



# **Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil**

*Deborah Nelson*

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## **Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil** Deborah Nelson

This book focuses on six brilliant women who are often seen as particularly tough-minded: Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt, Mary McCarthy, Susan Sontag, Diane Arbus, and Joan Didion. Aligned with no single tradition, they escape straightforward categories. Yet their work evinces an affinity of style and philosophical viewpoint that derives from a shared attitude toward suffering. What Mary McCarthy called a “cold eye” was not merely a personal aversion to displays of emotion: it was an unsentimental mode of attention that dictated both ethical positions and aesthetic approaches.

*Tough Enough* traces the careers of these women and their challenges to the pre-eminence of empathy as *the* ethical posture from which to examine pain. Their writing and art reveal an adamant belief that the hurts of the world must be treated concretely, directly, and realistically, without recourse to either melodrama or callousness. As Deborah Nelson shows, this stance offers an important counter-tradition to the familiar postwar poles of emotional expressivity on the one hand and cool irony on the other. Ultimately, in its insistence on facing reality without consolation or compensation, this austere “school of the unsentimental” offers new ways to approach suffering in both its spectacular forms and all of its ordinariness.

## **Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil Details**

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## **From Reader Review Tough Enough: Arbus, Arendt, Didion, McCarthy, Sontag, Weil for online ebook**

### **Leanne says**

This one was tough to get through, and sometimes the author got a little unnecessarily technical with her philosophy-jargon. But a lot of the background information was interesting; there's enough here to give you a jumping-off point for your next book.

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