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Writing Excesses

**The Role of Art
in the Transitional Presence of Valerie Solanas**

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Abstract

My thesis “Writing Excesses: The Role of Art in the Transitional Presence of Valerie Solanas” examines the hypertext of Solanas in relation to life and language. In critical texts about Solanas I have found a divergence in approach, either by including the famous shooting of Andy Warhol in Solanas’s project, or insisting on separating it from the manifesto, in order to isolate and reduce its violence and prevent it from contaminating the entirety of Solanas’s textual presence. I will assign to these readings an avant-garde and humanist function, respectively. In particular, I will analyze Sara Stridsberg’s novel *The Dreamfaculty* in order to follow her fictional adaption of the historical Solanas into a polyphonic collage that remains faithful to the humanist agenda in spite of its experimental aesthetics. I will thus conclude that what ultimately constitutes the avant-garde is the continual challenging of the limits of what is human. In humanist discourse, what is human comes to be defined simply as what is known, whereas the avant-garde becomes the process of unknowing the known and transgressing into the surreal. The hypertext of Valerie Solanas as exemplified by Stridsberg’s *The Dreamfaculty* is thus located at the intersection between the human and its others, the real and the surreal, history and fiction.

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Introduction

My primary objective in this thesis is to follow the tension between history, fiction and critical thought invoked by the hypertext of Valerie Solanas. In what follows I will discuss the discourses this hypertext engages, distinguishing two main tendencies: avant-garde and humanist discourse. I will begin with the premise that the former privileges chaos, while the latter advocates logic. The first seeks multiplicities, instabilities and gaps in meaning, while the second follows singularities, namely the singularity of a person placed within a necessary relation between causes and consequences.

Solanas's history is marked by two events: the publishing of the violent feminist treaty *SCUM Manifesto* and the almost lethal assault on Andy Warhol. These events were essential in bringing Solanas's legacy into the conflicting position between extreme feminism and criminal insanity. Solanas's biography tells us that she was sexually abused by her father, that she was a beggar, homeless, and worked as a prostitute, but also that she earned a degree in psychology from the University of Maryland and wrote an important (and even canonical) feminist text.

When I started to work on this project my main focus was the literary analysis of Sara Stridsberg's *The Dreamfaculty*.¹ Here the historical Valerie Solanas was introduced into the context of fiction. The genre of biographical fiction is currently fairly common, including for example Mette Karlsvik's novel *Bli Bjørk* (2011), about the pop icon Bjørk's life from childhood and towards international stardom, or Karl Ove Knausgård's auto-biographical novels *Min Kamp Volumes I-V* (2009-10). Both are highly contemporary examples of an ongoing intersection between fiction and the real. Although the field of documentary fiction becomes highly controversial, for example in Knausgård's novels, when discussing the *The Dreamfaculty* in Part Two the adaptation of Solanas into fiction is not my main focus. The special circumstances of writing a novel

¹ In Swedish Stridsberg's novel is called *Drömfakulteten*, the translation is mine. In what follows I will use the name in English.

about Solanas does however bring about two simultaneous consequences. Solanas is entered into fiction, with the result that Solanas's position is altered, if not historically, then at least within the boundaries of the novel. What interests me in Stridsberg's novel is therefore this movement within the narrative between historical life and textual life. Documentary fiction brings to the surface questions about the diverging accounts between the historical person and the fictional version, questions about who controls these accounts as well as their access to and construction of truth in language.

Sara Stridsberg is the author of *The Dreamfaculty*, the play *Valerie Solanas skall bli President i USA*, based on the novel, as well as the introduction to the Swedish edition to the *SCUM Manifesto* (2003). She has an explicit feminist agenda and expresses deep admiration for Solanas, describing her as a “writer and feminist theorist. Genius”² (Stridsberg 2003: 8). As I worked on Stridsberg's novel, it became more and more clear to me that Stridsberg's portrayal of Solanas diverged from the account of Solanas manifest in her own writing and actions.

My hypothesis is that Solanas's project can be situated within an avant-garde discourse, and that Stridsberg's novel is a humanist project. In Part One I will first look into what I call Solanas's acts, beginning with a comparison with Judith Butler's reading of Antigone's defiance in *Antigone's Claim – Kinship between Life and Death*. Here Butler's argues that there is a “trend championed by recent feminists to seek the backing and authority of the state to implement feminist policy aims,” with the result that the legacy of Antigone's defiance is lost (Butler 1). This trend is what I define in relation to a humanist discourse that explains Solanas in terms of being a victim (of male abuse), poverty, failure and solitude, in order to reduce the impact of the shooting that keeps Solanas from being a feminist icon.

In addition to Butler, I will be discussing Avital Ronell's Preface to the latest English edition of the *SCUM Manifesto*, “Deviant Payback: The Aims of Valerie Solanas.” In her essay, Ronell points out that Solanas's defiance is a process of “becoming man,” which leads Solanas's project into confusion, if not even failure. I interrogate this concept of *becoming*, opposing a becoming *in* language to a becoming as

² “Författare och feministisk teoretiker. Geni.” My translation, all translations from Stridsberg's work will from now on be quoted in the original language in the footnotes.

a body. The former is defined in terms of culture and residing within a human territory, the latter surpasses and exceeds the human territory of language. Ronell's reading of the *becoming process* of Valerie Solanas situates gender as a concept in language, whereas Solanas's utopian visions for a purely female society is based on the concept of gender as a physical attribute.

In his essay "The Simplest Surrealist Act: Valerie Solanas and the (Re)Assertion of Avantgarde Priorities," James Harding argues that Solanas's manifesto and assault situated her within the boundaries of the avant-garde discourse. Harding's reading therefore brings Solanas's hypertext into an altogether different course than the one I just described above. In Harding's argument, Solanas's actions are not explained in terms of biographical background, rather they are explained by way of an interplay between writing and action, art and violence. This interplay situates Solanas within the boundaries of the avant-garde, although Solanas's very actions cut open boundaries of the historical avant-garde itself. As opposed to being in a victimized position, Solanas becomes brutally vengeful and dangerously productive.

Harding stresses the importance of feminist writings in the reception history of Solanas. He does however render problematic the tendency to see the assault on Warhol, and the violent content of the manifesto, as indications of the same social problems faced by women. In order to "save" the manifesto from the shooting, it has become important to separate the one from the other, Harding argues (Harding 157). My argument is that the causality between events in Solanas's life is ultimately used as a model to explain the violent content of the manifesto, as well as the assault on Warhol. The causalities of Solanas's life are even used in order to justify her attacks in writing and in life. Therefore I will propose that the attempt to save Solanas's position as a feminist figure in fact is reductive, and instead rips Solanas of the forceful potential that she invokes.

In the Swedish preface to the *SCUM Manifesto*, Stridsberg describes how the shooting ruined Solanas's possibilities to be heard and how it came to be an event that would stand between her words and her readers. The consequences of Solanas's act on the day of the shooting were, in Stridsberg's words:

The opportunity to be a writer, to be one that everybody listens to (the only thing she wants) is gone. She becomes Andy Warhol's feminist nightmare. She becomes nothing more than that. This is how everyone will remember her" (Stridsberg 2003: 12).³

As I mentioned above, Harding points out how Solanas's shooting is an unparalleled coming together between art and violence. On the other hand, Stridsberg describes the effect that the shooting had in Solanas's position in literature, reducing her possibility to be heard as anything other than Warhol's "feminist nightmare." In accordance, I will read the avant-garde as actively departing from language into performativity, and the humanist discourse as firmly embedded within the scene of language. In Part Two I will pursue the reading of *The Dreamfaculty* as an attempt to remove the wounds that Solanas's shooting caused her as a writer. *The Dreamfaculty* excludes the event of the shooting from the narrative of the novel and so it seems that Stridsberg's text becomes part of the larger feminist scene that Harding describes.

However, the novel is a complex structure that also employs avant-garde techniques, such as polyphony, collage, randomness and an ultimate goal to dissolve language into a praxis of life. In Part Two, I will perform a literary analysis of Stridsberg's text in order to decipher which discursive archive it employs, which techniques are used, how it enters into a dialogue with avant-garde techniques as well as objects (dream, performativity, collage, and so on), and how it ultimately attempts to reintegrate Solanas within humanist discourse.

³ "Möjligheten att vara författare, vara en som alla lystnar på (det enda hon vill) försvinner. Hon blir Andy Warhol's mardröm. Hon blir ingenting annat enn det. Det er så alla kommer att minnas henne."

PART I

The Act

Solanas's act

I will begin Part I with a discussion about Valerie Solanas's acts – what were her acts, what kind of discourses did they invoke, who opposed them, and what were the consequences of this encounter? By considering these acts I will arrive at a reception history of Solanas. In some of the critical texts about Solanas I have found a divergence in approach, either by including the shooting in Solanas's project, or insisting on separating the shooting from the manifesto in order to isolate the latter from the violence of the former. I will assign to these readings an avant-garde and humanist discourse, respectively. Before we go into a discussion about these discourses, let us first consider how Solanas's acts were defined. To begin with I find it helpful to compare Solanas's history to another defiant feminist figure: Antigone - what unites the two and what separates them?

Legacies of Defiance

On June the 3rd, 1968 sometime around 9 A.M. Solanas went to the Chelsea Hotel and asked if her publisher Maurice Giordias was there.⁴ Being told that he was out for the weekend, she waited around in case he still would show up. After several hours of waiting she left for the Factory around noon to see if she could get hold of Andy Warhol instead. Meeting Warhol's associate Paul Morrissey outside she told him "I'm waiting for Andy to get money," Morrissey told her that Warhol was out to which she replied "Well that's all right. I'll wait." At 4:15 Warhol finally arrived and Solanas accompanied him up the elevator. Solanas, the records tell us, was dressed in a black turtleneck sweater and a raincoat, her hair was styled, wearing lipstick and make-up, she also carried a little brown paper bag. Warhol is supposed to have commented on her appearance saying, "Look doesn't Valerie look good!" Warhol now received a phone call and as he spoke on

⁴ All information and quotes about the day of Solanas's shooting is taken from Freddie Baer's webpage <http://www.womynkind.org/valbio.htm>

the phone Solanas shot him three times. The first two shots missed, at which point Warhol pleaded to Solanas; "No! No! Valerie, don't do it." The third shot went through Warhol's left lung, spleen, stomach, liver, esophagus and right lung. Solanas then fired more shots against art critic and curator Mario Amaya hitting him above his right hip. She also turned to Fred Hughes, Warhol's manager, put the gun to his head and pulled the trigger but her gun jammed. At this point the elevator door opened with no one on it. Hughes said to Solanas, "Oh, there's the elevator. Why don't you get on, Valerie?" She replied: "That's a good idea," and left.

The question I want to pursue is: after Solanas left the scene, did her act *end*?

According to Judith Butler, Antigone's crime was to bury her brother Polyneices after her uncle King Creon prohibits such a burial. Creon considers her brother an infidel after he has led an army against his other brother, Eteocles, claiming what he believes is his rightful place as the inheritor of the throne. Both brothers die, and Creon wants Polyneices's body "dishonored and ravaged" (8) Antigone defies Creon and buries her brother twice, and the second time the guards report seeing her. Standing in front of Creon "she acts again, this time verbally, refusing to deny that it was she who did the deed," but neither does she simply say, "I did the deed" (Butler 7).

Solanas's crime was not only to shoot somebody, but as we will see to refuse in court to admit she had done anything wrong. Similarly, Antigone's crime was the burial of her brother Polyneices, as well as the refusal to deny or admit her crime. The acts are separated by the fact that one is fiction, the other a documented historical event. And where Solanas's act was a violent strike against three people, Antigone's was to refuse to obey an authority figure. However, the acts are connected as female acts of defiance, consisting of a verbal refusal coupled with physical action. Furthermore, they are linked by the transmittability of language that will be affecting the results of their acts as well as the reception.

Butler considers Antigone's crime in two stages, a physical crime alongside a verbal refusal when Antigone acts linguistically by standing in front of Creon. Solanas's act is also delivered in several stages, including her testimony in front of the court on the day of the shooting. Brought before Manhattan Criminal Court, Solanas told the judge: "It's not often that I shoot somebody. I didn't do it for nothing. Warhol had me tied up,

lock, stock and barrel. He was going to do something to me which would have ruined me.”⁵ When asked if she could afford an attorney, she replied: “No, I can’t. I want to defend myself. This is going to stay in my own competent hands. I was right in what I did! I have nothing to regret!” The judge struck Solanas’s comments from the court record, and Solanas was taken to the Bellevue Hospital psychiatric ward for observation.⁶

Both Antigone and Solanas refuse to deny the accusations against them, and in Solanas’s case, she openly declares to have not only broken the law, but also to have acted *correctly* in doing so. By not denying her act, Antigone, performs a double negation: she refuses to deny the accusation, whereby she refuses to defend herself. But she is also refusing to confess her act, by which she would confront Creon’s edict and reveal the performativity of his sovereignty. “I will not deny my deed” is a refusal to perform a denial, “but it is not precisely to claim the act,” writes Butler (8). Contrary to Antigone, Solanas *claims* her act before a court of law. By performing these speech acts, Solanas with an affirmation, and Antigone with a double negation in the refusal to deny, they are articulating the discontinuities in legal discourse, and in fact resisting its performativity.

Solanas’s act is a physical one, yet it has a necessary verbal dimension. When she re-performs her physical act by officially stating: “I did it,” the act becomes a double one. Without being entirely in language, it acquires a separate existence in historical reality – and so it survives as both linguistic and historical event. Antigone’s act spreads throughout the text much like a disease, Butler notes, for it is “transferable from the doer” and threatens to attach to the guard who reports the act to King Creon, for the act is “owned by some who could not have done it, disowned by others who might have done it” (7). The distinction between the deed and the authorship of the deed is altogether unclear, Butler notes how it is even propagated from the guard onto the authority figure of Creon: when Creon at the end of the play takes the suicides of his wife and son upon himself as his own actions, “the question of what it means to author a deed becomes fully ambiguous,” Butler concludes (7).

⁵ From Freddie Baer’s webpage <http://www.womynkind.org/valbio.htm>

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The distinction between Solanas's deed and the authorship of her deed is similarly unstable. In proclaiming she did it, Solanas claims her act, and to say "Yes, I did it" is to "claim the act, but it is also to commit another deed in the very claiming: the act of publishing one's deed, a new criminal venture that redoubles and takes the place of the old" (Butler 8). And so Solanas *publishes* her deed. As such her deed is redoubled – in fact her deed is no longer only one deed but a set of two, the original and the one she claims. When Solanas answers the question from the authority she opposes, that authority being the Manhattan Criminal Court, she is propagating the actions from the specificity of a historical scene to the randomness of contamination across the Law.

As a paradox, the female perpetrator embodies "the norms of the power she opposes" (Butler 10), by acting in language Antigone cannot survive the act *as a woman*, for she is implicated in "the masculine excess called hubris. And so, as she begins to act in language, she also departs from herself" (Butler 10). But, writes Butler, as Antigone departs from herself so does Creon "scandalized by her defiance resolves that while he lives "no woman shall rule," suggesting that if she rules he will die" (8).

In her preface to the *SCUM Manifesto*, "Deviant Payback the Aims of Valerie Solanas," Avital Ronell observes that Solanas is facing a related dilemma when she asks: how can Solanas take on her enemy without entering the war machine that defines him, "how can you launch war against war?" (14). In order to go to war against war, Solanas ironically must embody "the norms of the power she opposes" (Butler 10). She inevitably has to take on manhood, whereby "the war zone of her declared target" (Ronell 14) is reproduced. What is then the purpose of that act – how can defiance be possible if acting against an opposing force reinstates the opponent? Butler's solution is that the distinction between the two principles is confounded on the rhetorical level, whereby the stability of the distinction is brought into crisis: "The one principle [of kinship or the state] merely replaces the 'idiom of the other,'" Butler writes (Butler 11-12). This might be sufficient for a linguistic act, but what if the distinction between the two principles is not enough, what if the crisis that is to be sought goes beyond a crisis within mere "language" into life? I want to suggest that this is precisely what Solanas aims to do as an avant-garde act, impatient to exit language into life.

If it is correct that Solanas in affirming her action enters the discourse that she opposes, gathering the agency and power through her defiance, then affirming it multiplies and spreads the act in language. Solanas's act ends on June the 3rd, 1968 sometime between 4 and 5 pm, but not as a completed act, rather as an unfinished text, to be read, transferred and re-performed. After the termination of the act in time and place – the only ways to access her crime is through bodily evidences on her victims' and through its verbal reports. The unsettled relationship that Butler finds between the report of the deed and the authorship of the deed implies that the deed, although it is of the past, lingers on into the present – never to find its closure. This process of transmission forms a web of relationships I will follow further in the sections to come and as we will see these relationships become important in the reception history of Solanas. In separating body from authorship, and privileging the latter, a negation is performed in neglecting the tangible physical act, the actual bodily wounds – that which cannot be transmitted through authorship.

We can single out some preliminary approaches to Solanas's act. In the first approach the act spreads through language, and language takes on more existence than the materiality of the physical action itself. Secondly, there is the approach to the act as bodily as well as linguistic, accepting that there is a reality that exists outside language that cannot be described by language. Authorship simply does not transmit certain features of the event, because language cannot grasp the materiality of life in its entirety. The first approach I will call a tendency towards a humanist discourse that is based on ideas of individuality (e.g. gender, personal biography, psychology) in language; the second I will describe as an avant-garde tendency that dissolves cultural entities away from language and towards the performativity of life.

The Physical Act and the Manifesto

If, in accordance with Butler and Ronell, we are to accept that a female crime becomes male than the female defiance is caught in a problem of circularity. The problem of circularity arises from a reading of defiance as happening within language, but if we are to be completely accurate it has to be read as a multiplicity, happening simultaneously within the realms of both language and the body. In "We Who Are Free, Are We Free?"

Hélène Cixous writes about *A Society of Lies* that distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable murder – if a man murders and rapes it is “pitiful and therefore acceptable” (212) but when a woman enacts the same act, her act brings about a completely different result:

Inexplicable, monstrous, appalling, incomprehensible is the crime of that unnatural woman who has poisoned her husband. A woman kills: we are horrified. A man kills, nothing could be more natural. That's what our society thinks: if a woman gets killed, we're used to that, we understand that. I'm talking about my country. And here, how are things here? What I have just said is one of the ethical and statistical truths that disgust our society. It mustn't be said. It mustn't be touched. It's foul (Cixous 212).

Cixous points out the divergence between male and a female crime. Disgusting, unspeakable, untouchable, and foul are some of the traits of a woman who kills. Solanas's is an example of how a female crime becomes inexplicable and incomprehensible. Her crime causes other wounds than a male, whereby the female perpetrator cannot become male because her position in relation to his is more marginalized. Solanas's story lingers on as a mystery never quite forgotten it almost attains a mythical essence, alongside Antigone, Medea, Medusa, Bobbit or Wournos. The reality of Solanas's act becomes lost into an incomprehensible and ghostly appearance.

Similarly, James H. Harding's text “The Simplest Surrealist Act: Valerie Solanas and the (Re)Assertion of Avantgarde Priorities,” he notes that the it is not only the female crime that places women on the margins: Harding comments that Susan Suleiman has applied the term “double marginality” to characterize French experimental writings by women, and also in Solanas's work, Harding observes that there is “a fundamental and uncompromisingly irreconcilable antagonism between the cultural margins occupied by the avantgarde and the cultural margins occupied by women” (Harding 148)⁷.

We have talked about Solanas's acts that inflicted bodily wounds, exceeding the territory of language as well as it infiltrating it, and here her acts enter a third level: the manifesto.

⁷ From: Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

In retrospect, Solanas's writing and shooting are inseparable – to read the manifesto's call for violence brings the assault to mind, and vice versa, urging the question: how did Solanas's murder-attempt, a disgusting, unspeakable, untouchable, and foul event to use Cixous's words, affect her writing?

As we will shortly see it has been important for some supporters of *SCUM Manifesto* to isolate the writing from the deed of the author. James H. Harding's reading proposes instead that her shooting was staged as a performance, which situated her within the avant-garde movement. At the basis of Harding's argument is a little brown paper bag that Solanas was carrying on the day of the shooting. Solanas left the bag on the table close to where Andy Warhol had been talking on the phone when Valerie Solanas shot him. The bag, an "incongruous and foreign object," according to Harding, contained three items: a pistol, Solanas's address book, and a woman's sanitary napkin. The items echoed "a sense of incongruity" that "ha[d] been hovering about Solanas" (147), Harding tells us, the incongruity being a sense that these small, but "not insignificant" items served as "props to stage the assassination" (147).⁸ However, Harding feels compelled to add "the sheer actual violence of Solanas's act served as a harsh reminder that the assassination was not merely staged" (147). In between the small items and the pistol shots, Harding finds a Solanas who "constructed a mode of performance that absolutely defied the conventions of mainstream theatre and tore at the very conceptual fabric of the avant-garde" (147). Accordingly, the little brown paper bag played a major part, not only did it establish Solanas's act as an aesthetic performance but also as a performance that "transgressed decorum by calling attention to basic feminine experiences that were publicly taboo and tacitly elided within avant-garde circles" (Harding 147).

