

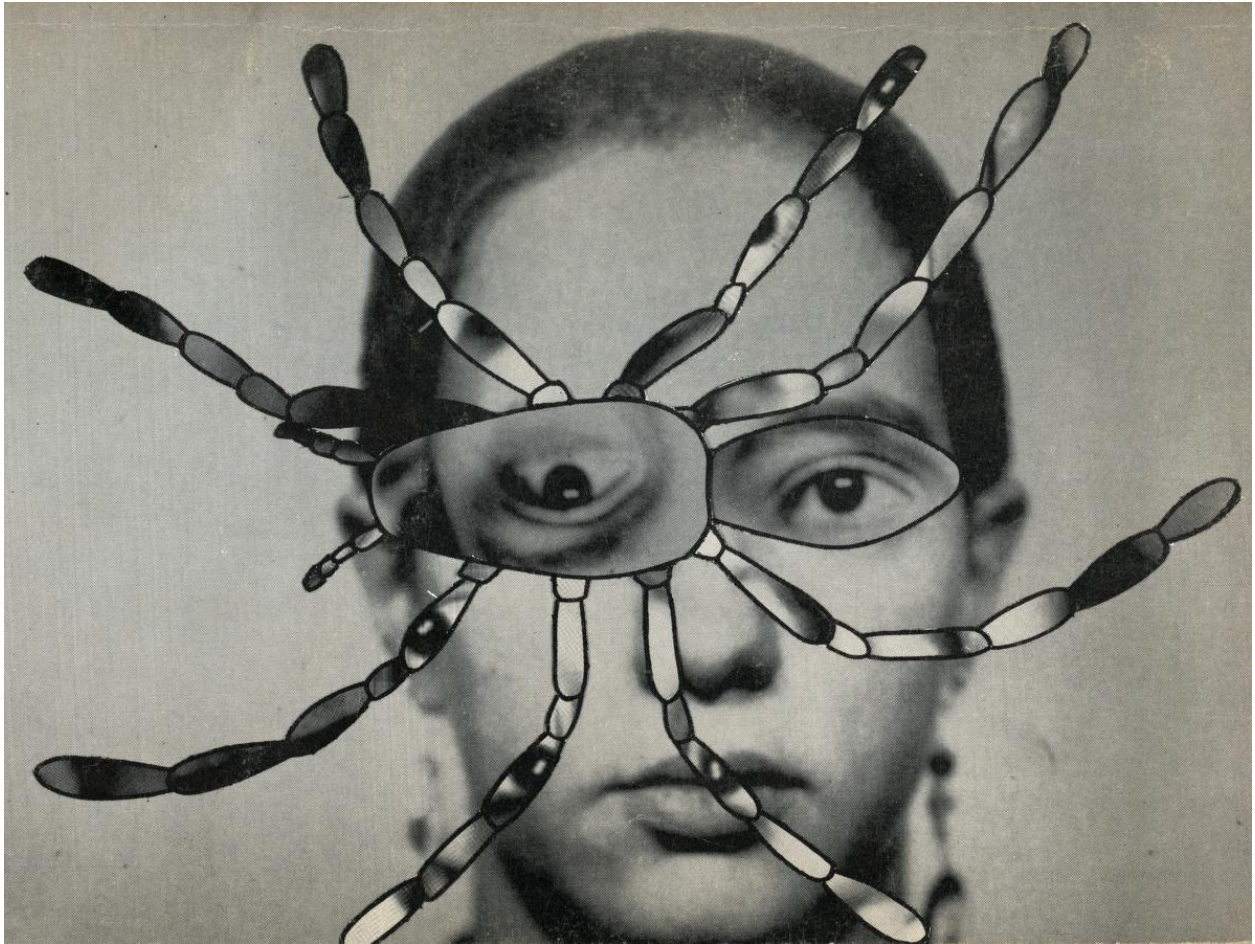
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The Kathy Acker Collection



From Jill Kroesen's cover of *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula*.
TVRT / Viper's Tongue Books, 1975.

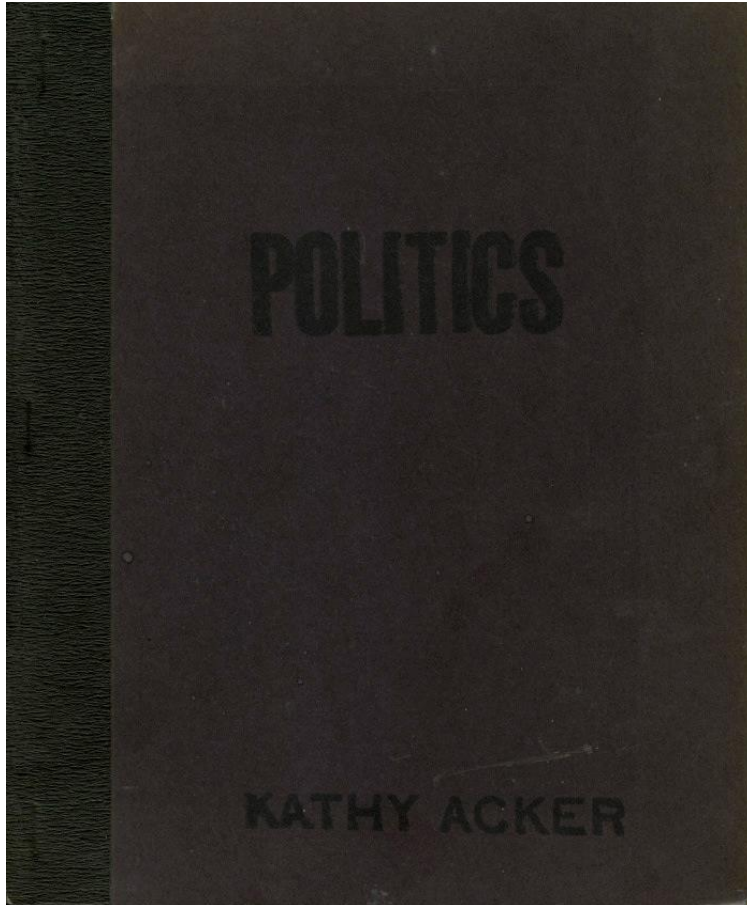
The jacket copy for Chris Krauss's *After Kathy Acker* describes her best:

“Rich girl, street punk, lost girl and icon ... scholar, stripper, victim and media-whore: The late Kathy Acker's legend and writings are wrapped in mythologies, created mostly by Acker herself.”

