

# Guide to the Erin Cramer: Feminists on SCUM tapes SC31

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Barnard Archives and Special Collections

3009 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

[archives@barnard.edu](mailto:archives@barnard.edu)

URL: <http://archives.barnard.edu/>

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## Summary Information

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| <b>Repository:</b>               | Barnard Archives and Special Collections                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Title:</b>                    | Erin Cramer: Feminists on SCUM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>ID:</b>                       | SC31                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>ID [aspace_uri]:</b>          | /repositories/2/resources/466                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Date:</b>                     | 1992                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Physical Description:</b>     | 948 Gigabytes One harddrive (948 GB in 51 files).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Physical Description:</b>     | 1 Linear Feet One record carton of 25 betacam tapes (transferred from Hi8).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Physical Location:</b>        | This collection is located in the Barnard Archives and Special Collections, Barnard Library. To use this collection, please contact the Barnard Archives and Special Collections at 212.854.4079 or archives@barnard.edu.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Language of the Material:</b> | English .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Abstract:</b>                 | This collection contains 25 interviews on videotape of feminists and artists who had a significant relationship to Valerie Solanas's shooting of Andy Warhol. The interviews were conducted by Erin Cramer and filmed by Mary Patierno. The interviewees include Ti-Grace Atkinson, Florynce "Flo" Kennedy, Ros Baxandall, Dana Densmore, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Vivian Gornick, Jill Johnston, Jeremiah Newton, and Ultra Violet. |

### Preferred Citation

Erin Cramer: Feminists on SCUM tapes, 1992; Box and Folder; Barnard Archives and Special Collections, Barnard Library, Barnard College.

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## Historical Background

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Erin Cramer is an Emmy-winning screenwriter and director from New York, based in London, who makes films in the documentary and fiction genres. Cramer is a graduate of Barnard College (class of '86), where she majored in Women's Studies with a concentration in Literary Theory.

In the early 1990s Cramer began collecting the SCUM tape interviews for a self-funded project, interviewing radical feminists and actors involved with artist Andy Warhol's studio space, The Factory, in New York City. The interviews all center around Valerie Solanas and her widely-publicized shooting of Warhol in 1968. Solanas was also known for her self-publishing of *SCUM Manifesto* (1967), wherein the author envisions a world without men. The acronym SCUM, Society for Cutting Up Men, is said to have been added by publisher Maurice Girodias and appeared on the first edition of the text. After Solanas's conviction for shooting Warhol in June 1968, she received psychiatric evaluation and was sentenced to the prison ward of Elmhurst Hospital. In that same month Girodias published *SCUM Manifesto* through the independent and controversial Olympia Press, cementing Solanas's image as a militant misandrist and feminist separatist, with many interpreting the work as satire, despite Solanas claiming the work to be sincere, and her never having identified with the feminist movement. The crime has since been mythologized and theorized upon in both the media and public memory, with depictions likening Solanas to fictional and real tragic idols, such as Medea, or the Unabomber (in Avital Ronell's introduction to *SCUM Manifesto*). Alternately, composer Pauline Oliveros has likened Solanas's fate and legacy in pop culture to that of Marilyn Monroe in her orchestral piece "To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe in recognition of their desperation" (1970).

The set of interviews conducted by Erin Cramer in the 1990s give voice to individuals who personally knew Solanas, understood her shooting of Warhol as a political act and came to her aid. Though many of these individuals have publicly spoken out in defense of Solanas on other platforms, the Cramer tapes likely represent the only video interviews on the topic. Speakers include: Florynce Kennedy, a lawyer and radical feminist who defended Solanas; Ti-Grace Atkinson, a feminist activist who had a complex personal relationship with Solanas; radical feminist activist Rosalyn Baxandall, who resonated with Solanas's militant tactics; Dana Densmore and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, founding members of Cell 16, a feminist separatist movement which drew inspiration from *SCUM Manifesto*; Vivian Gornick, a radical feminist writer who wrote an introduction to the second printing of *SCUM Manifesto*; Jill Johnston, a lesbian separatist activist and author; influential gay rights activist Jeremiah Newton, who knew Solanas from the downtown scene and edited *The Letters and Diaries of Candy Darling* (1992) which would go on to be the basis for the 1996 film *I Shot Andy Warhol*; and Ultra Violet, an actress in many of Warhol's films, including *I, a Man* (1967), on the set of which she met Solanas.