In-between staging and violence Harding captures a Solanas's who does not enter the language of the opponent to gets transformed and swallowed, but on the contrary enters language of the opponent in order to break the boundaries of that very opponent. Solanas employs the avant-garde's methods as she revolts against it, and thus she reinvents the avant-garde for her own ends. Harding's aim is not to include Solanas in the

⁸ As stated by Laura Winkiel, "The 'Sweet Assassin' and the Performative Politics of SCUM Manifesto." *In The Queer Sixties*. Smith, Patricia Juliana, ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. 62-85.

tradition of the historical avant-garde, but to account for how she impacts on how avant-garde history should be written:

What I have attempted here is the beginning of an historiography aimed not so much at including Solanas as it is at accounting for the subversive incompatibility with the history of the avantgarde as it has been written. Indeed, much of the significance of Solanas's act lies precisely in the forceful way her violence, as an aesthetically extreme form of avantgarde performance, simultaneously revolts against exclusion from avantgarde history even as the transgressiveness of that violence consciously asserts a kind of fundamental disruptive incompatibility with the history from which it has been excluded. (Harding 156)

The brutality of the shooting exceeds language only to immediately re-enter it as a performance in a union between radical art and radical politics, as Harding describes it (146). Therefore, he establishes a connection between art and violence – if shooting and art can indeed share such an intimacy – an intimacy that might also affect her writing. Harding proposes a subversive relation between art and violence staged in the assault, while also emphasizing an “avantgarde dynamic” between Solanas's manifesto and her shooting of Warhol. In connecting Solanas’s writing and shooting, his aim is not to go against earlier feminist readings of Solanas’s significance, that have understood the shooting as dictated by the manifesto. In these readings Solanas’s act of violence has been justified as the misguided solution to “real social problems that real women face” – the result of historical conditions, but not something that can be seriously endorsed (Harding 157). The result of these readings, according to Harding, is that they embrace Solanas’s writing (to some extent) but exclude the shooting (157).

Because it is important to Harding’s argument that Solanas’s feminist concerns “derive much of their force from the avantgarde context that generated them,” he proposes a re-reading of Solanas’s significance (147). What Harding finds is that this re-reading does not only encompass a revision of the reception of Solanas’s work, but also of the history of the American avant-garde itself. According to Harding, this revision begins with a “fundamental realignment of the respective cultural values that critics have given to her manifesto and to her act of violence” (147).

Following Harding, I will read the manifesto as happening between writing and action, in a continual re-invention of one another. But before we move to the dynamic between text and act, we need to analyse the text itself – the *SCUM Manifesto* – and how

it is found in a special relation to life and to the avant-garde.

The Manifesto

Solanas conceived of her text as divided into two sections: "the first part of the Manifesto is an analysis of male psychology, and the second is what to do about it" (Heller 143). *SCUM Manifesto's* declared opponent is man: "a walking abortion," "the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene, that is, it has an incomplete set of chromosomes," Solanas writes employing scientific language to make her argument (35-6). To be male, according to Solanas to be deficient, in fact he is a disease and emotionally he is crippled (37). Man, is in fact half-dead, halfway between humans and apes, and "to call man an animal is to flatter him" (37). Not quite human and close to the animal, he is also a machine and "a walking dildo," the drive of his sexual desires lies as basis for his every action. (37)

He is utterly egocentric, unable to relate, to have empathy or to identify, and more importantly, he is inherently passive. What man does with his passivity is to hate it, and because man is unable to bear his passivity he projects "it onto women, defines the male as active, then sets out to "prove that he is a Man" (37). His main means of proving that he is not passive is by screwing, as Solanas puts it. But since he's "attempting to prove an error," he must "prove it again and again. Screwing, then, is a desperate compulsive, attempt to prove he's not passive, not a woman; but he is passive and does want to be a woman" (37). In Solanas's terminology man is not really a man but spends his life becoming female, a continual attempt that he tries to accomplish by "constantly seeking out, fraternizing with and trying to live through and fuse with the female, and by claiming as his own all female characteristics" (37-8). The female characteristics man takes on as his own are: emotional strength and independence, forcefulness, dynamism, decisiveness, coolness, objectivity, assertiveness, courage, integrity, vitality, intensity, depth of character, grooviness, to mention some. Having taken on these qualities, he then projects his own traits onto women: vanity, frivolity, triviality, and weakness. Man does beat women in one field though, Solanas concludes and that is in public relations, man has done a "brilliant job convincing millions of women that men are women and women are men" (38).

Aside from being passive, and projecting his weaknesses onto women, he is responsible for various crimes: war (to compensate for not being female), money (“there is no human reason for money,” (39) work (there is no reason for anyone to work, “work could have been automated long time ago” (39), marriage, prostitution, fatherhood (“leads to a lifelong obsession with being approved of” (43). Because he is deeply ashamed of his animality, man furthermore enforces a “social code” that suppresses his individuality, man is, Solanas writes, merely a member of the species, he does not have individuality and is interchangeable with every other man; “males differ from each other only to the degree and in ways they attempt to defend against their passivity and against their desire to be female” (46). What he is however, “acutely aware of” is the female individuality” (46). He doesn’t comprehend it, it frightens him and fills him with envy, he therefore denies it and instead produces “identity,” which is the definition of everyone in terms of their function, and so “assigns himself of course the highest positions, president, doctor, scientist.” (46)

The female *has* to take complete charge “whether she likes it or not,” as Solanas puts it, because man is in the process of “gradually eliminating himself,” through wars, race riots, and because men are “becoming fags or are obliterating themselves through drugs” (67). Man is in the process of destroying himself but the process is and “SCUM” is *impatient*: “SCUM is not consoled that future generations will thrive; SCUM will grab some thrilling living for itself” (69). The key strategy for SCUM to take-over, something that could be achieved within a few weeks if a large majority of women were SCUM is “simply by withdrawing from the labour force, thereby paralyzing the whole nation” (69). Additional measures that will be “sufficient to disrupt the economy and everything else,” are for women to “declare themselves off the money system, stop buying, just loot and simply refuse to obey laws” (69). Women could also, “simply” leave men, Solanas suggests. SCUM will become members of the “unwork force, the fuck-up force, they will get jobs of various kinds and unwork” (71). But beyond unworking, exiting the monetary system and leaving men, SCUM will also actively “kill all men who are not members of the Men’s Auxiliary for SCUM. Men in the Men’s Auxiliary are those who are working diligently to eliminate themselves, men who regardless of their motives are doing good, men who are playing pal with SCUM” (72).

What SCUM is

SCUM, according to Solanas are those “females ... who trust only their own animal, gutter instincts, who equate Culture with chicks, whose sole diversion is prowling for emotional thrills and excitement,” SCUM are those who “by the standards of our “culture are SCUM . . . these females are cool and relatively cerebral and skirting asexuality” (61). SCUM are females those females who don’t belong to a specific group but who possess certain characteristics: they are dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, violent, selfish, independent, proud, thrill-seeking, free-wheeling, arrogant females, and they “consider themselves fit to rule the universe” (70).

SCUM has been read to stand for, “Society for Cutting Up Men,” and has been read as an illustration of Solanas’s intentions for “what to do about” the male problem (Heller 143). The manifesto, however, never mentions the acronym, and in “Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure.” Dana Heller argues that there is no reliable evidence that Solanas intended her title to be an acronym. In fact Heller states, “One source suggests that Solanas never intended SCUM as an acronym at all” (Heller 168). The source Heller refers to the 1975 interview with Solanas that was never published. Jane Caputi,⁹ one of the interviewers, recalls Solanas insisting that “the acronym ‘Society for Cutting Up Men’ was the fabrication of her publisher, Maurice Girodias” (Heller 168). Solanas, Heller continues, did not intend any connection between the manifesto and the shooting, and her usage of the term "scum" was, Caputi recollects, “based on a subversive appropriation insofar as "scum" signifies women's debased status in a male-defined system of social values. Solanas intended to playfully reverse this meaning so that SCUM would mean "female genius... the females who are the grooviest and most cerebral" (168). Solanas’s version of a genius or of the “relatively cerebral,” (Solanas 61) comes to mean something else than greatness within what is culturally acceptable, in Solanas's word the female SCUM’s are inverted into greatness, but simultaneously the implications of “greatness,” and the “acceptable” is confronted with new implications.

⁹“These words are Jane Caputi's taken from an e-mail message sent to the author, 7 Dec. 1999,” Heller writes. (187)

Harding reads SCUM according to a somewhat a similar line as Heller, and finds SCUM to be “the most famous but oddly the least discussed aspect of Solanas's work” (Harding 148). Harding finds it to allude to a more literal meaning, “to the derisively low social status that, according to Solanas, women are relegated to in patriarchal society” (148), and emphasizes the powerful inversion of “scum”:

one of the first instances of an individual or a group publicly embracing and appropriating an offensive characterization for a political agenda running directly counter to its derogatory implications. SCUM thereby subverts an accepted linguistic order as a titular point of departure for a group of women actively and radically engaged in subverting the social order that represses them (Harding 148).

SCUM as Harding sees it is the subversion of the derogatory status of women and here he is in alignment with Heller’s reading of Solanas’s intention. He departs, however, from Solanas’s rejection of the acronym when he continues to read it in terms of a striking back, although not physically, when SCUM being an acronym “threatens a graphically violent response to the violence that historically has been perpetuated against women” (148). By simultaneously inverting the meaning of SCUM at the same time as the acronym poses a threat the manifesto’s title becomes a break with what Harding reads as “the existing traditions of the avant-garde,” instead it becomes “a countervailing point of critical tension in a radical juxtaposition of irreconcilable, mutually exclusive aesthetic agendas” (148).

In SCUM, Ronell points out the same double connection between a female violence and the avant-garde that Harding finds. Ronell comments on “the unreadability” of the title and notes that if we were to accept the acronym, the “cutting up,” links Solanas to Lorena Bobbit. But beyond a violent female background, Ronell observes, that the title also links Solanas to avant-garde techniques such as “laughter, montage, editing” (11). In the juxtapositions between the verb “cutting,” as either a disfigurement of a body or as a collage technique employed by the avant-garde, Ronell’s argument parallels Harding’s:

[The verb “cutting”] may strike directly at male anxieties about dismemberment, there is a more subtle allusion in Solanas's acronymic title. It recalls perhaps the most innovative aesthetic strategy of subversion historically employed by the avant-garde, namely the subversive cutting up,

recontextualization, and radical juxtapositions that are the basic techniques of collage itself. (Harding 148)

The inversion of “scum” into SCUM, and the acronym’s juxtapositions between violence and an avant-garde technique, enforces a willingness to exit writing and perform transformations in minds as well as bodies. It remains to look at the genre that Solanas’s text it written in – historically the manifesto genre has been strongly tied to, namely, the avant-garde movement – but before I do that I will discuss the language Solanas’s invokes in order to perform alterations on the body.

The genre

In “Manifesto = Theatre,” Martin Puchner examines “the history of the manifesto, with an emphasis on the manifesto’s particular form of performativity” (451). According to him, the manifesto is one of the “least understood and at the same time most important inventions of what is now called the historical avant-garde” (Puchner 172). Its morphology includes: numbered theses, denunciations of the past, an aggressive attitude toward the audience, a collective authorship, exaggerated, shrill declarations, varied, often bold, letters; and a mass distribution in newspapers, on bill-boards, and as flyers (Puchner 172). These features, Puchner says, characterize “the avant-garde manifesto from Marinetti to the seventies and beyond, spanning what one might call the era of the manifesto” (172).

Solanas’s manifesto could claim a share in all these traits, the past is denounced, if any of its readers are not SCUM the manifesto’s tone is certainly aggressive, its statements are possible shrill exaggerations, it claims belonging to a collective (SCUM) and Solanas went to the streets to distribute it. The manifesto is written in a tone in which it is never quite certain whether a statement is to be taken literally or not. Heller for example, notes a possible connection between “the brutally ironic tone of the *SCUM Manifesto*,” and how Solanas was described by almost everyone who knew her as “terrifically angry and terrifically funny (172). Reading the manifesto into a history of manifestos the aggressive and shrill tone of Solanas’s text becomes a reply to the Futurist manifesto’s violent attitudes towards the opposite sex.

Puchner notes that another “female” manifesto, “Isabella Rossellini’s Manifesto,”

as an ad for lipstick and makeup departs from the traditional avant-garde manifesto in several ways. In particular because it turns the writing of the manifesto into an individual and private (as well as a commercial) exercise (455). But it also lacks numbered theses and is addressed primarily to women. Interestingly, as it directs itself just to women Puchner notes that the manifesto comes into opposition against the traditional male manifesto:

[Rosellini's manifesto] takes a stance toward the gender history of the manifesto. At least in the hands of Marinetti, a chief inventor of the avant-garde manifesto, the manifesto had been a genre celebrating the masculine: aggressive posing, virility, force. Pound and Lewis, for example, use their Blast manifesto to threaten the Suffragettes, whose cause they otherwise endorse. To say that the avant-garde manifesto is often masculinist is not to say that there are no manifestos by women—Rosa Luxemburg's Sparakus Manifest, Valentine de Saint-Point's Manifesto della donna futurista, and Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* testify to the opposite. (455)

The Rosellini manifesto is written by a woman, it directs itself towards women, and it encourages women to “write your own manifesto” (Puchner 184). Puchner finds that the Rosellini manifesto diverges from the standard manifesto from Karl Marx through Rosa Luxemburg to Guy Debord, that was a collective enterprise: “often written collaboratively and always on behalf of a group” (184).¹⁰

Similarly, *SCUM Manifesto* does not direct itself to everyone, and it is one person's address to potential female members of SCUM, a revolutionary organization and a possible collective. However, as Heller points out, Solanas later asserted that SCUM is a “purely metaphorical function. It's just a literary device” (183). In a 1977 interview with the *The Village Voice* Solanas claimed that “there's no organization called S.C.U.M. There never was and there never will be... I mean, I thought of it as a state of mind... women who think a certain way are in SCUM” (Heller 183). Being the writer of SCUM is an individual act – but since SCUM is a mental state of mind the manifesto does not direct itself towards a group as such but to a shared, although invisible inter-subjective collectivity.

As far as Solanas's manifesto diverges from the standard manifesto because it is an individual (and female) act, accompanied by the historical avant-garde itself. Puchner observes that even in Tristan Tzara's “Dada Manifesto 1918,” Tzara writes: “I write a

¹⁰ As Perry Anderson points out in *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998), 93.

manifesto and I don't want anything, nevertheless I say several things and I am against manifestos on principle just as I am against principles" (Puchner 460). Tzara's manifesto does not follow the requirement of collective authorship but even more so it is, Puchner notes, at odds with the manifesto's "desire for efficacy," it self-reflexively breaks cuts itself off towards implementing changes in the world (461).

Violence

SCUM Manifesto, as well as "Isabella Rosellini's Manifesto," appropriate the manifesto as feminine and feminist, but the two are of course completely different: one as an ad for lipstick, and the other as the propagator of male extinction. In the connection between violence and the manifesto as a genre, Harding notes that Solanas's manifesto is historically typical (here he quotes Janet Lyon):

Linked with the form's passion for truth-telling is its staging of extreme rage. David Graham Burnett has offered the thesis that the "manifesto" derives etymologically from a Latin composite of *manus* and *fectus*, and this translation acknowledges the nascent fury embodied in the form (Harding 148).¹¹

SCUM Manifesto's violent implications were especially shared by the mentioned Futurist Manifesto and its embrace of war: "We will glorify war – the world's only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gestures of freedom bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman . . . We will destroy . . . feminism" (Ronell 5). The Futurist Manifesto's "uncringing attack on women" (5) is returned by *SCUM Manifesto* as "payback," Ronell writes, and thus it shares an "anti-social edge with the destructive demands of prior manifestos" (5).

The manifesto has a problem according to Ronell, in that it seeks to exit itself in order to make alterations in life. While it is "tripping over the pitfalls that await any speech act, the *Manifesto* nonetheless seeks to make itself binding; in the fervent hope – that we would be bound by its effects," and this is its dilemma, Ronell concludes (5).

The manifesto's revolutionary style and the call to make itself binding, is a problem according to Ronell: Solanas "shows up as a victim of the failed performative, (. . .) one who felt her verbal velocities could reach no one in a way that would truly mark

¹¹ Lyon, Janet. 1999. *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca. New York.

or unhinge the brutal protocols of lived reality” (4). Solanas was says Ronell; ”disabled by the very fact of language, by its phallic lures and political usages, by its disturbing record in the human sciences and liberal arts – by the mere fact of its incessant institutional collaborations” (4). Although caught within a male driven language, Solanas did however know how to make use of it in order for it to “hurt.” Solanas inflicted wounds on the body as well as the mind, writes Ronell, for her words could “land in the psyche or explode in the soma” (4). But, Ronell argues, Solanas wanted to go further, in that she ”wanted to draw a social contract,” a revolution against the avant-garde, against the male. In fact, she wanted, as Ronell phrases it, an “end to all ends” (14). This also becomes Solanas’s dilemma:

Revolution is tainted by the insufficiency of the signifier, the corruptions of the male marked colonisations of language. “No genuine social revolution can be accomplished by the male . . . The male “rebel” is a farce” (54 . 55). Still, the revolutionary rebel starts out as “male:” In terms of her sense of slippage, Valerie Solanas runs with the best of them, none of these terms stick. Which is why she remains a chronic misfirer. (7)

Ronell observes that the dilemma that Solanas paradoxically is to be found within is that in rebelling against “man,” she also takes on his disability in accomplishing a revolution. Solanas sets out to revolt and rebel, but in doing so she becomes a part of what Butler describes as the “masculine excess called hubris.” The failure that according to Solanas is a specifically male failure, appears to be transmitted onto Solanas herself. But if Solanas becomes “man,” what does that *becoming* mean? Masculinity in Butler’s argument stands for the “kinship and state,” and according to Butler’s argument masculinity resides as an entity within culture, that also is transferable. But as we recall, Solanas posits herself directly in antagonism with the traditional feminist view on the gendered body as a social construct. In Solanas’s argument, gender is defined in terms of the biological body, anatomically, if not genetically defined, and if gender is transferable it is only through physical alterations, and men can become women solely through the use of technological intervention.

Ronell points out in her Preface that Solanas inverts basic assumptions around gender (that women are passive, men are active) whereby she establishes a new language around lack: “it is no longer woman who is organized as and around lack, but man, trapped in his pernicious projection booth, who tries to come to terms with the desperate

situation of lack: he is the woman-in-lack” (19). Turning ideas about gender around, her opponent is a man who is really a woman, and she is really a woman who is a man – and so a certain confusion around gender arises.

In Ronell’s argument Solanas’s willingness for violence backlashes at Solanas, and she becomes the negative being in lack that she was striking against. But if Solanas’s manifesto (and also her shooting) is *payback* for male crimes inflicted on women historically, how can the answer to the violence inflicted on women become the same violence that she reacts against? One comes before the other, and the other is *payback* to the former, a *payback* that would not be necessary if it were not for the male violence that first took place. If I understand Butler’s and Ronell’s arguments correctly, it seems there is no difference between an abusive language and the answer to that abusive language, or between the ethical repercussions of an act that occurs chronologically before another – but can that argument be sustained?

Harding reads Solanas’s performance and manifesto in a highly interactive relationship, where the relationship between the two can be described more in terms of a *becoming* similar to a living organism – in a process of interaction and redoubling. Ronell finds a performative lack in Solanas’s text – but if the text is a performative failure, it becomes the opposite of the process of interaction that Harding describes. Being a performative failure, the text is unable to reach outside its own ends, and it can only *happen* within its own limitations, with the ultimate result that as the text is written it has reached its closure, it has become something of the *past*. In Part two I will discuss the implications of this closure more thoroughly in relation to my analysis of *Dreamfaculty* by Sara Stridsberg.

SCUM Manifesto is “an indefensible text,” Ronell writes (15). But which part is cannot be defended – is it indefensible because of the connection between the assault and the propagation of violence in the text? To this question Ronell does not give a clear answer. It seems there is no actual distinction between act and text in Ronell’s view, instead the two appear to become the same, one indicating the other, foreclosing, introducing, permeating, continuing the effect of the other. Finally, the actual violence is separated from Ronell’s text, transformed into a cartoon-like event, performed by a person Ronell is intimate with, as she is referred to by her first name: Valerie.

Harding points out that in spite of the fury of language in the avant-garde texts, Solanas's shots were unparalleled in the history of the avant-garde. Theoretically it parallels Breton's 1924 "First Manifesto of Surrealism," where Breton asserts that "the simplest surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd" (Harding 150). Harding points out that Solanas's act "called the bluff" in Breton's statement, as well as "cut through the rhetorical posturing of the futurists (150). On the day of her arrest, Solanas was asked why she shot Andy Warhol, to which she replied "I have lots of reasons. Read my manifesto and it will tell you who I am" (Harding 147). Harding notes that feminist critics have read Solanas's statement to the reporters as an "indication that she was acting under the guidance of the dictates of her manifesto and that her act of violence was an understandable albeit misguided reading of the vitriolic implications of her text" (157). Rather than viewing Solanas's manifesto and her act of violence in a relationship of equality, feminist critics have, according to Harding, read Solanas's shooting as a "symptom of real social problems that real women face but not a part of the real solutions finally and seriously endorsed" (157).

