Becoming Dusty: the purpose of self-transformation in an era of repression

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Abstract

Throughout the 1960s, self-transformation allowed the closeted aspect of Dusty Springfield's persona to not only be an outlet; but an identity. Springfield created a queer persona during an age where lesbianism, lacking the criminal status and culminative glamour of male homosexuality, remained less visible and understood. This essay focuses on the tools that Springfield used to express her marginality and how she made her 'transgressive' identity apparent to certain audiences. Springfield subverted fixed ideas of identity by incorporating tactics of camp, drag, diva status, and musical genre into her presentation and identity. These actions reinforced her status as a 'camp icon,' providing catharses for both herself and her queer audience. Springfield's re-fashioning of self exposes gender and sexuality as cultural codes which rely on imitation, lacking any essential truth.

Dusty Springfield's story is one of self-invention. Her tale is that of the closeted Mary O'Brien, born in 1939, to middle-class, Irish Catholic parents in a London suburb, who spent her life re-constructing and dismantling her identity; from her hair, to her clothes, to her very name. Upon invention, Springfield was seen in 'high-collared, hull skirted gingham dresses embellished with starchy cravats and petticoats'—the quintessential, albeit parodic appearance of a *nice* white 'lady of the Cold War era.'[1] However, to be deemed *nice* in the 1960s (for a homosexual) entailed repression and artificiality. The general public hoped Springfield's radically artificial 'feminine' appearance and soulful vocal style to be an unloaded one.[2] Journalists speculated about male suitors that Springfield wanted 'to be with', and insisted on rigid, 'this or that' identity distinctions, while Springfield, 'with equal insistence', embraced neither.[3] By the latter half of the 1960s, the public grew increasingly suspicious of her unwillingness to conform.[4] The first British woman in modern music assumed to be gay; the press persistently chased the star for an exclusive confirmation. Why, it must be asked, did they come to suspect such a

1 Renée Drezner, "A Celebration of the Camp Performances of Dusty Springfield and Dolly Parton" (unpublished,) 6.

2 Patricia Juliana Smith, "'You Don't Have to Say You Love Me' The Camp Masquerades of Dusty Springfield" in Patricia Juliana Smith, *The Queer Sixties* (New York, 1999), 279.

3 "Dusty only wants to be with Alden" *Daily Mirror*, 24 February 1964; "Dusty, The Half-Hippie," *Daily Mirror*, 16 August 1967; and Rob Hoerburger, "Dusty Rides Again" *New York Times Magazine*, October 29 1995, in Annie J. Randall, *Dusty! Queen of the Mods*, (Oxford, 2009), 28.

4 Annie J. Randall, *Dusty! Queen of the Mods* (Oxford, 2009), 113.

thing? Springfield created a queer persona in an age in which lesbianism, lacking the criminal status and glamour of male homosexuality, was lesser recognised and explored in British popular culture. Utilizing the tactics of camp, she 'became' a man in drag, and through her chosen portrayal of musical genre and voice, bore assumptions that she was Black. Her career represents a covert expression of queer sensibility by means of coded transgression and reinvention.[5] This essay will focus on the tools that Springfield used to express her marginality, making her 'transgressive' identity apparent to certain audiences. The singer's 'de facto' expressions of queerness that manifested themselves in both her appearance and vocal sound will be explored. By analysing Springfield's method and purpose of self-transformation, this essay hopes to closer determine how and why homosexuality—especially for women—was expressed in the 'pessimistic' sixties.

Springfield emerged as a solo-artist in 1963. Two years later, she reached a point in her career where her sexuality was not publicly questioned: her powerful ballads, depicting straight romances and traditional gender roles, appealed to the masses. Within the music industry, homosexuality equated with non-commercialization; for example, the closeting of non-heterosexual performers is comparable to how the Beatles concealed their partners to appear sexually available to teenage girls.[6] Heteronormative compliance promised commercial success, and artists who publicly transgressed or approached taboo topics encountered hostility.[7] Springfield kept her sexuality quiet and ambiguous. To the journalists who wrote about her from the 'universalizing' heterosexual 'we' subject position, her reality was not only unprintable, but was *unreal*. Of this position, Calhoun comments that: 'unlike the heterosexual woman, including the heterosexual feminist, the lesbian experience of the institution of heterosexuality' is of a system that makes 'sexual, affectional, domestic, and reproductive life unreal.'[8] Persistent prodding about her bachelorette status prompted the singer to eventually divulge in 1970

5 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 283.

