

## A Critical Rethinking of Notes on Camp and Susan Sontag's Literary Identity

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### Abstract

The essay Notes on Camp explores nature of ubiquitous phenomenon and imposition of intricate meaning to a Camp. It navigates with a vivid depiction of the idea of Camp with a divergent modality. Camp as Sontag states is more than just the beauty of the world, but the underlying view of the artifice and aestheticism. It is a spectacular occurrence engulfs in perception beyond credibility and believability. She relates Camp as homosexuality taste and describes it as being playful, embellished with debonair beauty which seem shared with the homosexuals, along with love, and love for human nature being fulfilled in unique representation.

**Keywords-**Notes on Camp, Divergent Modality, apolitical and depoliticized, aestheticism.

According to Susan Sontag, a lot of things have not received their names in this complex world, if so, and then they are deprived of their identity through description. Out of which sensibility unmistakably modern and a variant of sophistication but scarcely alike, synonymous and goes with the cult name "Camp".

She opines strongly that a sensibility possesses complexity and hardest things to be discussed. A sensibility as she says is generally abnormal, if any; the synopsis of Camp is its love of unnatural, of artifice and exaggeration. She furthermore says that Camp is esoteric-something and somehow confidential code and a distinctive mark of identity among small urban exclusive group. In order to concretize the idea, she talks in the Christopher Isherwood's novel The World in the Evening (1954). She that's why emphasizes to talk about Camp is to betray it. And if betrayal can be defended it will be for the edification it provides or the respect of the conflict it resolves. As per her own sensibility, she puts a strong argument and proclaims the architectural and stimulus of a sharp conflict. She again vehemently says that she has been drawn to Camp and she was strongly offended. Hence, she takes it to her heart and soul and discussed in details which wholeheartedly for someone is difficult to share, analyze, whatever his intention exhibit it. However, in order to name sensibility, advocacy and reminiscent of its past, requires a deep sympathy changed by revulsion.

She claims that she only is speaking about sensibility out of many other things, which converts the serious into unimportance are generally acute in nature. And sensibility is surmised or perceived by most of the people as its taste as the realm of solely subjective preferences and the mysterious attractions mainly are sensual, and that have not been paced in the sovereignty of reason. As they accepted that the considerations of taste has a

role in their relations to people and to works of art. However, the attitude lacks wisdom and it is worse too. She states that patronizing the faculty of taste is to patronizing oneself. Furthermore, she says taste is ubiquitous as it abounds in people like visual taste, taste in emotion, and taste in acts and in morality. Intelligence is not an exception to it and it is considered as the taste in idea.

Notwithstanding, Susan Sontag tries to legitimize that, taste possesses logic coherence but does possess no system and proofs, as the consistent sensibility which underlies and gives rise to a certain taste. The intensity of ineffability of sensibility is very high but not absolute. And argues and concretizes that if any sensibility that can be digested or crammed into the mold of a system, or managed with the rough tools of proof is no longer a sensibility and it has handed into idea.

She states in comprehending the very terminology sensibility connotatively, there is a possibility of ambiguity since the term is equivocated in nature, whereas when the very term is understood as denotatively then there is a possibility of specificity. The understood by the author s something different from the world comprehended it. In order to concretize Sontag cites example for Oscar Wilde as “One should either be a work of art or wear a work of art”.

Sontag comprehends Camp extensively and explains it vividly as Camp is a way of viewing the vista on the earth as an aesthetic phenomenon, not in terms of mere beauty but in terms of degree of stylization and artifice. She gives more importance on style as it depicts the Camp sensibility as disengaged, apolitical and depoliticized. A Camp on one hand, visualized the aesthetics, on the other hand, people view things in totality ranging from behaviors to qualities in an object. It can be found in furniture, clothes, buildings, people and novels. More precisely Camp is a ubiquitous phenomenon.

Sontag claims that taste has a higher affinity for specific type arts than others. For instance, clothes, furniture and the general appearance of décor from the larger part of the Camp. She states that for Camp art is often decorative art giving importance to texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content. However, concert music, since it is content-less, hence is scarcely Camp. But sometimes the whole art forms become saturated with Camp. And all forms of art movie criticism is most possibly the greatest popularize of Camp taste today because most of the people still love movies and visit in high-spirited unpretentious way. Hence, it is accurate to pronounce a piece is too good to be Camp. In order to give a more concretize idea some of the examples the works she gave, include by those by Jean Cocteau whom she believes his work is a Camp but not those of Andre Gide. She also claims that nothing natural can be Campy. Everything Campy has to be an artifice.

