



Eat your Heart Out: the Life Work of Kathy Acker

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Eat your Heart Out: The Lifework of Kathy Acker

Come alive, dead heart, and sing.
Kathy ACKER, *In Memoriam to Identity*

This quote by the American writer Kathy Acker can be read as an incantation, a magic spell from beyond the grave, more than 20 years after her passing, just as it can resonate as a wake-up call from death to life, to art. However, this is a call first addressed to Acker herself, insofar as it defines two crucial techniques at the source of her work: the performative aspect of her writing (“sing”), and the body (represented here by its essential organ, the heart) as a space and means of experimentation in her textual practices¹. It can also be a wake-up call to her readers, who are encouraged to react to the provoking material they are presented with², and finally a call to the characters, created or borrowed, plagiarised, or parodied, who become animated and through which new stories come to life. Indeed, Acker’s address to a “dead heart” evokes all at once writer, reader and the text in their physicality, if not in their flesh.

This reinscription of the body in the work is, I will argue, Kathy Acker’s first and foremost act of resistance. Indeed, in *My Death my Life by Pier Paolo*

1. Activities such as body building, dreaming or masturbating became experimental writing tools. Acker defined and described some of her physical disciplines in numerous interviews and essays (see *Bodies of Works: Essays by Kathy Acker*) while she turned her own body into a space of political experimentation with aesthetics and identity through piercing and tattoos.

2. The number of reactions to Kathy Acker’s work, as their nature, is noteworthy. Indeed, readers’ responses are as diverse as they are extreme: although Kathy Acker’s work has been praised for its radical novelty, it has also been condemned for its violence, its anger and its obscenity. Indeed, numerous reviews and testimonies describe the discomfort of readers who are physically affected by the visceral content of the books, their disorienting disruption of narrative. Readers’ negative reactions range from rejection to nausea. One of the students interviewed in the beginning of the documentary *Who’s Afraid of Kathy Acker* recalls: “I felt physically sick,” while Ridenour describes the same experience, though in a more critical tone: “[...] revolting, repulsive, disgusting and otherwise offensive, and I left with a nauseous feeling” (review in *The Argonaut*, as cited by Nicole PERADOTTO in “Icono-clash: Visiting Writer shocks, disgusts some People with her books’ contents,” *The Lewiston Tribune Online*, October 7, 1994 <http://lmtribune.com/icono-clash-visiting-writer-shocks-disgusts-some-people-with-her/article_adcb6b58-7633-5678-b924-25363138042c.html> (accessed May 15 2019)).

Pasolini, Acker declares “The Body, the body, that which is present, which is the source of everything and has been made to disappear” (216). It is therefore this erasure she both aims at revealing and at resisting in her writing. This reanimated “beating and singing heart” then appears as a metaphor for the origin of an organic animation of text itself while reaffirming the physicality of both reader and writer. This image simultaneously engages distinct concepts and categories such as the body of course, but also the voice and the soul.¹ In doing so, it alludes to a variety of themes such as anatomy, emotions and feelings, the sensory and meaning, reading and writing, literature and magic. Thus evoking, at the same time, the realm of emotions and of sensory experience, the image of the heart considers their interactions and blurs their very boundaries, including, in a tour de force comparable to that of Doctor Frankenstein, the one between life and death. A network of bodies thus appears, an organic cobweb woven by the Black Tarantula² herself and which this volume wishes to celebrate.