6 Mark Abrams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London, 1959), pp. 10–11.

7 Chris Charlesworth, author's interview (2011), in Patrick Glen, '''Oh You Pretty Thing!': How David Bowie 'Unlocked Everybody's Inner Queen' in spite of the music press" *Contemporary British History* (2016), 3.

8 Cheshire Calhoun, "Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory" in Carole R. McCann, Seung-Kyung Kim, (eds), *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (New York, 2003), 350, in Randall, *Dusty!*, 136.

that: 'Being a woman is very precious to me, and that's probably why I could never get mixed up in a gay scene because it would be bound to undermine my sense of being a woman.'[9] This statement post-dates the essay's time-bracket, but its inclusion highlights Springfield's misconstrued sense of self that was in part formed due to the pre-legislative, and often homophobic atmosphere in which she existed. The policing of the music industry led many, including Springfield, to acquiesce to the status quo.[10] There existed loopholes however, and from the early 1960s, the star confronted pressure to conform with the aesthetics of subversive queer resistance.[11]

1960s London read as a world of miniskirts, psychedelia, protest, and sexual liberation—this liberation was strictly heterosexual. Before the explicit 'coming out' phenomenon of the 1970s, implicit 'coming out' tactics were required. Such tactics manifested in the incorporation of 'camp'; a 'disruptive style of humour' that defies canons of mainstream taste.[12] Born out of a need for concealment, camp functioned as a mechanism of survival. Its function was 'not to conceal knowledge', but 'to conceal the knowledge of the knowledge.'[13] In motion, this ironic sensibility is applied to a product (in Springfield's case, musical performance); the aesthetic itself conceals a hidden, deeper meaning beneath a façade of absurdity. At the time, camp sensibilities were understood only by certain audiences. Music, entailing performance, occupies the public sphere and can be exploited by camp, to keep 'secrets' from coming out. Butler contends that 'if a regime mandates a compulsory performance of sex,' then 'it may be only through that performance that the binary system of gender and sex come to have intelligibility at all.'[14] Enabling the dissociation of homosexuality and music, despite them being patently intertwined, creates an 'open secret' mechanism of expression. The rhetoric of permissiveness did not puncture 'the culture of compulsory heterosexuality' and reasons for escapism were manifold.[15] As will be explained, Springfield utilized playfully disruptive camp sensibilities as a means of subversively expressing her sexuality and identity. In order to express herself, the singer metamorphosed into

9 Ray Connolly, "Dusty Springfield" *Evening Standard*, 17 September 1970, via Ray Connolly, Lucy O'Brien also gives an account of the interview in *Dusty: A Biography* (London, 1999), 138.

10 Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, "Lesbian and Gay Music," *Revista Eletrônica de Musicologia* VII (2002) 8.

11 Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (London, 2011), p.83; and Jodie Taylor, *Popular Music, Identity and Queer World-Making* (Oxford, 2012), p.209, in Glen, "Oh You Pretty Thing!" 3.

12 Brett, Wood, "Lesbian and Gay Music," 5.

13 DA Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, 1988), p.206 in Wood, "Lesbian and Gay Music" 5.

14 Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Georgia, 2008) 267.

15 Adele Patrick, "A taste for excess: disdained and dissident forms of fashioning femininity," PhD Thesis, University of Stirling (Stirling, 2004), 112.

the exuberant idol of a 'cultural movement' that, ironically, 'had little to do with her own existence.'[16] Through her campy presentation, Springfield attempted to solve, in an imaginary way, identity problems which at a more fundamental level, remained unresolved.

