris, the penis is endowed with the ability to sexually “satisfy” the mother. And as a biological female, the girl will never be able to overtake the male, father or brother, in their struggle for the mother. Realizing that she’s been symbolically castrated, left with an insignificant and useless clitoris, the girl has no use for any of her masculine traits and permanently resigns herself to an inferior feminine position. “Penis envy” underlines a girl’s acceptance of her inferiority.



In *SCUM*, Solanas mockingly appropriates Freudian psychoanalysis and manipulates his theories to prove the reverse: it's men, in fact, who are biologically inferior to women: "Women, in other words, don't have penis envy; men have pussy envy" (Solanas 6). Solanas launches her argument by recasting the characters of Freud's Oedipal complex according to her perception of the different roles of mothers, fathers, and their children in the reproductive cycle, referring to mothers and fathers as "Mother" and "Daddy," respectively, and to their respective female and male children as "Daddy's Girl" and "Men." "Daddy" and "Mother" are introduced in the first subsection of the *SCUM*, entitled "Fatherhood and Mental Illness (fear, cowardice, timidity, humility, insecurity, passivity)". "Mother wants what's best for her kids; Daddy only wants what's best for Daddy, that is peace and quiet, pandering to his delusion of dignity ('respect'), a good reflection on himself (status) and the opportunity to control and manipulate, or, if he's an 'enlightened' father, to 'give guidance'" (10). "Daddy" is the ideal of manhood. He's obsessed with projecting strength and decisiveness but in reality, is insecure and emotionally incompetent. "Mother" has good intentions and is empathetic towards her children but falls prey to "Daddy's" forcefulness. She genuinely loves her kids, whereas "Daddy" merely tolerates them, if even that. By categorizing "Mothers" and "Daddys," Solanas interrogates these gender roles and how they've come to govern sexual and social interactions between individuals.

Solanas notes that "it is the increase of fatherhood, resulting from the increased and more widespread affluence that fatherhood needs in order to thrive, that has caused the general increase of mindlessness and the decline of women in the United States since the 1920s" (13). In tandem with an increase in fatherhood, "the close association of affluence with fatherhood has led, for the most part, to only the wrong girls, namely, the 'privileged' middle class girls, getting

'educated'" (Solanas 13). "Daddy" is too "emotionally diseased" to be self-aware of his shortcomings, which are only exacerbated as he progresses through life, marries, and eventually has children (Solanas 11). "Mother," meanwhile, has been relegated to her role purely by negation. It's "Mother's" responsibility to fill the gaps "Daddy" leaves, providing comfort, compassion, and empathy. And even those who are middle class, and therefore "privileged," end up becoming "Mother." Hypothetically, education could be a means of escaping the normative path from girl to "Mother," but as Solanas points out, the "wrong girls" have been educated (13). Who she's referring to is "Daddy's Girls," young women who will never challenge the status quo or dare to think for themselves because they endlessly seek "Daddy's" approval. Solanas describes "Daddy's Girls" as "always tense and fearful, uncool, unanalytical, lacking objectivity, appraises Daddy..." (13). The "Daddy's Girl" is an extension of "Daddy" s own self-deception. He can't contend with being an incomplete person and his existence is riddled with self-hatred and jealousy. Unable to relate to others, he coldly projects his insecurities onto women, namely his daughter, who obeys him in her efforts to gain his love. Grown-up, "Daddy's Girl" will go on to appraise "thereafter, other men, against a background of fear ('respect') and is not only unable to see the empty shell behind the facade, 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," Solanas continues (13).

Describing the effect of "Daddy's" domineering fatherhood on his children, Solanas refers to young boys as future "Men." In contrast to "Daddy's Girls," who will always be Daddy's possession, "Men" are merely byproducts. "The effect of fatherhood on males, specifically, is to make them 'Men', that is, highly defensive of all impulses to passivity,

faggotry, and of desires to be female” (12). Boys are equally as compliant of “Daddy’s” will as his daughters are, but perhaps more so out of fear than for his approval. “Men” may want to be empathetic and gentle like “Mother” but “Daddy” is quick to squash that.