Harding argues that feminist readings have tried to save Solanas's text from the implications of the shooting by "advocat[ing] a separation of Solanas's shooting of Warhol from discussion of the *SCUM Manifesto*" (157). However, as Harding points out, there is no clear indication in Solanas's statement to the reporters that the contents of the manifesto would explain the specifics of her action, for the manifesto does not, as Harding puts it, "provid[e] a script for those actions" (147). The sections of the manifesto that contain passages that advocate a selective and discriminate use of violent destruction, as well as sections describing how SCUM will "[...] coolly, furtively stalk its prey and quietly move in for the kill" cannot be used to explain the act itself (Harding 147).

Instead of a separation, Harding's project is to emphasize an avant-garde *dynamic* that he argues is to be found between *SCUM Manifesto* and the shooting of Warhol. He clarifies that his reading does not stand opposed to a more "traditional" feminist reading of Solanas's significance. According to Harding "that reading has its own value, and, more importantly, is indispensable to understanding the manner in which Solanas ultimately revitalized the otherwise seemingly exhausted aesthetics of the historical

avantgarde” (Harding 147). But he does however find that Solanas feminist agenda derived “much of [its] force from the avantgarde context that generated [it].” (147) This fact has been “generally overlooked,” he observes. According to Harding, the new way of seeing Solanas’s act and her manifesto begins with a “fundamental realignment” of how critics have read each act (the manifesto and the shooting) as separate entities, each with its own significance and cultural values:

the avantgarde dimensions in Solanas's activities are located in the dynamic between the text she produced (the manifesto) and the performance she enacted (the shooting of Warhol), a dynamic which arguably corresponds to the theatrical avantgarde's reconceptualization of text and performance as a radical juxtaposition of two equally weighted, autonomous art forms (147).

Harding finds that when Solanas on the day of her arrest refers to her manifesto ("it will tell you what I am") suggests that “the manifesto establishes an identity and thus serves as a kind of credential,” thereby positioning herself among the likes of avant-garde figures such as Filippo Marinetti, Tristan Tzara, and Andre Breton (147). At the same time as Solanas makes use of the avant-garde rhetoric, she goes “toe-to-toe” (147) against the long history of misogyny that the historical avant-garde “uncritically absorbed.” The *SCUM Manifesto*, Harding concludes, “thus usurps the mantle of the avant-garde by skillfully inverting and thereby exposing its historically unacknowledged, gendered tropes” (147-8).

A Problem

On first reading it, I thought, 'I have never had the courage to even think some of these things, and Valerie Solanas only had that courage because she had cut her moorings and separated herself from traditional feminine virtues such as fairness, compassion, empathy.... It made me wonder about blighted talents, vanished possibilities, and what might be lurking in the great host of humanity we call failures. (Heller 167)

What is in fact lurking in the great host of humanity that we are calling failures, and are these failures even considered to be *human*? If not, then what it means to be a human is not tied to bodily features but to other characteristics, as opposed to, for instance, Solanas’s envisioned society of female bodies.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida aims to show how the “so called animal” has been treated in the Western Philosophical tradition. For Derrida, it is essential to disclose how an entire philosophical tradition has made an opposition between humanity and animality, defining the animal negatively, deprived of human traits such as “speech, reason, experience of death, mourning, culture, institutions, techniques, clothing, lying, pretense of pretense [*feinte de feinte*], covering of tracks, gift, laughing, tears, respect, etc” (Derrida 2008: 44). Derrida finds that animality and humanity have been separated in order for humans to be defined positively, meaning humans are deprived of animal traits. Derrida’s project is to reveal the *cogito* as a violent negation of the *nonhuman*.

Likewise, Butler points out how the public constitution of the human is today still haunted by what Hanna Arendt calls the “shadowy realm,” a realm where human lives, according to Butler, are not being “genocidally destroyed, but neither are they being entered into the life of the legitimate community in which standards of recognition permit for an attainment of humanness” (81). Butler goes on to note that

The “political” must be expanded to describe the status of a population of less than human, those who were not permitted into the interlocutory scene of the public sphere where the human is constituted through words and deeds, and most forcefully constituted when its word becomes its deeds” (Butler 81).

What is human is traditionally defined by its existence within the “interlocutory scene,” as Butler comments – constituted through words and deeds in the public sphere. Solanas, a female (attempted) killer, is if we recall Cixous definition, inexplicable, monstrous, untouchable, and unspeakable. She is found in a position of being “less than human” – perhaps even in Derrida’s terms “nonhuman,” not in a position to be human, since she cannot be defined “positively” against the animal, but rather assumes animalistic traits.

To follow the question of inclusion and marginality we will return again to the avant-garde. Earlier we discussed the avant-garde tendencies in *SCUM Manifesto* and in Solanas’s assault, and we looked into the manifesto genre’s eagerness to exit itself – but what *is* the writing that the avant-garde wants to exit? The surrealist manifesto called for action, and surrealist writing included a practice of “automatic writing,” where the writers “converted themselves into machines to record the whispers of the unconscious,” as E.

San Juan, Jr. writes in “Antonio Gramsci on Surrealism and the Avant-Garde” (San Juan, Jr. 31). According to San Juan, surrealism claimed to be a “total revolution of the world,” and they aimed for “changes in society being premised on changes in the character and consciousness of humans” and “criticized the “common sense” rules and practices of everyday life” (31). When “converting into machines,” the surrealists departed from the traditional position of the author, and the author’s (or narrator’s) controlled staging of that writing. The controlled authorship that the surrealists wanted to depart from included not only writing, but also a way of life in its everyday form, with its rules and its apparent common sense.

When the surrealist project of automatic writing was to exceed traditional concepts of humanity in terms of reason, culture, institutions, techniques – perhaps even (controlled) speech – they were aiming into a field of non-humanity reaching towards the marginal, and its beyond. If Solanas can be claimed to be part of an avant-garde project, she attains non-humanity by a “double marginality,” to use Suleimans’s words (Harding 148). She is “monstrous” as a woman who committed a crime, as well as partaking in an avant-garde project to exit the human field of meaning into the nonsensical.

In the sense that Solanas is “non-human,” her non-humanity is a lack in language. She does not possess either words or deeds and she is expelled from the “interlocutory scene” of the public. Being kept outside the public sphere we might even say that her words and deeds instead of being political become random, meaningless acts of insanity – and we might even say they become “surreal.” But as we have seen, Solanas’s marginality is more complex than her just being “kept” in a victimized position. She has also deliberately stretched her writing and shooting into this sphere, as an avant-garde act that still claims to be ethical, moral, and political.

Butler argues that the “less than human” should be included into the political sphere, and likewise Derrida finds that the negation of “the animal,” as a singularity that includes a vast multiplicity of species, has vast implications that we cannot take for granted. According to Derrida, the reduction begins in language, but the result is for him a devastating disrespect for life itself. Derrida calls to “awaken us [or be awoken] to our responsibilities and our obligations vis-à-vis the living in general (...)” (Derrida 34). The relation between humans and animals must change “both in the sense of ontological

necessity and of an “ethical” duty,” urges Derrida in *For What Tomorrow* (Derrida, Roudinesco 64). The question of the animal is *the most* important question today for Derrida:

It is not one question among others, of course. I have long considered it to be decisive (as one says), in itself and for its strategic value; that’s because, while it is difficult and enigmatic in itself, it also represents the limit upon which all great questions are formed and determined, as well as all the concepts that attempt to delimit what is “proper to man,” the essence and future of humanity, ethics, law, “human rights,” “crimes against humanity,” “genocide,” etc (Derrida, Roudinesco 63).

When we read any text where Solanas occurs, we might similarly ask *how* are we reading her, *how* are we approaching her otherness – does our approach to Solanas’s *difference* have implications? Is the staged meeting between Stridsberg and Solanas in *Dreamfaculty* a meeting between equals? When we encounter the Solanas hypertext, perhaps we are not hearing her voice but instead “looking at her” from a distance, without touching or listening, rejecting the encounter with her. Solanas then approximates that something that “mustn't be said. It mustn't be touched. It's foul.” (Cixous 212)

Derrida’s primary concern is that humans (and philosophy) fail to register the *being* of the other they define themselves against, and this failure is located in the *looking*: “In the first place there are texts signed by people who have no doubt seen, observed, analyzed, reflected on the animal, but who have never been *seen seen* by the animal” (Derrida 13). An entire philosophical tradition has failed to acknowledge that when looking at the animal, the animal also looks back:

Clearly all those (all those males but not all those females) [...], belong to this quasi-epochal category. Their discourses are sound and profound, but everything goes on as if they themselves had never been looked at, and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them. At least everything goes on as though this troubling experience had not been theoretically registered, supposing that they had experienced it at all, at the precise moment when they made of the animal a theorem, something seen and not seeing (Derrida 15).

In part two we will discuss Bakhtin’s theory of polyphony – as a relation of equality in the text – and so I argue that even though Solanas is dead, when we encounter her in the text we can admit to her otherness as being seen as well as *seeing*. The process of seeing oneself be seen is described by Derrida in terms of *following*, and his main

objective is to discuss what “to follow” or “to pursue” means, as well as “to be after,” back to the question of what happens when “I am” or “I follow”:

When I say “*Je suis*,” if I am (following) this suite then, I move from “the ends of man,” that is the confines of man, to “the crossing of borders” between man and animal. Passing across borders or the ends of man I come or surrender to the animal, to the animal in itself, to the animal in me and the animal at unease with itself, [...] to the man whom Nietzsche said [...] that it was an as yet undetermined animal, an animal lacking in itself (3).

Derrida confronts the negativity in the “I am” statement that excludes everything that is not included within the “I,” whereas the process of following offers an open, and transitional state of becoming. Solanas can be then seen to participate in a discussion about the “ethical encounter,” where the political ends and otherness begins. Derrida’s argument is relevant here in order to investigate *how* Solanas is approached, whether she is ever heard, seen, noticed looking back at us – or whether she is negated, reduced into a singularity. In her Preface, Avital Ronell stresses how Solanas’s drastic goal is the end of man. As I proceed to discuss Ronell’s text in the next section, I am also interested in which gaze Ronell employs for her encounter with Solanas.

A technological body

Solanas invokes a scientific discourse (“the Y (male) gene...” (Solanas 35-6) in order to make her claims to clarify her means and justify her ends. In Solanas’s words men should seek to be really female, and they should do so by means of “intense biological research,” that will enable operations on the brain and the nervous system in order to transform the psyche and the body of the male into truly female (68). The male gender is not a genetic, but a physiological and neurological category that can be transversed in order to become female, which should be the aim of every male, according to Solanas. Similarly, while “chicks” are of culture, the female is a biological entity, we assume outside of patriarchal discourse and untouched by it. In this alignment, Solanas posits herself directly in antagonism with the traditional feminist critique that places the possibility of change within culture and that regards the gendered body as a social construct. Solanas, in fact, explicitly states that “SCUM is out to destroy the entire system, not attain certain rights within it” (Solanas 76). Instead, Solanas proposes that it is in the biological body of the female sex, genetically and anatomically defined, that the

potential for women's politics resides.

Thereby, Solanas's great belief in a technological take-over that would correct both male and female functions becomes apparent. According to Dana Heller, Solanas's "near-utopian theories" were informed by her years spent at the University of Maryland, where she majored in psychology and where she received her scientific training (186). Melissa Deem points out that for Solanas the only function of the male is reproductive, and is therefore rendered obsolete:

a male desire that serves to displace women's physicality onto the male, who must, in his ontological incompleteness, live through his compulsive need for the female body. [For Solanas,] men "don't have penis envy; men have pussy envy." While the female has individuality, the male has a function - to produce sperm (Deem 530).

While women are individuals, men are limited to their biological reproductive function, and since "we now have sperm banks," men are, in Solanas's argument, no longer necessary (59). As Deem concludes, men are "infinitely substitutable, rendered obsolete by technology" (531). Heller also emphasizes the importance of technology in *SCUM Manifesto*, especially how the new technologies of reproduction that Solanas envisions are central in the "utopian vision of a world in which mechanization and systems of mass (re)production would render work, sexual intercourse, and the money system obsolete" (Heller 186).

The male, whom "for practical purposes won't exist," will be replaced by sperm banks that will ensure the *production* of babies, which would take place in laboratories (Solanas 67). That it will take place without male assistance is already established, whereas the female role in the production remains undecided. Solanas writes: "whether or not to continue to use females for reproduction or to reproduce in the laboratory will also become academic" (68). To Solanas, the question of reproduction lies open to scholarly evaluation, and is decided within the limits of research. The society that Solanas envisioned after the end of man implied a major transition for the female, in that she would become "man", and she would no longer necessarily "reproduce" herself biologically. But if men become women and females become men, how can the female "man" escape becoming a regular male? Since Solanas proposes that it is in the biological body of the female sex, genetically and anatomically defined, that the potential for

women's politics resides, the female "man" does not take on the qualities of men, but rather takes back the qualities that belonged to her - forcefulness, dynamism, decisiveness, coolness, objectivity, assertiveness, courage, integrity, vitality, ... and so on.

In her Preface, Ronell focuses on the philosophical implications of Solanas's utopian vision. Ronell observes how Solanas was "bursting through layers of philosophical history to put her own 'ends of man,' her own limit case to the classical unity of man" (2). As we have seen, Solanas argues that the reproduction of males is unethical in the society to come, but not only does she question the necessity of male reproduction, she also questions the necessity of a (re)production of *any* sort, including the reproduction of women: "Why should there be any future generations" Solanas rhetorically asks (Solanas 69).

Ronell suggests that the answer to this question is that Solanas "calls an end to all ends" (14). Solanas's envisioned society is not only devoid of men but, according to Ronell, possibly the termination of history itself, because as Ronell puts it: "there is no history without the end in sight" (14). What Solanas wants instead, Ronell argues, is "everlasting life, the utopia of non-history" (14). In line with Ronell's argument, we might even say that Solanas's utopia equals the termination of men with the end of a linear account of history. Instead her new way of life would be a random existence without end similar to the avant-garde's goal, which according to Peter Bürger in the *Theory of The Avant-garde* was to "be sublated [*aufgehoben*] in the praxis of life" (Heyd 69).

But since Solanas sets out to "end man," Ronell finds her methods problematic, not in the context of the "natural course of events, of social evolution," but rather in SCUM's *impatience* in bringing about the social take-over. If man does not eliminate himself fast enough, SCUM will in Solanas's words "help" him: by destroying, looting, fucking-up, and killing, SCUM aims at rapidly eliminating man (74).

The violent solution in the manifesto is part of the dilemma for Ronell, who wonders: "there has to be a way to situate the diatribe without falling into the trap of polemics, without perpetrating the very assault against which you stand or promoting the war utterance" (14). When Solanas goes against the male negativity with what Ronell

perceives as the exact same means that the “male lack” threatens to become her own. As Solanas makes use of the same violent tactics, it seems that there is no easy separation between male and female tactics. It is not only men who are “their own worst and first enemies,” who have placed themselves beyond the pleasure principle (“I have no time for sex of any kind,” as Solanas puts it), who are “propelled by the death drive,” and who “thrive, which is to say they wither on war” (Ronell 12).

Similarly to Butler’s Antigone who takes on the form of “a certain masculine sovereignty,” manhood appears impossible to share, for to uphold itself it requires a feminine and an inferior opposite. Ronell considers it possible that Solanas “might have been backed into a cave like Antigone at some point, shaking with anger and taking upon herself what Hegel has said was true of women: she stands as the internal enemy of the community” (Ronell 24). To Ronell, Solanas is not quite the eternal enemy of community, but she is “the coming-out of woman as absolute enemy” (25). Solanas embodies a status as “enemy to [all] men, to community, to the inscribed system of values, [and] to Great Art” (25). In this she is not alone but follows in the tracks of other female enemies to patriarchy, from mythical and literary figures to female serial killers of the recent past: “whether she was part of the girl gang of Ovid’s *Heroides* or her name was Medusa, Medea, Antigone, Lizzie Borden, Lorena Bobbit, Aileen Wournos, Christine and Lea Papin” (25). Although Solanas’s “psychotic outburst” was momentary, she was in fact part of a collective across the limits of time and space, mythical and real, and performed her function in a “terrible cutting machine,” as Ronell concludes (25).

A Loner

Although Ronell finds Solanas to be part of a mythical and timeless female enmity, she is also invested in classifying her as a “loner” during her lifetime (9). For Ronell, being a loner makes Solanas more associable to “the petitions and complaints of the solitary ranters for whom missives and missiles collapse into an in-dissociable, deadly mission” (9). Ronell thus finds Solanas to appear among those who act on their own, outside the support system of any rebel movement:

Lacking the elegance and cultural legitimacy of a subcommandante Marcos, a Weatherman or a proponent of the civil rights movement, the so-called Unabomber, David Koresh. Koresh and

Solanas are more vagabond, unmoored and alone with their inscriptions, offering a spare cluster of revolutionaries who act outside any institution: "de-institutionalized and depopulated "revolutionaries" (9).

Solanas had no followers, no disciples, and even worse she is troubled by lacking "elegance" and "cultural legitimacy," in Ronell's words. In addition, Ronell considers her to be uniquely American in that she offered "an uniquely American dead-end-one-warrior-revolution spinning on its own axis" (9). In Ronell's view then, to act on one's own seems to be mutually exclusive with having a just cause, for those who act on their own are not connected to (intangible although perhaps co-existing) ideas and communities outside themselves. Acting alone, Solanas's mission ended with her. In her "dead-end-one-warrior-revolution," Solanas becomes a marginal presence, a being in-lack that can only perform as the *minor literature* of Deleuze and Guattari. In isolation, the *minor literature* becomes pushed aside or outside the limits of the interlocutory scene.

Solanas's solitary rebellion was further complicated by her arrival, which happened "too late and too early on every scene," for Solanas's acts were, according to Ronell, "untimely" (9). Being outside her own time, as well as acting on her own, Solanas seems to take on a cartoon irreality for Ronell: "who needed a runaway Hothead Paisan, the comic strip lesbian avenger, in the summer of 68?" (9). Not only untimely, Solanas's rebellion against "Great Art" assumes a characteristic unimportance at a time when "King and Bobby and Malcolm X were being slaughtered, when women for the first time were protesting the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City" (9-10). Solanas's rebellion does not correspond with the events of her time, according to Ronell, although she admits that Solanas was not entirely on her own. Solanas was "declared a very important feminist," by NOW and the feminist movement, and feminist lawyer Florynce Kennedy volunteered to represent her in court.

Ronell finds Solanas in a confused position, continually deemed by those writing on her as "spinning between crackpot and prophet" (Ronell 24). Among those who have seen Solanas as a prophet, Ronell points out, is cultural theorist B. Ruby Rich, who found Solanas to be feminism's answer to Joan of Arc (24). But Ronell adds, Joan of Arc had God on her side and though she was "illiterate and solitary, she responded to a higher calling" (24). Solanas on the other hand had no connections into the transcendental realm

according to Ronell, and no one but herself to give assurance she was doing what was right, “though her resolve was unshakable” (24).

According to Harding, Solanas never abandoned the sense that her actions were justified. In a 1977 interview with the *Village Voice*, Solanas spoke about her unsuccessful attempt to kill Warhol and she “emphatically maintained that she adhered to “an absolute moral standard,” and that the shooting was “a moral act” (Harding 156). In fact, as Dana Heller points out, Solanas’s act was a moral failure according to herself “not because she shot him but because she failed to kill him” (186). “I consider it immoral that I missed,” Solanas further claimed.

Although Ronell establishes Solanas as a loner, Solanas’s aims to strike “the jugular of referential man,” paralleled another of Solanas’s contemporaries (1-2). “Somewhere on an existential corner of 1968,” writes Ronell an “improbable rendez-vous” between Solanas and Derrida took place. Both shared what Ronell calls the “beat of a feverishly agitated Zeitgeist” (1). Derrida and Solanas did not meet in place but in time: 1968, when Derrida “brought out his path-breaking essay “The Ends of Man,” and Solanas “began earnestly distributing *SCUM Manifesto*” (1). More than their historical time, Ronell observes, Derrida and Solanas shared an enemy: the paternal fiction. According to Ronell, these are “ineluctable contiguities” that make the two come together in a fellow interest in “the aims and finality of the concept of ‘man’” (1).

While Derrida was conceptually concerned with the excess of man, Ronell notes that Solanas was not only conceptually manifesting her aims, but literally stepping outside the text thereby “bursting out through layers of philosophical history to put out her own “ends of man,” her own limit case of the classical unity of man” (2).