“Eat your Heart Out: the Lifework of Kathy Acker,” the very title of this issue, speaks volumes and offers numerous possible readings that exemplify the complexity of this network. Indeed, on the one hand, it can refer to an “Aching for Acker,” to quote Kathy Acker’s friend and artist Aline Mare³. It reflects an excessive longing, a pining for a writer who died too early and is missed by her friends as well as her collaborators, readers, fellow artists, scholars, and writers (the contributions in this volume bear witness to the fact that several of these writers claim her heritage). On the other hand, the title can also allude to the author’s provocative approach that did not lack a shrewd sense of humor pervading her novels⁴. Moreover, the second part of this title highlights the intricate, intimate bond of Acker’s life and her body of

1. As William Burroughs wrote in his blurb for Grove Press’s 1983 publication of *Great Expectations*, “Acker gives her work the power to mirror the reader’s soul.” This observation by Burroughs is confirmed and completed by one of the students interviewed in Barbara Casper’s documentary when she confesses she learnt a lot from reading her: “things [she] wanted to know and things [she] didn’t want to know about [herself].”

2. In her first novel, *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula by the Black Tarantula*, Kathy Acker incorporated a wide range of texts (*The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*; *Justine: Philosophy in the Bedroom* by the Marquis de Sade) to her own writing, offering a radical concept of text as bodies of works, or more precisely, to emphasize the effect of this practice, of bodies *at work*.

3. Aline Mare is an American visual and performing artist and an independent filmmaker who started her career in New York City in the mid-70s. Part of the Downtown scenes, she was active in the ABC No Rio Center, a collectively run arts organization on New York City’s Lower East Side. She is the visual artist behind the picture used on the front cover whose heart-shaped, sewn-up organ echoes the opening quote. The work, entitled “Bloody Glove” (2018), was featured in Mare’s collection *Requiem: Aching for Acker* reproduced in this issue of *Profils américains*. Through the collection, she opened a dialogue between her own visual work and “Requiem,” excerpted from *Eurydice in the Underworld* (1997), Kathy Acker’s last published work. Her use of one of Kathy Acker’s MC gloves in the piece challenges further the boundaries between life and art, materializing her presence as her absence.

4. “Eat your Heart out, _____” could then leave a space to be filled irreverently with the names of white males from the canon and thus illustrate a quote from *Don Quixote: which was a dream*: “BEING BORN INTO AND PART OF A MALE WORLD, SHE HAD NO SPEECH OF HER OWN. ALL SHE COULD READ WERE MALE TEXTS THAT WEREN’T HERS” (83).

works. This indivisibility is materialized in the word “lifework” which stands for Acker’s dedication as well as her refusal of a limit between theory and praxis, literature, arts and politics, work, and life.

One may wonder, though, with Ralph Clare in his 2018 review of the new edition of *Blood and Guts in High School* for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*: “Why Kathy Acker now?” Indeed, what makes Kathy Acker’s work so very relevant today both artistically and politically? Through the 1970s to the 1990s, she’s been called an avant-garde experimentalist, a punk poet, a revolutionary pirate, a literary terrorist even, each label highlighting the radical politics at the core of her work. Kathy Acker’s work was then brand new, fresh and transgressive, especially for a woman in experimental fiction, as Ira Silverberg recalls in the documentary *Who’s Afraid of Kathy Acker?* Indeed, she questioned and challenged all forms of established power and authority: from patriarchal power, colonialism and neoliberalism, to the very notions of authorship and ownership, to name but a few. Although these powers are still very much active today, the context is nevertheless quite different: an unstable, fluctuating concept of identity, autofiction and the disruption of narrative are now, if not common, at least accepted strategies in art and literature; postcolonial and queer studies are taught at university; LGBTIQ+ people have gained some rights and visibility, offering alternatives to the dominant white heterosexual male discourse Acker rebelled against.

Yet, not only is Kathy Acker still read, but articles, dissertations and books about her work are being written, biographies¹ and posthumous books² published, symposiums, events and exhibitions³ set up. Besides, the variety of contributors to this volume of *Profils américains* also proves the importance of her legacy. It is apparent amongst writers, including those here, just as it resonates in the art world and in academia. Indeed, as McKenzie Wark noted in his review of the writer’s first solo exhibition “Get Rid of Meaning,” published

1. Chris Kraus’s *After Kathy Acker* and Martin Douglas’s *Acker* were published in 2017 while Jason McBride’s biography is forthcoming from Columbia University Press.