She creates a sexual situation in which, (premature) “Men” unconsciously lust after their “Mother,” although they can never become involved with her. “Every boy wants to imitate his mother, be her, fuse with her, but Daddy forbids this; he is the mother; he gets to fuse with her” (12). Solanas envisions the Oedipal complex as a driving force of patriarchy. In his 1910 article “A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men,” Freud expands on his construction of the Oedipus complex, describing that it occurs as soon as a boy can understand what sex is and that he is destined to one day have sexual intercourse himself. The boy comes to accept that sex is a normative part of society, rather than his parents being the exception, and that “the enlightening information he has received has in fact awakened the memory-traces of the impressions and wishes of his early infancy, and these have led to a reactivation in him of certain mental impulses” (Freud 170). As he begins to desire his mother in a sexual sense, his father is positioned as a rival who stands in the way of the boy and his mother being able to have intercourse. At the same time, the boy is unforgiving towards his mother because he sees her intercourse with his father as an act of betrayal. The boy feels that he has only two options: enact revenge on his father or entertain fantasies about his mother being unfaithful to his father, often through masturbation. The latter appears to be the least damaging to the family dynamic. Over the years, the boy also develops a “rescue” complex for his mother, after repeatedly hearing that she gave him life, and thus, it’s up to him to protect her (171). His feelings of love and affection towards his mother are conflated with emerging masculine conditioning that dictates he must

exercise his strength and male independence over her. Freud calls this complex network of interfamilial relationships the “family romance,” which “comprises the manifold ramifications of this imaginative activity and the way in which they are interwoven with various egoistic interests of this period of life” (171).

Since a mother gives her son his life, and there is truly no greater gift, the next best thing a son can do is create a child that resembles himself. Solanas pinpoints this cycle as one of patriarchy’s biggest problems. “Daddy” himself has emotional issues, which he then passes on to his son, and the cycle continues ad infinitum. In response to boys’ desire to have sex with “Mother,” Solanas purports that “Daddy” “tells the boy, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, to not be a sissy, to act like a ‘Man’” (Solanas 12). Conflicted with his concurrent fear of “Daddy” and impulse to enact revenge against him, and take his place in a relationship with “Mother,” the boy ends up becoming just like him. “The boy, scared shitless of and ‘respecting’ his father, complies, and becomes just like “Daddy,” that model of ‘Man’-hood, the all-American ideal — the well-behaved heterosexual dullard” (13). Solanas argues that Freud’s Oedipal complex is embodied in the continuation of a male lineage and “Daddy’s” conditioning of boys into “Men.”

In the bedroom scene, however, Solanas envisions that “Daddy” unconsciously assumes “Mother’s” role. In spite of the boy’s desire for Mother, “he [Daddy] is the mother; he gets to fuse with her. So he tells the boy, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, to not be a sissy, to act like a ‘Man’” (12). The result of this idealized heterosexual manhood, which “Daddy” bullies into his sons, is the typical all-American man, a “well-behaved heterosexual dullard” (13). Solanas mocks the imposing idea of the American dream and the perfect American family that

dominated the late 1960s by penetrating through the smoke and mirrors surrounding the archetypal American nuclear family. While the family members may seem content in their respective roles — “Daddy” as breadwinner, “Mother” as doting housewife, obedient sons and daughters — it turns out, everyone is miserable, especially “Daddy.”

According to Solanas, “Daddy” would be happier if he was a woman. In the sub-section “Fatherhood and Mental Illness” the traits that Solanas uses to describe “Daddy” — “fear, cowardice, timidity, humility, insecurity, passivity” — overlap with the same traits that Freud associates with female frigidity (10). In his 1918 paper “The Taboo of Virginity,” Freud surveys the first instances of women having sexual intercourse and the psychological toll it takes on them. Epitomized by “frigidity,” the failure of women to have a vaginal orgasm, he hypothesizes that young married women beginning to have sex for the first time in their lives often lose touch with reality, a phenomenon he expresses using the umbrella term, “neurotic” (Freud 201). Particularly in the bedroom, these women feel disembodied and wish to take on the masculine role; women want penises and struggle to contend with the feeling that they’ve been castrated. Freud observes that “we have learnt from the analysis of many neurotic women that they go through an early age in which they envy their brothers their sign of masculinity and feel at a disadvantage and humiliated because of the lack of it (actually because of its diminished size) in themselves” (Freud 204). Comparing these cases of “neurotic” women, “we include this 'envy for the penis' in the 'castration complex’” (204). The castration complex can be considered the grown-up version of a young girl’s “penis envy,” which she first encounters in the pre-Oedipal phase of childhood. Based on a broad definition of ‘masculine’ which encompasses adult women’s supposed desire to be masculine, Freud refers to the castration complex as a form of

“masculinist protest” in the case of women, in which they feel deprived of owning a penis (204). (Men can also have a castration complex, fearing the loss of their penis.) While in the pre-Oedipal phase, the “penis envy” of young girls is hardly secret and many will even experiment with urinating standing up, the “penis envy” of adult women is more shameful, albeit demonstrated differently. Freud references the case of a woman diagnosed with the castration complex because she showed “uncontrolled aggression” towards her husband after intercourse (205). The solution to her castration complex ultimately ended up being that she had misplaced her libido and unconsciously harbored the desire to have a child. “Behind this envy for the penis, there comes to light the woman's hostile bitterness against the man, which never completely disappears in the relations between the sexes, and which is clearly indicated in the strivings and in the literary productions of 'emancipated' women” (205). Freud’s cold and out-of-touch diagnosis of the castration complex especially targeted women such as Solanas, perhaps the most radical case of the ‘emancipated’ women. Since she didn’t have any children, her “penis envy” towards men couldn’t be cured and would continuously fuel her hostility against men.