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## Collection Scope and Content Summary

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The collection consists of 25 videotapes, numbered 1-3 and 6-27. The interviews include both critical and sympathetic perspectives on Valerie Solanas and the shooting of Warhol, as well as the complex legacy of Solanas within the feminist movement. The interviews were conducted by Erin Cramer and filmed by Mary Patierno.

Cramer interviews several women involved in the radical feminist movement of the late 1960s who were not personally familiar with Solanas, but admired her as a militant figure in the movement, including Rosalyn Baxandall, Jill Johnston, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. The interviews allow for the women to voice their complex thoughts on Solanas as a symbol for the feminist movement. For example, in tape 13 Dunbar-Ortiz discusses that as a political prisoner Solanas held similar symbolic power for radical feminists as Huey Newton did for the Black Panther Party. At the same time, it was clear to her that Solanas was a "total individualistic anarchist" and would not be a suitable leader for the feminist movement.

The set of interviews also represents feminists who had more personal involvement and interactions with Solanas, including Ti-Grace Atkinson, Florynce Kennedy, Dana Denmore, and Vivian Gornick. These interviewees share the complex ways in which they related to Solanas. Prominently, Ti-Grace Atkinson discusses her turbulent relationship with Solanas in tape 3. Atkinson was one of the biggest proponents of Solanas's work and distributed manuscripts of *SCUM Manifesto* prior to its publication, despite Solanas directly stating her rejection of the feminist label.

Lastly, Cramer interviews Jeremiah Newton and Ultra Violet, two people who knew of Solanas through Andy Warhol's Factory. They contextualize Solanas's experience within wider patterns of exploitation that they saw perpetuated in the Factory. Newton shares memories of Solanas and relates them to his own experiences, such as being incarcerated at Elmhurst Hospital. He discusses Solanas's shooting of Warhol in the context of her poverty, having to sleep on rooftops, go hungry, and pursue sex work for survival.

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## Collection Arrangement

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The tapes retain the order that they were received in, organized by interviewee.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Access

The collection is currently closed to all researchers in accordance with an ongoing documentary film project based on the interview footage, *Civic-Minded Thrill-Seeking Responsible Females*, dir. Eric Cramer, prod. Alexandra Juhasz. The interview materials will become unrestricted in April 2026.

### Publication Rights

The copyright to the collection's materials is retained by Erin Cramer. Individuals utilizing the collection who wish to reproduce or publish any materials in this collection must obtain permissions from the copyright owner.

### Reproduction Restrictions

After the collection becomes unrestricted, the materials will be made available online.

### Acquisition Information

The collection was purchased from Erin Cramer in 2023. Prior to Barnard's acquisition of the collection, the materials were transferred from their original Hi8 to Beta SP, digitized, and transcribed. Alexandra Juhasz facilitated this process to test the legibility of the tapes for the very early stages of an ongoing documentary project. Cramer and Juhasz both facilitated the collection's transfer to Barnard Archives.

### Accruals

No accruals are expected.

### Processing History

Barnard in-house transcripts to the interviews were created by Anique Edwards, Lina Enfante, Eve Glazier, Adam Johnson, Zara Simba, and Carson Stachura. The collection was

processed and the finding aid written by Olivija Liepa in March, 2024. Finding aid adheres to descriptive rules prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Radical feminists
- Lesbianism
- Lesbian Separatism
- LGBTQ + sexual abuse
- Sadomasochism
- Violence
- Sex work
- Filmed interviews
- Psychiatric hospitals
- Attempted murder

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## Related Publications

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In the Fall 2023 semester, Barnard students used the collection's materials to create digital projects for the course Feminist Media Praxis (taught by Alexandra Juhasz). The URLs to the projects are available here:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240328121230/https://feministmedia.barnard.edu/>  
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/feminist-media-archive/index> <https://valerieslesbianherstoryarchive.cargo.site/>

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## Collection Inventory

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| Title/Description                                                   | Instances |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Tape 1: Interview with Ti-Grace Atkinson and Florynce Kennedy, 1992 |           |

## Scope and Content Summary

Ti-Grace Atkinson narrates how she got involved with Valerie Solanas due to her involvement with the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the emerging American east coast art scene in the 1960s. Atkinson and Flo Kennedy were friends because of their shared beliefs and activism, and they discuss the violence of sexism and the intersectional nature of the discrimination women artists faced. It was a coincidence that they both ended up advocating for Solanas despite her denying being a feminist. Atkinson's and Kennedy's commentary on radical feminism provides insight into the state of gender politics in the context of the art world. People and organizations mentioned include Andy Warhol; Maurice Girodias; Poets, Essayists, Novelists (PEN).