2. Previously unpublished material, *Homage to Leroy Jones and Other Early Works* (edited by Gabrielle KAPPES), and *I’m Very Into You Correspondence 1995-1996*, Kathy Acker’s correspondence with McKenzie Wark were published in 2015, while *Kathy Acker 1971-1975* (edited by Claire FINCH and Justin GAJOUX) was published in 2019. Both *Rip-off Red Girl Detective and the Burning Bombing of America the Destruction of the Us* and *Essential Acker: The Selected Writings of Kathy Acker* were published in 2002. More recently, a corrected version of *Blood and Guts in High School* was published (the last two sections were mistakenly printed in reverse order in earlier publications) and so was *Kathy Acker: The Last Interview and Other Conversations* (2019).

3. Although very few events were reported since *Lust for Life: The Writings of Kathy Acker*, the 2002 symposium held at the University of New York, several major exhibits and events have taken place in recent years: *Get Rid of Meaning*, Acker’s first solo exhibition and symposium were held in Karlsruhe, Germany in November 2018 while 7 months before, Sarah Schulman organized a marathon reading of Kathy Acker’s *Blood and Guts in High School* at Performance Space New York, bringing together many of Acker’s peers, friends, and mentees; in 2019, *I,I,I,I,I,I,I,I*, *Kathy Acker* was hosted by ICA in London and the exhibition and symposium *Kathy Acker in Seattle, 1989* discussed the lasting legacy of Acker’s 1989 CoCA residency. Finally, the Kathy Acker Reading Room is the personal library of Kathy Acker as gifted to the English Department of the University of Cologne by Matias Viegner in 2015.

in the February 2019 issue of *The Brooklyn Rail*: “There’s some strange margin of the literary world where queers, punks, riot girls and avant-gardists have found reasons to keep turning to her¹.” Indeed, coupled with the fact that her work is still highly confrontational and belongs to the contemporary avant-garde, there is both a legacy and a revival that show she also was a visionary. The power of her work lies in the techniques she exposed through her writing, and the experiments she carried out. Her radical thinking, along with her strategies have opened up inspirational spaces of empowerment for writers and artists who appropriate her work. They can find in her the tools and strategies to respond to, resist and oppose the numerous backlashes, the pervasive neoliberalism, the national retrenchment that characterize our contemporary reality.

This volume of *Profilis américains* aims at mapping bodies and voices, through time and space, texts and contexts to explore Kathy Acker’s lifework. The contributions of which it is comprised, whether they are academic or creative responses to her work, often defy these very categories, make them porous, in a very *Ackerian* way. I am following in the footsteps of the volume’s contributors by adopting a thematic approach for the rest of this introduction. I thus hope to provide some biographical, contextual as well as theoretical elements that will help the reader navigate through the works, walk through the mirror and wander in this Acker-inspired organic labyrinth.

From the Upper to the Lower East side: The Birth of a Poet²

Until the recent publication of Chris Kraus’s *After Kathy Acker*, Kathy Acker’s biography was limited to the information she gave in interviews, to what seeped through via recurring motifs in her books (her father’s departure, her step-father’s abuse, her mother’s rejection) or the mixing of her life and the books she appropriated. This information revealed as much a feeling of rejection, a rebellious spirit, as it served the deconstruction of traditional values, the demise of oppressive powers and domination, and the creation of fables, of a self-made mythology. Kathy Acker thus represented an unstable, fluctuating identity that opened up narrative possibilities, mythologies, rather than set truths. For her, legend and writings were entangled in mythologies, created mostly by Acker herself. Her use of the outcast (pirates, gang members, cyborgs, punk), her fascination for writers such as Arthur Rimbaud, Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet and William Burroughs also played a part in her myth-creating and showed the rebel she ever was, a rebel with an enduring fascination with art.

