



May Sarton: Biography

Margot Peters

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The first biography of May Sarton: a brilliant revelation of the life and work of a literary figure who influenced her thousands of readers not only by her novels and poetry, but by her life and her writings about it.

May Sarton's career stretched from 1930 (early sonnets published in Poetry magazine) to 1995 (her journal At Eighty-Two). She wrote more than twenty novels, and twenty-five books of poems and journals.

The acclaimed biographer Margot Peters was given full access to Sarton's letters, journals, and notes, and during five years of research came to know Sarton herself--the complex woman and artist. She gives us a compelling portrait of Sarton the actress, the poet, the novelist, the feminist, the writer who struggled for literary acceptance. She shows us, beneath Sarton's exhilarating, irresistible spirit, the needy courtier and seducer, the woman whose creativity was propelled by the psychic drama she created in others.

We watch young May at age two as she is abruptly uprooted from her native Belgium by World War I, a child ignored both by her mother, who was intent on her own artistic vision and reluctant to cope with a child, and by her father, obsessed with his academic research.

We see Sarton as a young girl in America, and then later, at nineteen, choosing a life in the theatre, landing a job in Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory, and gathering what would become a tight-knit coterie of friends and lovers . . . Sarton beginning to write poetry and novels . . . Sarton making friends with Elizabeth Bowen and Julian Huxley, Erika and Klaus Mann, Virginia Woolf, the poet H.D.--charming and enlisting them with her work, her vitality, her hunger for love, driven by her need to conquer (among her conquests: Bowen, Huxley, and later his wife, Juliette).

We see her intense friendships with literary pals, including Muriel Rukeyser (her lover), and Louise Bogan, Sarton's "literary sibling, who at once encouraged her and excluded her from a world in which Bogan was a central figure.

We see Sarton begin to create in the spiritual journals that inspired the devotion of readers the image of a strong, independent woman who lived peacefully with solitude--an image that contradicted the reality of her neediness, loneliness, and isolation as she pushed away loved ones with her demands and betrayals.

A fascinating portrait of one of our major literary figures--a book that for the first time reveals the life that she herself kept hidden.

From the Hardcover edition.

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