In fact, not only does Solanas correspond with Derrida’s thinking, Ronell points out that Solanas was running “with the best of them.” In fact, Ronell defends Solanas’s place among thinkers such as Goethe, Nietzsche, Deleuze and Butler, among others. But Ronell also underlines that even as Solanas could be mentioned among these thinkers, she does not quite belong: “it would be unwarranted to turn Valerie Solanas into a blindingly lucid catalogue of contemporary theoretical thought” (8). Ronell clarifies that the common space assigned to Solanas is made up of both belonging and non-belonging. Solanas was “inscribed” and as such took to the margins of major philosophers, and Ronell urges that

Solanas belongs with them, “even only as a limping stagglor and wounded anomaly” (8). Ronell assigns Solanas in a double position among “great” philosophers such as Derrida and Nietzsche, but the result is obviously not the same as when Harding argues for Solanas’s juxtaposed position within and outside the avant-garde. I believe that Harding’s argument does not impose on Solanas something that is not there – but rather, he follows the course of Solanas’s actions, and these lead him to the aesthetics and methods of the avant-garde.

Dana Heller points out that the *SCUM Manifesto* is a critique against the hierarchical order of “greatness” and “the undoing of the logic of canonizationism,” as well as a rejection that also included “Great Art and Culture” (186-7). The mentioning of Solanas’s name among the names of “great philosophers” appears to be the opposite of a rejection of the canon. The relationship she constructs is between the marginal (voiceless) and “interlocutory scene” of philosophy, and it is a *filiation*. Solanas, who rejected “great art,” institutionalized systems, and men, would almost certainly also reject being (a)filiated to any (male) group or institution. We might even ask why Ronell finds it necessary to connect Solanas to anything outside her own words.

When Ronell connects the “less than human,” in this case Solanas, to those who occupy the “interlocutory” scene, the limit between the marginal and the included is still not erased. Here we might recall Derrida’s argument that to follow “the animal” is to register it looking back at us. Solanas is dead, but perhaps she can still look back at us—through her words and actions – and we in our encounter with her must follow, even if she is marginal, even if she speaks the “unspeakable,” even if she is “foul.” Ronell admits that “understanding may be the wrong goal, since no hermeneutics, however politically inflected, will succeed in placing Solanas under a secure grasp” (24). And so perhaps to find an answer to what Solanas *is* (whether she be a loner, a negative warrior, a feminist activist, an almost great thinker, a writer, a performer), in line with Ronell’s point, is bound to fail. What we instead can do, is to describe what Solanas *does*, which range of archives her hypertext enacts: surrealist, feminist, technological, legal, psychological, political, fictional or even aesthetic.

Solanas’s intentions

Ronell points out that Solanas's act took on a degree of randomness in that Warhol was her "inverted itinerary when she was actually gunning for her publisher, Maurice Girodias, at the Chelsea Hotel. Both targets, already substitutes, were involved in cementing the refusal of her writing" (Ronell 21 – 22). As Ronell notes, her targets, either Warhol or Girodias, were obstructions to her work, as such were carefully chosen targets. After the shooting, when Solanas stood before a legal and later a medical authority, her opponent was singular (Andy Warhol), yet multiple (he could easily be inverted into Maurice Girodias, or any of the other victims). The opponent could possibly extend to the Manhattan Criminal Court, the Elmhurst Psychiatric Hospital, and even into man in general.

In Solanas's own view Warhol had her tied up "lock, stock and barrel,"¹² so much that she felt compelled to go and shoot him. According to Dana Heller, Solanas became convinced that he and Maurice Girodias were conspiring to "steal her ideas; profit from her writings; and deny her the entitlement, license, and power that corresponded with her idea of textual authorship" (Heller 183). "The factory was not open to her" (Ronell 22), and Ronell concludes that something had been stolen from Solanas, "a manuscript, a life, a chance, a place, her say, her bodily integrity (her father had molested her), her dignity" (26).

What were Solanas's intentions going to the Factory that day - personal, politically motivated or just an act of insanity? Her act was singular, individual and outside any general law – but where do we locate her act - is it opposite to what we can call the political, can it come to function as political, or does it occupy both political and apolitical positions at once?¹³

Solanas's shooting ends and does not end at the moment the bullets pierced through bodily flesh. It appears to subsist in the subsequent tendency to generalize this singular, actual event and universalize it as a symbolic act, whereby the materiality of the event is transplanted into an idealized sequential narrative. Solanas randomly aimed for Warhol, Girodias and the other bodies who were present, but according to Ronell, Warhol was a "stand-in," part of "a serialized chain linking back to primal indignities" (27). She

¹² From Freddie Baer's webpage <http://www.womynkind.org/valbio.htm>

¹³ The pre-political is what Butler finds to be the opposite of the political, that which also makes the political possible.

aimed for Warhol, but for Ronell, he was not her real target, for “in picking him off she was shooting at the whole series, popping all the spin-offs and simulacra of man for which Andy stood – and fell” (27). Warhol functioned only a representative of a whole line of those who “bereft, exploited, chronically undervalued” Solanas (27). Ronell therefore suggests that when Solanas broke out of her text “she did not intend to go for the jugular of a person or a human being” (27). Solanas's target, Andy Warhol, a body, a person, is replaced with what Ronell designates as a placeholder, “a symbolic clip that held every oppressive signifier together” (27).

Since we are concerned about the law and the political here, then the relation between the two must be interrogated. If the law might be considered to function as the border that distinguishes the apolitical from the political, or even be mistaken for the political, then it becomes easy to deny what is criminal, what is outside the law, any form of political agency.

Perhaps removing Solanas from an apolitical position and inserting her into a political one diminishes the brutality of Solanas’s act. In fact, by articulating what is political about the act in rational terms, the shooting according to Ronell is transposed from an actual, singular act and replaced with another more tolerable, utopian fiction. But what happens to violence in this move?

In her article "From Bobbitt to SCUM," Melissa Deem has, according to Harding, argued a direct connection between Lorena Bobbitt and Valerie Solanas. Solanas, like Bobbitt, had “justifiable anger but unfortunately it regressed from "dissent" and "disharmony" into "violence, and madness," as Harding puts it (Harding 2001: 57).¹⁴ In Deem's view, the long list of male responsibility for various crimes becomes the source of justified female anger, which ultimately made Solanas step out of her text and into this more problematic “violence, and madness.” Harding’s concern about Deem’s account of Solanas is that Solanas is pushed towards the very margins Deem is trying to remove her away from. Deem’s article “From Bobbit to SCUM” (instead of “From Bobbit to Solanas”), is according to Harding attempting to erase “Solanas and her assault on Warhol” (157). Deem attempts to sweep the violence “beneath a discussion that characterizes the *SCUM Manifesto* as a feminist variation of Deleuze and Guattari's

¹⁴ Lorena Bobbit who is known to have cut off the penis of her abusive husband.

concept of a “minor literature,” Harding argues (157).

As *minor literature*, Solanas performs the process of deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari describe in *Kafka: Towards A Minor Literature*, but she is refused the process of reterritorialization into the *major literature*, that Deleuze and Guattari argue are in constant transition. Solanas as *minor literature* only becomes isolated and frozen as she is returned to an inverted position where men project their passivity onto women. According to Harding, Solanas’s position in relation to the avant-garde discourse performs the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari describe.

At the moment when Solanas could have reached the headlines of the news, at the moment when she was sentenced to three years in prison for the shooting of Andy Warhol, other news hit the front page, Ronell writes: “the news were reported deep in the remote pages of the *New York Times*, in an article that appeared adjacent to a notice addressed to city residents concerning a change in the summer garbage collection. This was a sorry and sad fate for the woman declared by Norman Mailer to be ‘the Robespierre of feminism,’” Ronell concludes (10). The fate of being forgotten was not only sad for Solanas, Ronell observes, as it was “no less a disappointment to Mr. Warhol, who saw his near extinction miniaturized by world events” (10). Both Solanas and Warhol were “thus reduced and compressed,” (11) they were “in the dumps that summer” (11). Warhol’s and Solanas’s problem according to Ronell was poor timing, and poor timing according to Ronell “appeared to define her [Solanas]” (10) The motivation for the shooting appears in Ronell’s argument to be fame and publicity. But for Harding, the accepted interpretations of Solanas’s actions are “based upon Warhol’s own reduction of Solanas’s act to a mere attempt to use him as a trampoline to fame.” (Harding 142). Harding goes against such a reading, emphasizing how his own interpretation deviates from accepted interpretations of the shooting. According to Harding, a “narrative of fame-mongering” is to significantly underestimate “Solanas’s importance in the cultural history of American experimental performance” (144). As opposed to the traditional readings, Harding finds Solanas’s intentions on the day of the shooting to be “a much more significant historical narrative” (144) that goes beyond the mere physical wounding of the pop icon Andy Warhol. This significant story, Harding says, has never been told,

because perhaps “its telling positions a deadly act of violence within an unsettling liminoid sphere of cultural legitimacy that is potentially as seductive as it is dangerous” (144).

A failure

In “Understanding Performance Art: Art Beyond Art,” Thomas Heyd writes against Peter Bürger’s theory that he posits in *The Theory of the Avant-garde* about the essential failure of the avant-garde movement. According to Heyd, Bürger argued that the avant-garde’s goal was to “be “sublated” (*aufgehoben*) in the praxis of life, which means not only that art was to be *eliminated qua* art through its integration in life, but also that it was to *survive* in some sense by the transformation which it was to effect in life” (Heyd 69). The avant-garde therefore had the double aim of both completely intersecting in a new way with life, as well as surviving as art-form, perhaps only possible if life itself *becomes* art.

Heyd observes several issues within the avant-garde practice that are used by Bürger in order to argue for the failure of the avant-garde. First, the pieces that have been produced by the historical avant-garde have been fully integrated into art institutions, discussed in textbooks on art, found to be collector’s items and exhibited in reputable art museums (69). Even more importantly, Heyd notes, is the fact life was *not* transformed as the avant-garde had aimed.¹⁵ One could even say that the avant-garde aesthetic was so successful and popular that it has been included in mainstream discourse, and that this in part constituted its failure. Bürger’s argument is thus similar to Butler’s and Ronell’s claims, in that the result of both Solanas’s and Antigone’s actions is that they literally *become* men and are therefore incorporated into the power they oppose.

However, Heyd argues that he does not find it “so clear that the avant-garde really *did* fail” (70): “The intentional ambiguity inherent in this sort of art [that pushed itself *beyond* art] may actually be instrumental in the *achievement* of the sought-for integration of art and life” (70). Solanas’s aim was not to integrate art and life – but she produced a

¹⁵ “Earlier this century the movements which have been called the historical avant-garde had already sought to transcend art by seeking the integration of art and life,” Heyd writes. (Heyd 1991: 68) Heyd also notes Bürger’s complete argument that is less important to our argument here; that present institutions of art, while becoming increasingly autonomous, is also increasingly self-preoccupied and elitist, and hence even more disconnected from real life concerns than during the period of the historical avant-garde.

scene of “art” that went *beyond art*, as Heyd puts it. Through this ambiguity, as Harding argues, Solanas’s acts became avant-garde, and from there Solanas’s act transgressed the avant-garde itself. If not altering life as such, she performed a brutal union of life with art.

The cultural marginalization that the avant-garde aimed for, according to Bürger, was a failed attempt, but it obviously differs from the cultural margins occupied by women, as Harding notes. Ironically, as well as embracing a double marginality, Solanas embraces a double failure. She fails when she becomes a man in Butler/ Ronell’s argument, and she fails when she becomes the avant-garde in Bürger’s argument. Of course, Solanas was never included and embraced by any institutions, which was her own intention (as well as the avant-garde’s), when she stated that SCUM was “against the entire system” (76).

According to Harding, Solanas’s act tears up the avant-garde, but in order to do so, it also becomes what it attempts to exceed. Butler and Ronell have illustrated that respectively Antigone’s and Solanas’s actions were part of a process of *becoming* what they acted against, confronting a question of resistance – possibly revealing how resistance to someone or something necessarily incorporates what is being resisted. For Ronell, in the case of Solanas (and Antigone), the language of the oppressor becomes the language of the one who opposes it – and the result is failure.

In Harding’s argument, the process of becoming has quite the opposite effect. Harding does not argue that Solanas “becomes” avant-garde, but that the juxtaposition between the languages of art and brutality situate Solanas in a hybrid position. Harding agrees with Butler and Ronell on the fact that it is a woman’s act in a male context, but he also finds that the traditionally male discourse is utterly reshaped by Solanas. Butler’s and Ronell’s arguments are about gender, a gender that is based *in* language or culture (as opposed to the body) in order for it to be transmitted onto the other. Gender – being a man or a woman – is in Ronell’s and Butler’s visions further thought of as mutually exclusive of each other, since when acting “like” a man would entail the actual becoming-man.

Perhaps a more fruitful way of reading Solanas’s act(s), independently of either failure or success, is in relation to the process whereby the language of the opponent is

taken on, not quite becoming what is opposed but conflating the two – the production of a continuous ambiguity.

The Non-Act

One of Ronell's critiques against Solanas is that she was a loner. Solanas possibly escapes that critique by being singular yet multiple, by being scum and SCUM. But why is it a problem that she acted on her own, and why did the avantgarde stress a collective authorship?

According to Sara Stridsberg, "Valerie Solanas is a promise about absolutely nothing. Valerie Solanas is death, destruction" (Mohaugen, Meisingset 42).¹⁶ Ronell connects Solanas's acts and being a "loner" to the lack of a just cause, and the resulting failure. It is true in some sense that Solanas acted on her own, but I would like to suggest that her act(s) both employ and transgress avant-garde techniques. As we recall, part of the avant-garde morphology rests in a collective authorship. But perhaps the collective is also a threat, for as Ronell points out the collective *does* justify and legitimate. In fact, we can argue that the collective might partly have driven the avant-garde to failure.

In her preface to the Swedish edition of *SCUM Manifesto*, Sara Stridsberg diminishes the violent implications of Solanas's actions by stating that "It does not matter that she shot Andy. It is so many other things that are important" (Stridsberg 14).¹⁷ Wenche Mühleisen also aims for a separation between writing and action in her introduction to the Norwegian edition of the manifesto. According to Mühleisen, Solanas's biography is unverified, uncertain, and overflowing with myths, and the shooting has "overshadowed the potential of the manifesto as a text" because of the long prevailing tendency to read "texts [. . .] as symptoms of the life of the author" (Mühleisen 8-9).¹⁸ The text has, according to Mühleisen, been taken as a symptom of a confused personality. In order to save Solanas from the mark of insanity Mühleisen prefers the literary interpretation of Stridsberg's *literary fantasy* in order to enter Solanas's destiny.

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¹⁶ Valerie Solanas er et løfte om absolutt ingenting. Valerie Solanas er døden, undergangen."

¹⁷ Det spelar ingen roll att hon sköt Andy. Det är så mycket annat som spelar en roll."(my translation)

¹⁸ "overskygget manifestets potensial, som tekst." (my translation)

¹⁹ Stridsberg's term *litterær fantasi*, from the coverpage of *The Dreamfaculty*

In line with Mühleisen, Stridsberg prefers a reading of Solanas where shooting and manifesto are read as separate. Stridsberg's novel therefore can be read as a fight on behalf of writing, standing opposed to other technologies, such as the performing body. I find it interesting to read Stridsberg's novel from the perspective of Solanas's "engagement in a writer's war of technologies" (Ronell 2004: 11). How does the novel situate itself in this war? Does it situate itself as writing in opposition to Solanas's act as a performance?

My overall question will be why Stridsberg attempts to resurrect Solanas. My hypothesis is that she does so in order to move her away from historical narratives of causality, such as the one Ronell insists on placing her within, towards Harding's understanding of Solanas's hypertext as a random, surrealist narrative of the avant-garde. In Part Two, I will demonstrate how Stridberg's attempt fails by falling into a humanist discourse, favoring writing over body, sentimentality over life, and closure over experimentation.

Part Two

The Dream

The approach

We have discussed the hypertext of Valerie Solanas constituted by her life, her writing and her acts. The beginnings and the ends of this hypertext will in this chapter be confronted with the role of fiction, as Valerie Solanas acts as a literary character in *The Dreamfaculty* by Sara Stridsberg. In what I will call an explanatory paragraph Stridsberg describes the step into fiction as a *literary fantasy*:²⁰

The Dreamfaculty is not a biography but a literary fantasy taken from the dead American Valerie Solanas's life and work. There remain few known facts about Valerie Solanas and this novel is neither faithful to these facts. Every character that appears in the novel must therefore be considered to be a fiction, even Valerie Solanas.²¹

The neologism *literary fantasy* separates itself from fiction in general in that it employs a biographical account of Solanas's life, but it is also specified that *The Dreamfaculty* is *not* a biography. Although it is not a biography the novel is divided into many subchapters with titles that announce dates, year and the place of events implying that the novel strives to situate Solanas within her actual historical context. If the biography is to give an accurate account of someone's life, *The Dreamfaculty* makes a claim not to participate in this reproduction. It is not a biography because it does not truthfully repeat the known facts about Valerie Solanas. I would also like to suggest that not only does *The Dreamfaculty* distinguish itself from the biography but that it essentially constitutes a rejection of the biographical account. The rejection is conflicting, since it *is* a novel about a real person; what it rejects is the biography's claim to truth, and through the rejection that also is a rejection of itself it strives to construct an alternative of to the biographical account. In this paradoxical position *The Dreamfaculty* is instead of an enclosed unit, a

²⁰ "Litterär fantasi." All the following translations from Stridsberg's Swedish original into English are mine, I will quote the Swedish text in the footnotes

²¹ "Drömfakulteten är inte en biografi utan en litterär fantasi som utgår från den döda amerikanskan Valerie Solanas liv och verk. Det finns få kända fakta om Valerie Solanas och den här romanen är inte håller trogen dessa fakta. Alla personer som förekommer i romanen måste därför betraktas som fiktiva, även Valerie Solanas." (Stridsberg 2003: omslagssiden).

novel about *a process* of bringing about this renewed position. The question becomes whether the novel can succeed in negotiating these conflicting positions.

Introduction to the novel

What kind of text is *The Dreamfaculty*? When I analyze the novel in this section it will always be with my main goal in mind: to decide within which discourse (either humanist or avant-gardist) Valerie Solanas is it situated. I will therefore only discuss the sections of the novel in so far as they are relevant to my discussion. It is however important to give a introductory idea of the novel's complex structure, narrative and composition as this will prove essential to Solanas's transition into either of these discourses of fiction. I will here briefly describe the novel in general before I focus on specific sections in more detail.

The novel is divided into five main chapters, and these are again divided into many subchapters, introduced by a Preface and completed by an Afterword. The main chapters can be said to progress linearly representing sections from Valerie's life; her childhood ("Bambiland"), her travels across the country as a young prostitute ("The Oceans"), her life as a student at the University of Maryland ("The Laboratory Park"), her period in New York in the sixties, meeting Andy Warhol ("The Factory"), and finally, the time before her death at the Chelsea Hotel in Tenderloin district ("Love Valerie").²²

The subchapters take shape according to this structure, some assigning a specific time and place related to events in Solana's life; BRISTOL HOTEL, 10 OF APRIL 1988 (52), DAY OF DEATH (16) and NEGOTIATION OF ARREST (26).²³ Others report from post-war U.S., revolts, wars, absurd co-operations across enemy lines corresponding in time to the events in the novel: "THE SOVIET AND AMERICA ARE TOGETHER WORKING TO SAVE TWO WALES THAT HAVE STRANDED ON THE COAST OF ALASKA" (163). The information in the titles appear sometimes not to be related to the narrative, like for example the historic events of the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the workers' strike or the US nuclear experiments on the Bikini island.

²² "Bambiland," Oceanarna," "Laboratorieparken," "Fabriken," "Love Valerie."

²³ DÖDSDAGEN, HEKTNINGSFÖRHANDLING, SOVJET OCH AMERIKA ARBETAR GJEMENSAMT FÖR ATT REDDA TVÅ VALAR SOM HAR STRANDAT PÅ EN KUST I ALASKA"

When the narration cuts off from telling Valerie Solanas's life in a linear progression from beginning to end, it is because the five main chapters are broken down into multiple subchapters that jump back and forth in time, constructing smaller narratives outside the narrative at large.

The subchapters that diverge the most from the general plot or to the dialogues are the subchapters The NARRATORS, the ARCHITECTS, the PSYCHOANALYTICS, the PARASITES, the PRESIDENTS and ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ALPHABET.²⁴ Here we sense a lack of narration, as the chapters take shape as enlisted, random notes. As well as lacking a clear narrative, the syntax is close to being dissolved, cut down to brief sentences, often just a few words, sometimes only a single one.

The novel is not only a constant shift between narrative layers, but sudden changes can take place within the same subchapter and from one sentence to the next. The narrator is sometimes authorial, sometimes personal, sometimes it even appears that there is no narrator at all, with the narrative voice merging as a character among others. Particularly this appears when in the dialogical segments, in the dialogue between Narrator²⁵ and Valerie the narration recedes as the dialogue takes shape as in a drama with announced speech acts. As the narrative function recedes the Narrator as a character and a dialogical partner comes to the foreground, the narration therefore comes into a double role of invisibility as well as focus.