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Tape 2: Interview with Ti-Grace Atkinson and Florynce Kennedy, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Ti-Grace Atkinson describes her relationship to Valerie Solanas and the way it was received by NOW and Betty Friedan. Atkinson and Flo Kennedy discuss Solanas's relationship to SCUM and contextualise it in the women's rights movement. They also talk about Solanas's time in prison and her other works such as *Up Your Ass*. People and organizations mentioned include Andy Warhol; Maurice Girodias; Ultra Violet.

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Tape 3: Interview with Ti-Grace Atkinson, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Ti-Grace Atkinson tells the story of a birthday party she threw for Valerie Solanas with other radical feminists in attendance, and how there, Solanas rejected the feminist label. Atkinson details how this was the last time she saw Solanas, and how much of their interactions involved an S/M dynamic that Atkinson herself was not aware of. She discusses Solanas' mental state, and concludes with a discussion around violence in the women's movement. People mentioned include Shulamith Firestone; Ann Kurk; Cathy Sarachild; Maurice Girodias; Simone de Beauvoir; Flo Kennedy; Susan Saxe.

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Tape 6: Interview with Ti-Grace Atkinson, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Ti-Grace Atkinson assesses her view of the *SCUM Manifesto's* influence, concluding that it had a cultural, not political, impact. Atkinson speaks about her knowledge of the Warhol scene and Solanas's



relationships with friends and family. People mentioned include Andy Warhol; Roxanne Dunsbar-Ortiz; Maurice Girodias; Ultra Violet.

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Tape 7: Interview with Ros Baxandall, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Rosalyn Baxandall describes the activities of the women's activist groups she was involved in throughout 1968, namely New York Radical Women and WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell). Baxandall discusses media coverage of the demonstrations she participated in and talks about her perception of men as the enemy within the feminist groups to which she belonged. Baxandall explains her interest in *SCUM Manifesto* and the resonance she felt with Solanas's use of direct action, comparing her approaches to feminism with those of Solanas. Additional key concepts include the anti-war movement, civil rights, and violence as strategy in the women's movement. People mentioned include Kate Millett; Andy Warhol; Shulamith Firestone.

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Tape 8: Interview with Ros Baxandall, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Rosalyn Baxandall answers theoretical questions about *SCUM Manifesto*, particularly around a feminist anti-sex critique, and speaks to the role of daring acts in movement-building using the *Manifesto* and the shooting of Andy Warhol as examples. People mentioned include Roxanne Dunsbar; Bob Gottlieb; Shulamith Firestone.

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Tape 9: Interview with Ros Baxandall and Dana Densmore, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Rosalyn Baxandall briefly reflects on when she found out that Valerie Solanas had shot Andy Warhol, and talks about the actions she participated in as a member of WITCH and New York Radical Women. Dana Densmore begins her section of the interview by detailing where she was in '68, and speaks about how she first heard of Solanas. Densmore provides her analysis on *SCUM Manifesto's* call to eliminate men, and responds to Cramer's question on Solanas's mental state. People and organizations mentioned include Women's Strike for Peace; Abbie Hoffman; Boston Draft Resistance Group; Ti-Grace Atkinson.

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Tape 10: Interview with Dana Densmore, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Dana Densmore reflects on her understanding of the *SCUM Manifesto* and the implications it had on feminism during the 1960s-1970s. Densmore explains the difference between what Solanas refers to as the 'daddy's girl' and the SCUM woman, details the reception to the Manifesto at feminist conferences she attended, and describes the feminist initiatives Cell 16, which she was involved with, took on. People and organizations mentioned include Roxanne Dunbar; Ti-Grace Atkinson; Cell 16.

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Tape 11: Interview with Dana Densmore, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Dana Densmore unpacks her comparison of Solanas to the Greek heroine Medea, and close-reads the *Manifesto* to concur with its assessment of women's influence on men within a patriarchal society. Densmore concludes the tape by providing her input on the relationship between mental health and feminism. People and organizations mentioned include Shulamith Firestone; Cell 16.

