The Literature of Rebellion

The voice of dissent in contemporary American Literature and Society.
THE STEREOTYPE (FE)MALE REBEL

What does a rebel look like? What is rebellion? In mainstream culture it's a white male, sticking it to 'The Man', living on the edge of society. Not so for women rebels. In mainstream culture they are seen as secondary to the male rebel. At best, the mainstream cultural image of the female rebel is as a dominatrix, a sex object of male fantasies. These images of rebel women are always filtered through mainstream culture's male dominated point of view. Feminist rebels tried to subvert that idea as part of the second-wave feminism movement.
A leading figure in the Women’s Movement, her 1963 book The Feminine Mystique is credited with sparking the 'second-wave feminism' in America. In 1966, Friedan founded and was elected the first president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), which aimed to bring women "into the mainstream of American society now (in) fully equal partnership with men".

NOW is the largest feminist movement in America, with around 500,000 active members.
SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

Often called the Women's Liberation Movement, second-wave feminism lasted from the 1960s until the 1980s. Where the first-wave focused on equal rights for women (e.g. the right to vote), second-wave focused on issues such as sexuality and sexual violence, the family and women in the workplace.

However, many thought that second-wave was too focused on white middle-class women. The third-wave that came in the 1990s addressed this by acknowledging women's diversity, with no fixed idea of femininity, rejecting the gender binary.
Valerie Solanas

Radical feminist writer who is best known for her assassination attempt on artist Andy Warhol. She came out as a lesbian in the 1950s. She moved to New York in the mid-1960s, working as a writer, beggar, and prostitute. Her most famous work is the SCUM Manifesto.

Solanas died of pneumonia aged 52, in 1988. Leaving a legacy that divided feminist opinion.

The SCUM Manifesto, said women should “overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and eliminate the male sex.”
Written by Valerie Solanas, sold as 2000 self-published copies in 1967. A commercial edition was published in 1968. Shocking in its extreme views, language use, and its conclusion that men have ruined the world and that women should overthrow society and eliminate the male sex.

The SCUM Manifesto states that, “If SCUM ever marches, it will be over the President’s stupid, sickening face; if SCUM ever strikes, it will be in the dark with a six-inch blade.”
THEMES OF THE MANIFESTO

The Manifesto claims that men are incomplete women, due to the ‘Y chromosome’. And that in a reverse of Freud’s theory about ‘penis envy’, that men have ‘pussy envy’. Most of the manifesto is a list of grievances against the male sex. Among these are, War, Money, Fatherhood, Suppression of Individuality, Prevention of Privacy, Prevention of Community, Conformity, Authority and Government, Philosophy, Religion and Morality Based on Sex… The list goes on! It also argues that women must replace the “money-work system” with a system of complete automation, as this will lead to the collapse of the government and the loss of men’s power over women. The manifesto ends by describing a female-dominated utopian future in which there is no money, and disease and death have been eliminated.
Solanas had been hanging around The Factory, Andy Warhol's studio. She even starred in one of Warhol's films. However on the 3rd of June 1968, over an argument about a play she'd written called Up Your Ass, Solanas shot and almost killed Warhol. She later handed herself into police. She was sentenced to 3 years in prison and psychiatric care.
A 1996 movie about the life of Solanas, starring Lili Taylor. The movie uses the conflict between Warhol and Solanas as a metaphor for the changing culture of the times. Solanas representing the 'old' print (written word) based culture, and Warhol the 'new' Pop Art culture of images. The music was by John Cale of the Velvet Underground, Warhol's house band at The Factory.
I Shot Andy Warhol was directed by Canadian film-maker Mary Harron, who is also known for her films American Psycho and The Notorious Bettie Page.