Freud goes on to describe how men fear interaction with women because it poses a risk to their masculinity. He maintains that “wherever primitive man has set up a taboo he fears some danger and it cannot be disputed that a generalized dread of women is expressed in all these rules of avoidance. Perhaps this dread is based on the fact that woman is different from man, forever incomprehensible and mysterious, strange and therefore apparently hostile” (Freud 199). Men don’t merely see women as hostile and unpredictable, though. They think that femininity is infectious and that too much time spent in the presence of a woman will cause them to transform into one themselves. “The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her

femininity and of then showing himself incapable” (198). Freud suggests that under a thin veil of masculinity, men possess their own femininity. Constantly suppressing the feminine, men must physically isolate themselves from women in order to continuously upkeep and enforce their masculinity. In primitive civilizations, they would do so by embarking on special campaigns and hunting trips (198). Men are able to maintain their masculinity through periods of living exclusively with other men, where it’s impossible to have sex with women. Freud argues that sex with women poses the utmost threat to men’s masculinity, such as in the case that a man and a woman sleep together, making the man less tense and thus more vulnerable to her feminine influence. Freud maintains that “the effect which coitus has of discharging tensions and causing flaccidity may be the proto-type of what the man fears; and realization of the influence which the woman gains over him through sexual intercourse, the consideration she thereby forces from him, may justify the extension of this fear. In all this there is nothing obsolete, nothing which is not still alive among ourselves” (199). He concedes, once again, that all men should patrol their masculinity as they’re at risk of being overwhelmed and overtaken by women’s femininity.

In her construction of “pussy envy” and the male as a deficient female, Solanas parodies the castration complex, breaking it down argument-by-argument and recontextualizing and repurposing it to explain men’s deep-rooted desire to have a pussy. Solanas prepares her reversal of Freudian psychoanalytic principles by first agreeing with Freud and emphasizing his points. She plays up the idea that primitive men throughout history isolated themselves from women as a means of preserving their masculinity from feminine influence, a practice continued in the modern-day in the form of bachelor parties, men-only hunting trips, and household men-only

rooms called man caves. Rather than isolate themselves, though, men will seek out female partnership as a way to make up for their lack of femininity. “Being an incomplete female, the male spends his life attempting to complete himself, to become female. He attempts to do this by constantly seeking out, fraternizing with and trying to live through and fuse with the female...” (Solanas 6). Men actively wanting to date and cohabit with women reflects a certain newfound awareness that was absent from the primitive men that Freud wrote about. Civilized men, by comparison, are unconsciously more embracing of their desire to be women. She continues to assert that men have been “claiming as his own all female characteristics — emotional strength and independence, forcefulness, dynamism, decisiveness, coolness, objectivity, assertiveness, courage, integrity, vitality, intensity, depth of character, grooviness, etc — and projecting onto women all male traits — vanity, frivolity, triviality, weakness, etc” (6). Men have pulled a bait-and-switch on women. What we’ve come to accept as feminine traits are actually masculine, and on the flip side, what we think is masculine is in fact feminine. Women are men, and men are women. This reality is reflected in the fragility of masculinity that has had to be carefully contained and protected from the looming threat of femininity. If men dared to expose themselves to women for too long, they would begin to realize that they are women.

Solanas goes on to unravel Freud’s claim that he cured a “neurotic” woman of her castration complex by uncovering her desire to have a child, prescriptive pregnancy being a recurring thread throughout his analyses. Recalling the Freudian stance on neuroticism and pregnancy, Solanas reminds the reader that “the male claim that females find fulfillment through motherhood and sexuality reflects what males think they'd find fulfilling if they were female” (6). Instead of considering women’s needs, men automatically assume that motherhood is the



be-all and end-all to women's problems. For men, who spend their earliest years with their mothers, "it never becomes completely clear to them that he is not part of his mother, that he is he and she is she" (14). Amid men's ongoing gender confusion and the inability to "fuse with" "Mother" during childhood, having been blocked by "Daddy," men still don't have vaginas and must live out their dreams of becoming their mothers by continuing the reproductive cycle through heterosexual marriage (12). The wives, grown-up versions of the "Daddy's Girl," have already had the expectation that they will one day become mothers drilled into their skull by "Daddy" since childhood. Likewise, "Man" has been prepped by "Daddy" throughout his boyhood to espouse heterosexuality and suppress all of his impulses to be female. Now, as he creates his new nuclear family, he'll assume the role of "Daddy" and carry on the cycle with his children.

