



Susan Sontag: The Making of an Icon

Carl Rollyson, Lisa Paddock

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"The book neither sympathizes with its subject nor trashes her. A kind of semiruthless, semi-good-natured impersonality prevails throughout....This book never penetrates the glazed surface of Sontag's appearance or the formal character of her work....[However] many interviews were conducted with friends and enemies alike, the reader is left knowing that a wall still stands behind which Susan Sontag lurks, undetected and unknown." —Vivian Gornick, *Salon*, 08/01/2000

The first--and unauthorized--biography of the so-called dark lady of American letters. Ever since she took American culture by storm with the publication of her *Notes on Camp* in 1964, Susan Sontag has been a star. Her austere glamour has been a critical factor in her success, making her a role model for intellectual women, a sex symbol for brainy men. She has never ceased to fascinate the public: as brilliant wunderkind, bringing the latest in French thought to America; as sophisticated analyst of her own experience with cancer in *Illness as Metaphor*; as champion of free speech in the Rushdie Affair; as theater director in besieged Sarajevo; and, with the publication of *The Volcano Lover*, as best-selling historical novelist. Yet she has both courted that fascination and insisted on holding it at a distance, demanding control over her public image. This first--and most definitely unauthorized--biography delves beneath the surface to examine the forces that made Susan Sontag an international icon. Carl Rollyson and Lisa Paddock explore her public persona and private passions, including the strategies behind her meteoric rise to fame and her political moves and missteps. Above all, they show how the life of Susan Sontag reveals to us the way we live now.

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