Most non-straight women in the 1960s, even those who believed themselves to be 'progressive,' felt—as Val Wilmer puts it—that they were missing a sense of 'rooting' and were 'being deliberately destroyed with little to replace it.'[17] With the emergence of her 1960s solo career, this sense of un-rootedness explains Springfield's refashioning of self. Confessedly psychologically tormented and in need of an outlet, Springfield came to rely on camp and 'half-truths' to cope with the restraints of reality.[18] Her ironic look: 'the simultaneous appearance of "seeming to be like" and "not seeming to be like" functioned as a resistance to heteronormative femininity and opened up room for difference.'[19] Further, identification and consumption of queer female stars by female fans is a key phenomenon to interpret within Springfield's construction of self. Homosexual women were less inclined to mix with members of other 'social classes' than their male counterparts, and anti-lesbian discrimination was a jarring reality that meant that many ordinary women avoided expressive/camp forms of presentation. Even in the music world; a long-established haven for outsiders in pursuit of self-expression and acceptance; the lesbian was shunned. Springfield's transgressive appearance and performance—intrinsically linked to struggle—resonated deeply with and was cathartic for those who longed to embody the freedom and expressiveness that her persona possessed.

In the 1960s, advice found in women's prescriptive literature increasingly presented natural, 'ideal bourgeois' presentations of femininity, which were entirely at odds with Springfield's exaggerated feminine performance.[20] Her self-fashioning goal was to 'try to be as unsexy as possible' and to cultivate 'an over the top parody of stereotyped femininity that didn't pose a threat.' Her almost comical look had the effect to not be 'made fun *of*, but *out* of.'[21] Billie Davis, who often shared a dressing room with the star, suggests that she engaged in beautifying acts that 'transgressed acceptable limits of femininity while remaining specifically female.'[22] Springfield's pragmatic mascara tip was to: 'spit in it to get it to the proper consistency.'[23] This, and rumours that Springfield never brushed her hair or took her makeup off, can be interpreted as running counter to idealised representations of femininity.[24] The singer thus disrupted formularised and socially sanctioned advice found in women's literature. Springfield's appearance served a 'double function' as a 'style and strategy of passing' in addition to communicating different concepts to different audiences.[25] The 'Dustyification' of many of her fan's hair announced identification with 'dissident forms of femininity' and affiliations with alternative influences and concerns.[26] By imitating Springfield, her fans contradicted the passive procedure of fashioning and self-objectification for the male gaze; the singer's exaggerated and personalized sense of femininity called out to queer audiences—her transformation of self, may even have come close to fulfilling her own desire for authentic self-expression.

Springfield's first solo album, *A Girl Called Dusty,* provides a 'veritable' catalogue of 'subversive lesbian camp.'[27] On its cover, Dusty is pictured with her signature beehive hairdo, muddied mascaraed eyes, and wears a man's denim work shirt—the image a cocktail of both 'butch' and 'femme' looks.[28] This 'vampy overkill' shattered naturalistic semblances of femininity and created the 'ironic lesbian resignification of the gay man in drag'—in effect, 'that of the *female* female impersonator.'[29] Drag destabilizes the perceived 'truth' of gender and sexual identity and highlights the fragility behind the constant mimicry of performed identities. By 1966, Springfield impersonations were common practice for British drag queens, while she, enthralled by their world, masqueraded as ultra-feminine.[30] Caught between projected fantasy and reality, Springfield adopted the drag queen's epistemology of camp.[31] O'Brien notes

16 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 272.

17 Val Wilmer, *Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This: My Life in the Jazz World* (London, 1989), 307, in Smith, *The Queer Sixties*, 278.

18 Penny Valentine, Vicki Wickham, *Dancing with demons, the authorized biography of Dusty Springfield,* (London, 2000), 28. The singer frequently expressed the depths of the psychological pain that she experienced to Faye Harris, with whom she lived with for six years.

19 Rebecca Carbery, *Queer Genders: Problematising Gender through Contemporary Photography*, Master Thesis, Durham University (Durham, 2011), 66, in Doris Leibeseder, *Subversive Strategies in rock and pop music* (Surrey, 2012), 102.

20 Lucy O'Brien, *Dusty: A Biography of Dusty Springfield* (London, 1999), p. 80; and 'Profile: Dusty Springfield, I only want to be with me' *Scotland on Sunday*, 15 February 1998, 15 in Patrick, "A taste for excess", 97.