The collection comprises many rarities, including complete sets of her three serial novels (one with letters to Black Sparrow publisher John Martin); her very scarce first book, *Politics*, self-published in San Diego in 1972; an original manuscript for a never-published story, *Bondage & Discipline in New York City* (1976); a first edition of *Great Expectations* (Re/Search, 1982), as well as copies of nearly all of her published books, together with assorted ephemera.

Selected Highlights from the Collection

Unless noted otherwise, all quotes are from Chris Krauss's indispensable biography, *After Kathy Acker*, Semiotext(e), 2017.



Politics. Papyrus Press, 1972.

Acker's first book was created during her return to San Diego with Len Neufeld (July and August 1972) where she spent time with David and Eleanor Antin and Mel Freilicher. She extracted writings from her New York notebooks, mostly those that describe her experiences with Neufeld as a sex worker at Fun City in Times Square. "She describes the look and smell of the club and the people she met: pimps, junkies, whores, and gay party boys, with their stories about busts, jail, and prison." The text ends with "... a strident, declarative statement, a manifesto of what it's like to be twenty-three: *I'm sick of fucking not knowing who I am.*" Acker typed the text and arranged for the printing, possibly with help from David Antin. (pp. 64–65)

Kathy Goes to Haiti



Kathy Acker

Kathy Goes to Haiti. Rumour Publications, 1978. Wrappers, with drawings by Robert Kushner.

In 1976, Acker received a New York State CAPS (Creative Artists Project Service) grant, the only grant she ever received, in the amount of \$7,000. She visited Haiti in June of 1976 and began work on *Kathy Goes to Haiti* upon her return. She then met the artist Robert Kushner at his New York loft where he and his wife hosted a meditation group based on the teachings of Swami Muktananda. The book was finally published by Rumour Publications, an imprint founded by Judith Doyle for the express purpose of bringing out *Kathy Goes to Haiti*. Judith Doyle worked at A Space in Toronto and through her, Acker met Anne Turyn, who would later publish *New York City in 1979* in the *Top Stories* series.

THE CHILDLIKE LIFE OF THE BLACK TARANTULA #3
A Secret Document.

I move to San Francisco.
I begin to copy my favorite pornography books
and become the main person in each of them.

by The Black Tarantula
July 1973

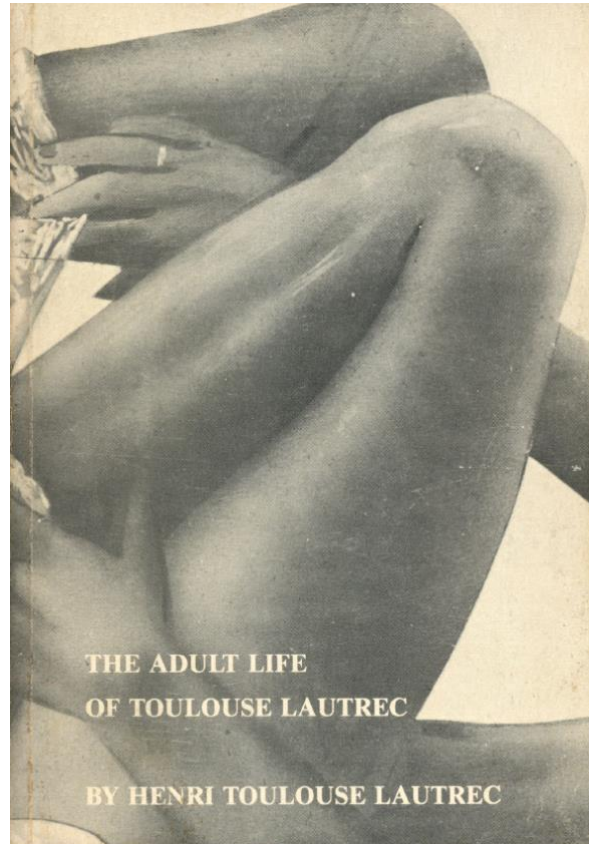
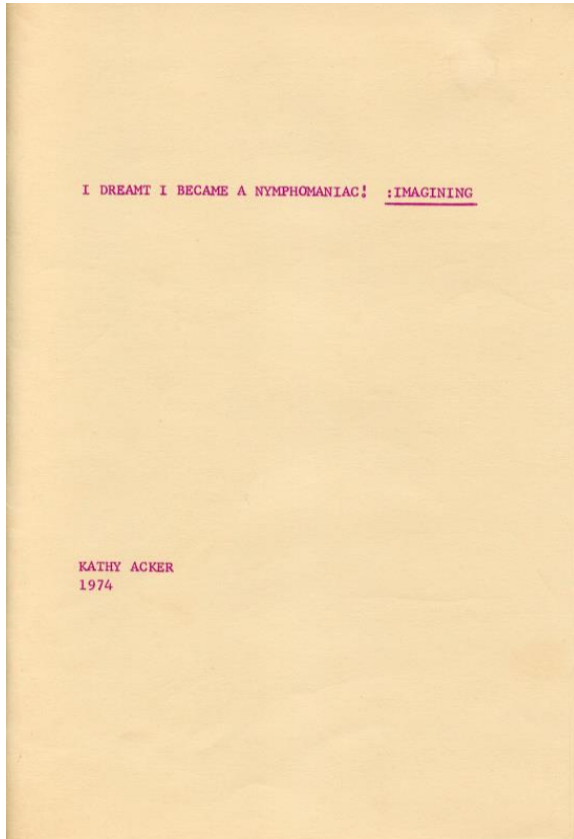
Some Lives of Murderesses, the first volume of *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula*, was composed in May 1973 during another return to San Diego. “Five years after attending David Antin’s poetry seminars, she’d discovered a way to use his compositional mandate—*go to the library, steal!*—for her own purposes.” (p. 80) *Some Lives* was sent from “The Black Tarantula” to the artists and poets on Eleanor Antin’s *100 Boots* mailing list. Subsequent pamphlets were sent from San Francisco where Acker and Peter Gordon moved in July. No. 3 is titled *I move to San Francisco. I begin to copy my favorite pornography books and become the main person in each of them*. “Everyone who mattered then *knew* that the Black Tarantula was a young woman named Kathy Acker. Then, just as now, rumor and hearsay were far more effective tools for advancing a nascent reputation than plastering one’s unwanted name all over the place.” (p. 83)

The letter to John Martin (from 46 Belvedere, San Francisco, 2 pp, TLS, approx. 220 words, June 26, 1973) reports “At the moment I’m becoming a young lesbian in a French boarding school; I’m throwing myself into the world of *Thérèse and Isabelle* [by

The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula #3: A Secret Document. I move to San Francisco. I begin to copy my

favorite pornography books and become the main person in each of them. 1973. Complete set of six saddle-stitched pamphlets with ALS and TLS from Kathy Acker to Black Sparrow Press publisher John Martin. See checklist below for details.