1. “Kathy Acker: Get Rid of Meaning,” McKenzie WARK’s review of the show was published in *The Brooklyn Rail* in February 2019. <https://brooklynrail.org/2019/02/artseen/Kathy-Acker-Get-Rid-of-Meaning> (accessed 15 March 2019).

2. *The Birth of a Poet, an Opera* was a work conceived by Kathy Acker and the playwright and director Richard Foreman. The composer Peter Gordon and the painter David Salle also collaborated to the project.

As a teenager, she regularly left the comfort of the Upper East Side to meet artists in Lower Manhattan. There, she was introduced to experimental cinema, FLUXUS and the works of the Black Mountain Poets. As a poet first, then as a writer of experimental fiction, Kathy Acker's work is also closely related to American counterculture. In addition to Allen Ginsberg, Kathy Acker cites Jack Kerouac and especially William Burroughs as influences. The latter's use of cut-ups/cut-ins as ways of radically experimenting with language and narrative, his interest in marginals and outlaws or in dreams were all relevant in Acker's development as a writer. Indeed, her playful plagiarism and appropriation of texts represented a stance against control, the rigidity of meaning, and allowed meaning, as identity, to fluctuate and flow.

In his essay for this volume, "In Memoriam to Kathy Acker's Biography," Douglas Martin puts this strategy into practice and takes us through a literary and loosely biographical journey that includes his own response as a scholar *cum* writer. His text turns into a knife cutting through texts and documents belonging to Kathy Acker's life and writings, and more specifically, her work on Arthur Rimbaud's life, also discussed in Chris Kraus's biography. Douglas Martin thus multiplies mirrors and mythologies.

Ellen Friedman chooses to concentrate on Kathy Acker's ethnical background. Indeed, she shows that being a Jewish woman writer is central to Acker's authorial position. Using the transnational image of the Jew wandering through Western culture, she considers exile and the status of the Outsider (whether it is Acker or her characters) as agents of radical change. Identity is thus formed from a collection of disruptive voices, of fragments in movement, of forms of flux: the personal is thus political in its plurality.

New York, 1979

Kathy Acker is part of a tradition of literary radicals and rebels of the 20th-century avant-garde that emerged in the counterculture and was continued in the punk culture. As she explains to Melvyn Bragg in 1984, her introduction to punk was groundbreaking: "I always felt like a freak and then suddenly other people felt the same way. It was this ability to combine art with the circumstances of life. Before, art was on a white pedestal in an ivory tower and though I love art, I couldn't bear it" (*The Southbank Show*). All of a sudden, the voices of those fallen through the cracks of the New York below (to paraphrase Neil Gaiman's 2005 introduction to *Neverwhere*) were heard, life and art were no longer apart. Margaret Henderson's recent book *Kathy Acker Punk Writer* confirms the deep impact of punk aesthetics and philosophy on Kathy Acker. The author embraced punk enthusiastically: its irreverent shock tactics, its gutter trash art, its Dada-inspired experiments and performance, its sense of humor.

Although they do not directly mention punk, three contributions to this collection refer to Kathy Acker in New York City in the 70s and the 80s. In that way, they capture the ethos of the time and reveal the broad impact

of punk: the DIY philosophy, the anti-establishment spontaneity. All three are testimonies of life in the Lower East Side, each author providing their personal tribute to Kathy Acker: Catherine Texier's "Acker's Gift" deals with the influence Kathy Acker had on her own writing and gives us an insider's glimpse on the NYC literary and art scene of the period. In her essay "My film *Variety* and working with Kathy Acker," Bette Gordon recalls her collaboration with Kathy Acker on *Variety*, the film she wrote and directed in 1983. In doing so, she also provides a reflection on the male gaze and its subversion that is central to Acker's work. Finally, the interview with Sarah Shulman takes us through the LES art scene from the 80s until now, in the wake of Kathy Acker. These three contributions provide us with experiences of the context that saw Kathy Acker emerge as an author.