In the Preface and Afterword an unidentified “I,” possibly the author or the voice of a narrator establishes the preconditions for the novel in a narrative layer that intersects with other narrators, as well as the image of Valerie dying on her own. Referring to a time after its own completion: “After the novel I visit Tenderloin District in San Francisco, the small area of disease right in the middle of the city by the Pacific Ocean,” a meta-relationship is constructed (Stridsberg 359).²⁶ In addition, it brings closure to itself at the beginning, for the novel begins with an introduction of Solanas on the day of her death. The death-scene both opens and concludes the novel, thus the novel has a circular, self-enclosed structure.

²⁴ ARKITEKTERNA, PSYKOANALYTIKERNEN, PARASITERNEN, PRESIDENTERNEN and PÅ ANDRA SIDAN AV ALFABETEN.

²⁵ In Stridsberg's novel the name is “Berättaren,” I have applied the English term here and from here onwards I will use the English translation.

²⁶ “Efter romanen besöker jag Tenderloin District i San Francisco, det lilla området av sjukdom mitt i staden vid Stilla havet.”

The typography of the novel is elaborate, and especially the employment of italics is extensive, marking transitions. For example, an authorial narrator directs its speech towards Valerie, suddenly to change into a personal narrator, here in the voice of Valerie:

You are tearing at your chest, you cry and yell, fumble with the bed-linen. [. . .] The heat in the arms, the fever, the lethargy and the scent of death. Fragments and rays of lights still linger and the hands are fumbling for Dorothy. *I hate myself and I refuse to die. I don't want to disappear, I want to return, I long for someone's hands, my mother's hands* [...] (16).²⁷

Sometimes a voice supports and encourages Valerie: “*Remember to write, Valerie. Don't forget to write*”²⁸ (52) or as a reference to the manifesto: “*All that remains is Society For Cutting Up Myself*” (52).²⁹ And as a descriptive explanation: “COSMO (*opens the manifesto*)”³⁰ The italics are sometimes emphasized by large space between the words or words standing entirely on their own (19):

“*You Know I love you.*”

The quote is originally written in English, as are many words and phrases like: “Y. She says: follow the star. The lost highway”(60).³¹ In addition, odd word constructions are common (e.g. “self-dead” or “universe-ruler”).³² Capital letters are frequent, especially in the titles but also sometimes occurring within the text; “VALERIE: The material is called SHE IS NOT COMING” (97).³³ Further repetitions of words and topics are frequent, with loneliness, death, desert and cowboys among them.

The Dreamfaculty makes use of a variety of techniques and voices (stream of consciousness, monologues and dialogues), as well as a blend of genres. With a short-story's hunger for its own termination, it begins where it ends. Based on a biography, it is a novel, but it is also a novel that resembles a play, with direct discourse quoting police reports and legal records. It makes extensive references to a common inter-textual

²⁷ “Du river dig på bröstet, gråter och ropar, famlar med händerna I sängkläderna. (. . .) Hettan i armarna, febern, övergivenheten och lukten av dödssjukdom. Fragment och skärivor av ljus flimrar fortfarande och händerna famlar efter Dorothy. Jag hatar mig själv och vill inte dö. Jag vill inte försvinna, jag vill tillbaka, jag längtar efter någons händer, min mors händer (. . .)”

²⁸ “Kom ihåg att skriva, Valerie. Glöm inte att skriva.”

²⁹ “Allt som återstår är Society For Cutting Up Myself”

³⁰ “COSMO (öppnar manifestet):”

³¹ “Hon säger: följ stjärnan. The lost Highway.” A reference to David Lynch's movie but as *The Dreamfaculty* also alludes to many American topics (historical, entertainment) it is also a reference to its main characters native language and place of birth.

³² “Självdöda,” “Univsumregjerare”

³³ “VALERIE: Materialet heter HON KOMMER INTE.”

ground, as we will see, including not only *SCUM Manifesto*, but a vast field that seems to situate its narrative approach among traditional as well as avant-garde techniques.

Humanist and/or Avant-garde

Why is it that *The Dreamfaculty* rejects the *biographical* truth? Perhaps because few facts remain known about Solanas. While many biographical novels lack crucial information about their objects, they attempt to fill in these gaps. The lack of sources therefore is not an adequate reason why Stridsberg would write a *literary fantasy* and not a biography, since the facts simply could be filled in. Why *literary* and why *fantasy*? As we have seen, *The Dreamfaculty* is structurally complex, and its *structure* is in many ways a key concept in the encounter between Stridsberg and Solanas. We can even suggest that the difference between the biography and the *literary fantasy* is structural, separated by a view of truth as respectively a singularity or a multiplicity,

Why is truth moved away from a singularity and towards multiplicities in the case of Valerie Solanas? For this there are three possible reasons, if not more. *The Dreamfaculty*'s complex structure might not focus on retelling Solanas's individual story but rather be an attempt to embrace Solanas as a part of a non-completed flow, not found outside a human discourse but as belonging to the sameness and otherness that is shared by everyone. If so the novel is not an attempt to alter a person's history but instead away of thinking, the focus on the individual as an enclosed unit is minimized, to a broader understanding of a person's life in an interchangeable flux within a larger complexity – such as an assemblage.³⁴

Secondly, Stridsberg's novel might have a personal level as its focus, attempting to change how Valerie Solanas's story has been told and to humanize her as a psychological being, knowable, fixed, narrateable, and determined. If so, *The Dreamfaculty* aims to move Solanas away from her marginal position in the outskirts of humanity and into the "interlocutory scene of the public sphere" (Butler 81).

Thirdly, the lack of faithfulness to biographical "truth" can be read as an attempt to situate the *literary fantasy* as an event that occurs *between* the written and the actual

³⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. Guattari, Massumi, Brian. (trans). 2009. *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, London.

world. The borders that separate these worlds become even more pronounced when Stridsberg changes the overall details of how something did indeed happen in Solanas's biographical life. For example, although Solanas died a solitary death in a hotel room in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco in 1988 (7), in *The Dreamfaculty* Solanas is accompanied by The Narrator on the day of her death, as well as by the imaginary presence of her girlfriend.

Which one of these three possible reasons (if any) is closest to describing the motivation behind *The Dreamfaculty* – this is what I will attempt to answer in what follows.

In one of his later texts “The future of the profession or the university without condition,” Derrida links literature to unconditionality: the principal right to say everything. Literature is defined “in the European and modern sense of the term, as the right to say everything publicly, or to keep it secret, if only in the form of fiction” (McQuillan viii).³⁵ What follows from Derrida's statement according to McQuillan is that literature is a rare space standing in a “non-competitive relation to the sovereignty of power (the state, capital, the media, religion), if only in the form of fiction” (viii).

When Solanas stepped outside of writing and fired at live flesh, was her hyper-text expelled from the realm of literature? As non-literature, perhaps Solanas hyper-text can no longer stand to occupy that space that stands in a non-competitive relation to power, and thus risks to lose the right to say everything. Stridsberg's moving Solanas into fiction can in turn be read as a reintroduction into literature, thereby situating her in the unstable distinction between reality and language that is the distinctive mark of fiction: “Literature offers the secret at the same time as it is jealously guarding the secret (not in the form of an encryption that is potentially knowable but an absolute deprivation of the power to choose between reality and fiction)” (McQuillan ix) Ultimately, fiction as defined by Derrida is the place where everything can be said at the same time as it is kept secret.

³⁵ When talking about the humanities within “the un-conditional university of tomorrow” (McQuillan 2003: viii).

The beginning, the end and the in between

As I have already mentioned the novel sets off before it's beginning and by "beginning" I mean the sections that are included within the five main chapters ("Bambiland," etc.). Before these chapters there is a cover page (1), a title page (3), an explanatory paragraph (4), a quote (5) and a Preface (7), here, I will pay most attention to the title, the Preface, and the quote's allusions to other (con) texts outside itself, the explanatory paragraph I already introduced initially. The cover-page (1) is worth noting although I will not focus on it other than as a collage. The cover-page includes the title, the author's name and images of a black and white picture of a horse is being tamed by two cowboys, an old television set, a cat lifting her kitten by the mouth, a rose, a pink backdrop and a lace.

Moving on to page 3 we reread the title this time with completed by a subtitle: *The Dreamfaculty – addition to sexual theory*. The two words *dream* and *faculty* are fused in what could be called a collage perhaps the words are part of a greater collage like the cover-page, the novel in its entirety or the hyper-texts of Solanas and Stridsberg. In his thesis *Jag hatar mig själv och jag vill inte dö - En lesning av Sara Stridsbergs Drömfakulteten i lys av Mikhail Bakhtin og Julia Kristeva* (2010), Rustad argues (based on Mikhail Bakhtin's theories)³⁶ that *The Dreamfaculty* is polyphonic because of the multitude of voices and because of the dialogue between the Narrator and Valerie (Rustad 15).³⁷ The interplay between the two words, dream and faculty, is interesting to Rustad because as he states: "the two words play against each other giving the impression of the oppositions between the polyphony (dream) and the monological (faculty)" (52).³⁸ In his argument Rustad finds that the dream, the place where fantasy can become real, where a life can be lived again, where we can interrogate the abstract is polyphonic (52). In contrast to the dream we find the faculty, embodying a monologizing discourse according to Rustad. The faculty is an organized structure and therefore it represents the

³⁶ In Bakhtin's terminology the dialogue stands opposed to the monologue in a conflicting relationship, *monologism* "denies that there exists outside of it another consciousness." (Hawthorn 77) The polyphonic means "literally many-voiced," "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices [...]" (Hawthorn 266)

³⁷ "Drømmelogikken." All quotes from Rustad will be in my translation.

³⁸ "Romanens tittel, Drömfakulteten, er også interessant i seg selv. Spillet mellom navnets enkeltord gir oss et bilde av motsetningene mellom det polyfone (drømmen) og det monologiske (fakultetet)."

established and the concrete, as well as being a place for learning, Rustad therefore concludes: the “dream gives us the place to interrogate Valerie in the novel and its dialogical essence” (52).³⁹ Rustad opposes dream – and faculty and makes them represent either the polyphonic or the monologue – but can the two concepts be opposed in this way? If dream represents a world of intangible fantasy, it is not only the dream that makes the conversation with Valerie possible. What also can make it possible to converse with Valerie is literature, and if we recall Derrida, literature is the union between fiction and the real, a “place of unconditionality” (McQuillan ix) This time the union is represented by two words: faculty and dream, organized in inorganic union, in togetherness the two become polyphonic. Again recalling Derrida’s argument, I am not quite certain that faculty only represents a monologizing structure, since it when belonging to an institution also can be related to the place of literature (in the place of humanities), which connects us “to the right to say everything publicly” (McQuillan viii). Alternatively, reading the words as opposites, faculty represents the embodied, the tangible, the abilities and dream represents the un-tangible, the elusive. They do not stand opposed as “better” or “worse” of one another, neither do they function as guarantors of monological or polyphonic discourses. For example, how can dream be polyphonic when dreamt by one? How can a faculty represent a monologue when consisting of many? Depending on one’s point of view, one can be a singularity and/or oneness can become a multitude, oneness does not preclude polyphony as neither multitudes preclude monologic structures. August Strindberg, who also made use of the world dream in his title, *A Dream Play*, pointed out in his introduction to the play that; one character can “split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, dissolve, and merge. But *one* consciousness rules them all: the dreamer’s; for him there are no secrets, no inconsistencies, no scruples and no laws” (Strindberg 3). In A. Strindberg’s view then, the dream is not necessarily polyphonic – since it is ruled by one. Neither is it entirely monologic, since the one dissolves into many. Truthful to the word dream (and) faculty they too are one, a dreamfaculty, the oneness of the two become the intriguing and unsettling union that offers a place to be “forever lost.” Any number of meanings is opened to us but always “in secrecy” and always concealing itself from the grasp of definition, interpretation and

³⁹ In English also denotes ability and staff. “Drømmen gir oss spillerom til å utforske Valerie i romanen og det dialogiske ved den.”

subjection. What remains uncertain is if Stridsberg's *literary fantasy* is to be found in either in direct opposition between two worlds, unnaturally united, exemplified in Rustad's argument, or it to be found in a constant transition between two or more worlds (exemplified in Derrida's argument). Could Stridsberg's statement that; "every character is fiction" be an expression of an idea that sees literature enabled by the dream (or by the fantasy) solely, and therefore separated from reality? If so *The Dreamfaculty* is an expression of reality *becoming* fiction, a *pure* fiction only existing as language, where the bonds to other spheres are entirely cut. Why is this a problem? If literature is conceived as pure matter, it does not reside as a "unconditionality." The transitional, ungraspable place Derrida described for us literally slips through our hands since, it appears, we are no longer occupying two places but one. Having lost the place of fiction, or literature we no longer possess the "right to say everything." As I proposed at the beginning of this chapter, *The Dreamfaculty* might be the place where Solanas is attempted reinstated into speech, into "the interlocutory scene," and the participation in language therefore becomes crucial in the encounter between Stridsberg and Solanas.

From Sigmund Freud's two works *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) we can draw some connections to the complete title of Stridsberg's novel: *The Dreamfaculty – Addition to Sexual Theory*. The title-word dream and fantasy (in the *literary fantasy*) as well as the focus on sexual theory refer to Freud's works, where the states of the subconscious are linked to the waking state of the psychological being. The allusion to Freud in the novel's title becomes a theoretical excursion, the novel publishes that it not only is a work of fiction but that it as well is an amendment to ways of thinking about sexualities, faculties and dreams:

I. The mystic existence of the lusts, the grandeur in the impossibility for them to be grasped. Neurosis, culture, apathy, language, perversion, the very infantile sexuality of children. All phenomenon of degeneration and pathological perversions originate in the childhood. It is not possible to register and catalogue sexual phenomenon without the ambition to create a theory that violates. The life-threatening connection between child and mothers, between a nursing baby and a wet nurse. Addition to sexual theory. Hey wait mister.

(ARCHITECTS, 103) ⁴⁰

⁴⁰ I. Drifternas mytiska väsen, storslagenheten i deras obestämbarhet. Neuros, kultur, apati, språkdräkt, perversion, den mycket infantile barnsexualiteten. Samtliga degenerationsfenomen och patologiska persioner har sin grund i barndommen. Det är inte längre möjligt att registrera och katalogisera sexuella fenomen utan ambition att skapa en övergripande teori. Den livshotande förbindelsen mellan barn och mödrar, mellan spedbarn och ammor. Tillägg till sexualteorin. Hey wait mister. (103)

Stating that theory or “the registering and cataloguing” is a source of violation, Stridsberg’s “addition to sexuality” seems to reject Freud’s ideas.⁴¹ In Stridsberg’s version the child’s receives milk from the mother, but as it receives its nurturing melancholy and grief is transmitted onto it as well. Further than being a rejection the text ironizes around Freud’s s ideas. Her tone of voice resembles Solanas’s shrill but humorous voice from the *SCUM Manifesto*, due to the tone Solanas aims remained never to be quite grasped, and here as well Stridsberg’s “additions” land within the uncertainty in-between humor and explicit meanings.

The title traces back to the already mentioned Swedish author, August Strindberg and his *A Dream Play* (1901).⁴² In her paper “Sara Stridsbergs Drömfakulteten (2005) - et Bakhtinsk møte - en estetisk hendelse” (2009) Henriette Thune comments on the running parallel with Strindberg through Stridsberg’s text. Beyond the similarities of the titles, Thune notes the corresponding structure between their works:

a) Strindberg’s “RECOLLECTION (43) and Stridsberg’s comment on the text as a *literary fantasy* on the colophon (44) and b) between Strindberg’s explicitly titled RECOLLECTION (45) and Stridsberg’s bordering text – containing what I have named the preamble (7) as well as the continuation of this bordering text in the first dialogue between *the Narrator* and Valerie, not designating time nor place (Thune 11).⁴³

Thune compares the voices from the two texts and finds an apparent correspondence: “Strindberg operates with Agnes, the daughter of the gods as his main character” (8), because Valerie’s relationship to her mother is given much space in the novel Valerie can be read as a parallel to “the Daughter in Strindberg’s play. Reading Valerie thus it becomes clear, says Thune that the Narrator is to be read closely to A. Strindberg’s the Poet (8). Stridsberg, Thune concludes, renders problematic also what Strindberg does, namely questions like what poetry and reality is, what dream is and who owns the words.

⁴¹ I will not go further into Freud’s theories, but according to Rustad who uses Freud in the development of his argument, Freud saw “an important connection between melancholy and the oral level in the development of libido [in a child]. “en viktig forbindelse mellom melankoli og det orale nivået i libidoutviklingen. Et barns fiendtlige impulser mot foreldrene kommer frem i lyset av besettelse.” (Rustad 63)

⁴²The two names are unavoidably similar, and although both Thune and Rustad for example comment on this I will not go into a discussion of names here.

⁴³ a) mellom Strindbergs ERINRAN43 og Stridsbergs kommentar til teksten som litterær fantasi på kolofonsiden44 og b) mellom Strindbergs eksplisitt titulerte FÖRSPEL45 og Stridsbergs grensetekst – bestående av det jeg har kalt en fortale46 samt fortsettelsen av denne grenseteksten med den første ikke sted- og tidsangivne dialogen mellom *Berättaren* og Valerie.

Following Thune, we can say that both texts are found in a meta-relation to themselves, both are crossing the limits of genre: Stridsberg by stepping into the realm of theory, poetry, and drama, Strindberg by crossing the border into the novel. Stridsberg's Preface parallels A. Strindberg's "REMEMBRANCE," in that both give a pre-conceived idea of the text's origin, as a text within the text it steps outside itself in order to explain itself, in A. Strindberg's "REMEMBRANCE," the author begins by stating: "As with his earlier dream play, *To Damaskus*, the author has in this dream play sought to imitate the disjointed yet seemingly logical shape of a dream. Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and place do not exist. (...)" (Strindberg 3).⁴⁴ In Strindberg in the dreamer's existence where "everything is possible and probable" does not arrive without pain:

(...) because a dream is usually painful rather than pleasant, a tone of melancholy and compassion for all living creatures permeates the rambling narrative. Sleep, the liberator, often feels like torture, but when the torment is at its worst, the moment of awakening comes and reconciles the sufferer with reality, regardless of how painful it might be, it is at this very moment a joy compared to the agonies of dreaming (3).

Thus the dreamer awakes, relieved to have returned to the constraints of the "real" world. Strindberg's play is not a dream, but the imitation, still part of a place where "everything" can happen. Being somebody's imitation, it remains throughout the piece orchestrated by the author. Strindberg's play is literature and so is Stridsberg's novel. Where Strindberg begins with the dream, Stridsberg's Preface begins with what appears to be a bitterly experienced reality. Time and place is given; we are in Tenderloin district, its April 1988 and "Valerie Solanas is lying on a dirty mattress, the sheets are covered in urine, she is lying there dying of pneumonia" (7).⁴⁵ The bleak presence of reality is intensified by the tense being used; the novel takes us back to April 1988, and this spring day when Valerie's slow death is taking place happens now in the present moment of the text. It is not the unlimited possibilities of the dream world that is the source of pain but the pain of disease, loneliness, and finally death. What offers a way out of this painful existence is writing, it offers a solution in two ways: "Some weeks earlier, the report [from the police]

⁴⁴ "ERINRAN." My translation, From now on all quotes from Thune will be cited in English, with the original Norwegian in the footnote.

⁴⁵ "Det är april 1988 och Valerie Solanas ligger och dör i lunginflammation på en smutsig madrass och nedkissade lakan.

says, somebody of the hotel-staff has seen her writing. I imagine piles of paper on the desk.” (7) Throughout, the novel stresses the importance of Solanas’s being a writer, and although her troubled history, she did write until the very end. The “I,” that imagines the piles of papers on Solanas desk, offers the second solution delivered by writing as she concludes the Preface stating: “I imagine that I am there with Valerie” (7).⁴⁶ The conclusion to the Preface suggests that Valerie at the present moment of the novel no longer dies alone, her painful experiences can be observed by another, possibly someone who can give comfort, company, someone who beyond holding hands might be there to talk, listen and understand Solanas.

Once again this experience is not “real” but imagined and orchestrated by the author, but where the state of fantasy, “where everything is possible” represents something uncanny in Strindberg, it appears as a place of mending and undoing in Stridsberg.

To complete our discussions about the implications of the title I want to trace the allusions of the dream to a final alternative: the avant-garde. When Breton published his "First Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), he too privileged dreams, the unconscious, the fantastic, and the marvelous:

pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the real function of thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason and outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupations....Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of associations neglected until now, in the omnipotence of the dream, and in the disinterested play of thought. It leads to the destruction of all other psychic mechanisms and substitutes itself for them in solving the principal problems of life (33).

The surrealists challenged these psychological mechanisms, or the Freudian ego that was commanded by a reality principle in a “status quo internalized in the psyche” as E. San Juan Jr. writes in “Antonio Gramsci on Surrealism and the Avantgarde” (34). Instead they found the unconscious (in dreams, fantasies and irrational behavior) to be “the repository of utopian possibilities” (34). These possibilities needed “a new grammar, a new syntax of art,” E. San Juan writes, and accordingly, the new stylistic breakthroughs that the surrealists sought to materialize were working towards the subversion of the

⁴⁶ “Jag tanker mig att jag är där hos Valerie.”