Violette Leduc]: all this writing in connection with my reading everything I can get hold of about R.D. Laing's work, Kingsley Hall, and the language of schizophrenics. (Fiction as an exercise in controlled schizophrenia.)”

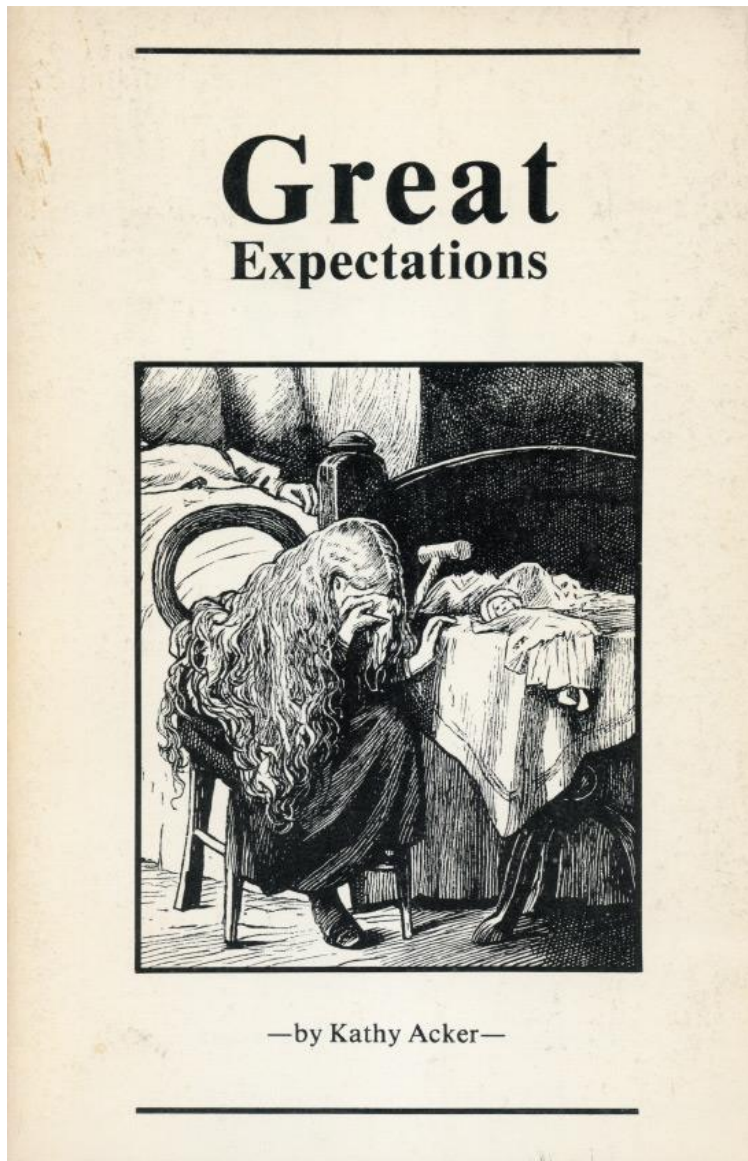


I Dreamt I Became a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining. 1974.

The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec. TVRT Press and Printed Matter, 1978. Wrappers. Drawings by William Wegman. Inscribed by Kathy Acker.

The collection includes complete sets of both titles, each issued in six saddle-stitched pamphlets. See checklist below for details.

As with *The Childlike Life*, *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining* was completely self-produced. The first issue bears the imprint of the Empty Elevator Shaft Poetry Press, a small press and magazine active in San Francisco during the seventies. The sixth volume acknowledges musicmusic corporation: San Francisco. The six parts of *The Childlike Life* were published in a single volume edition by TVRT / Viper's Tongue Books, a New York small press run by Ted Castle and Leandro Katz. (TVRT is The Vanishing Rotating Triangle). According to Krauss, TVRT published the six parts comprising *The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec* as well as the single-volume edition with cover and drawings by William Wegman (above right).