Literal Madness, Theories at Work

The more formally academic articles collected here position Kathy Acker as a queer feminist practitioner, thus confirming the central role of the body in her work as a space of friction and of opposition, of both control and power. Acker's practices then appear in their radical, revolutionary light.

Spencer Dew, in his essay "I was kind of conscious,' Queering the Neo-Liberal Body," presents Acker as a queer avant-gardist who deconstructs the body to reveal the pervasive colonizing trait of capitalism. He shows how bodybuilding becomes, in Kathy Acker's work, a language game to expose, disrupt and subvert oppressive powers at play. Dew thus analyses Acker's queering strategies aimed at the denaturalization, and the de-mystification of both body and language. He offers a mapping of Acker's tactical games of political resistance.

Both Georgina Colby and Claire Finch confirm the indivisibility of politics and arts by exploring Acker's early writings (published and unpublished). Colby considers literary experimentation as radical political activism and feminist practice. She reflects in terms of feminist solidarity, of flux, while Claire Finch concentrates on literary history, theory and feminist practice. Finch analyses the genesis of Acker, the woman queer avant-garde writer, the *cuntemporany* writer.

Sharing his expertise of the content of the Kathy Acker Reading Room, Daniel Schulz creates a dialogue between published works, Acker's reading and her annotations in her own library. He unveils Acker's experimentations in their process and follows her reading of Georges Bataille, Judith Butler, and of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Found There*, through a game of mirrors and labyrinths. Caroline Bergvall invites us on a different journey by considering the status of the alien, of the foreigner and of the outsider in Acker's texts. She shows how Acker transcends gender as well as meaning by using "bad language" or foreign languages that are not translated in order to disrupt understanding and to "defamiliarize" language.

These contributions portray Kathy Acker as a postmodernist, a feminist, a queer thinker and writer while not reducing her to any of these labels. On the contrary, they reveal what these theoretical perspectives have in common: the understanding of the body as a space of subversion of the symbolic by deterritorialisation¹ and nomadic subjectivity.

Dream, delirium, disease . . . death

Four of the texts compiled in this volume retrace very personal experiences of Kathy Acker and her work. They nevertheless offer some inspiring entries into the texts. Karolin Meunier, in “Legible (Dreams)” shares her own physical and emotional experience of the Kathy Acker Reading room as well as the collaborative work and reflection that derived from it. Her collaboration with Kerstin Stakemeier offers possible framings of Acker’s creative process, deconstructing and reconstructing Acker’s reading from the notes in her books. In “Theory of Prophecy: On Acker and Dreams,” Teresa Carmody offers a (tarot) reading of personal stories and objects that are lost and found. She sheds a light on the permeability of life, reading and writing, the role of coincidence and the reading of signs in our attempt to make sense especially through disease and death. Aline Mare provides us with a visual interpretation, or rather an appropriation of Acker’s strategies and material (a text, a glove). “Requiem: Aching for Acker” is both a tribute and a mourning, an embracing of and resisting to death through creation. Finally, in these selected excerpts from his text *The Assassination of Kathy Acker*, Matias Viegner, Kathy Acker’s executive agent and friend, shares his memories of Kathy Acker’s death and a reflexion on the life of the work after the death of the artist.

This volume, drawing on theory and practice, analysis and creation aims to offer various prisms through which to read Kathy Acker’s work. They encompass different sensibilities, theories and possible readings simultaneously. The contributions assembled in this volume set out to create a dynamic interaction, forming a collective soulful network with a kaleidoscopic view. They make up a matrix without a fixed structure resulting in a cross-media fertilization, moved as much by theory as by desire and pleasure, that keeps the work and the heart alive, beating and singing. As Chris Kraus noted in her 2017 article for *The Guardian*, Kathy Acker’s essential aim was “trying to find a language that would contain all of life’s contradiction.” This collection of critical essays confirms Kathy Acker’s essential paradox: language and body as both sites of control and of liberation.