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Tape 12: Interview with Dana Densmore and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Dana Densmore speaks about feminist burnout, and Valerie Solanas's relevancy in a possible feminist resurgence. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz joins in on a conversation around Solanas's capacity to truly kill men and the state of politics in light of the Supreme Court. Dunbar-Ortiz reads a favorite excerpt from *SCUM Manifesto* and explains her inclinations towards that passage. People and organizations mentioned include Cell 16; Simone de Beauvoir; Robyn Morgan.

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Tape 13: Interview with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz describes her whereabouts and activities during 1968 and her efforts towards movement-building. Eventually ending up in Boston, Dunbar-Ortiz discusses the formation of her own women's group, Cell 16, and their study of the *SCUM Manifesto*. She responds to a question about Valerie Solanas's pro-celibacy stance and her sexual orientation. People and organizations mentioned include Simone de Beauvoir; Black Panthers and Huey Newton; Martin Luther King Jr.; Boston/New England Draft Resistance Group (BDRG); Daughters of Bilitis; Fidel Castro; Che Guevarra; John F. Kennedy; Flo Kennedy; Ti-Grace

Atkinson; Huey Newtown; Andy Warhol; Rox Baxandall;  
Cell 16.

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Tape 14: Interview with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz responds to a question about the relationship between celibacy and sensuality and whether or not pursuing relationships with women was a feasible alternative within Cell 16's feminist framework. She talks about the criticisms she received as an organizer, and life in the public eye as a kind of celebrity activist. Dunbar-Ortiz also gives her perspective on Andy Warhol, her feelings and thinking around the shooting. The tape concludes with Dunbar-Ortiz providing a physical description of Valerie Solanas. People and organizations mentioned include Flo Kennedy; Norman O'Brown; Anita Hill; Harvey Milk; Rita Mae Brown; Daughters of Bilitis; Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); Abby Rockefeller; Malcolm X.

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Tape 15: Interview with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz gives her retelling of a controversial Cell 16 demonstration, a performance where women cut their hair on-stage. She discusses her relationship with National Organization of Women (NOW) organizers in relation to Cell 16's support of Valerie Solanas, and speaks about the manifesto's omission of race in its analysis. People and organizations mentioned include Dana Densmore; Cell 16; Betty Friedan; Ti-Grace Atkinson; Simone de Beauvoir; Che Guevara; Lolita LeBron.

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Tape 16: Interview with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Vivian Gornick, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz concludes her interview, with the majority of tape featuring Vivian Gornick as she recounts her initial reaction to *SCUM Manifesto* and provides her feminist analysis of the text. Gornick responds to a question about the efficacy of reducing the male to his biological nature rather than critiquing male behavior. People mentioned include Betty Friedan; Ti-Grace Atkinson; Myrna Lamb; Susan Brownmiller; Shulie Firestone; Kate Millett.

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Tape 17: Interview with Vivian Gornick, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Vivian Gornick discusses how her writing applies to Valerie Solanas, additionally giving insight into the interactions the two shared and speculating on Solanas's possible motives for shooting Andy Warhol. She examines Solanas's actions as praxis, noting a generational divide in finding humor in the *SCUM Manifesto*. The interview concludes with Gornick examining prominent figures in feminism and reading an excerpt from the *SCUM Manifesto*. People mentioned include Maurice Girodias; Robin Morgan; Ti-Grace Atkinson; Myrna Lamb; Susan Brownmiller; Alice Paul; Carrie Chapman Catt; Betty Friedan.

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Tape 18: Interview with Vivian Gornick and Jill Johnston, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Vivian Gornick reads from the *SCUM Manifesto* and explains the significance of the manifesto format during the 70s. Gornick assesses the shooting of Andy Warhol in relation to WITCH and Youth International Party ("yippie") actions of the time. Jill Johnston begins by providing a description of herself during the 1970s, discusses female rage during that period, and traces this account back to pre-70s conditions for women in New York. She comments on her previous writing on Valerie Solanas. People mentioned include Maxwell Bodenheim; Margaret Atwood.