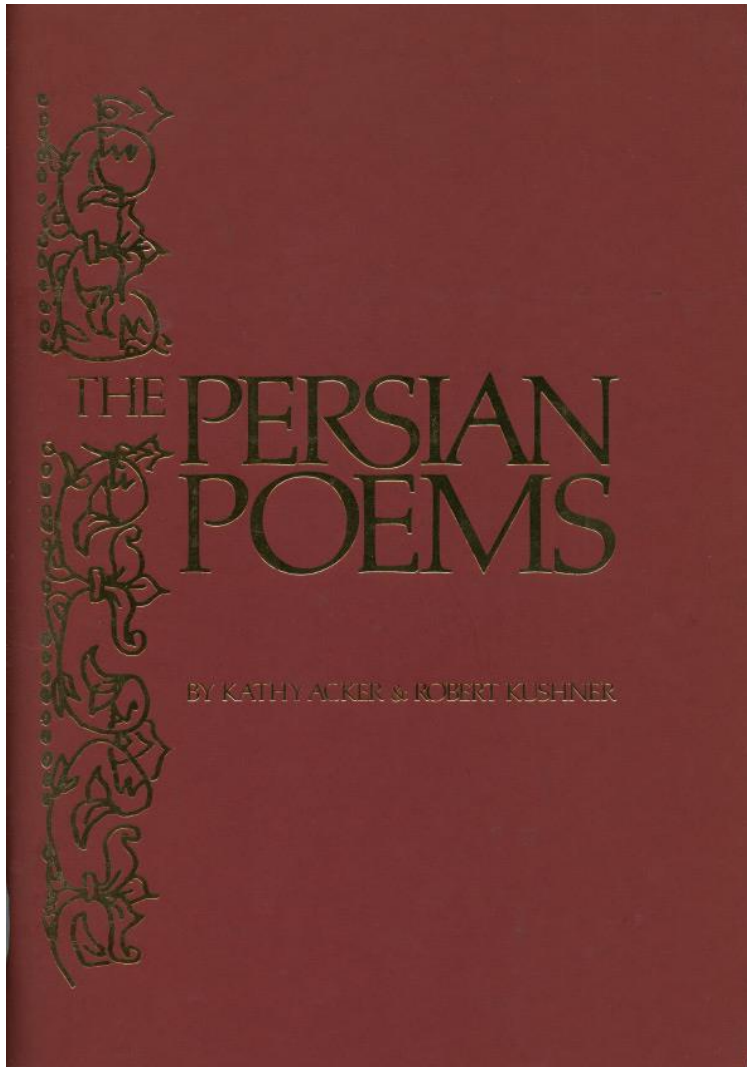


Great Expectations. Re/Search, 1982. Wrappers.

Acker had been working on *Great Expectations* since late 1979 or early 1980 and used the occasion of the publication party for *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac Imagining* (Traveler's Digest, 1980) to showcase the work as a performance at the Kitchen, with visuals by Diego Cortez. Or perhaps more likely she used the performance of *Great Expectations* as an occasion to launch *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac Imagining*. In any case, this was the third and last of her serialized novels to be gathered together and published as a whole. *Great Expectations* was published by Re/Search and produced in an edition of 300 copies in 1981. Due to dissatisfaction with the printing and binding of the Re/Search first edition, *Great Expectations* was reprinted by Open Book / Station Hill in 1982.'

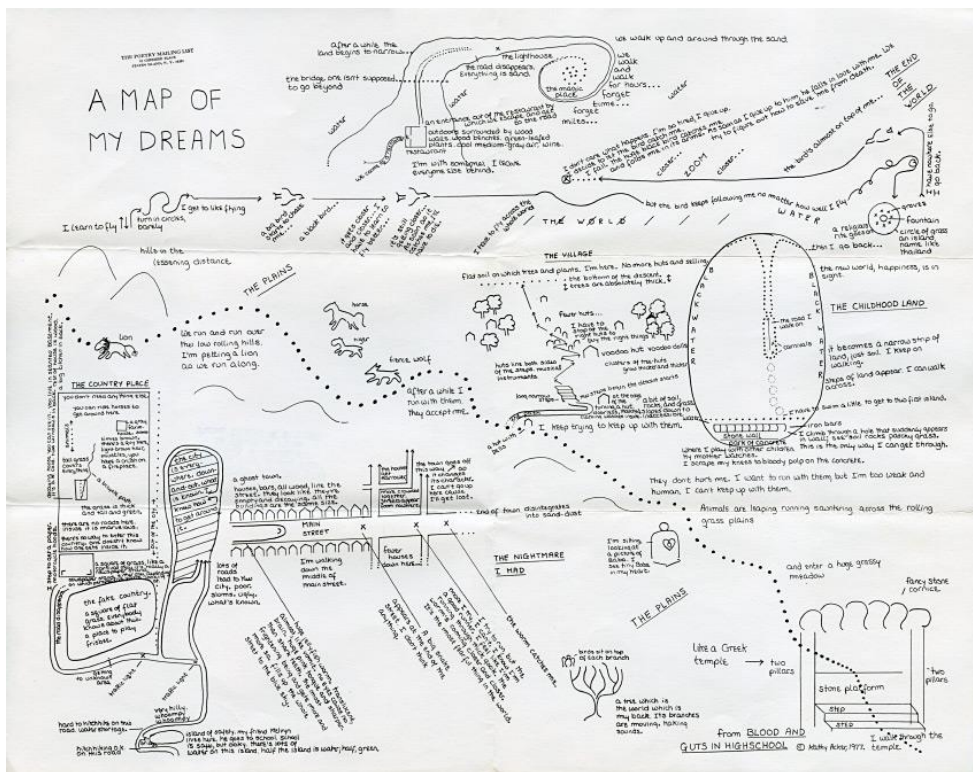


Great Expectations: A Performance. Visuals by Diego Cortez. The Kitchen, [1980]. Flyer.



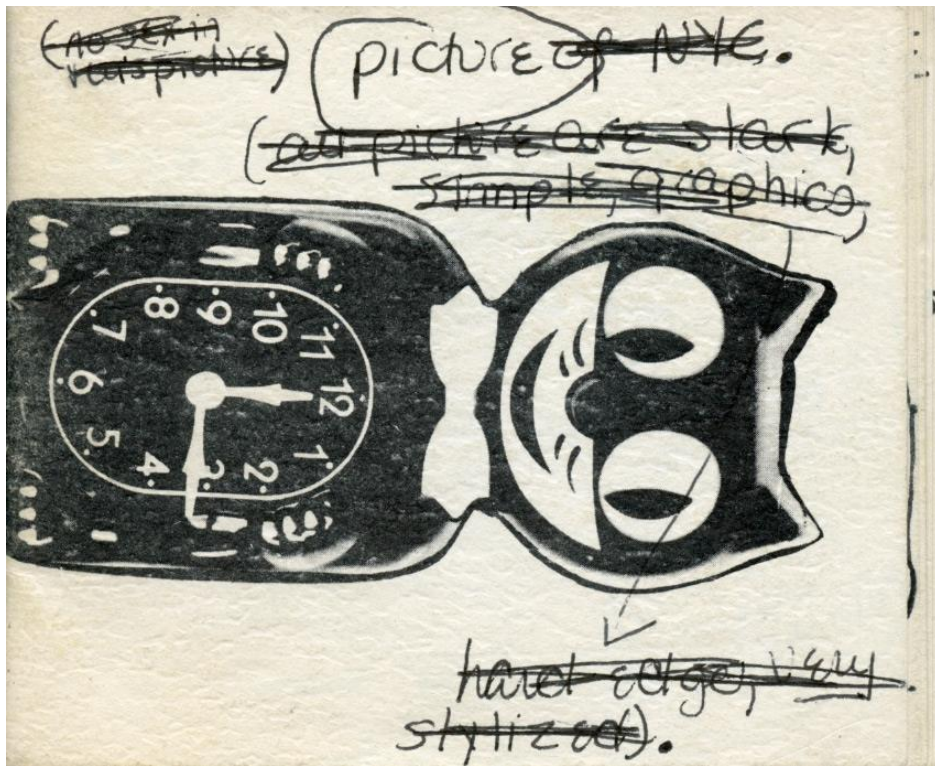
The Persian Poems. Bozeau of London Press, 1980. Wrappers, with drawings by Robert Kushner.