A rare few men have accepted that they are and always have been women, opting to adopt a female-presenting identity through cross-dressing. Solanas proposes that "when the male accepts his passivity, defines himself as a woman (males as well as females think men are women and women are men), and becomes a transvestite he loses his desire to screw (or to do anything else, for that matter; he fulfills himself as a drag queen) and gets his dick chopped off" (6). She posits the male who has embraced his womanhood against Freud's castration complex: these men don't fear being castrated — they want to be castrated. They have "pussy envy." As transvestites and drag queens, such men defy the compulsory sexuality imposed upon them by "Daddy" and replicate the same womanness that they witnessed in "Mother" growing up. These gendered performances typically emphasize the breasts of "Mother," which were sexualized by "Daddy" but off-limits to them. The personalities of drag queen characters are often frivolous

and ditzzy, affirming the “mindlessness” that Solanas associates with women’s mental decline upon being mothers (13). The role that transvestites and drag queens take on in Solanas’ recasting of Freud’s Oedipal complex isn’t “Mother” but more replicative of “Daddy’s Girl.” After undergoing a metaphorical castration by becoming celibate, transvestites and drag queens imitate the same repression of masculine characteristics that “Daddy’s Girl” does once she realizes that her inferior clitoris could never satisfy “Mother.” Rubin hypothesizes that “if the pre-Oedipal lesbian were not confronted by the heterosexuality of the mother, she might draw different conclusions about the relative status of her genitals” (Rubin 187). Solanas notably doesn’t explicitly identify the transvestites and drag queens she writes about as homosexual, in which case their penises would still be valued as superior to vaginas and symbolize their dominance over women. Whereas, “screwing is, for a man, a defense against his desire to be female,” the castrated man “achieves a continuous diffuse sexual feeling from ‘being a woman’” (Solanas 5). This “feeling” can be contextualized within Rubin’s comparison of Freud’s distinction between active and passive desire: “Freud locates active desire in the clitoris and passive desire in the vagina, and thus describes the repression of active desire as the repression of clitoral eroticism in favor of passive vaginal eroticism. In this scheme, cultural stereotypes have been mapped onto the genitals” (Rubin 195). To proceed with the Oedipal cycle, “Daddy’s Girl” must accept her castration, relinquish her libido, and resign herself to the corresponding passive gender role through an exhaustive process of psychological conditioning that was launched immediately after she was born.

Instead of women accepting that they’ve been symbolically castrated, Solanas argues that all men should voluntarily castrate themselves and become celibate, pointing out that passivity is

the natural state of heterosexual men, despite how in denial they may be about it. “Completely egocentric, unable to relate, empathize or identify, and filled with a vast, pervasive, diffuse sexuality, the male is psychically passive” (5). Men seek to compensate for their passivity through their sexuality, demonstrating their manly power through the sexual conquests of women. “He hates his passivity, so he projects it onto women, defines the male as active, then sets out to prove that he is (‘prove that he is a Man’). His main means of attempting to prove it is screwing (Big Man with a Big Dick tearing off a Big Piece). Since he’s attempting to prove an error, he must ‘prove’ it again and again” (5). Sex allows men to flex their dominance over women by physically overpowering and penetrating the female body with the penis, while desperately attempting to convince themselves that they don’t want to be women.

Solanas also brings in the argument of genetics to build the case for universal male castration. Ridiculing the baseless, pseudo-science of Aristotle and Freud, whose work has been weaponized to justify the oppression of women for centuries, Solanas scornfully offers up her own scientific hypotheses. Both Aristotle and Freud argued for a biological understanding of the female sex as predicated on lack. Aristotle bases this on his aforementioned comparison of female menstrual blood to male semen, concluding that the difference in color meant women’s bodies were deficient in heat (Tuana 36). Freud adds to this from a psychoanalytical standpoint, stigmatizing the clitoris as the fragmented product of a castrated phallus and diagnosing women with “penis envy” (Rubin 187). Co-opting the methodology of her adversaries, Solanas literalizes the chromosomal compositions of the sexes; the female chromosomes are ‘XX’ and the male chromosomes are ‘XY,’ yet the ‘Y’ of the male chromosome pair is missing the additional arm that would otherwise make it an ‘X,’ resulting in a half-formed gene. “The male is a biological

accident: the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene, that is, it has an incomplete set of chromosomes. In other words, the male is an incomplete female, a walking abortion, aborted at the gene stage” (Solanas 3). The effect of Solanas’ argument is a strategic reversal of the biologically or genetically-centered rationale used to position women as inferior to men in the sex/gender system. The missing arm of the ‘Y’ chromosome could also be read as the symbolic castration of the male gene. If one equates the penis with the extra line, its absence from the chromosomal makeup shows that the penis is an illegitimate marker of male supremacy.