21 David Bergman, *Camp grounds: style and homosexuality* (Massachusetts, 1994), 4.

22 O'Brien, *Dusty: A Biography of Dusty Springfield,* 92.

23 Dusty Springfield, "The Melody Maker's Pop Think-in" *Melody Maker,* November 1965.

24 Charlotte Grieg, *Will you still love me tomorrow? Girl Groups from the 50s on...* (London, 1989,) 97.*Maker,* November 1965.

25 Steven Cohan, *Incongruous Entertainment* (Durham, 2005), 9.

26 Patrick, "A taste for excess", 70.

27 Drezner, "A Celebration of the Camp Performances of Dusty Springfield", 6.

28 Fig 1: Album cover: *A Girl Called Dusty*, Philips Records (April 1964).

29 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 273.

30 Valentine, Wickham, *Dancing with demons*, 96.

31 Coppa, "A Perfectly Developed Playwright Joe Orton and Homosexual Reform," in *Queer Sixties*, 288.

that Springfield's image became increasingly 'more outrageous and difficult to control. She took tips from male drag queens,' and declared that: 'basically, I'm a drag queen myself!'[32] For example, the drag queen's excessive sentimentality seeps into her 1964 performance of her rendition of 'Dancing in the Street.' Springfield makes elaborate gestures of mock melodrama; subverting the song's consistent, rhythmic orchestral accompaniment by ornamenting the performance with exaggerated hand gestures and finger waves. Camp masquerade allowed the closeted aspect of Springfield's persona to be an outlet and an identity. Further, her ability to mockingly build upon and undermine the prescribed rules of femininity reinforced her status as a camp icon.[33]

Springfield embodies a timeless model of refinement, 'separated from the prosaic pursuit of fashion and somehow beyond,' (despite lyrical requirements), 'the limits of boy-girl love.'[34] She depended on audiences being able to discern attributes that, in a period in which homosexuality was socially outlawed, 'were not readily apprehended' by the mainstream.[35] For queer fans, moments of collective recognition, even in relation to manufactured sound and performance, were potentially political and dissident. As Frith denotes, one of popular music's central uses is 'to conceal; the futile pleasures of indulging in private fantasies in public places.'[36] Queer imagination is a highly developed one, and is exacerbated when overt expression is disavowed.[37] Springfield's 'amalgam of fictive identities and facades' that 'grew in complexity and extremity over time,' matched the relentless 'rumour innuendo,' and 'consequent public pressure regarding her sexual inclinations.'[38] On this note, Meyer bemoans Sontag's separation and de-politicization of 'queerness and camp,' arguing that camp 'is solely queer discourse; and embodies a specifically queer cultural exchange.'[39] Bergman's definition holds a more elastic maxim of camp's partnership with homosexuality: 'Camp', however one chooses to interpret it, 'is affiliated with homosexual culture, or at least with a self-conscious eroticism that throws into question the naturalization of desire.'[40] Camp was intrinsic to Springfield's fashioning of self; the star's mysteriously transgressive presentation thus called out to queer audiences. Meyer contends that the seemingly 'un-queer subject' within the industry, 'transformed camp into the apolitical badge of the consumer whose *status-quo* 'sensibility' is characterized by the depoliticising Midas touch, and 'whose control over the apparatus of representation casts the cloak of invisibility over the queer the moment it appropriates' camp.[41] Important to note that Sontag's prolific 'Notes On Camp' was published in 1966, perhaps hinting at the creeping influence and the British general public's awareness of camp's existence and associations. Self-transformation provided catharses for both the star and her queer audience, yet campness, intrinsic to her queerness, became increasingly intelligible to a broader group in the 1960s; it hinted at Springfield's internal truth and led to increased speculations about her sexuality.[42]