“corrupting control of the rational logo-centric mind” (34). Perhaps most importantly the destruction of the logo-centric was enabled by the collage, a method where the avant-garde would create new lives, new destinies, as E. San Juan Jr. describes it: “knowledge and action are oriented toward linking the past with the present in order to fashion the future. The chronotope of revolution is essentially a collage, more precisely a montage, of transformations that amalgamates contraries, oppositions, disparities” (32). The method could very well fit into a description of Stridsberg’s work, when she combines Solanas’s past and present towards a future (or literary) destiny, in *The Dreamfaculty* even a new grammar is suggested, or at least, especially the alphabetical subchapters could be read as the montages of new grammars, or at least as the contemplations of a possibility of this new grammar. In “On the Other Side of the Alphabet” the title could hint towards a new language order, or even an existence outside language, and the novel’s themes of life and death, narration and non-narration, language and non-language, history and non-history could very well be read as a collages of transformations between opposites urging towards action, performance and materiality. If this is the case, Stridsberg’s work is found in an alignment with an avant-garde tradition. However, it could it also be the case that as *The Dreamfaculty* unites and folds opposing forces, it is the combination of logo-centrism and the polyphonic. If we recalling Bakhtin’s argument about the polyphonic and the monologue, every discourse is threatened to be infiltrated by the monologue, it is under the constant threat of monologization, if *The Dreamfaculty* is polyphonic, as Rustad and (as we shall see also Thune) argue, it too is under the treat of monologization.

We have discussed the implications of the idea of fiction as a “pure” form enabled by the fantasy and the dream in Stridsberg’s work. Breton preferred the dream but not to materiality: “the dream, and in the disinterested play of thought. It leads to the destruction of all other psychic mechanisms and substitutes itself for them in solving the principal problems of life” (33).

The uncontrolled dream would bring forth the changes the avant-garde aimed to materialize, the surrealist movement therefore, aimed to destroy the separation between language (means of expression and communication) and the physical world (material

conditions), “Man 'is' precisely the process of his actions” Gramsci writes (32).⁴⁷ Stridsberg’s comment “it does not matter what Solanas did” in order to save Solanas’s writing from the brutality of her action clashes possibly both with Solanas’s and the avant-garde perspective. Solanas never confirmed that the shooting was the materialization of the manifesto but neither did she admit to regret her actions – she never argued that her actions should be separated from her being. In Stridsberg’s view, Solanas is other than her act (or actions) she is even differentiable from it. In separating the human from her action Stridsberg performs a negation, removing a part of Solanas that Solanas herself never stated she wanted removed. In doing this Stridsberg also departs from the avant-garde model but does this mean that she falls into logo-centrism?

The Human

We have discussed the possibility that Stridsberg moves Solanas away from the reality of her own actions and into a pure state of language. Since *the Dreamfaculty*, is a novel about a real person, the move is surprising. Being a project that is neither purely fiction nor purely biographical (if these are in opposition) it arises from two worlds, not one, it therefore would be more probable that it would be a move away from language *towards* reality. If we recall Butler’s argument that the ”political” needs to be expanded into describing also the status of those who are less than human, Stridsberg’s novel can be an attempt of such an expansion where one of those who are not permitted into the ”interlocutory” scene of the public is given a voice, and in so far as Solanas is not human, she can regain the humanity she has been expelled from.

What is the human? In *Postmodern Narrative Theory* Mark Currie defines the human as inseparable from the narrative act, narration is according to him “as inescapable as language in general, or as cause and effect, as a mode of thinking and being” (Currie 2). Not being human, means not possessing the ability to narrate. The idea of humanity based on our capacity for language posits a possible threat, as Butler commented, authorship is “unclear,” it transmits and is potentially dangerous, because the act of doing

⁴⁷ Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci founder of the innovative journal, *L'Ordine Nuovo* and who advocated the factory council (modeled after the Russian Soviets) as the germ of an emergent communist society. According to San Juan both Breton’s and Gramsci’s initiatives were pathbreaking in challenging the orthodoxies of modernist bourgeois culture, politics, and philosophy, and from Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* he extrapolates “the general approach Gramsci would take toward surrealism and avantgarde art as oppositional cultural practices.

and speaking becomes the same. Language becomes circular, inescapable and tautological. If we embrace our essence as beings of matter, however (similar to all beings of matter) before we think of ourselves as beings of language, can the equality between doing and speaking prevail? The manifesto genre begins in language, but language is merely an instrument that the manifesto's aims to exit, as here described by Martin Puchner in *Manifesto = Theatre*:

Even while the manifesto is nothing but so many letters on a page or so many words shouted at an audience, it is a genre deeply unsatisfied with itself, a genre that desperately wants to move beyond language and change the world. The self-critique that ensues from this desire not only accounts for the manifesto's characteristic impatience, its choppy brevity, its eagerness to stop talking and start acting, but also for the attempt to infuse its own language with the attributes of action (Puchner 452).

The idea expressed by Currie that we are narrative beings, *homo fabulans*, who cannot escape our own accounts of the world, a definition of the human residing in language possessing the potential threat that Butler describes does not correspond with the avant-garde's urge for performativity and materialization. The manifesto is impatient to exit itself towards action – it even borders onto action Puchner describes.⁴⁸ When Solanas fired off her shots she performed a violent act, an act that exceeded the territory of words and the narrative account (of language itself) that according to Currie is impossible to escape. First of all because it happened in the material world, causing material wounds. The shooting can be made into a narrative as we have seen when we initially described her act – but does the narrative embrace all there is to the act? If it countered onto the performative art – as Harding has argued, it possibly also touched upon literature. Literature therefore does not parallel the narrative act but lingers between what is disclosed and its secrets, narration is the action of telling, the disclosure of the story about what *really* happened. Stridsberg's fragmented novel, does not simply narrate Solanas's story, it performs a dissection of the narrative function. As a dissection it stays close to an avant-garde practise, even to the manifesto's aim to materialize changes in life. The fragmentations, collages and multitude of voices, the enlisted sections – are all avant-

⁴⁸ There are different movements within the avant-garde movement that I will not go into here. Tristan Tzara's "Dada Manifest 1918," which begins: "In order to launch a manifesto, you have to demand: A.B.C., and denounce 1,2,3, become nervous . . ." A page later he continues: "I write a manifesto and I don't want anything, nevertheless I say several things and I am against manifestos on principle just as I am against principles."¹⁶ The manifesto opens with a veritable morphology of the manifesto, Puchner notes, and, comments that the self-reflective opening is "at odds with the manifesto's desire for efficiency. (460)

garde techniques. But even more so is the inclusion of Solanas within the narrative a way for the narrative to bring itself close to life, “The other side of the alphabet,” might be here the manifesto genre’s “deep dissatisfaction with itself, ”to use Puchner’s words. *The Dreamfaculty*, diverges of course from a manifesto’s structure but there are some striking similarities; enlisted sections, multiple voices, dismantling of the narrative function, and most of all a goal to bring forth changes in the world.

The Other Side of Language

On page 5 of Stridsberg’s text we find the title of Claudia Rankine’s poem ”Hope was never a thing with feathers” (1963). According to Thune it is a comment on Emily Dickinson’s “Hope is the thing with feathers” (10). Rankine’s poetry reverberates throughout *The Dreamfaculty* Thune notes, in the alphabetical subchapters and especially the chapter “On the Other Side of the Alphabet.”⁴⁹ Rankine wrote the poem “The End of The Alphabet, ” explained by Rankine in this way:

The End of the Alphabet, makes a kaleidoscopic journey through the will to existence. I think sometimes I am too private, too lonely in my heart, but my mind rows constantly as if involved in a public disturbance. (10)

Thune points out that the movement between solitude and collectivity is echoed in Stridsberg’s preface to the manifesto; “On the subway you feel like you are moving in a pack, although you are in fact quite alone” (Stridsberg 2003: 9).⁵⁰ Correspondingly, Thune notes that Stridsberg’s topic and style takes us on a “kaleidoscopic journey through the will to exist,” and she asks: “*if we find ourselves at the end of the alphabet, what is to be found on the other side?*” (10)⁵¹

Thune leaves the question unanswered but reading Rankine’s statement more closely we find a possible answer: Rankine explains that her writing is about “touching the depths of how it is and what it is to be human. On the surface we exist but just beyond

⁴⁹ “På andra sidan av alfabetet;”

⁵⁰ ”I tunnelbanan känns det som om du rör dig i flock fast du är alldeles ensam.”

⁵¹ ”Dette er toner vi tematisk og stilistisk kjenner igjen fra *Drömfakulteten* med sin kaleidoskopiske reise gjennom viljen til å eksistere.” “Hvis vi med Rankine befinner oss ved slutten av alfabetet; hva kommer så på andra sidan?” (*my trans*)

is existence. I write to articulate the felt experience.” (Rankine ⁵² Writing, then to Rankine can escape itself (and language), as her alphabet reaches on to the other side of itself and into experience. What it is to be human, appears to be different to Rankine than for example Mark Currie’s narrative perspective, Rankine bases humanity (as well as existence) in experience. “On the surface I exist,” says Rankine, at the surface the narrative can touch but beyond lies existence – literature too we can imagine resides beyond that surface.

Is there a difference between the end of a language and the other side of a language? At the end of the alphabet where Rankine’s poem resides, we find ourselves at the beginning of whatever lies beyond. We have not yet crossed onto the other side, as we neither have crossed into the alphabet. We are at the border – between the beginning and an end, in neither place and in both places at the same time. Here, remembering Derrida we find “the right to say everything.” On other side, however, we have crossed the borders from one into the other. From the alphabet, possibly also language, we have left the “right to say everything,” but what instead have we reached into?

B. It is not possible to imagine a text without people. A building does not exist before it is inhabited. The clothing, the lower arts, the origin of architecture. The architects. The narrators. I focus on the surface. On the text. Every text is a fiction.

THE ARCHITECTS (Stridsberg 2005: 102)⁵³

Fiction, from latin *fictionem*, a making, fashioning, a feigning, or *fingere*, to form, mold, shape, devise, feign (from the *Oxford English Dictionary*). All text is fiction, the text states. All text is a human activity. If the text cannot be imagined without the people, perhaps people cannot be imagined without the text. If the building does not exist without the human, then the human experience creates the building. Perhaps not only the text is fiction, but the building and the human experience too. If so is the case the materiality of

⁵² My first book of poems, *Nothing in Nature is Private*, existed in the experience of Black, Jamaican, person, woman in a bruised world. My second, *The End of the Alphabet*, makes a kaleidoscopic journey through the will to existence. I think sometimes I am too private, too lonely in my heart, but my mind rows constantly as if involved in a public disturbance.

<http://www.reference.com/browse/claudia_rankine>

⁵³ ”B. Det går inte att tänka sig en text utan människor. En byggnad finns inte innan byggnaden befolkas. Beklädnaden, lägre konstater, arkitektens ursprung. Arkitekterna. Berättarna. Jag fäster min uppmärksamhet vid ytan. Vid texten. All text är fiktion.”

ARKITEKTERNA (Stridsberg 2005, 102)

things come into question, in particular the materiality of things outside human existence, things and objects have a life of its own outside the human, possibly the human itself does not have a material life outside fiction, the surface, the narration.

Rankine writes to “mend “ a bruised world.⁵⁴ As we recall, also Solanas’s project aims towards describing a “problem” and “what to do about it” (Heller 143). Man, has as we recall according to Solanas, excluded himself from the realm of pleasure, he has “placed himself beyond the pleasure principle” (Ronell 12). Also the role of the female remains needs to be revised: “whether or not to continue to use females for reproduction or to reproduce in the laboratory will also become academic”(Solanas 68). To Solanas existence in itself of either men or of women is necessary or given, and these matters as well as the question of sex is to be decided *academically*. The body, alterable by language or technology, does not represent pleasure but offers scenes of violence. In the introduction to the manifesto Stridsberg describes Solanas’s ideas about sex in this way: “SCUM and Valerie hate sex. Sex is a hang-up. Anti-sex is the answer”⁵⁵ (Stridsberg 2003: 23). In *The Dreamfaculty* Solanas concept of anti-sex is also referred to; “E. Heterosexual neurosis. Postmodern parasites. You have to go through a lot of sex to arrive at anti-sex” (102).⁵⁶ The focus on hope engendered by physical experience in Rankine differs from Solanas’s as well as Stridsberg’s in the perspective on the body as a receptor of pain.

The Alphabetical collages⁵⁷

The subchapter the NARRATORS is found outside time and the space of the novel at large, or at least so it appears. The subchapter is an enlisting, but what does it enlist? It is enumerated not by numbers but by the alphabet, and it is structured in the form of a graph, the vertical axis is a constant (A, B, C), the horizontal axis is the variable in the form of random words, and contents from the text as such. If we read the title “THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ALPHABET” as an attempt to alter the alphabet, or language,

⁵⁴ “When poet Paul Celan writes “pray Lord, pray to us, we are near,” I feel he speaks of me and I with him in talking to God. There are some of us who are constantly mending our hearts; I write into that mending, my writing is that mending. Anyway, here I am, Claudia Rankine, born in Jamaica, in 1963, here is my art,” Claudia Rankine writes. (http://www.reference.com/browse/claudia_rankine)

⁵⁵ “SCUM och Valerie hatar sex. Sex är en hang-up. Anti-sex är svaret.”

⁵⁶ “E. Heterosexuell neuros. Postmoderna parasiter. Du måste gå igenom en massa sex för att komma till antisex.”

⁵⁷ The NARRATORS, the ARCHITECTS, the PSYCHOANALYTICS, the PARASITES, the PRESIDENTS and ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ALPHABET, constitute what I will call these alphabetical collages.

the subchapter takes on a performativity similar to a manifesto, with the shape of enumerated stances, as well it is impatiently aiming to exit itself and to infuse “its own language with the attributes of action” as Puchner puts it (452). The content of the subchapters, such as the “NARRATORS” is not so much a summary of ideological content but the actual breaking down of language into randomness. Thus it enacts the surrealism of Breton’s manifesto to a complete written extent, dissolving containers of meaning into the “pure psychic automatism” as described by Breton earlier:

B. Blue smoke in the mountains. I am the only one who is not crazy here. There are no real cowboys. There were no real images. I was vacuum cleaning every room, it was still dusty. I wiped every window, I could still not breathe. It was something with the structure. The sun burned through the parasols. (57)⁵⁸

Each sentence interrupts the other, transmitting its content of meaning onto the next sentence, the “I” of one sentence becomes the “I” of the other, confusing time as well as place. In Rankine’s poem bodies open up to foreign objects, likewise in Stridsberg’s subchapter the “NARRATORS,” organs are invaded by strange objects:

A. A heart filled with black flies. A desert of loneliness. A landscape of stones. Cowboys. Wild mustangs. An alphabet of bad experiences (57).⁵⁹

Standing alone the meaning of each word becomes intensified. Reversely, standing alone and at the same time compiled together with unrelated words, the *lack* of meaning is intensified. Each word transgresses its own boundaries and infects the words next to it. “Specter unstrung, staggering stampede. Which sung? left the body open for the moon to break into,” writes Rankine. (Rankine 3) And so the willingness to *exit* language, becomes an invitation for foreign objects to transgress into language. Containers of meanings are invaded by new meanings, and the alphabet does not exist of letters but as traumatic events from life as such. The far away and close, fiction and real, past and present, personal and aural, happen at the same time, same place and no place. The structure does not seem to hold, it implodes and the constant takes over the content

⁵⁸ ”B. Blå rök i bergen. Jag är den enda som inte är galen här. Det fanns inga riktiga cowboys. Det fanns inga verkliga bilder. Jag damsög alla rum, det var fortfarande dammig. Jag tvättade alla fönster, jag kunde fortfarande inte andas. Det var något med strukturen. Solen brände gjenom parasollerna.” (57)

⁵⁹ ”A. Ett hjärta fullt av svarta flugor. En ökens ensamhet. Stenlandskap. Cowboys. Vilda mustanger. Ett alfabet av dårliga erfarenheter.” (57)

of the variable. Or they transmit onto each other, in a language, possibly a new language created by a collage that has as its aim to mend the world. The dissolution of logic into total openness between body and language aligns itself with the methods prescribed by the avant-garde:

The contradictions between action and dream, reason and madness, sensation and representation, psychic trace and primal myth, would all be resolved in the intrinsic dialectic of surrealist experience. In the region of the unconscious, Breton writes, there is not only "a total absence of contradiction" but also "a lack of temporality" and the absolute reign of the pleasure principle. The moments of creation and destruction coalesce in the surrealist technique of creating the marvelous and precipitating a new altered understanding of reality (Puchner 452)

Traditionally the ideas of body and mind are seen as binary oppositions, the body represents the animalistic, passion, brute, inert, outside history, culture and socio-political life. (Grosz xiv) The mind represents the distinctly human, reason, subject and consciousness. (Grosz xiv) In Stridsberg, the dichotomy dissolves so that the body too comes to be "human," a humanity that both directs itself towards a purified state of language as well as it is directed towards action. The alphabet is dissected into smaller sections and random parts but in doing so it does not arrive as another language. If anything it arrives to be more of what it in fact is: "H. Dead trees. Dead stories. Hold your horses. You have to hold your horses, darling." (58)⁶⁰ Perhaps any of the excerpts from these chapters ("hold your horses, is to be read similarly in Swedish) is a suggestion that a letter, for example the letter "H" can be translated into dead trees, dead stories. Perhaps "H" can be translated into just about anything, because language without connection to the world as such. In his book *Textual Power: and the Teaching of English* Robert Scholes discusses Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of sign as arbitrary stating that: "Saussure, as amplified by Roland Barthes and others, has taught us to recognize an unbridgeable gap between words and things" (24). If Saussure is correct there is no relation between language and things, and H can symbolize any of these words, or none of them. Saussure's theory shows that bodies (the actual body of the horses) are independent of language, they exist before language and outside language contrary to the idea that Stridsberg (or by the Narrator or the author) expresses of language's prevalence over the body. Perhaps in fact it is opposite of what Stridsberg finds, it is language or the

⁶⁰ H. Döda träd. Döda historier. Hold your horses. Du måste hålla in dina hästar, älskling"

humans thought as language that come into existence when encountering the house – or possibly even the house and the human come into being as something new in the encounter between each other.

In Stridsberg the escapability of language appears to be a problem: “P. The story’s tendency for escape. A demonstration of pain. The meanings go blank. Rhetorical disability. Contagious universe”(59).⁶¹ As language does not hold, no container holds, no horses, no bodily matter, no story. Whatever is held escapes and as it escapes it contaminates. The scenario is similar to Butler’s theory of transmission, and is opposed to a surrealist “wrestle with language that according to E. San Juan “generates the experience of illumination” than and he quotes Raymond Williams: “the surrealist converts the function of language as distorting public communication into a medium of "idealized 'pure consciousness'" which captures the distance between what is imagined and what exists in culture and society” (40).

We might add to culture and society the body, the openness of language that generates pain and a conflict and imposes itself on these containers, but it does not offer the new possibilities the avant-garde were seeking.

The Polyphony

Because *The Dreamfaculty* is structured as a multiplicity of genres, narrators, narratives the novel is polyphonic according to both Thune and Rustad.⁶² When Bakhtin traced the polyphonic he focused on Dostojevskij’s novels, according to Bakhtin these novels were enhancing ”a radical change of the position of the author” (Thune 2005: 3).⁶³ To Bakhtin a monological discourse is a discourse that refuses or tries to silence the voice of other discourses. Thus it stands opposed to the dialogical discourse that invites the word of the other into its own. The monologue, in Bakhtin’s sense of it, is connected with the authoritative word, while the dialogue opens to the word of the other.

⁶¹ P. Berättelsens flykttendenser. En demonstration av smärta. Meningarna blir blanka. Retorisk tafatthet. Smittosamma universum.”

⁶² I will focus on Thune’s reading in this section where she implements M.M. Bakhtin’s three concepts of the polyphonic, the stylistic, and the chronotope as summarized in Jørgen Bruhn’s *Romanens tænker- M.M. Bachtins romanteorier*. The most distinguishable narratives being Solanas’s and her death, the Narrator’s love and adoration for her object, a rejection of (patriarchal language), an attempt to create a new language, a rejection of a told history, a rejection of a history as it did occur, and an attempt to alter history as well as language.

⁶³ “radikal förändring av författarpositionen,”

The dialogue between the Narrator and Valerie Solanas, set similar to a dialogue in a play, lets its characters speak freely, is at the core of Thune's argument. Thune argues that the conversation between Valerie and the Narrator is only possible in a fantasy and that the *Dreamfaculty* is the *only* place where:

Sara Stridsberg can encounter Valerie Solanas, where the *Narrator* can encounter her hero, where Valerie can encounter the ones she loved, and where the reader can encounter the author⁶⁴ as well as the hero⁶⁵ (2).