“To be male is to be deficient, emotionally limited; maleness is a deficiency disease and males are emotional cripples,” Solanas continues (3). She lists the many different arenas in which men utterly fail to match up to women. Men are incapable of empathy, love, friendship, affection, tenderness, and so on. In terms of emotional intelligence, the male is “trapped in a twilight zone halfway between humans and apes, and is far worse off than the apes because, unlike the apes, he is capable of a large array of negative feelings” (4). Comparing men to apes, she indirectly responds to Aristotle once again, as the philosopher derived his understanding of female biology from his studies on animals and claimed that the human male was the most advanced and intelligent mammal species. Solanas brusquely dismisses this idea: “To call a man an animal is to flatter him; he's a machine, a walking dildo” (5). Women have long been deprived of their sexual autonomy because men perceive the female body as weaker, frailer, inadequate, reduced to the capability to passively receive sex and dutifully spawn children. Solanas upholds the same vulgar objectification that men regard women with as she shifts the lens onto them, treating the male body as a mere sex object. Stripped of personality, intellect, and complexity, the value of a male is no greater than his capability for reproductive function.

## Chapter 4

### *A Radical Restructuring of the “Sex/Gender System”*

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Having established that women don't have “penis envy” but that men, in fact, have “pussy envy,” Solanas lays out her vision for a revolutionary restructuring of gender in society, or in Rubin's now classic conception, of the “sex/gender system.” She first calls for the genocide of all men who aren't willing to resign themselves to becoming allies of *SCUM*'s cause. Solanas declares that “SCUM will kill all men who are not in the Men's Auxiliary of SCUM” (43). The “Men's Auxiliary” is composed of men who have turned on their gender, collaborating with *SCUM*'s women to kill off the male species. Auxiliary means to provide additional support to another jurisdiction and as the male arm of *SCUM*, the sole job of the “Men's Auxiliary” is to aid *SCUM* in their genocidal ambitions. They are those “working diligently to eliminate themselves, men who, regardless of their motives, do good, men who are playing ball with *SCUM*” (43). But the select men that make up the “Men's Auxiliary” have been subject to the same patriarchal conditioning as the men and women of the outside world. To prove their loyalty and demonstrate self-awareness of their subhuman state, *SCUM*'s male allies must participate in events called “Turd Sessions,” in which they verbally admit to their inferiority (43). Solanas requires that “every male present will give a speech beginning with the sentence: ‘I am a turd, a lowly abject turd’, then proceed to list all the ways in which he is” (43). Those deemed “nice, clean-living male women,” as in men who have willfully acknowledged their “pussy envy,” thus earning the secondary “women” label, will be invited into *SCUM* meetings ( 44). Learning from the women of *SCUM*, these sessions will “help clarify any doubts and misunderstandings they

may have about the male sex” ( 44). Men will be trained to stay vigilant to the advances of other men who may corrupt them, such as the evil men who encourage drug use, watching porn, or reading pornographic magazines.

Among those who comprise the “Men’s Auxiliary” are “men who kill men,” as well as “men who consistently give things away — money, things, services; men who tell it like it is (so far not one ever has), who put women straight, who reveal the truth about themselves, who give the mindless male females correct sentences to parrot, who tell them a woman's primary goal in life should be to squash the male sex” (43). Although men created patriarchy, women have been trained to dutifully uphold it. These women, “Daddy’s Girls,” are cogs in female oppression, unconsciously suppressing their true male nature and blindly following “Daddy” through the stages of the Oedipal drama. Solanas tasks men with undoing the damage they’ve wrought. In addition to killing off the useless non-*SCUM*-abiding men, they must decondition women from the belief that they are inferior to men. Men educating women in the ways of *SCUM* may seem counterintuitive to the cause, but up until now, women have been taught to listen to and obey men, first their fathers and then their husbands, before they listen to fellow women.