1. Both defamiliarization and deterritorialisation are key concepts for Acker. The Russian Formalist Viktor Shlovsky coined the concept of *ostranenie* (subsequently translated as “defamiliarization”) in his 1917 essay “Art as Technique”, while Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri described deterritorialization in *L’Anti-Oedipe* (1972).

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A Letter to Kathy Acker

New York City in 2018¹

Dear Kathy,

You're right, parents stink! High school? Blood and guts, bruises and screams—loud or mute. In the classrooms, the hallways, the restrooms, this cell or anywhere else the same violence is ordered, organized. It is barely covered by the figures of the so-called economic recovery, hidden like the corpses, the homeless bodies silenced and made invisible, pushed around, bullied by gentrification. Vanished from The Bowery, kicked out from the squats of Alphabet City. Ghosts hunted down, ghosts whose very tracks must be erased from memory. The rot? the filth? the garbage? Carefully covered as perfume over scars that will not heal. Varnish to polish and police, but no one buys it—not really.

Johnny stinks too. He's eaten alive by his repressed violence; the violence of the father he refuses to be. He doesn't get it. He doesn't get shit. Pretends he knows it all, though. Pretends not to see either, suffering from this general hypocrisy crisis, too. In Merida, as in New York, he acts ignorant, plays dead, acts like a child, talking about token feelings like a robot, like the zombie he is. What he calls society is in fact a world created by men for men. Squared territories drawn against the possibilities of space. Under surveillance. He watches. Stands guard. Cannibal among the cannibals. "Rebellion is useless," "there is no such thing as the Revolution" as he forces his language down my throat, hands tight on the back on my neck. "My law is order, bitch!" The carnival has left the city, been banned from these streets.

He won't stand bail for me. I'm gonna rot away between these walls.

Johnny. A so-called intellectual. Trimmed beard, empty look. One in a million. Duplicated. He keeps talking, says nothing. Sees nothing. He dreams of

1. A first version of this text was published in French in the Canadian online academic journal *Musemedusa*, in a volume dedicated to Dibutades ("Dibutades: the Origin of Creation"). Vol. 6, 2018. http://musemedusa.com/dossier_6/rauzier (accessed January 2020).

raping his mother and doesn't have the guts to kill his father. He pretends he's in love with Sally because he wishes he didn't want to fuck me anymore. He hates his desire in me. Denies mine. He hates his rape drive, his own violence, mirrored in my tears. He is terrorized and turns me into his terrorist. I'm best locked up, « for my own good ». Johnny-the-good-citizen, that's a good one! He's invented a new mission for himself: save society from its terrible truths. See no evil. Speak no evil. Any part will do, as long as he doesn't have to play that of a father. He can't tell paternity from paternalism.

You're right, these walls or others, what difference does it make? I am always locked up. Walled in words that lie, reduced to whispers. I look for my rights in your writing, Kathy. I find them. I must be mad. I am mad. Madness: the only possible means of resistance. Survival strategy. I do not recognize myself. I am unrecognizable. I is not ME, whether the definitions are written by psychoanalytical theories or the Other's SHE. I is always another. I have written my names in blood and shit on the walls of this hell. Hell, I yell, my tongue up against the wall. HELP. My words a breach that free the sound from its letter and in this breath a certainty: I will not be silenced. Disorder against orders. I am Janey. I am Genet, Pussy, Don Quixote. Gertrude. Virginia. Frida. I am Kathy.

Can you recognize me? 20 years later? 20 years already. 20 and what? How many Bushes and a Trump later? The Chelsea hotel has been walled in. It is to become a luxury hotel. The CBGB's is under glass. Punk turned into punk rock. Predictable, tasteless, insignificant. I hung around in the LES. 1st Ave, 5th Street. I saw Red. She was leading an investigation. Was after a possible plagiarist of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. I think she was looking for you, literally wandering, she stammered something about an old Mariner rhyming, about exploring the unthinkable, the impossible. She was trying to get rid of meaning.