Fiction, or in Thune's words the "aesthetical event" makes possible the encounter across the borders of time, space and death.⁶⁶ The Narrator and Valerie meet, Thune notes, in a chronotopical place: the hotel room. The hotel room in Tenderloin district functions as a place where the characters (as well as the reader) can re-experience major crises that occurred in Valerie's life, some biographical facts and some add-ons by Stridsberg. The events are as summarized by Thune: Valerie being before her death, sexual abuse and the loss of a father, the mother's disabilities for motherhood and the deprivation of a mother, prostitution and the deprivation of a body, the loss of "Silkespojken" and the loss of a brother, the death of Cosmogirl and the loss of love. In addition, Thune suggests that the shooting of Andy Warhol followed by Valerie's stay at the mental institution could be read as a loss of Valerie herself. Thune finds a Valerie who stands opposed to "the authoritative – and monologizing institutions of society" (1) these discourses are the state, Elmhurst Psychiatric Hospital, Jacksonville College and the University of Maryland. Even Andy Warhol's *The Factory* comes into clashing with Solanas.⁶⁷

Thune further emphasizes that the main theoretical focus in *Dostojevskijs poetikk* is the auteur's relation to his/hers hero:

It is the equality of the relation between the two – a dialogical I-you relation – that becomes essential, - a relationship that takes place outside the chronological, biographical time. The presence of time can be said to be a threshold – like a space that enables the encounter in-between

⁶⁴ Not precisely the author but the autor, ***

⁶⁵ "Gjennom å se på *Drömfakulteten* som et sted hvor Sara Stridsberg kan møte Valerie Solanas, hvor *Berättaren* kan møte sin helt, hvor Valerie kan møte de hun har elsket, og hvor leseren kan møte såvel autor som helt"

⁶⁶ En "estetisk hendelse,"

⁶⁷ "Solanas i grell kontrast til samfunnets autoritative – og monologiserende – institusjoner,"

one place and the other – one time and the other. The encounter between autor and hero, between two equal consciousnesses takes place on the threshold of something that comes afterwards, something that makes possible the enactment of the existential dialogue, [...] (5)⁶⁸

The radical shift, the “emancipated evolution” of the hero, the hero is self-sufficient, equal, complete, and equipped with an interminable consciousnesses equal to the consciousness of the author, with the result that instead of a single voice a multitude of voices are set in motion. (3)⁶⁹

To argue that the *Dreamfaculty* is polyphonic Thune needs to show that the hero’s status is made possible by “a relation of equality between author and heroes” only when the relation of equality is secured several consciousnesses are possible, whereby they can encounter each other in what Bakhtin calls a “philosophical polyphony” at this moment aesthetics and *truth* converge and become an “aesthetical truth,” meaning the hero is *completely* made real. (Thune 4) His position is as a consequence completely dialogical.⁷⁰

The combination of the documentary with fiction is fairly common, although frequently controversial, but according to Thune’s argument what becomes essential in Stridsberg’s novel is not the introduction of Solanas into fiction. Instead the relationship between “auteur and hero” comes to play the major part. It is a relationship that has to take place outside chronological and biographical time, before one place and after another (5). As a result the relationship happens within fiction but does not partake in the progression of the narrative or the actions within the novel. The “auteur” therefore becomes as important as Solanas. Valerie Solanas is presumably the hero in Stridsberg’s work. The hero’s (as well as the auteur’s) position is arguably already dialogical in that her reality is of her own *possession*, however since Solanas is already dead, she can only be accessed through narration (her biography, her manifesto, photos, films, and so on.) Both “auteur and hero” therefore have passed through the de-materializing machinery of fiction, conceived in the passage point of the threshold, when they arise as “completely made real” in the dialogical relationship to each other.

⁶⁸ “Det er den likeverdige relasjonen mellom de to – en dialogisk jeg-du-relasjon – som blir bærende, - og forholdet utfolder seg utenfor den kronologiske, biografiske tiden. Tidens tilstedeværelse kan påpekes som en terskel – som et rom for et møte på vei fra et sted til et annet - fra en tid til en annen. Møtet mellom autor og helt, mellom to likeverdige bevisstheter, finner sted på terskelen til noe som kommer etter; og det muliggjør utspillelsen av en eksistensiell dialog; [...]”

⁶⁹ “Å si at en roman er polyfon handler i følge Mikhail Bakhtin om en ”radikal förändring av författarpositionen”¹⁷ som tillater heltens frie utvikling – som selvstendige, likeverdige, fullstendige, uavsluttbare bevisstheter på linje med forfatterbevisstheten.”

⁷⁰ ”Författarens nya konstnärliga position i förhållande til hjälten i Dostojevskijs polyfona roman är således en *på fullt allvar förverkligad och konsekvent genomförd dialogisk position*,” quote by Thune from Jørgen Bruhn.

In Bakhtin's argument the polyphony is under the continual threat of monologization – and the possibility of this therefore as well present in *The Dreamfaculty*, voices can speak as many, still they might be speaking as one. If *The Dreamfaculty* is polyphonic, life must be depicted in a way where, as Thune writes it “takes a turn; away from what is known, towards the unknown” (6),⁷¹ and the relationship between the Narrator and Valerie (in equality) needs to be found outside chronological and biographical time, it must take place in between one place and the other, between one time and another to take the shape as a threshold (5). Furthermore, instead of focusing on the hero's death, it has to direct itself towards the *crises* and the *transitions* the hero passes through within the (non-) temporality of the threshold. If the Narrator, the author, and Stridsberg are the “auteur,” and Valerie is the “hero,” the dialogue between the Narrator and Valerie takes place explicitly and is physically staged but does an explicit dialogue between “auteur and hero” take place outside chronological and biographical time? *The Dreamfaculty* is a novel where a historical person plays a part but does an already “real” person need to be liberated as a character in a novel? In the dialogue with the Narrator Valerie express that she finds it un-necessary to be made into fiction, and perhaps *fiction* is a keyword. Perhaps the real Valerie Solanas is only entered into a polyphony if she is considered as monologized on beforehand. For the polyphony to be necessary in the hypertext of Solanas, she needs to be (perceived) as voiceless and de-humanized, possibly not even real, in order for the polyphony to have a liberating function.

My argument does not primarily move along the lines of Bakhtin's theory but the polyphony could be corresponding to the avant-garde's project to break out of the automatized way of life, language and thinking. For example the randomness that was sought in the construction of the collage could exemplify a strive to break up one voice into many, and I already mentioned that *The Dreamfaculty* could be read as a collage. Conversely, the term humanist discourse could be read as a parallel to Bakhtin's concept of monologic and monologization.

⁷¹ “Der livet tar en vending; bort fra det kjente – vendt mot det ukjente.”

Dialogues and monologues

The dialogue between the Narrator and Valerie takes place on a physical level at the hotel room in Tenderloin district and to the extent that it is physically situated it will have to take place within chronological and biographical time. But if it does, how can Thune still argue that the encounter is enacted in-between one place and the other, in-between one time and the other? The answer to that question is that the relationship between “hero and auteur,” does not have to be read as physical, throughout the novel we encounter voices that are not necessarily attached to bodies:

R. I am writing for the dead. What does it matter that everybody is dead (59).⁷²

The voice expresses an internal struggle and confusion, and confusion is integral to the text as a whole. While this voice expresses a longing towards what is not known, as well as an optimism about the possibilities in transgressing borders like death and language, other voices are negative and pessimistic: “it is not possible to think outside the thoughts” (59), the “exile languages are dead” (60).⁷³ Patriarchy too is in essence according to these accounts not escapable; “it is not possible to write one’s way out of patriarchy” (60).⁷⁴ When Thune argues the polyphony, perhaps these are the completely made real consciousnesses, encountering each other in “a dialogical I-you relation,” but taking place between one place and the other. *The Dreamfaculty*, then is a text that is to be read in dis-agreement with itself – not embodying a character, it is instead the embodiment of a process, a movement, a function - a struggle that takes place between an avant-garde and a humanist discourse.

The voices of Valerie and The Narrator become similar to the disembodied voices when we find the two characters in a conflict:

THE NARRATOR: I am dreaming of another end to the story.

VALERIE: You are not a narrator.

THE NARRATOR: I know

⁷² ”R. Jag skriver för de döda. Vad spelar det för roll om alla är döda?”

⁷³ “Massiv hegemoni. Exilspråkens död.”

⁷⁴ “Det går inte att skriva sig ur patriarkatet.”

VALERIE: And this is not a real story.

THE NARRATOR: I know. And I don't care, I just want to sit here and talk to you for a while (40).⁷⁵

The Narrator represents a sentimentality, directing her dream towards another end to the story, longing spend time with Valerie. Writing for the dead. Valerie, on the other rejects transgressing into her death: the longing for change, her company as well as the novel as such.

Announced by their names (“Valerie: You are not [...]”) the dialogic sections resemble a play. By using a technique from another genre, the borders between novel and drama are transgressed with the effect of estrangement. As the characters mainly narrate themselves in the dialogue the narrative function becomes superfluous. Given the possibility to speak through their own voice they can through their speech-acts become “complete” and “real.” Since the Narrator is positioned as a character with a name that is not a name but a literary function the degradation of the narration makes the narrative act into focus. Given the degradation and the wiping out of the narrator as well as the fact that the Narrator sheepishly confirms Valerie’s opinion – the narrator’s position lacks authority. The loss of authority on the narrative side, may in turn work to secure the equality between “hero and auteur.”

In his article: “Narrative Voice and Agency in Drama: Aspects of a Narratology of Drama,” Manfred Jahn has argued the presence of the narrator in the drama. Jahn asks if the drama to any extent can “admit of the narratological concepts of a narrating instance or a narrative voice” (660). What he finds is that it is sometimes useful to see the drama within a narrative situation, where “the dramatic narrator usefully swims into focus even if s/he is otherwise just a bodiless and voiceless show-er or arranger function indistinguishable from the author” (Jahn 676).

Even though the dramatic dialogue serves to make the narrator voiceless and bodiless and “indistinguishable from the author” the conversation *still* takes place in fiction, staged as a play that is unmistakably *structured*. When the narrator becomes

⁷⁵ ”BERÄTTAREN: Jag drömmer om en annan slut på berättelsen.

VALERIE: Du är ingen berättare.

BERÄTTAREN: Jag vet det.

VALERIE: Och det här är ingen riktig berättelse.

BERÄTTAREN: Jag vet det. Och jag bryr mig inte om det, jag vill bara sitta här och prata med dig en liten stund.” (40)

indistinguishable from the author – the author takes over the role of the narrator as the one who arranges. In the case of *The Dreamfaculty* the Narrator is not the real narrator (as a literary function), and Valerie is not the real Valerie Solanas, both they are staged imitations. When August Strindberg simulated the dream in a play, it was as he commented *still* authored. In the case of *The Dreamfaculty*: an enactment of a dream in the form of a drama that is a novel, the narrator's step towards the background only replaces her with another – the author – in this case Stridsberg. Although Valerie speaks with a strong voice, because she is moved to the foreground by way of the structure as well as she is the stronger voice in the dialogue – possibly being *completely* made real – someone has made these arrangements, the author, Stridsberg who takes over the role of the narrator. If the narrator is only replaced by the author the attempt to let Solanas speak seems failed, unless removing the narration also succeeds in removing the author. The avant-garde's attempt for the death of the author was by de-automatizing processes like for example the collage – the letting go of control into randomness. Unless Solanas's voice can become equal to the author/narrator it seems that Currie's claim that the narrative function is as "inescapable as language in general" becomes impossible to escape, at least when it comes to writing.

On the other hand, it could be possible, as Thune and Rustad have argued that a multitude of voices are taking place – so that the voice that speaks *really* is Valerie Solanas, not as fiction but as the actual lived and living Solanas, if only in the form of a ghost. Solanas is dead, her life is not over, as Rustad points out, "it does not mean that it has reached its *closure*" (Rustad 33).⁷⁶ If so is the case Solanas is narrated (arranged) into un-narration (complete being), the author manages to dissolve herself and lay the ground for the resurrection of Solanas.

But Solanas is also through a process of un-narration, narrated. By un-narration I mean the dissolving of language, genre, narrator (etc), a process of mending takes place that reinstitutes Solanas into narration, the mending of Solanas end and the alteration of language that resembles the avant-garde's eagerness to exit language appear to be two out of many irreconcilable voices – as in any struggle one comes out stronger than the other:

⁷⁶ "Valeries liv er altså over, men det betyr ikke at det er avsluttet."

”The NARRATOR: My dreamfaculty-

VALERIE: -and no sentimental little chicks and pretending authors who play that they are writing a novel about me dying. You do not have my permission to go through my material.

(*silence* (39))⁷⁷

Narrator is only replying with silence when Solanas claims that she is sentimental, pretending to be an author and furthermore her strongest card: Valerie was never asked, she never approved for someone to go through her “material.”

The concept of materiality is continually returned to throughout the novel, as for example in the chapter The NARRATORS: “N. To force the appearance of textual fragments and body material “(59).⁷⁸ By “material” Valerie does not only refer to her text, the *SCUM Manifesto* but also her body as material, her life, her being, a material entered without permission. As Solanas once sent bullets entering Warhol’s body rendering his body a collage, the forceful cut and paste between body, concepts, art, and life is now returned to Solanas in the form of a *literary fantasy*. In the forceful struggle to enter somebody’s existence without permission the Narrator and the author come out strongest.

But the Narrator *interviews* Valerie, as in the first question of the first dialogue The Narrator asks Valerie; “What kind of material is that?” Valerie in turn explains; “It is snow and black despair.” “Where,” asks the Narrator; “The shitty hotel. The end station for dying whores and drug-addicts. The last giant humiliation,”⁷⁹ Valerie replies (11). Herself, The Narrator has no answers; her name is not a name, but a literary function. As a character she is not a recognizable subject, she appears rather as an empty container that longs to be filled by the other, by Valerie, her presence, her rejection, by her story. The Narrator *is* not quite on any level of the narration; reduced to a nameless partner the

⁷⁷ BERÄTTAREN: Min drömfakultet-

VALERIE: -och inga sentimentala småbrudar och låtsastförfattare som leker att de skriver roman om att jag ska dö. Du har inte min tillåtelse att gå igenom mitt material.

(*Tystnad.*) (39)

⁷⁸ ” N. Det tvångsmässiga frammandet av textfragment och kroppsmaterial.” (59)

⁷⁹ ”Vad är det för material?,” “Sø och svart fortvivlan,” ”Var?” “Skithotellet. Slutstationen för döende horor och narkomaner. Den sista gigantiska förödmjukelsen”. (11).

sphere of the social is almost or completely absent, and the conversation that appears as a dialogue comes to resemble a monologue.

“What does it matter if the narrator is lying? What does it matter who is narrating” a voice rhetorically asks in “The NARRATORS.” (60)⁸⁰ The answer never arrives, unless the answer arrives more as a structure rather words. For example in a previous quote: “Blue smoke in the mountains. I am the only one who is not crazy here” the statement “I am the only one not crazy here” is a repetition that occurs frequently in the novel. In the subchapter MANHATTAN CRIMINAL COURT: 3 of JUNE 1968 Valerie urges the court to “Remember [that] I am the only woman not crazy here” (33).⁸¹ The second “I” in the quote: “I was vacuum cleaning every room,” though, is clearly not Solanas and is therefore separated from the first I. This “I” resembles the voice of the author, the Narrator, Stridsberg and her troubles working out a structure for her text, her words, her ideas within an existing language. They two “I”s are separated in time and in space and perhaps also in a cause. The first “I” is claiming her sanity, and standing in front of the court she claims that her deed was just; “I am repeating myself. I am continuing to repeat myself. I can repeat myself over and over again. I did right. I regret nothing. I had lots of reasons. It is not often that I shoot somebody. I did not do it for nothing.” (34)⁸² Solanas is saying this in the novel and it is of course also a repetition of the first time she said it, as is the story whenever it is told about Solanas’s refusal to regret standing opposed to the Law. The second “I”s objectives are different, she is not standing in a court of law, she is not the one who is repeating her words over and over again. Both are an “I,” separated by a few sentences, can they also be the same? Perhaps the border between one “I” and the other does not hold, and transmits onto the other, so there is no clear separation between the two. Dissolved into each other – two become one. Without contradiction – the sameness of the two is transgressed over the limits of time and place, making them occur at the same time in the same place. The place of the novel in the time of the fiction. Does the melting of one into the other as well transgress multiplicity of voices?

⁸⁰ “Vad spelar det för roll hvem som berättar?” BERÄTTARNA (60)

⁸¹ “VALÉRIE: Kom ihåg att jag är den enda kvinnan som inte är galen här.”

⁸² “Jag upprepar mig. Jag fortsätter att upprepa mig. Jag kan upprepa mig hur många gånger som helst. Jag gjorde rätt. Jag ångrar ingen ting.”

The Narrator carries a name that is not a name but as I already said, a literary function and the immediacy of mimesis is therefore ruined. The Narrator not only hardly exists, but to the extent that she exists she comes into being through emotions of negativity. Driven by a sentimentality she longs for the dead, the other, she has no name, she has nothing but questions to ask, and even more so she also comes to appear *guilty*: she is guilty of never having asked Valerie for permission, although she admittedly never *could*.

Valerie on the other hand carries a name but she is not named by her full name (Valerie Jean Solanas) or by her surname and the use of her first name implies a certain intimacy – a closeness that only exist between people who know one another, family and friends. Apparently two characters – they share an intimacy that perhaps is so strong that they even can be said be bordering onto each other. The intimacy can be intended so that the guilt from the acts of brutality that stained Solanas can be transferred onto the Narrator and the author. The scenes between Valerie and the Narrator can be a (intentional) staging of a process of repentance, where guilt is transferred from the perpetrator onto the author of the act.

According to Bakhtin the monological discourse is a discourse that refuses or tries to silence the voice of other discourses and the dialogical discourse invites the word of the other into its own. If Stridsberg's approach to Solanas is in order to mend something that occurred in Solanas history – this something being either solitude, failure in achieving her feminist goals – what might have been in the way of Solanas (in Stridsberg's view) might be the guilt.

Valerie on the other hand did not consider herself guilty, if she regretted it was because she did not complete her action to the full extent, according to Solanas it is not she who is degraded to the sphere of the non-human but man, who is degraded below animality and “to call man an animal is to flatter him” (Solanas 37). The process of mending therefore enters a monological discourse in that it works to silence Solanas's position as not-guilty and righteous. The silencing of the act of brutality– that remains something that should not and cannot be avoided when it comes to Solanas – is enhanced is the fact that the scenes of the shootings are cut out of the novel. Solanas appearance in court is however described so that the brutal act is left uninvited to speak for itself, but

Solanas words, her manifesto, her rejection of the court is given space to be heard. But Solanas completely made real would exist between both – violence and agitation – and the fictional Valerie is separated from her reality and the *Dreamfacutly* appears to slip towards a monologue.

The Narrator is the one who narrates, or so her name says, but if the novel is to be read as polyphonic, the narrative function in a dialogue that comes to exist between self-sufficient, inner free, incomplete and indecisive discursive partner appears problematic. The Narrator, paradoxically *exists* as a character on the dialogical level, but as we have seen her existence as a character is scarce. Through her being as a character she comes into non-being as a narrator, but since she is, but is not a character, perhaps the dialogue is no dialogue at all, and that there in fact one is one voice that prevails, one voice that takes over, and narrates. However, although she does not appear to be a person we are perhaps not to read the characters of *The Dreamfacutly* as people or bodies as such but as functions or processes. If read as such perhaps both The Narrator and Valerie are complete, and real. The focus on the narration is not about any number of (physical) voices, of their multiplicity, not about who is narrating, but *what* – a content, a structure, a material. The lack of The Narrator being a persona and Valerie being incomplete on the level of chronological and biographical time could therefore not be a threat to a polyphonic reading of the novel.

Another end:

”THE NARRATOR: The context-

VALERIE: There is nothing called context. Everything should be cut out of its circumstances. The circumstances can always explain away the most evident causal connections” (71- 72).⁸³

In this voice we read the conflicting ideas the characters have about the idea of context, a conflict that is to be exemplified at the structural level. The collage could be

⁸³ BERÄTTAREN: Kontexten-

VALERIE: Det finns ingenting som heter kontext. Allting bör ryckas ur sitt sammanhang. Sammanhanget kan alltid bortförklara de mest uppenbara orsakssammanhang.” (71- 72)

read as an effective cut away from context into in-organicity, being the end to what something belonged to and a cut into a new belonging. Collage can, however as well be seen as in-organic but not out of context, it is brought into the new and incorporated, linked together as bodies without organs, to use Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, connected to the past contexts as well as reshaped in a new.⁸⁴ The dialogue between Solanas and the Narrator is for example not just a dialogue between the two on a physical level, they are the coming together of invisible and indefinite contexts (The Narrator, the author, Stridsberg..) Valerie (*SCUM Manifesto*, shooting, rebel, and so on).