Sontag claims that Camp may not seem real from realistic point of view. It enables people to view world in style, particularly in an exaggerated style. It also sees thing in quotation marks. A Camp is generally intentional and deadly serious. However, when something is just bad, it is not considered a Camp. It is a work of art that delineates itself seriously but can't be taken too seriously because it is an exaggeration. Camp is also an effort to perform something spectacular. It is the glorification of character.

Susan Sontag states that we love art because of its seriousness, sensibilities and dignity which it achieves. The sensibilities presuppose morals, aestheticism, style and dethroned seriousness. Simultaneously it proposes the comic vision of the world.

She later tries to defend her ideological apparatus related to homosexuality by concretizing that not all homosexual have Camp taste since people defined Camp as synonymous to homosexual taste, rejected vehemently by claiming and terming them as propaganda. Furthermore, she explains that Camp taste is a means of refreshment or enjoyment, generosity and love for human nature. Camp taste nourishes itself as that love has gone into certain objects or styles. In her concluding remarks, Sontag says that “it is good because it is awful”. However, that only applies to that which she has sketched.

In her essay, Sontag included varied references other artistic pieces produced by other writers using their ideologies as a base to justify her definition of Camp. She argued that the Camp we witness is a surface one that is just the playful aspect of it and the pretense of the fake elegance; rather it is something beyond the things we see. She delineates Camp as being a more serious aspect of art and one which needs researched input whenever a person wants to produce a piece. On the contrary, she also claims that those very serious artistic works which fail to impress also from an element of Camp. Simultaneously she states that, a Camp is a sensibility that evaluates the world on strict aesthetic terms.

Sontag, in her essay, claims that Camp is specifically characterized by the theatrical exaggeration or artificial love for the unnatural converting seriousness into the frivolous. “It represents a victory of style over content, aesthetic over morality”. She later pointed out the lesbian people as the sole beneficiary of the Camp taste as vanguard and the most articulate audience describing them homosexual aestheticism.

At a particular juncture, the readers started suspecting that the knowledge of Sontag on Camp is decreasing as she starts to indulge in topics not as relevant to her initial ideology as expected. For example, she introduces the gay topic pertinent to Camp taste. The real sense including homosexuality in Camp may not be seen by many readers. She over-talks about homosexuality and deteriorate the value of the essay for which readers may be mistaken to forget the initial intent of the writer.

As Sontag focuses on the gays in relation to Camp taste, the homosexual found the essay more fascinating thus they read it intensively losing the initial intent of the essay. On the basis of this view point, they were not concerned with the other aspects of Camp. They did not give opinion of Camp as the expression of beauty but as Camp taste. With this view point, propagating the law, the essay became a point of focus for the gay rights activists.

That’s why the Femi-post-modernists receive a lacuna through which they evaluated and scrutinize Sontag’s article causing imbalance in the gender norms. As per Sontag’s comprehension and definition of Camp as the love for the unnatural, the homosexual adopted the ideology to justify their actions. It’s not candid that Camp taste, undoubtedly there is a peculiar affinity and overlap. Furthermore, they claim conformity to gender is not elegance. It is the non-conformity that makes an individual a Camp.

Sontag also describes in her essay, Camp as being elegant and beauty coincided each other. She emphasizes that a Camp is not a fake elegance, surrealistic appearance of the beauty of the world. Moreover, the elegance aspect of a Camp was displayed by Sontag using fashion and other forms of art. As already has been mentioned that Camp is ubiquitous, hence it can be found in movies, novels, buildings, people and furniture. From this view point it is proved that when a person seems Campy, a building or a movie it is their elegance that is depicted out loud. Furthermore, being elegant makes a product look remarkable just as similar definition she used in a Camp. To give an analogical statement, an inference of MacDonell concept of elegance in relation to Camp is something different from Sontag's. Elegance as a Camp in MacDonell is meant mainly for women to influence and embrace voluminous clothes, whereas, the main theme of Sontag's essay expressed different kinds.

### **Conclusion**

Sontag defines in her concluding statements, Camp as a sense of enjoyment not being judged and lots of appreciations. In the same way she claims that the Camp is love; love for human nature and beyond, things, objects, and personal styles. Simultaneously, she states that Camp is an expression of private ideology.

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