“*The Persian Poems*—her ingenious, maybe real maybe fake translations of such phrases as *Janey is an expensive child/But cheap* and *see my cunt!* into Farsi.” Robert Kushner produced, funded, and published the book under an imprint created for the purpose, Bozeau of London Press. (p. 146)



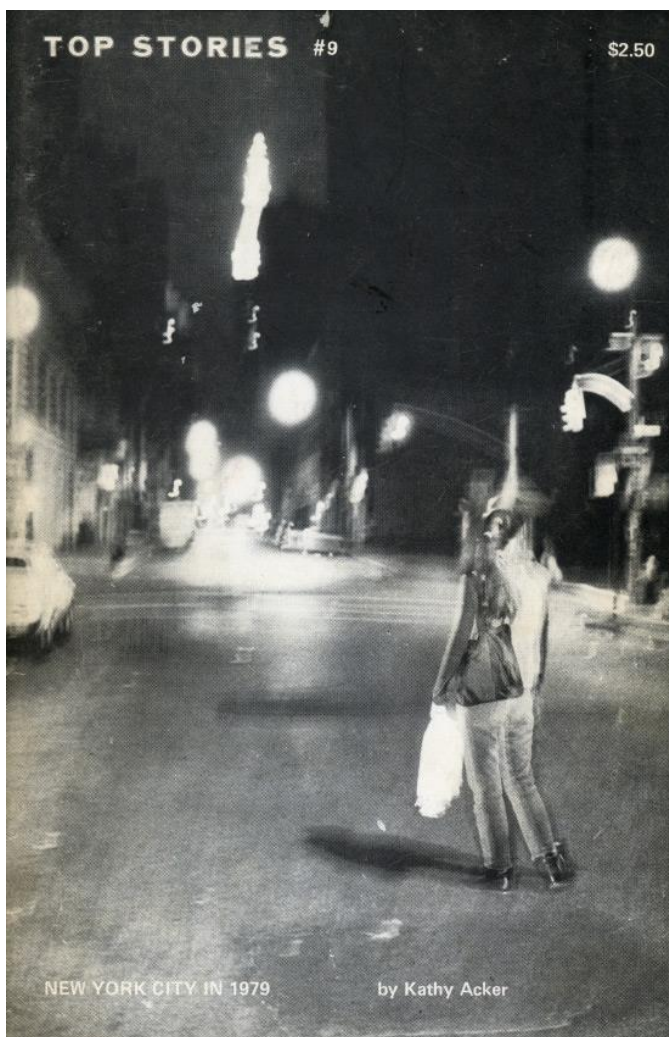
A Map of My Dreams. The Poetry Mailing List. 1977.

Single sheet printed on one side and folded for mailing. 14 x 11 inches. Publisher's Staten Island address rubber stamped on verso. This is an unnumbered issue of *The Poetry Mailing List* (1977), published by Stephen Paul Miller and edited by Kenneth R. Deifik. As stated on the front of the flyer this work is “from *Blood and Guts in High School* © 1977.” According to Krauss, the dream maps were drawn during the composition of *The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula* (1973) though not published in one of Acker's books until *Blood and Guts in High School* (1984). (p. 145)



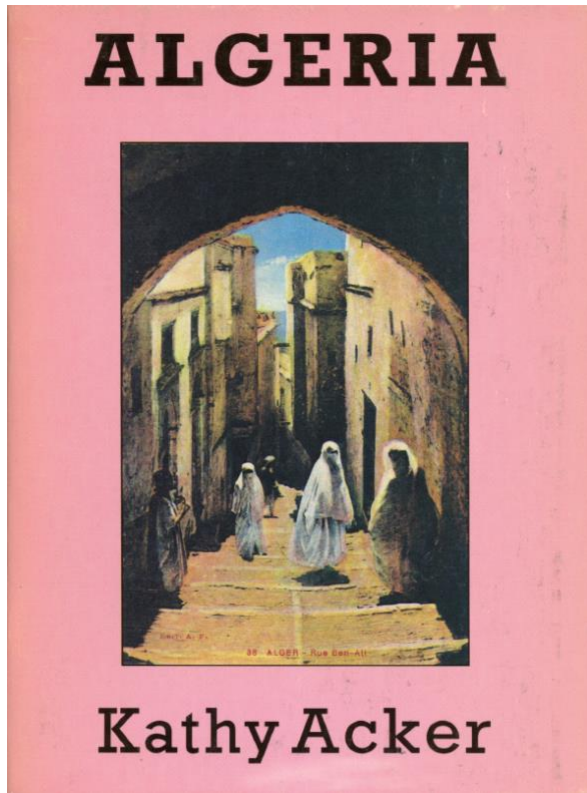
[Original Kathy Acker manuscript.] *Bondage & Discipline*, vol. 1, no. 2. 1976. Saddle-stitched. 4 ½ x 3 ½ inches, 52 pp.

Bondage & Discipline, "A Magazine of Short Works," was edited by Arnold Aprill in Chicago. This is the "prototype issue." Aside from the cover illustration, title, and copyright page notices, the pages are blank. The recipients were in effect invited to make their own book in the space provided. Kathy Acker filled the blank pages with her handwritten text titled "Bondage and Discipline in New York City" and returned it to the editor, presumably in anticipation of publication, as she includes instructions for the placement of type and images, and the credit line for illustrator has been left blank. The text relates to a maybe real maybe fantasized bondage scene at the St. Mark's Poetry Project shortly after her return from Haiti and mentions several familiar Poetry Project names, such as Andrei [Codrescu], the protagonist, Ted Berrigan, Ray Bremser, Anselm Hollo, Alice [Notley], and Regina Beck. We can find no evidence that this work has been published.