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Tape 19: Interview with Jill Johnston, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Jill Johnston reflects on the lesbian feminist circles that she was a part of, and how Solanas's radical ideology fit within those frameworks. Erin Cramer asks Johnston about SCUM in relation to Johnston's writing and definition of woman. Johnston reflects on her relationship to Warhol as an art critic and an actress in his films. She reflects on Solanas's shooting of Warhol as a political act. People mentioned include Betty Friedan; Andy Warhol; Ultra Violet.

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Tape 20: Interview with Jill Johnston, 1992

## Scope and Content Summary

Jill Johnston discusses Valerie Solanas's shooting of Andy Warhol within the context of cultural terrorism, noting her own views on violence as political strategy. She discusses an interaction that she had with Solanas and elaborates on the circumstances surrounding Solanas's mental state. Johnston states that Solanas was a vital figure within radical feminist thought. The

interview concludes as Johnston assesses the role of humor in political strategy. People mentioned include Robin Morgan; Florynce Kennedy; Norman Mailer.

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Tape 21: Interview with Florynce Kennedy, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Florynce Kennedy discusses how she first heard about Valerie Solanas. She expresses her thoughts about *SCUM Manifesto*, reading an excerpt from the document. People mentioned include Ti-Grace Atkinson.

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Tape 22: Interview with Florynce Kennedy, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Florynce Kennedy expresses her feelings about Valerie Solanas's significance to feminism. She discusses the role of violence in distinguishing the personal from the political, deeming it an appropriate response to acts of abuse. Kennedy concludes by reflecting on the experience of defending Solanas in court and the subsequent backlash received from NOW. People mentioned include Ti-Grace Atkinson; Roz Baxandall; Roxanne Dunbar; Maurice Girodias; Celestine Ware; Betty Friedan.

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Tape 23: Interview with Florynce Kennedy, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Florynce Kennedy reflects on the prejudicial treatment of women in court, particularly noting the prescription of psychiatric evaluation, using Valerie Solanas's case as an example. Kennedy further discusses Solanas and the *SCUM Manifesto* as influences within radical feminism, examining the role of violence in spurring societal reform. The interview concludes as she shares her opinion on Andy Warhol. People mentioned include Shulamith Firestone; Ti-Grace Atkinson; Maurice Girodias.

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Tape 24: Interview with Jeremiah Newton, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Jeremiah Newton talks about how he met Valerie Solanas while Solanas was staying at the Chelsea Hotel and reflects on the experience of auditioning for her play *Up Your Ass*. Newton discusses his interpretation of the *SCUM Manifesto* and of Solanas herself. He gives insight into Solanas's personal interactions and life experiences, noting locations where she had stayed following her release from prison. Solanas's experience on *The Alan Burke Show* is mentioned. The interview concludes as Newton retells a conversation in which

Valerie reenacted her shooting of Warhol to him. People mentioned include Maurice Girodias; Ti-Grace Atkinson.

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Tape 25: Interview with Jeremiah Newton, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Jeremiah Newton describes visiting Valerie Solanas at the psych ward unit at Elmhurst Hospital, where Valerie details the trial of Alice Crimmins. Newton provides further details on Solanas's life, particularly before her death. Newton discusses what he believes were Solanas's motives in her attempt to assassinate Andy Warhol. People and organizations mentioned include Alice Crimmins; Maurice Girodias; Gay Liberation Front; Candy Darling.

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Tape 26: Interview with Ultra Violet, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Ultra Violet describes the environment within Warhol's Factory and her observations in regards to the affect Warhol has on other people. Ultra Violet mentions that her relationship with Valerie Solanas began when they acted together in the film *I, a Man*. Ultra Violet discusses the research she did on Valerie Solanas for her book *Famous for 15 Minutes*. Ultra Violet details the conflicts and worries between Solanas and Warhol in producing Solanas's script for *Up Your Ass*. People mentioned include Andy Warhol; Maurice Girodias.

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Tape 27: Interview with Ultra Violet, 1992

### **Scope and Content Summary**

Ultra Violet details the shooting in the Factory and describes Andy Warhol and how his circle reacted to it. Ultra Violet expands on the way Warhol was impacted by the shooting psychologically and discusses how he viewed Solanas and other women. Ultra Violet also mentions her book on the New York art scene in the 1960s. She shares her personal views on Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* and the feminism. People mentioned include Andy Warhol; Viva; Maurice Girodias.