Idols are an integral part of queer culture, especially in times when homosexuality, for men, was moreover proscribed, and for women, unrepresented.[43] In 1960s England, the resonance and need for cult figures—objects of identification, admiration, and desire—derived in considerable part from feelings of alienation. In addition to her veneration as cultic queer icon, Springfield, given her musical and dramatic sensibilities, drew inspiration from divas.[44] Emerging in 1940s and 1950s Hollywood film, the post-war generation encountered great amounts of melodrama, along with its distinctive female heroine—the diva. The figure appealed to Springfield for a number of reasons. Divas; famed for employing camp and revered by queer audiences: 'are performers, usually women,' who are celebrated 'not only for their distinctive voice and performance styles, but for their life stories,' which generally sees them conquering a momentous stigma and 'reinventing themselves before attaining a position of greatness.' [45] Smith expresses that the diva's hard-earned persona embodies a 'cathartic function' for the 'heartache' and 'suffering that almost inevitably plays a role in queer life.'[46]

32 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 287.

33 Drezner, "A Celebration of the Camp Performances of Dusty Springfield", 9.

34 'Dusty was the height of decadence; she was grown-up, but not in the boring way most adults were; Dusty's adulthood suggested all sorts of unknown indulgences and pleasures, including the intensely contradictory, confusing experience of sex and romance,' in Grieg, *Will you still love me tomorrow?* (London, 1989), 97.

35 Smith, "Introduction: Icons and Iconoclasts," in *Queer Sixties*, 19.

36 Simon Frith, *Music for pleasure: essays in the sociology of pop* (London, 1988), 129, in Patrick, "A taste for excess", 112.

37 Smith, "Introduction: Icons and Iconoclasts", 19. (London, 1988), 129, in Patrick, "A taste for excess", 112.

38 Idem, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 273.

39 Moe Meyer, "Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp" in Harry M. Benshoff, Sean Griffin, (eds), *Queer Cinema: the film reader* (New York, 2004), 137, in reference to Susan Sontag's "Notes on camp," (New York, 1966).

40 David Bergman, *Camp grounds: style and homosexuality* (Massachusetts, 1993), 5.

41 Meyer, "Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp", 143.

42 Interviewers evaded aspects of Springfield's private life: the star knew that they would ask while they similarly knew that she would skirt around explicit answers. Dusty met their battery of questions with 'non-answers,' confirming to viewers the existence of her 'non-relationships.' Speculation served to ensure gay invisibility through the discourse of Dusty's 'non-sexuality.'

43 Smith, "Introduction: Icons and Iconoclasts", pp. 23-24.

44 Randall, *Dusty!*, 74.

45 See: Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London, 2004); and Wayne Koestenbam, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York, 1993).

As a diva, Springfield's influence extended beyond an emotional pronouncement of homosexual anguish; her 'operative value' appealed to marginalized people because it emphasized the individual's ability to reshape themselves in such a way that they are able to overcome hardship.[47] However, compared to her fans, the diva, being in a place of relative privilege and power, acts as a 'figure of self-authorization' and is capable of being 'in defiant disregard of orthodox conventions of social discipline and patriarchal injunctions against feminine potency.'[48] Whether divas are queer or not is beside the point; the defiant diva exhibits success in her ability to confront adversary and to subversively express herself in a homophobic atmosphere. Springfield's fashioning into a diva becomes a heroic measure of the distinct and often unseen suffering of the ordinary or obscure homosexual. Conceiving of Springfield within the 'diva equation' is possible and proves that her self-transformation was not only as a means of catharsis for herself, but for her fans too.

Appearance aside, Springfield's incandescent voice reflects hidden impulses; her near-quixotic yearning to remodel herself into someone else; and her desire to support and to forge musical alliances with Black musicians.[49] Some listeners, unfamiliar with the identity of the androgynously named star, 'in addition to her repository consisting primarily of hits originally performed by American black women vocalists,' believed Springfield's husky timbre to be that of a young (and probably Black) man.[50] The initial impression of Martha Reeves of the Vandellas was typical: 'When I heard her on the radio, I just assumed she was American and [B]lack.'[51] The African American Reeves, conversely, embodied a dislodged sexual licence and 'power to middle-class white audiences,' thus attaining the means to subversively articulate the unspeakable.[52] Identification with such female 'outsiders' gave Springfield a sense of connection 'non-existent in her limited cultural context.'[53] Soul music sets a precedent for configurations of feminine excess in performances by both women and men. Its musical

46 Patricia Juliana Smith, "Divas," *GLBTQ: An encyclopaedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer culture* (2006), 2.

