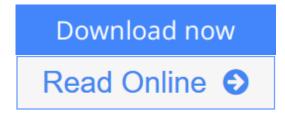


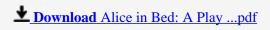
Alice in Bed: A Play

By Susan Sontag



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Alice in Bed is a free dramatic fantasy which merges the life of Alice James, the brilliant sister of William and Henry James, with the heroine of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. It is a play about the anguish and grief and rage of women; and about the triumphs and limitations of the imagination.



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Alice in Bed: A Play By Susan Sontag Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sontag's (The Volcano Lover) first stage play focuses on Alice James, the invalid sister of Henry and William and, since Jean Strouse's acclaimed 1980 biography and the publication of her diary, a feminist icon. It is in the latter role that Sontag casts the bed-ridden Alice, and playing off her name, she suggests, too, another, more famous Alice of fiction--to the extent that the center of the play's action is a tea party. The tea party becomes a gathering of independent women of imagination: Emily Dickinson, Margaret Fuller, Myrtha from the ballet Giselle and, as the somnolent dormouse, Kundry from Wagner's Parsifal. Alice's doting brother Henry makes a couple of appearances as well. Unfortunately, although Sontag acknowledges that her work is "a free fantasy based on a real person," none of the characters ever breathes with life; each lies flat on the page as a mouthpiece for Sontag's ideas about the imagination's dual role as liberator and jailer for a 19th-century woman of intelligence and about "women's anguish and women's consciousness of self."

Moreover, her dialogue is arch and literary. Regrettably, Sontag can add her name to a list of talented novelist-critics whose stage work disappoints.

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From Library Journal

Sontag (The Volcano Lover, LJ 6/15/92) describes her play as a "free dramatic fantasy based on a real person," Alice James, the sister of William and Henry James. A brilliant woman who suffered from depression from the age of 19, James died from breast cancer at age 44. The center of the play is "a mad tea party," a la Alice in Wonderland, to which Sontag has convened real and fictional 19th-century women to counsel the protagonist. Emily Dickinson; Margaret Fuller; Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis (from the ballet Giselle); and Kundry (from the opera Parsifal) all make appearances. The dialog is terse and the action tense in this trenchant tale of imagination and feminine anger and grief. Recently excerpted in the New Yorker (5/31/93), this play had its premiere (in translation) in Bonn during September 1991. Recommended for all drama and literature collections.

- Carolyn M. Mulac, Chicago P.L.

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Review

"Oddly eloquent."

--Bruce Weber, The New York Times

"The dialog is terse and the action tense in this trenchant tale of imagination and feminine anger and grief.... Recommended for all drama and literature collections."

--Library Journal

Users Review

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