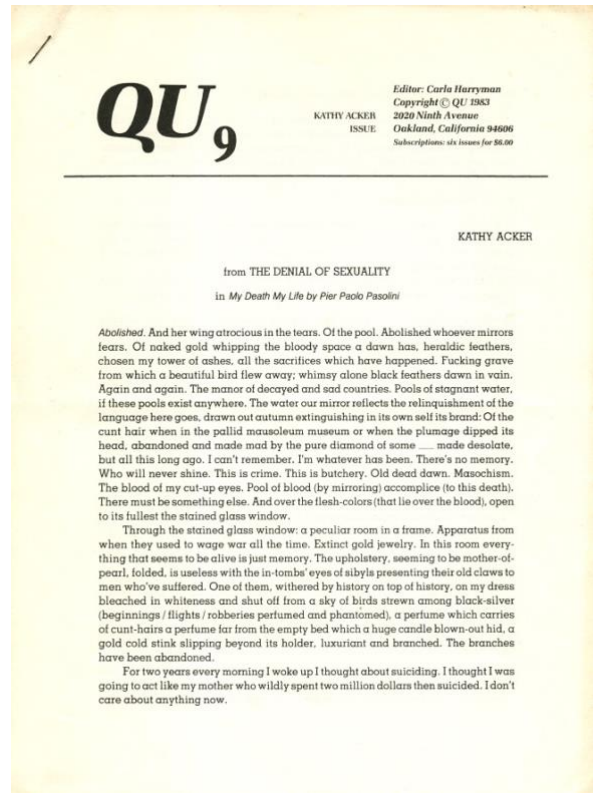


New York City in 1979. Hallwalls, 1981. Saddle-stitched. Photographs by Anne Turyn. Top Stories, no. 9.

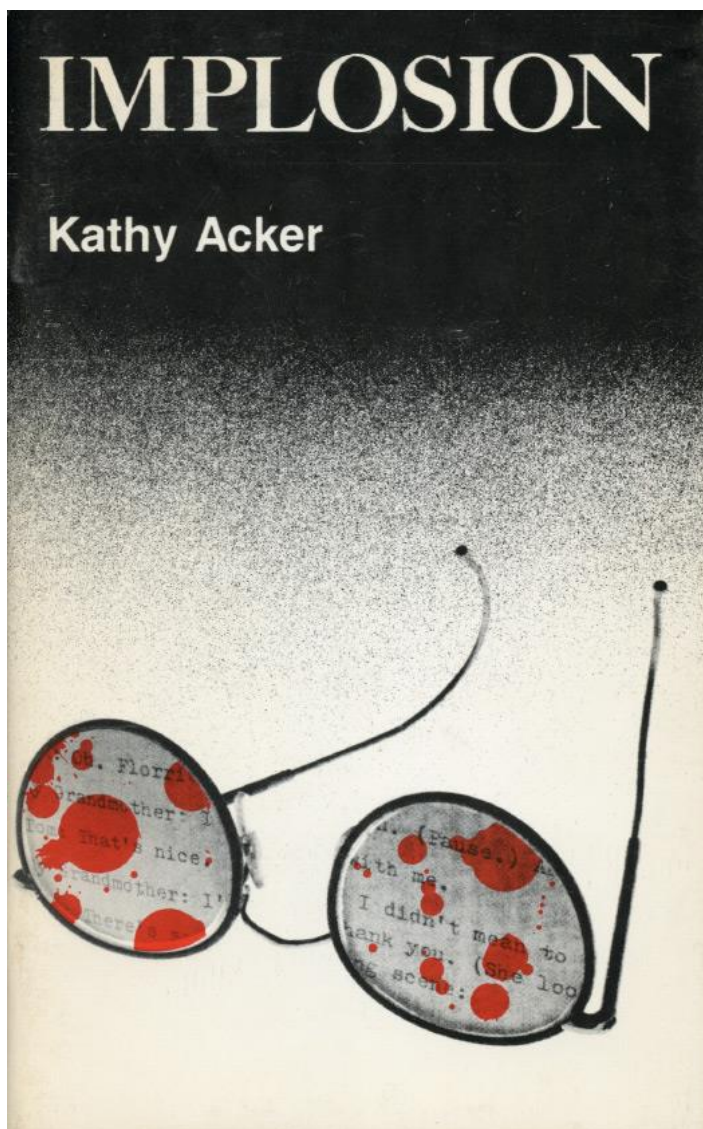
New York City in 1979 was first published in the San Diego magazine *Crawl Out Your Window* in 1980 and reprinted in *The Pushcart Press* in 1981. Acker received a Pushcart Press prize for the story, the "only award Acker ever received." (p. 170)



Algeria: A Series of Invocations Because Nothing Else Works. Aloes Books, 1984. Saddle-stitched.

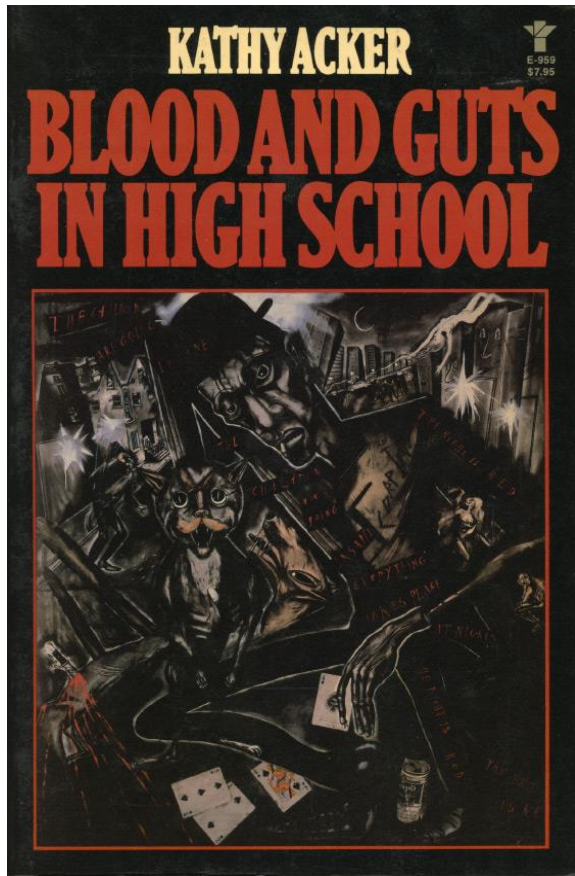


Harryman, Carla, ed. *QU*, no. 9. 1983. The Kathy Acker issue.