47 B Farmer, "The fabulous sublimity of gay diva worship," *Camera Obscura* 59, 20:2 (2005), 173.

48 Farmer, "The fabulous sublimity of gay diva worship," 189.

49 Alexandra Marie Apolloni, "Wishin' and Hopin': Femininity, Whiteness and Voice in 1960s British Pop", Doctoral Thesis, University of California (Los Angeles, 2013), 65.

50 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me" pp. 275-76.

51 O'Brien. *Dusty*, 73.

52 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 278.

53 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 278.

form, coupled with its association with emotional excess; allowed for a spectrum of identification that Frith has summarised: 'the best records are the ones that allow an ambiguity of response, letting us be both subject and object of the singers' needs (regardless of gender).[54] Deeply invested in devising a specific feminine model for herself, but also equivocal about her ability to fit into this role; musical genre and vocal masquerade became an essential part of how Springfield enacted her self-transformation. Losing Mary O'Brien's voice helped her to become Dusty Springfield: it became a site of cross-cultural alliance; and a vehicle through which she enacted a counter-femininity to the models of white girlhood that circulated in the media at the time.[55]

The unavoidable limits for the singer trying to construct an artform 'rooted outside' of her own culture are obvious.[56] Springfield's attempts at alliance were limited by critical responses to her work that continually re-centred her race.[57] While most accounts of appropriation are undoubtedly cemented in historical fact, many fail to acknowledge the heteroglot nature of music and race. As Back notes: 'prototypical images of love and theft conceal the diversity of white involvement in black music. Distinctions among musicians, studio owners, producers, and songwriters are elided within the language of appropriation.'[58] Springfield's acceptance into a community of Black musicians is arguably what Brunelle terms 'adoptive appropriation;' which combines 'mimetic practice with cultural apprenticeship.'[59] If the 'blue-eyed' soul singer's reign is inextricably linked to African-American community and culture, it is undeniable that the economic, social, and psychological pressures apprising Springfield's life came from middle-class, white British society. Springfield's 'bluesy ballad' hits were considered 'too soulful for a white audience, and not '[B]lack enough for the [B]lack radio stations.'[60] The star was caught in a trap. One of Springfield's producers grants her a degree of creative freedom distinct from race: 'With Dusty there was no trace of [B]lack in her singing, she's not mimetic. Whatever she gets from [B]lack she transmogrifies with her own sensibili-

54 Simon Frith, *Music for pleasure: essays in the sociology of pop* (London, 1988), 167, in Patrick, "A taste for excess", 118.

55 Apolloni, "Wishin' and Hopin", 65.

56 Coppa, "A Perfectly Developed Playwright," in *Queer Sixties*, 283.

57 Soul occupied acres of newsprint in both white and black press; what soul represented, and the possibility of white soul were addressed regularly and contentiously. Springfield, specifically in Britain, was included within these conversations.

58 Les Back, "Out of Sight: Southern Music and the Colouring of Sound," in Les Back, Vron Ware, *Out of Whiteness: Colour, Politics and Culture* (Chicago, 2002), 231.

59 Randall, *Dusty!*, 40.

60 O'Brien, *Dusty*, 144.

ty.'[61] For example, her most impressive resignification of soul music is arguably her cover of 'Mockingbird.' The song, originally sung by a Black brother-and-sister duo, follows a playful call-and-response format and parodically laments the difficulties of a heterosexual affair. In Springfield's recorded version, she becomes the "mockingbird"" herself, heightening the parody of the tune.[62] With her striking baritone voice, she sings both male and female parts, demonstrating her ability to duet without a man. Despite encountering controversy, Springfield's obsession with soul music and identification with Black female singers provided the basis not only for vocal disguise, but for visual masquerade.