I no longer manage to escape myself. I dream of explosion and come close to imploding. The whole machine is to be destroyed, a whole network to be revealed. I will not be intimidated. Silenced. I will not be sedated by the drugs they want me to take. A woken sleep, without dreams nor vision.

I will spit out the lies they want me to swallow. I will resist, body and voice, this Authority. I will not. I cannot. I . . .

My throat is tightened by the hand of power. Of progress. Of propaganda.
Slipknot.

A matter of time.

Before I choke. Exhaust myself.

Before the infection is systemic.

Before the Pain makes me numb.

Before desire runs dry.

Johnny's silence is deafening. Banging my head against the wall.

My access to books has been denied. Nothing left to mutilate, multiply. Flesh is now my only cut-up material, I'm writing my season in hell with it. From these tender buttons, the conclusion came when there was no arrangement. All the time that there was a question there was a decision. Replacing. Replacing a casual acquaintance. Replacing a casual acquaintance with an ordinary daughter. An ordinary daughter who never is. An ordinary daughter does not make a son. An ordinary daughter does not make the son Johnny dreams about. Dreams about recognizing himself in the mirror. Is this just a question of genitals, Johnny?

Your hand is leading mine, Kathy.

The black tarantula is coming for a visit. Anansi the joker, the trickster, the shape shifter, who weaves the stories by all possible and impossible means. It's coming for me now. Kathy, or Karen, what do I care? Soon many new Janey's are drawn on the walls, slide through the cracks, break free from the bricks.

These Janey's want the whole rotten world—and they want it now.

Janey

Bodies of Words, Written and Spoken: a Kathy Acker Bibliography and More

Providing a complete list of all the works, the words, spoken and written, published and unpublished, by Kathy Acker has proved to be a daunting task. Like her novels, Kathy Acker's bibliography feels organic, characterized by both fragmentation and fluctuation. Indeed, Acker revised, re-edited, recompiled her works. The texts echo one another, characters from older texts spring up here and there in layers of (auto-)cut ups, cut-ins that add to the appropriation of others' texts. This complex network can be disorienting for the curious reader. The picture becomes all the more complex if we take into account the videos of the performances as well as the collaborative works with other artists. The number of works devoted to her novels, her writing techniques and her style is so substantial, and the nature of these publications so diverse, from essays and reviews to fanzines, chronicles or gossip, that we have been obliged to be selective.

The first and most obvious choice was to abolish the divide between fiction and nonfiction. It is indeed irrelevant when referring to the work of an artist which not only simultaneously involves politics and literature, theory and practice but also strives to transgress and subvert boundaries of all kinds. Furthermore, we have decided to provide an exhaustive bibliography of Kathy Acker's published productions (for the unpublished works see Georgina's Colby's bibliography of *Writing the Impossible* and Justin Gajoux & Claire Finch's *Kathy Acker 1971-1975*) as well as book-length critical works and doctoral theses devoted to her art. Only a (relatively) small number of significant articles, interviews and essays (as well as those dealing partly with Kathy Acker's work) have been kept. Consulting articles and interviews in *BOMB Magazine* and *Artforum* will certainly prove an enlightening exploration and a good complement to this list. Likewise, only a few audio and video recordings are listed below but they should be relevant to further studies on Acker's actual performance. The recent Acker exhibitions as well as the symposiums also provide valuable resources for such investigations.

Contemporary research, art and events show a growing interest both in Acker's published and unpublished works. Acker is still read, her texts are

performed, her strategies and experiments can be read and seen at the core of other works, which proves that numerous artists and researchers are in conversation with Acker's work and her heritage, thus keeping her work alive, vibrant and exciting. This shows how much of a pioneer Acker was and how relevant her work still is today.

Published Works by Kathy Acker

Book

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