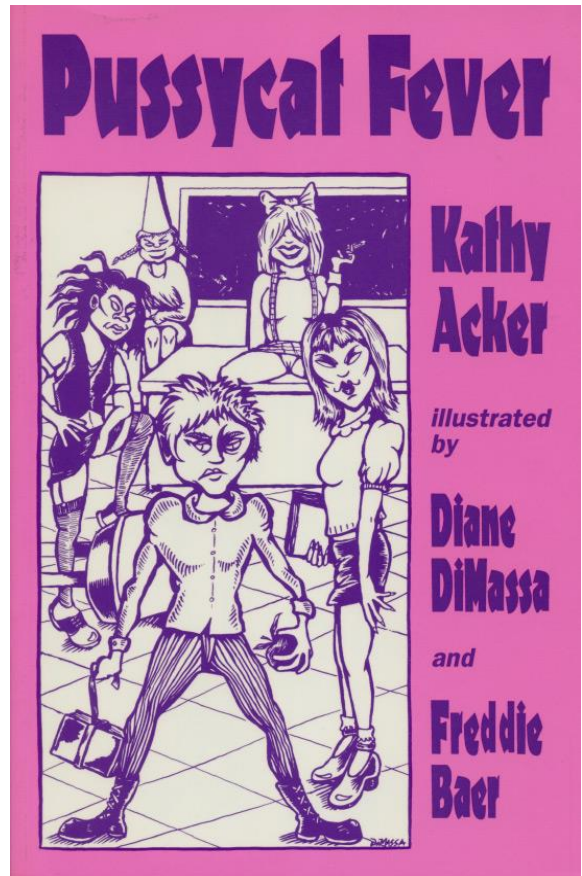


Implosion. Wedge Press, 1983. Saddle-stitched.

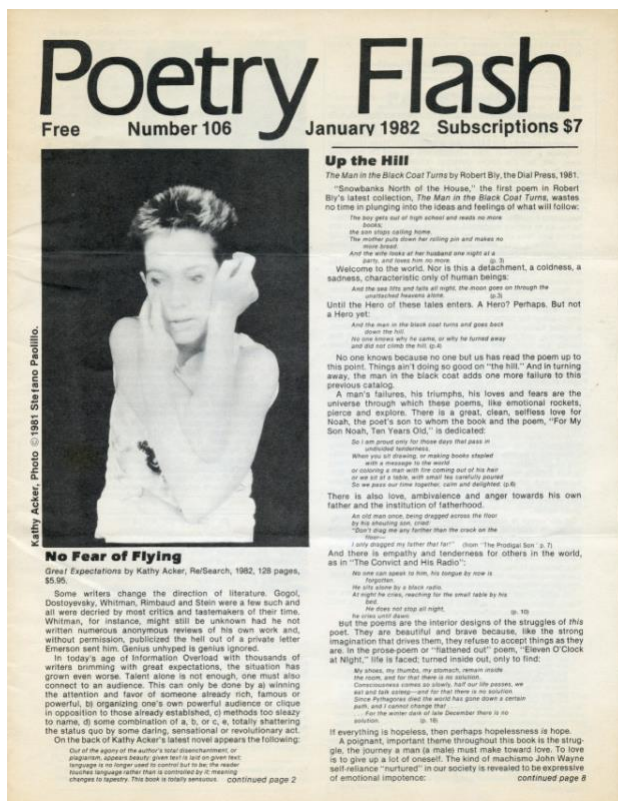
This play's backdrop is the French Revolution. The pamphlet was designed by Mark Magill. It was also issued as part of the special boxed edition of the magazine *Wedge*, nos. 3/4/5, 1983 (edited by Phil Mariani and Brian Wallis) comprising separate volumes from 14 contributors, including Theresa Hak Kyung, Gary Indiana, and Sarah Charlesworth.



Blood and Guts in High School. Grove Press, 1984. Wrappers. Cover by Sue Coe.



Pussycat Fever. AK Press, 1995. Wrappers. Illustrated by Diane DiMassa and Freddie Baer.



Abbott, Steve, ed. *Poetry Flash*, no. 106. Jan. 1982.



Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches, by Stefano Paolillo. Signed on verso by Kathy Acker. N.d. [ca. 1980.]

Acker apparently sent the photograph and an undated TLS in response to a query for biographical information from the organizers of the "Santa Cruz Sentinel 27 Big Fears Under The Big Top." The two-day circus event took place Nov. 13–14, 1981 and presented a very impressive group of poets and writers including Gregory Corso, Jim Carroll, Jerome Rothenberg, Bob Kaufman, Diane di Prima, Wanda

Coleman, and Kathy Acker. In the letter she notes “PS. I don’t have any photos of myself. This photographer named Stefano Paullililo (sic) took over a hundred (sic) a year ago, but he won’t give me any no matter how many times I ask. He will however send them out to whoever need photos of me.”

Poetry Flash, no. 106 included a lengthy review by Steve Abbott of Acker’s *Great Expectations* which closes with the observation “*Great Expectations* is Kathy Acker’s most ambitious, exciting and masterful novel to date. Its influence will be long and strongly felt ... That *Great Expectations* has been so shoddily printed is a shame and if some major press doesn’t soon reissue it, it’s either a testimony to the timorous obtuseness of the publishing trade or proof that Acker’s writing is far more dangerous to the State than that by other writers such as William Burroughs, Susan Griffin, or even Robbe-Grillet in whose company she has earned the right to sit.”

Contents of the Kathy Acker Collection

(offered as a *collection* rather than as individual items)

Politics. Papyrus Press, 1972. Stiff stapled wrappers with cloth spine.

The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula. 1973. Saddle-stitched. 6 volumes, paginated consecutively:

[1] *Some Lives of Murderesses*. June 1973. Community Congress Press, 1973.

[2] *A point to point comparison between my life and the life of Moll Cutpurse, the Queen-Regent of Misrule, the Roaring Girl, the benevolent tyrant of city thieves and city murderers, the Bear Lady*. June 1973. TLS from Acker to John Martin dated June 26, 1973, laid-in.

