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Patricia Juliana Smith, ed. *The Queer Sixties*. New York: Routledge, 1999. xxvi + 272 pp. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-92169-5.

Reviewed by Rick Dodgson (Contemporary History Institute, Ohio University)
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Queer Icons and Iconoclasts in the 1960s

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The Queer Sixties is a collection of essays concerned with the production and iconic representation of queer culture in the 1960s. Editor Patricia Juliana Smith asserts that these essays offer new literary and cultural perspectives on the queer history of the decade. Claiming that the existing academic literature on the 1960s has been produced mostly by social scientists—much of it with a “decidedly heterocentric bias”—Smith states that the purpose of *The Queer Sixties* is to “fill a gap” in that literature through the use of “new and different means of looking at the queer cultural and subcultural expression of the decade” (p. xii).

The anthology is organized into five sections, each of which contains essays that share a common theme: “Queer Pulp Fictions,” “Ultimate Icon, Ultimate Iconoclast: Andy Warhol and Valerie Solanas,” “Queer Icons of Swinging London,” “Los Angeles and Its Queer Denizens,” and “Icons and Iconoclasts in the Mainstream.” A focus on the historical and cultural significance of various queer icons or iconoclasts loosely ties all the essays together. Smith argues in her introductory chapter that “we must not readily dismiss the cult of the icon or the iconoclast as mere personal obsession or camp frivolity.... Nor should we underestimate the power of such veneration to effect social change” (p. xiv). Some of these icons and iconoclasts are familiar queer figures—Andy Warhol, Valerie Solanas, Joe Orton, Christopher Isherwood, Dusty Springfield—but the broad definition of queerness adopted here (“deviant from the larger cultural

norm” [p. xv]) allows some essays to consider the role of other public figures—John Lennon and Jim Morrison—not generally found in queer literature.

The first section of *The Queer Sixties* considers the queer pulp fiction of the period. Looking at pre-Stonewall gay male pulp fiction, David Bergman seeks to discount the simplistic impressions that all novels of this type followed the same formula (“boy meets boy, boy dies” [p. 26]) and that they provided only negative gay stereotypes for their readers. While not denying the prevalence of tragedy in most 1960s gay pulp fiction, Bergman asserts that “often these books evaded the homophobic ethos of the time” (p. 28), and that their authors played an important role by demarcating an exclusive queer identity that “gave substance to political, emotional, and social solidarity” (p. 35) within the queer community. Yvonne Keller makes a similar argument about lesbian pulps, arguing that even though these novels were produced for a mostly homophobic and voyeuristic male audience, their candidness “opened up an important space in public discourse” (p. 4) about lesbianism and provided at least some lesbian representation for a lesbian audience starved of anything else.

In the next section, Kelly Cresap and Laura Winkiel revisit the well-worn historical landscape occupied by Andy Warhol and Valerie Solanas. Cresap’s essay makes the argument that the still-emulated “naïf-trickster” or dumb-blond persona that Warhol presented to the public can be seen as both an “intricately coded surrogate for coming out as a gay man,” and as a “chameleonic per-

formative mode” that enabled him to “employ de-gayng tactics and the rhetoric of homophobia when he found it expedient” (p. 43). Winkiel offers an interesting study of the “performative politics” of Solanas’s SCUM Manifesto although her conclusion— “[The] SCUM Manifesto did not simply result in one failed assassination and lesbian separatism. It participated in the political, social and cultural shifts known as the sixties” (p. 79)—is overly cautious compared to much of her preceding analysis.

Our attention then shifts to “Swinging London” with a section devoted to three distinctive British icons of the sixties. Of the essays presented here, Ann Shillinglaw’s provocative investigation of the supposed “queerness” residing in the Beatles’ two major films, *A Hard Day’s Night* and *Help*, is perhaps the most notable, but both Francesca Coppa’s analysis of Joe Orton’s influential queer sensibilities, and editor Patricia Juliana Smith’s insightful treatment of the career of Dusty Springfield are more informative and historically useful. Returning to the murky multiplicity of Los Angeles, the penultimate section of *The Queer Sixties* presents us with two quite different approaches to our subject matter. Joseph Bristow offers a perceptive and well-written account of the queerness expressed within Christopher Isherwood’s life and his literary accomplishments. Taking a few more interpretive risks, Ricardo Ortiz searches for echoes of John Rechy’s *City of Night* in the performance and lyrics of the Doors’ frontman, Jim Morrison.

The final and largest section of *The Queer Sixties* contains five essays, each of which explores the emergence and production of queer icons and iconoclasts in main-

stream American culture of the day. Most of these essays are quite narrow in focus: Jennifer Rich, for example, applies the ideas of Diana Fuss (and others) to her analysis of lesbian identity as portrayed in William Wyler’s 1961 cinematic adaptation of *The Children’s Hour*; William Cohen explores the themes of what he calls “Liberalism, Libido, [and] Liberation” in James Baldwin’s novel *Another Country* (1962); William Scroggie discusses how Mart Crowley’s play *The Boys in the Band* “participat[ed] in producing new representations of homosexuality that [led] toward our contemporary sense of identity” (p. 238); Blake Allmendinger compares Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* to other Western-themed literature and finds common homoerotic themes in the male same-sex relationships contained therein; and Douglas Eisner discovers in Gore Vidal’s 1968 novel, *Myra Breckinridge*, “the almost perfect foreshadowing of the Gay Rights movement—an effort to thrust queer desire into the center of American politics—arguing that sexuality is as much about power as it is about personal expression” (p. 256).

Individually, each of the essays contained in this anthology possesses some interesting arguments and enough fresh insights to make them useful to a variety of disciplines. On the negative side, the theme of “Icons and Iconoclasts” is somewhat imposed upon what is really a collection of disparate pieces. Few of the authors ever live up to the “new and different” or gap-filling perspective that Smith promised in her introduction, but *The Queer Sixties* still offers us a collection that will provide valuable supplemental material to the existing queer literature on the 1960s.

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