To conclude, Mary O'Brien's self-transformation arose out of being entrapped within a string of inevitable contraries. Springfield utilized camp, drag, femininity, diva status, voice and genre to negotiate aspects of her identity; her culminative unorthodoxy and 'questionable heterosexuality' granted her a decidedly queer persona and admiration from her followers.[63] As Smith writes: 'she pushed accepted notions of femininity to absurd extremes and thus, subverted the iconography of what it means to look like—and be—a 'girl.'[64] Dusty offered listeners 'a path to musical catharsis' while her theatrics made her persona recognizably camp. Yet, the star's publicists, as patrons of a 'contemporary white British society and culture,' had a 'vested interest in promoting her within their own 'unrooted' cultural context,' but struggled to 'reconcile a blues-singing' and furtively gay white woman 'with conventional public expectations.'[65] Even after her death in 1999, Springfield's legacy remained fixated on defining her sexuality, rather than the way in which she, and her musical artform, transcended conventional categorizations. Most tributes hand her success over to her eccentricities, without delving into the meaning of her subversive habits which were a response to a repressive and hostile society. For example, the noughties saw the release of Dusty's 'official biography;' *Dancing with Demons;* which revived a 'stale women's pages perspective,' of her life; ignoring the quality most present in her life—camp.[66] Camp is 'the lie that tells the truth;' a truth central to the singer's identity and self-worth, not because of its intrinsic nature, but because social oppression made it so. Her career and influence can be found within her eventual collaboration with the Pet Shop Boys in the 1980s, to Lesley Gore's 'Dusty' impressions in the Gateway's Club in London. In order to 'offset the multitiered biases against queer historical inquiry,' we must 'assume the presence of queer desire.'[67] Here, self-transformation facilitated the articulation of the unspeakable. As has been shown, Springfield's re-fashioning of self exposes gender and sexuality as cultural codes which rely on imitation, lacking any essential truth. Springfield's legacy offers a glimpse into the still resonant need for self-transformation; we have much to catch up on yet.

61 Jerry Wexler in O'Brien, *Dusty*, 12.

62 Dusty Springfield, (original: Inez and Charlie Foxx), "Mockingbird", *A Girl Called Dusty*, Philips Records (April 1964).

63 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me", 287.

64 Smith, "Introduction: Icons and Iconoclasts", 29.

65 Smith, "You Don't Have to Say You Love Me" pp. 278-279.

66 Randall, *Dusty!*, 134.

67 John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago, 1989), 28.

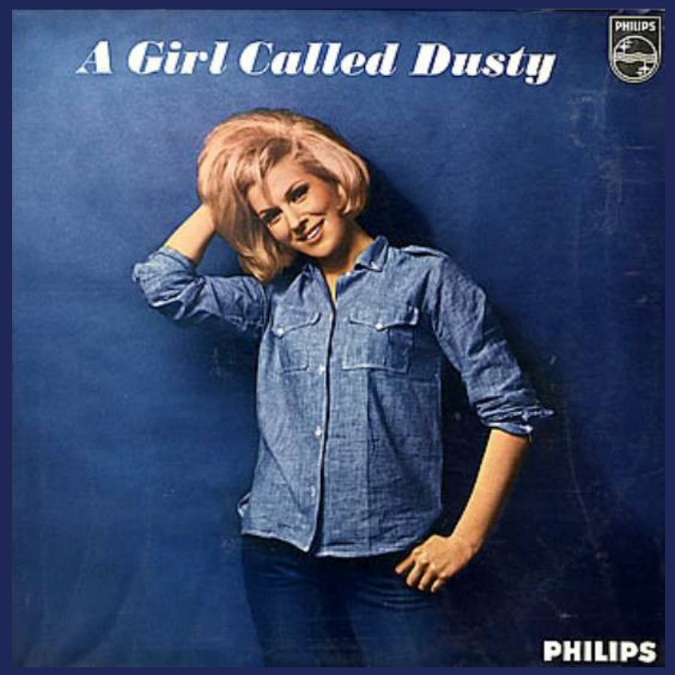

Fig. 1 Cover for ‘A Girl Called Dusty’

Springfield on a visit to the Stedelijk Museum © Anefo Photo Collection from the Grand Gala du Disque 1968 series