Language always appears within a context writes Bakhtin (Rustad 25). With Bakhtin in mind, Rustad concludes that the novel and likewise Valerie's life never ends, always is in a process, always in movement (33). So is the relation between Valerie and the Narrator that according to Thune, undergoes subtle changes within the 18 days they spend together, the relation is decided by the "existential dialogue that is being played out between the two, torn between among other things carefulness (primarily The Narrator), indifference (only Valerie), all-embracing love, aggressive frustration (both – but mostly Valerie), desperate fear of death (Valerie), loss of meaning (both), and finally a releasing realization of the others situation" (Thune 5).⁸⁵ Four days before Valerie is about to die, Thune says, the breakthrough takes place, set in motion by two crises. The first is Valerie's crisis as she is about to die, alone. The second is The Narrator's crisis as she is on the verge of existence without Valerie. After the breakthrough, Thune notes, Valerie accepts the Narrator's presence, her emotional support and the project itself (the novel). In turn it becomes the Narrator's breakthrough as well, Thune concludes: the transition "gives meaning to the meaningless, it gives her [Solanas] ability to face death without the fear from earlier" (5).⁸⁶

The conflict and the breakthrough on a physical level in chronological and biological time might correspond with solving the conflicts on the deeper level of ideology. The embodied conflict between voices, words and bodies might intersect with

⁸⁴ Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Massumi, Brian. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

⁸⁵ "Forholdet mellom de to bølger seg subtielt skiftende gjennom de 18 dagene de tilbringer sammen på rommet på Bristol Hotell – mens de preget av den eksistensielle dialogen som utspilles mellom dem slites mellom blant annet tilnærmende forsiktighet (primært *Berättaren*), likegyldighet (bare Valerie), altopplukende forelskelse (*Berättaren*), aggressiv frustrasjon (begge – men mest Valerie), fortvilet dødsangst (Valerie), meningsløshet (begge) og til slutt en forløsende innlevelse i hverandres situasjon."

⁸⁶ "Og får med dette en mening i det meningsløse, som gjør henne i stand til å nærme seg døden uten samme angst som før."

the disembodied clash on the deeper level of structures. The conflict between the contexts of language is a conflict that can be described within Bakhtin's concept of monologic and polyphonic. In the monologic discourse language is stripped from a belonging to organicity, it becomes a closed up system that separates itself from materiality. Languages outside "exile languages"(60), are dead. In the polyphonic view language is part of the body without organs, touching upon everything, always in process, and always in movement.

According to Thune *The Dreamfaculty* offers a solution in the dialogue between The Narrator and Valerie. But also elsewhere in the text a distinguishable narrative cuts through the cacophony of voices, the random words and bodies that are hurled at us through the chapter of "THE NARRATORS" are towards the end brought together in a distinct dialogue:

V. She says: I am dreaming that you will never stop looking for me.

W. How will I find my way back in the dark?

X. Darkness. Silence. The desert does not reply.

Y. She says: Follow the stars. The lost highway.

Z. Follow it to the end.

The NARRATORS (60)⁸⁷

The Dreamfaculty is the altering of Solanas's scene of death. Not only is a scene of death altered but meaning is given where there was none but the historical events of Solanas life. Solanas is befriended, loved, and (a)filiated with Stridsberg. In the company of a Swedish feminist novelist from the year 2005 Solanas gets to enjoy to be included into a less marginal position, as the struggle between The Narrator and Valerie is solved, so also is the struggle between opposing discourses. Solanas second death, is not only a death on the narrative level, but it transcends to become a structural change. As the "new end" cuts as a clear voice through the non-narrative sections of the alphabetical collages a change has arrived that reverberates through the text as a whole.

⁸⁷ V. Hon säger: Jag drömmer om att du aldrig ska sluta leta efter mig.
W. Hur hittar jag vägen tillbaka i mörkret?
X. Mörker. Tystnad. Öknens svarar inte.
Y. Hon säger: Följ stjärnorna. The lost Highway.
Z. Följ den till slutet. (60)

The new end to the story becomes a story of love and togetherness through barriers of time and history but as it is materialized in the story, the story reaches closure, the end to a process, and the novel has completed itself in a circle. A struggle has been won and the sentimental narrative has come out the strongest. What do we say when we say that something is sentimental? What is sentimentality, if not a regression towards that which is of the past as opposed to the avant-garde's orientation from the past, present, and in a new grammar of the future. Stridsberg's novel is a longing for the past, written for the dead, and it seems that it is not a new grammar that is being re-shaped, but the past that is remodulated, remodulated it is completed but it does not become a present or a future, it is not writing towards the living, nor towards life, Stridsberg is: "writing for the dead. What does it matter that everybody is dead "(59).⁸⁸ In its longing towards the dead, the voice could be read as a parallel to Solanas's rejection of reproduction and dismissal of the importance of the survival of the human species: "When aging and death are eliminated, why continue to reproduce? Why should we care what happens when we're dead? Why should we care that there are no younger generations to succeed us, Solanas asks (69). But where Solanas confronts the question why we should "care when we're dead," the longing *towards* the dead becomes the enactment of that very caring that Solanas questions. In Solanas vision aging and death exist no more, it is existence in continual process *forward* as opposed to the sentimental regression backwards in time.

Stridsberg's act

Is the act of putting words and deeds into the voice of another a crime, although a fictional one? And most of all is to enter someone else's *time*, although their time is up, lost and lived, a crime? Not necessarily a crime in terms of what is *good* or *bad*, but a crime that returns to Valerie what Valerie did to Andy Warhol: to enter somebody's flesh without permission.

Stridsberg's "act," happens within writing, but contrary to what I have argued earlier Stridsberg's writing also pushes itself towards the body: it is a dramatic dialogue and is the act of writing the author herself as well as Solanas into literature, thereby

⁸⁸ "R. Jag skriver för de döda. Vad spelar det för roll om alla är döda?"

confronting the edges between life and fiction and moving one into the other (and vice versa). Harding has argued that Solanas's shots "called the bluff" to Breton's surrealist manifesto that, and he quotes from the 1924 edition of the manifesto; "the simplest surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd." (150) In 1968, Harding points out, that crowd happened to be the fashionable one of Andy Warhol's Factory, Solanas's shots thereby served to rip through that crowd with her bullets. Through the shooting Solanas pierced through Warhol's body and rendered him a "permanent collage," not only did she succeed in attacking Warhol but she entered the ways of expression of the avant-garde itself:

In this respect, Solanas's manifesto has to be seen as providing a context for a profoundly subversive interpretation of the historical avant-garde's longstanding fascination with collage. However grotesque, the physically disfiguring effect that her attack had on Warhol was thus without question the quintessential act of appropriating and then turning the tropes of the avant-garde against itself-both with regard to the radical juxtapositions of collage aesthetics and with regard to the hyperbolic rhetoric of the avant-garde manifesto. (Harding 150 -1)

Harding finds a striking parallel shared with the theatrical avant-garde's attitude towards classical texts. From Erika Fischer-Lichte's article "The Avant-Garde and the Antitextual Gesture," Harding points out what Fischer-Lichte characterizes as the anti-textual gesture: "the avant-garde's ambivalent relations to classical texts as a form of Sparagmos;" the sacrificial tearing apart and incorporation of textual bodies in which we symbolize our cultural traditions, indeed in which we see our culture embodied"(159).

When Solanas ripped through Warhol's body and the avant-garde's collage aesthetics, she attacked the most "fashionable" representative of the American Avant-garde. Stridsberg enters Solanas in order to incorporate and include Solanas, furthermore she also pierces through herself in order to incorporate herself into the novel. An anti-textual gesture itself, Stridsberg furthermore strikes against the narrative function much in the same way that the avant-garde applied the collage. The narrative function is torn apart, and incorporated within a new scene in Stridsberg. Staged as a character, ripped apart in the alphabetical subchapters, accused by Solanas of untruthfulness, the author "pretends" to be an author, scattered into a collage, and as a collage it is revived as the narrative it is revived in the final death-scene and the breakthrough.

Through their techniques, the avant-garde aimed at the random, the chaos, the un-authored, non-subjective. Their use of the collage, the montage of unrelated and preferably arbitrary objects, strived to remove the work of art from authorship. Sara Stridsberg's novel can also be said to be a collage, it is a meeting-point between the two versions of Solanas (the instable meeting-point between fiction and real), as well as a blend of genres, voices, structures and so on. Although the collage is randomly orchestrated, someone has nevertheless put it together. Equally *The Dreamfaculty* although it appears a polyphonic collage, is authored. Even though it is constructed as a collage, it still is planned out (instead of random), authored (in stead of automatic) and sentimental (instead of non-sentimental and depersonalized).

If Stridsberg's and the avant-garde's aims are the same by using related techniques: to reach a new grammar, but in positioning herself in alignment with the avant-garde Stridsberg paradoxically clashes against the critical intention of her main character. Valerie Solanas aimed to destroy Warhol and position herself against the avant-garde, however, as Harding points out, this incorporated Solanas within "the anti-traditions" of the avant-garde itself. The avant-garde's ambivalent relation to its predecessors, Harding notes, resembles "the act of symbolically killing one's aesthetic parents," and an event that has been the necessary "initiation rite for entrance into the ranks of the artistic avant-garde- an expected impudence" ⁸⁹ (150). Most importantly, Harding finds Solanas's manifesto to position itself "not as a petition for recognition within the existing traditions of the avant-garde" (150). In this it is found in alignment with what according to Puchner is the manifesto's "history of rupture," directed outwards "as a political genre, the manifesto had been geared toward a revolution, a cut in the historical process, an act that attempts to change suddenly the course of history" (Puchner 452). Every movement within the avant-garde is a break with the former, Puchner points out: Futurism is a break with Symbolism; Vorticism is a break with Futurism; and so on.

If the avant-garde of Solanas is Stridsberg's "aesthetical parent," she does not perform a killing of either one. The avant-garde's or Solanas's, were striking against their predecessors – and were re-instituted in their position. Stridsberg aims to strike against

⁸⁹ Here, Harding quotes from Lora Rempel, "The Anti-Body in Photomontage: Hannah Höch's Woman without Wholeness." In *Sexual Artifice*. Ed. Ann Kibby Kayann Short, and Abouali Farmanfarmanian. New York: New York University Press, 1994. 148- 70

the narrative function and the new endings and the closure that is brought about from the second death – re-institutes exactly the narrative function. Both attempts are possibly failed – but are they failed for the same reason?

Closure

In “A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia,” Deleuze and Guattari state “that literature is an assemblage” (4). Being an assemblage literature, including books, have neither to do with ideology nor a signifying process:

multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency and in each case the units of measure (4).

Writing, for Deleuze and Guattari is always defined as the measure of something else, and through its lines of flights and intensities within the rhizome the effort to survey and map is the process of *following* (5). Through these processes a quantification of writing takes place, as opposed to a reduction of writing within the signifying process. One method then is of quantification of an object that is not an object but a *becoming*, the other, the signifying process is a reductive simplification. One could possibly argue that the separation between the two methods in itself is a dichotomy, but the two methods are separated by direction, and not by matters such as good or bad, right and wrong, the binary model is escaped, since one makes an effort to follow its object through “the lines of flight” (5), the other instead makes its object follow.

I have distinguished the humanist from the avant-garde discourse, but it is plausible that both can occur at the same time, in the same text. Although they can appear as oppositions the “real” Valerie Solanas and the character Valerie in *The Dreamfaculty* can both be followed at the same time, in the same text. The Valerie Solanas who is neither in need of inclusion, nor of defence, who is determined, willing to defend herself and her text against everything, by every means, refusing to regret when replying to the court: “I was right in what I did! I have nothing to regret!”⁹⁰ Next to the furious, decisive and vengeful Solanas we find another: “*I hate myself and I refuse to die. I don’t want to*

⁹⁰ From Freddie Baer’s webpage <http://www.womynkind.org/valbio.htm>

disappear, I want to return, I long for someone's hands, my mothers hands, a girl's embrace, a voice, any voice, just not this eclipse"(. ..).⁹¹ The two versions are opposed, they collide and converge, they may seem incompatible, but they exist not as binary oppositions in a relationship of exclusion but rather they are present at the same time and we need to *follow* them through their lines of flights.

At the beginning of this chapter I mentioned the hypertext of Solanas, consisting of the modules of Solanas's body, her life her acts, everything written by Solanas, and everything written on her. The hypertext of Solanas is a rhizome. According to Deleuze and Guattari the rhizome assumes very diverse forms, and can be enumerated within certain "approximate characteristics." For example the rhizome follows principles of heterogeneity and connection, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7) Deleuze and Guattari write. Only when seen as a heterogeneity can the rhizome be removed from the process of signification: "it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, "multiplicity," that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world" (8). Furthermore the rhizome does not have a beginning, end or a closure, it does is undefinable: "there are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree or a root" (8).

The Dreamfaculty appears to embrace a multitude of structures and positions, however these ultimately inflict on each other through a process of speaking as one, thereby they position themselves outside the rhizome in the form of a tree or a root system. There is a process in which the rhizome gets "broken," Deleuze and Guattari write but when "broken, shattered at a given spot, [...] it will start up again," because it "constantly flees" (9). This becomes important, since the lines of flight are part of the rhizome and they continually "tie back to one another, which is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in rudimentary form of the good and the bad" (9).

In *The Dreamfaculty* we can neither find *just* a humanist discourse, in a self-enclosed form of a tree or a root, when Stridsberg's novel strives for closure and completeness, the moment it completes itself in the second death of Solanas, a second

⁹¹ "Jag hatar mig själv och vill inte dö. Jag vill inte försvinna, jag vill tillbaka, jag längtar efter någons händer, min mors händer, en flickas favn, en röst vilken som helst, bara inte den här solformörkelsen."

death already implies the possibility of a sequence (a, b, c) – the possibility of a third death. In the ultimate chapter of the novel: “A FINAL ILLUMINATED ROOM, AN EXPLODING LILY IN THE DARK,” Solanas’s dies. The title gives signals of termination using words like “final,” and Cosmogirl literally closes the novel as she “carefully closes the book” at the moment when death has reached Solanas and she no longer is awake (354).⁹² Closure has been reached, the end of the novel is present but in the possible simultaneous sequence of both Cosmogirl as well the reader closing the novel closure is shattered in being same, yet different they double and re-double, taking flight and connecting itself to “anything other.”

In the scene between Cosmo and Valerie, death becomes a state of sleep: “schhhh...we will sleep now” Cosmo tells Valerie and she soothingly explains: “death is not where we are.”⁹³ Sleep implies the waking up, the continuation of a process, and so no end is reached, neither a beginning. “I long for another end to the story” is the Narrator’s continual statement through the novel, and the immediate moment closure is found it redoubles not as a circle where ends meet, rather it takes the shape of a spiral or a vector⁹⁴ thus the rhizome escapes.⁹⁵

The Dreamfaculty is not to be found within a humanist discourse that works solely with the aim to include Solanas would, along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari’s argument place it within a binary model. The matters we are deciding are not either/or questions, but rather it is a discussion about *direction*. Although the *Dreamfaculty* both includes both the avant-garde and the humanist discourses I hope to have shown that its main course of direction is towards the monologue, towards the humanist, towards the tree and the root.

In Brian Massumi’s Foreword “Pleasures of Philosophy” to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* he opposes Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the closed circuit of the tree to their own effort, a “nomad thought” (xiii). “Nomad thought’s,” objective, Massumi says, is to be an open system following the line of a vector that has

⁹² “ETT SISTA UPPLYST RUM, EN EXPLPODERANDE LILJA I MÖRKRET.” “Sedan slår hon försiktig igen boken.”

⁹³ “Schhh...Nu ska vi sova.” “Döden är inte där vi är.”

⁹⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Massumi, Brian. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

⁹⁵ “Jag drömmer om en annan slut på berättelsen.”

no subject or object other than itself (xiii). The vector is an *act*. The closed equation of representation can according to Massumi be formulated as the following: $x = x = y$ ($I = I = \text{not you}$). “Nomad thought’s” is the replacement in an open equation: . . . + $y + z + a$ (+ arm + brick + window + . . .) (xiii).

In *The Dreamfaculty* the relationship between Stridsberg, the Narrator, the narrator and the author is unclear. The limits between one “I” and the other is a limit of language that evaporates, and so the intimacy between Valerie and The author, the Narrator and Stridsberg takes on the closed equation: $x = x$. Within this model they are in a state of oneness: Valerie Solanas = Valerie = The Hero = The Narrator = The Author = Auteur = Stridsberg. But through lines of escape the divergence between Valerie and Valerie Solanas is not of oneness they are parallel but do not touch upon each other as in an open equation: Valerie + Valerie Solanas + character + writer + shooter + feminist + visionary + . . . And so *The Dreamfaculty* reaches its closure, at the very moment as it begins.

Conclusion

In my introduction I stated the intention of distinguishing two main tendencies in the hypertext of Valerie Solanas, an avant-garde and a humanist discourse. Through my study of Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto*, the shooting and her subsequent appearance in court, as well as texts on Solanas by Harding, Ronell and Stridsberg, we have seen that these discourses do not appear as clear forms, but rather as juxtaposed processes in these various texts.⁹⁶ Through our discussion about Valerie Solanas we have seen that she evokes a confrontation with the marginal, the other, and the non-human. I have tried to outline the avant-garde as a model of chaos, where the non-human and the human can encounter each other *ethically*. Humanist discourse is, as we have seen, based on the exclusion of this otherness, defined by its difference from what is constituted as the animal, or in the case of Valerie Solanas, a female criminal and a radical writer.

I would like to propose that what ultimately constitutes the avant-garde is this continual challenging of the limits of what is human. In humanist discourse, what is human comes to be defined simply as what is known, and the avant-garde becomes the process of unknowing the known and transgressing into the surreal. Going against the automatic practices of everyday life, perhaps to unknow the known is also the moment when the avant-garde presses beyond the human, all the while risking to become knowable and reinscribed into the human field. Perhaps this is the process Bürger described as "sublation," and which according to him was the biggest failure of the avant-garde (Heyd 69). Bürger used the term "historical avant-garde," but according to Puchner the adjective "historical" implies a break, a cut, or an end, it "derives its justification from precisely this sense that this period is no longer continuous with ours, and that we are

⁹⁶ We can even say that they are oscillating between a deterritorialized minor language and reterritorialized within a major language. Deleuze, Gilles. Guattari, Felix. Towards A Minor Literature. Trans Polan, Dana. Minneapolis. London: University Press of Minnesota, 1986

doomed to recycle and quote from the forms, such as the form of the manifesto, that came into existence then” (Puchner 460).

The avant-garde failed, Bürger has argued. Solanas’s act failed too, and it seems so did Stridsberg’s. But how has the avant-garde failed, and what is at stake in that failure? Solanas’s project could be read as failed because her presumed goals, to kill Warhol and exterminate men, were not successfully executed. For the avant-garde, revolution did not occur, and for Stridsberg a new grammar did not arise. Life remained the same – or so one might think.

I would argue however that one aspect where the avant-garde has succeed is precisely via its inclusion in the institutionalized art scene, the very establishments it revolted against. Solanas has been occupying a “double marginality” (Harding 148),⁹⁷ but in the Stridsberg and Ronell texts undergoes a process of inclusion or (a)filiation. For example, Solanas is efficiently brought closer when Stridsberg and Ronell call her by her first name, in a tone of familiarity that can verge on paternalism. At the end of Part One we discussed the avant-garde failure, but what is failure, if not the reading of something in terms of closure, as ended, finalized, past and gone?

Rustad argued that although Solanas’s life is over it has not reached *closure* (Rustad 33). So is the case for an act *as* process, such as the avant-garde project or Solanas’s and Stridsberg’s hypertext. When we mention the failure of either the avant-garde, Solanas or Stridsberg, we speak in the past tense. But the process of inclusion (or also marginalization) that Solanas is undergoing in Ronell, Stridsberg, or Harding, as well as here *in this text*, shows that Solanas is not of the past. She is instead linking the past with the present in “order to fashion the future,” the primary goal of the avant-garde. (E San Juan 32).

“I imagine being there with Valerie,” says a voice on the first page of *The Dreamfaculy*, and it is as if she embraces Stridsberg’s entire project in this sentence: to be with Valerie. But being with Valerie also implies that Valerie is with someone, and

⁹⁷ Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

everything changes, “the desert of loneliness” (Stridsberg 2005: 57) is, as Thune has puts it, altered into togetherness and love (7).

Seeing Solanas’s project as failed implies that it is terminated, concluded and historical. Solanas exceeded the territories of humanity, femininity, writing, bringing about ruptures that are still taking place, still part of our lives. Solanas was human, a woman, a writer and a feminist –as well as embodying an otherness. Perhaps the real quest is not to incorporate otherness into the discourse of the human, to include the other into culture. Perhaps the question we need to ask is: What in the human is not human? What in the real is surreal? “Surrealism remains a vital aesthetic-political project today,” E. San Juan writes, for “the "surreal" is an immanent beyond, and its goal (in the words of Michel Beaujour) "a humanized nature and a naturalized man," conversing together in exalting clarity (40). Valerie Solanas lingers on, and will continue to linger as long as she participates in the conversation between the human and its beyond.

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