Also in the “Men’s Auxiliary” are “faggots who, by their shimmering, flaming example, encourage other men to de-man themselves and thereby make themselves relatively inoffensive” (43). Solanas builds upon her earlier endorsement that should embrace their “pussy envy” and symbolically castrate themselves by now identifying these men, who she previously referred to as “transvestites” and “drag queens,” as explicitly homosexual, albeit using a slur to do so. As a symbolic, not literal, gesture, self-castration is proven through one’s adherence to celibacy. The castrated man must behave as if he doesn’t possess a penis. Since they don’t engage in

heterosexual sex, homosexual men and “male women,” two identities that aren’t mutually exclusive, are seen as more similar to biological females than they are to biological heterosexual males. Solanas admits that “the farthest out male is the drag queen, but he, although different from most men, is exactly like all the other drag queens; like the functionalist, he has an identity — he is female” (20). Even while acknowledging the plurality of gender identities, in which drag queens are “different from most men” because they pose a lesser danger, Solanas still adheres to a binary definition of gender made up of oppositional male and female dichotomies. Drag queens, men who present as female, still technically fall on the male side of the binary. Whereas women are complex and layered individuals, drag queens are clones of another, all imitating a uniform hyperfeminine aesthetic. The drag queen, “not completely convinced that he’s a woman, highly insecure about being sufficiently female, he conforms compulsively to the man-made stereotype, ending up as nothing but a bundle of stilted mannerisms” (20). In doing so, drag queens inadvertently reaffirm the male perspective of femininity as uncritical and vain. Despite going to great lengths to cultivate a feminine appearance, drag queens can be considered female only in the “functionalist” sense, for the purpose of upholding Solanas’ new women-led social order.

Allyship between women and homosexual men, drag queens, and “male women” in SCUM is premised on the notion that these castrated men will never rape women. Listing men of the “most obnoxious or harmful types,” the first category Solanas names is “rapists” (44). While the politics of rape are undoubtedly more complicated — women can rape other women, for instance — the phallus has long signified male dominance and served as a tool that men use to suppress women. Comparably, the vagina doesn’t carry the same presupposition of sexual

violence. In Freud's "The Taboo of Virginity," he describes an exemplary case of "female frigidity" where "after the first and indeed after each repeated instance of sexual intercourse, the woman gives unconcealed expression to her hostility towards the man by abusing him, raising her hand against him or actually striking him" (Freud 201). Lacking insight into the woman's rationale for hitting the man, which was likely an act of self-defense, Freud justifies the man's "repeated instance of sexual intercourse" with the woman, recounting what reads as forced sex. The woman is an unwilling participant in the ordeal, but because of her retaliation, she is the one considered the abuser. In this paper, Freud normalizes the rape of women, characterized by a stream of cases that end in women being diagnosed with "neurorisis" or "frigidity" for rejecting sex. Along with taking aim at rapists, determining them the initial class of men that must be exterminated, Solanas refutes the idea that sex could ever be pleasurable for either men or women. Men only have sex with women as a means through which to channel their repressed "pussy envy," while women are wrongly forced into the passive (male) role in the bedroom.

Sex, as a result, is virtually absent from Solanas' vision for a new society. Failing to successfully pleasure either party, the only reason for men and women to have sex is for the purpose of reproduction, but with the aid of modern technology, reproduction no longer requires penetrative sex. Solanas reminds the reader on the first page of *SCUM* that "it is now technically feasible to reproduce without the aid of males (or, for that matter, females) and to produce only females" (Solanas 3). By setting the precedent of male uselessness at the beginning of the text, Solanas retroactively counters the doubts that may arise from the reader when they encounter, later in the text, her demand for the extinction of the male race. While she bestows the concept of reproduction without males with an impassioned sense of urgency — "We must begin



immediately to do so. Retaining the male has not even the dubious purpose of reproduction” — Solanas then shifts immediately to her next point regarding the deficiency of males as human beings (3). She doesn’t revisit the concept of reproduction sans men until after she completes her subverted retelling of the Oedipal drama, in which “Daddy” conditions “Daddy’s Girl” to renounce her masculine characteristics and emulate the role of “Mother.” Eager to please “Daddy” and gain his love and affection, “Daddy’s Girl” obliges, transforming into a mirror image of the “Mother” as she enters adulthood.

Once the reader is acquainted with Solanas’ parody of the nuclear family structure, she once again counters Freud, arguing that men have assigned the tasks of childbirth and childrearing to women to convince them that they are interchangeable in their gendered role. Freudian logic assumes that all women can have children, whereas men are designed for more important jobs, such as those that require an education. Solanas argues the man “denies it in her and proceeds to define everyone in terms of his or her function or use, assigning to himself, of course, the most important functions -- doctor, president, scientist -- therefore providing himself with an identity, if not individuality...” (16). There’s no formal school system that teaches women how to give birth and raise a kid, which has deprived women of seeking out advanced education, and even middle-class women who are college-educated abandon the prospect of a successful career in favor of raising children (13). The man “tries to convince himself and women (he’s succeeded best at convincing women) that the female function is to bear and raise children and to relax, comfort and boost the ego of the male; that her function is such as to make her interchangeable with every other female” (16). Having succeeded at convincing the world’s

