



Reborn: Journals and Notebooks, 1947-1963

By Susan Sontag

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"In the journal I do not just express myself more openly than I could to any person; I create myself."

The first of three volumes of Susan Sontag's journals and notebooks, *Reborn* (1947-1963) reveals one of the most important thinkers and writers of the twentieth century, fully engaged in the act of self-invention. Beginning with a voracious and prodigious fourteen-year-old, *Reborn* ends as Sontag, age thirty, is finally living in New York as a published writer.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. The first of three planned volumes of Sontag's private journals, this book is extraordinary for all the reasons we would expect from Sontag's writing—extreme seriousness, stunning authority, intolerance toward mediocrity; Sontag's vulnerability throughout will also utterly surprise the late critic and novelists fans and detractors. At 15, when these journals began, Sontag (1933–2004) already displayed her ferocious intellect and hunger for experience and culture, though what is most remarkable here is watching Sontag grow into one of the century's leading minds. In these carefully selected excerpts (many passages are only a few lines), Sontag details her developing thoughts, her voluminous reading and daily movie-going, her life as a teenage college student at Berkeley discovering her sexuality (bisexuality as the expression of fullness of an individual), and meeting and marrying her professor Philip Rieff, with whom, at the age of 18, she had David, her only child. Most powerful are the entries corresponding to her years in England and Europe, when, apart from Philip and their son, the marriage broke down and Sontag entered intense lesbian relationships that would compel her to rethink her notions of sex, love (physical beauty is enormously, almost morbidly, important to me) and daughter- and motherhood, and all before the age of 30. Watching Sontag become herself is nothing short of cathartic. (*Dec.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Rieff sensitively portrayed revered critic and novelist Sontag during her last days in *Swimming in a Sea of Death* (2008) and now continues to navigate the great sea of her legacy as editor of her journals. He didn't want to open his mother's private life to public eyes, but because her papers are available to scholars, he does so preemptively, granting readers access to the innermost thoughts of a genuine prodigy. In 1948, at age 15, Sontag asks, "And what is it to be young in years and suddenly awakened to the anguish, the urgency of life?" After starting college at 16, she fills her journals with passionate analysis of books, her intellectual ambitions, her struggle to accept her homosexuality, and the ecstasy and torment of her first lesbian relationship. Then, suddenly, this ardent seeker becomes a wife and mother. She loves her son, but marriage does not suit her, and her battle to reclaim her true self is one of several dramatic rebirths punctuating this electrifying record of Sontag striving to become Sontag. Two more volumes are planned. --Donna Seaman

Review

"A fascinating document of Sontag's apprenticeship, charting her earnest quest for education, identity, and voice . . . What slowly emerges . . . is a sense of Sontag's ferocious will. . . . She wanted to be a writer and would do almost anything to make that happen." ?Darryl Pinckney, *The New Yorker*

"A portrait of the artist as a young omnivore, an earnest, tirelessly self-inspecting thinker fashioning herself into the phenomenon she will be . . . Her journal is her true first book, the story of a woman struggling with her consciousness." ?Richard Lacayo, *Time magazine*

"A revelation . . . As do all the best critics, Sontag gave us new metaphors for how to read and see. Fabulously, surprisingly, *Reborn* shows she used that skill to understand her own pell-mell life." ?John Freeman, *NPR.org*

"What's fascinating . . . is that the journal reveals an adolescent and, later, a young woman, in whom 'ambition'--in this case, an overpowering yearning to be surrounded by and immersed in literature and

culture--vastly outweighed, and seems to have overpowered, 'sexuality.' As she herself puts it in the last entry of this journal, 'intellectual wanting' was the equal of 'sexual wanting' ” ?*Daniel Mendelsohn, The New Republic*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jerry Carley:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or even read a book titled *Reborn: Journals and Notebooks, 1947-1963*? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have different opinion?

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dialect styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. Often the writer made some exploration when he makes this book. This is why this book suitable all of you.

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