[3] *A Secret Document. I Move to San Francisco. I begin to copy my favorite pornography books and become the main person in each of them*. July 1973.

[4] *I become Helen Seferis, and then, Alexander Trocchi*. July 1973.

[5] *I explore my miserable childhood. I become William Butler Yeats*. September 1973.

[6] *The story of my life*. September 1973. ALS from Kathy Acker to John Martin laid-in.

I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining. 1974. Saddle-stitched. 6 volumes, paginated consecutively. The title switches between *I Dreamt I Became* and *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac*.

[1] *I Dreamt I Became a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining*. Empty Elevator Shaft Poetry Press, 1974.

[2] *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining*. 1974.

[3] *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining*. Peter Gordon. 1974.

[4] *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining*. *Tales of San Francisco: Coke!* 1974. © The Black Tarantula.

[5] *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining*. *Tales of San Francisco: Distrust*. 1974. © The Black Tarantula.

[6] *I Dreamt I Became a Nymphomaniac! :Imagining*. *Tales of San Francisco: Dykes*. musicmusic corporation, 1974. © The Black Tarantula.

The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula. TVRT / Viper’s Tongue Books, 1975. Wrappers. Cover by Jill Kroesen. Single sheet TVRT Press catalog and a letter from the publisher saying that the book has been sent with the compliments of Kathy Acker laid-in.

The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec. 1975–76. Saddle stitched. 6 volumes, paginated consecutively:

[1] *The Case of the Murdered Twerp*. 1975.

[2] *Longing for Better Things*. Written as the Black Tarantula. 1975

[3] "Stop It, Ted," I screamed when he finally released me. But he didn't hear. He was like a madman: overcome with lust. I was totally in his power, completely helpless. Written as the Black Tarantula. Published by TVRT, 1975.

[4] *How Love Can Lead Youngsters to Murder*. Written as the Black Tarantula. 1975.

[5] *The Future*. Written as the Black Tarantula. 1975.

[6] *The Life of Johnny Rocco*. 1976.

Bondage & Discipline in New York City. 1976. Unpublished manuscript contained within *Bondage & Discipline*, vol. 1, no. 2. 1976. Edited by Arnold Aprill.

The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec. TVRT Press and Printed Matter, 1978. Wrappers. Drawings by William Wegman. Inscribed by Kathy Acker.

A Map of My Dreams. The Poetry Mailing List. 1977. Single sheet printed on one side and folded for mailing. Publisher's Staten Island address rubber stamped on verso. 14 x 11 inches. This is an unnumbered issue of *The Poetry Mailing List* (1977) published by Stephen Paul Miller and edited by Kenneth R. Deifik.

Kathy Goes to Haiti. Rumour Publications, 1978. Wrappers. Drawings by Robert Kushner.

The Persian Poems. Bozeau of London Press, 1980. Saddle-stitched. Drawings by Robert Kushner.

New York City in 1979. Hallwalls, 1981. Saddle-stitched. Photographs by Anne Turyn. *Top Stories*, no. 9.

Great Expectations. Re/Search, 1982. Wrappers.

Great Expectations. Open Book / Station Hill, 1982. Wrappers.

Hello, I'm Erica Jong. Contact II Publications, 1982. Saddle-stitched. Artwork by Michael McClard.

Implosion. Wedge Press, 1983. Saddle-stitched.

Algeria: A Series of Invocations Because Nothing Else Works. Aloes Books, 1984. Saddle-stitched.

Blood and Guts in High School. Picador Press, 1984. Wrappers.

Blood and Guts in High School. Grove Press, 1984. Wrappers.

Don Quixote. Grove Press, 1986. Wrappers.

Empire of the Senseless. Grove Press, 1988. Boards with dust jacket.

Literal Madness: Kathy Goes to Haiti, My Death My Life by Piero Paolo Pasolini, and Florida. Grove Press, 1988. Boards with dust jacket.

Low: Good and Evil in the Work of Nayland Blake. Petersburg, 1990. Cloth over boards. Published on the occasion of the Nayland Blake exhibition "Low" at Petersburg Gallery, New York City, October 6–November 3, 1990.

Hannibal Lecter, My Father. Semiotext(e), 1991. Wrappers. Semiotext(e) Native Agents Series.

My Mother: Demonology. Pantheon, 1993. Boards with dust jacket.

Pussycat Fever. AK Press, 1995. Wrappers. Illustrated by Diane DiMassa and Freddie Baer.

Bodies of Work. Serpent's Tail, 1997. Wrappers. Essays.

Portrait of an Eye: Three Novels. Grove Press, 1997. Wrappers.

Essential Acker: The Selected Writings of Kathy Acker. 2002. Wrappers. Edited by Amy Scholder and Dennis Cooper.

Spread Wide. Dis Voir, 2005. Wrappers. With Paul Buck.

Acker: Articles from The New Statesman 1989–1991. Amandla Publishing, 2007. Wrappers. Edited and with an Introduction by Robert Buckeye. Photographs by Fred Cray.

I'm Very Into You. Semiotext(e), 2015. Wrappers. Correspondence with McKenzie Wark, 1995–1996.

Assorted

Abbott, Steve, ed. *Poetry Flash*, no. 106. Jan. 1982. Features Steve Abbott's "No Fear of Flying," a review of Kathy Acker's *Great Expectations*.

Friedman, Ellen G. and Miriam Fuchs, guest eds. *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 9, no. 3, Fall 1989. Work by and about Kathy Acker, Christine Brooke-Rose, and Marguerite Young.

Harryman, Carla, ed. *QU*, no. 9. 1983. Stapled upper left corner. The Kathy Acker issue. This issue is devoted to publishing an excerpt from "The Denial of Sexuality" from "My Death My Life by Pier Paolo Pasolini" by Kathy Acker.

[Letter and Publicity Photo]. Undated [ca. 1980] TLS from Kathy Acker to an unidentified recipient, 1 page. With an 8 x 10 inch black and white silver gelatin print by Stefano Paolillo, signed on verso by Acker.

Scholder, Amy, Carla Harryman, and Avital Ronnell, eds. *Lust for Life: On the Writings of Kathy Acker*. Verso, 2006.