entire population of women that they're destined to be mothers and have little else to offer society, men have deceived women into becoming dependent on them. Women marry men with the expectation that they'll be content serving their husbands and children. Little do they know that "Daddy" and "Mother" were lying to them: motherhood defies all of a woman's natural tendencies. Solanas contends that "the male claim that females find fulfillment through motherhood and sexuality reflects what males think they'd find fulfilling if they were female" (6). If anything, men should be at home doing the childrearing, since, psychologically speaking, they're actually women and have claimed all of the female characteristics for themselves (6).

If the Oedipus complex can be summarized as a reproduction of normative gender roles, the literal reproductive cycle can be classified as its impetus. Freud's Oedipus complex wouldn't exist without women giving birth, typically to more than one child, and then raising their daughters to aspire to have children of their own. Rubin writes that in Freud's Oedipus complex, "the girl never gets the phallus. It passes through her, and in its passage is transformed into a child. When she "recognizes her castration," she accedes to the place of a woman in a phallic exchange network" (Rubin 195). The phallus doubles as a marker of a man's ownership of a woman, so she can never actually possess the phallus. Although the phallus "passes through her" in the reproductive cycle, during both the act of sexual intercourse and when she grows a child in the womb, the woman can't give the phallus away or bestow it onto another person because it never actually belongs to her. As she ascends through the phases of the Oedipus complex and conforms to the value system of a phallic culture, in which she is devoid of value outside of bolstering the male ego, a woman resigns her capability to ever be anything other than a mother. Confined to the house, she misses out on the opportunity to have a career, "an identity, if not

individuality” (Solanas 16). In spite of her criticism of “Daddy’s Girls” who uphold patriarchy, Solanas remains optimistic about women having a greater purpose than what’s been laid out for them by men. She maintains that “in actual fact, the female function is to relate, groove, love and be herself, irreplaceable by anyone else; the male function is to produce sperm” (16). Similar to her previous reversal of the genders in Freud’s Oedipus complex, Solanas asserts that it’s women who are, in fact, unique, whereas men are replaceable.

Solanas envisions that a refusal of the normative reproductive patterns, such as those delineated in the Oedipus complex, will grant women autonomy and remove men from a position of power. She dismantles the Freudian reproductive framework focusing on two main components. The first component of reproduction that Solanas deconstructs is making men redundant to the reproductive process. While the sole “male function is to produce sperm,” even that can be automated with the aid of modern technology. Reminding the reader that “we now have sperm banks,” Solanas predicts that reproduction will become a scientific process carried out in a laboratory: “Whether to continue to use females for reproduction or to reproduce in the laboratory will also become academic: what will happen when every female, twelve and over, is routinely taking the Pill and there are no longer any accidents? How many women will deliberately allow themselves to get pregnant?” (38). Her prediction is premised on the notion that women don’t enjoy being pregnant or giving birth, even if they do find joy in raising children. If birth control is made widely accessible, in tandem with women’s general repudiation of sex with the male species, there would be fewer pregnancies to begin with. On top of that, most pregnancies aren’t “deliberate.” By this phrasing, Solanas doesn’t mean that the majority of pregnancies are accidental but that when women willfully become pregnant, it’s the result of

unconscious conditioning and the imposition of the nuclear family structure. Solanas rejects the idea that a select few women “be set aside by force to serve as broodmares for the species,” concluding that pregnancy can be circumvented entirely through the “laboratory reproduction of babies” (38).

Following her proposal for streamlining the reproductive cycle in a lab, the second component of reproduction that Solanas deconstructs is the question of whether or not to reproduce males. Inferring that the lab’s advanced technology will leave the decision of gender up to scientists, Solanas returns the Aristotelian theory that women are half-formed beings due to the supposed lack of heat in their bodies, demonstrated by the red color of “female semen” (menstrual blood) in comparison to the white color of male semen (Tuana 36). Continuously building on her reversal of the genders, Solanas argues in *SCUM* that the male is so biologically deficient that he’s “a walking abortion, aborted at the gene stage” (6). Simply because males have existed in the past doesn’t mean that they technically should. According to what we know about maleness, Solanas maintains that “when genetic control is possible—and it soon will be—it goes without saying that we should produce only whole, complete beings, not physical defects or deficiencies, including emotional deficiencies, such as maleness” (38).

