

*Susan
Sontag
Against
Interpret-
ation*

for Sonia
with much love -
(in London & New York)

Susan

Against
interpretation



Also by Susan Sontag
THE BENEFactor
(a novel)

SUSAN SONTAG

**Against
interpretation**

and other essays



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for Paul Thek



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Against Interpretation collects together the best of Susan Sontag's critical writing between 1962 and 1965. She discusses Camus, Sartre, Genet, Simone Weil, Nathalie Sarraute, Pavese, Artaud, Georg Lukacs and Levi-Strauss, amongst writers. In her theatre essays she considers the work of Ionesco, Hochhuth, Brecht, Beckett, Peter Weiss and Arthur Miller and comments on theatrical experiments such as "Happenings"; while her section on the cinema deals with directors like Bresson, Antonioni, Godard and Resnais, as well as with science-fiction films and the connection between films and novels.

"Although in these essays," Miss Sontag writes in her preface, "I do talk about particular words of art, and, implicitly, about the tasks of the critic, I am aware that little of what is assembled in the book counts as criticism proper . . . I was writing, with passionate partiality, about problems raised for me by works of art, mainly contemporary, in different genres: I wanted to expose and clarify the theoretical assumptions underlying specific judgments and tastes."

The title essay, indeed, argues that interpretive criticism in our day is largely reactionary and stifling. In *One culture and the new sensibility*, and in her *Notes on 'Camp'*, she tries to define the modern, present-day sensibility.

"What value these essays may possess, the extent to which they are more than just case-studies of my evolving sensibility, "the author says," rests not on the specific appraisals made but on the interestingness of the problems raised. I don't, ultimately, care for handing out grades to works of art (which is why I mostly avoided the opportunity to write about things I didn't admire). I wrote as an enthusiast and a partisan." Throughout, her style is as incisive as her ideas are stimulating: Miss Sontag is an exciting, penetrating and individual critic.

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THE AUTHOR, who is 33 and lives in New York, is known to English readers for her novel *The Benefactor* (1964), and for her critical articles which have appeared in *Partisan Review*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Evergreen Review*, *The Nation* and *Film Quarterly*.

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AGAINST
INTERPRETATION

SUSAN SONTAG

INSCRIBED
TO
SONIA ORWELL

1967