Even if men still exist as a species, the lack of future men in the reproductive cycle will strip the phallus of its dominance and collapse the phallic culture network. Women act as a “passage” through which the phallus is transferred, but if that passage no longer exists, the phallus will inevitably disintegrate in value (Rubin 195). In other words, the phallus can’t function as a symbol of male power if there are no future generations to mark. Solanas rewrites the script of the Oedipal drama by disrupting the conditioning of future generations into the

nuclear family. After laboratory reproduction ensures that there are no more sons, “Daddy” will no longer see the boy’s love for “Mother” as a threat. Solanas writes that “the effect of fatherhood on males, specifically, is to make them “Men”, that is, highly defensive of all impulses to passivity, faggotry, and of desires to be female” (13). This conditioning is exemplified in the Oedipus complex and the “sex/gender system,” which according to Solanas, saw “Daddy” assert his power over his family by telling the boy “sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, to not be a sissy, to act like a ‘Man’” (13). In the absence of fatherhood, which has been weaponized as a defense mechanism, men will be forced to address their “desires to be female.” From that point, the possibilities of how men can be repurposed in a women-led society are endless.

Fatherhood has corroded the natural state of womanhood, and Solanas declares that “the effect of fatherhood on females is to make them male—dependent, passive, domestic, animalistic, nice, insecure, approval and security seekers, cowardly, humble, “respectful” of authorities and men, closed, not fully responsive, half dead, trivial, dull, conventional, flattened out and thoroughly contemptible” (13). But as society dissolves the normative reproductive cycle, and thus, the Oedipus complex, women will no longer be forced to pretend to be male. Dropping the facade of being defined by what are actually male characteristics, women will destruct the “sex/gender system” and be freed to assume their place as society’s leaders and decision-makers.

On the flip side of gender-selective laboratory reproduction, Solanas briefly and succinctly addresses the question of why scientists should bother to produce females either. Indifferent to the topic, she leaves the matter is up to the evolution of the women-led society:

“Eventually the natural course of events, of social evolution, will lead to total female control of the world and, subsequently, to the cessation of the production of males and, ultimately, to the cessation of the production of females” (39). Once women are freed from the domestic sphere and empowered to take on positions of power, she entrusts that they’ll make the correct decisions. While “the effect of fathers, in sum, has been to corrode the world with maleness” (14), it’s the task of not mothers, but empowered women, to construct the world according to a distinctly female vision.

## Conclusion

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Over the past two decades or so, a handful of feminist critics and scholars have turned their attention to Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto*, such as Marybeth Hamilton, for instance, whose brief essay sought to reshape how readers, the media, and the public have remembered Solanas and her iconic text. But while *SCUM* has been the topic of scholarly projects and articles here and there, my research throughout my own project affirmed that my initial presuppositions were mostly true: *SCUM* remains on the fringes of academic discourse, with few taking Solanas seriously as a thinker, writer, and even a theorist. In the majority of the writing I encountered that celebrates *SCUM*, its author still concedes that, despite her ingenuity, Solanas was a madwoman. Scholarship on *SCUM* is nearly always underlined with her being identified as the woman who shot Andy Warhol. Although the infamy of the event is somewhat understandable due to Warhol's stature, scholarly readings of *SCUM* that heavily rely on the context of the shooting seem to be ironic in how they distill Solanas' complex identity to her association with a man, affirming the patriarchal notion of women as secondary citizens.

With this project, I aimed to offer a new perspective on *SCUM* that highlights Solanas' intellectualism, wit, and radical ideas. In *SCUM*, Solanas demonstrates a deeply-nuanced understanding of Freudian psychoanalysis and Aristotelianism and the overarching androcentric and phallogocentric foundation of philosophy. Based on her understanding of this dominant androcentric stance, she works from the inside out, specifically addressing Freud's and Aristotle's theories as she delivers one scorching counterargument after the next. One focal argument of *SCUM* is Solanas' reversal of Freud's phallogocentric "penis envy" theory with the

idea that men deeply harbor their “pussy envy.” Another is Aristotle’s conception of the female as predicated on lack, to which Solanas responds that the male is “a walking abortion” (3).

Criticisms of *SCUM* that call Solanas’ ideas absurd only serve to prove her point: that androcentric and phallogocentric logic is so recurrent that it’s been — in certain ways, unconsciously — accepted as the norm. Solanas’ proposal for a society led by women is merely a reversal of the prevailing “sex/gender system,” where men reign supreme and women are delineated into a subhuman state. By eliciting a reaction from her reader, who will most likely deem her crazy and dismiss *SCUM*’s revolutionary vision, Solanas reveals how patriarchy permeates every aspect of human life, from societal social orders to the mindsets of both men and women. In order to enact liberation from patriarchy, she argues, men and women alike must be deconditioned from their unconscious acceptance of gender hierarchies that ultimately pit women as lesser.



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