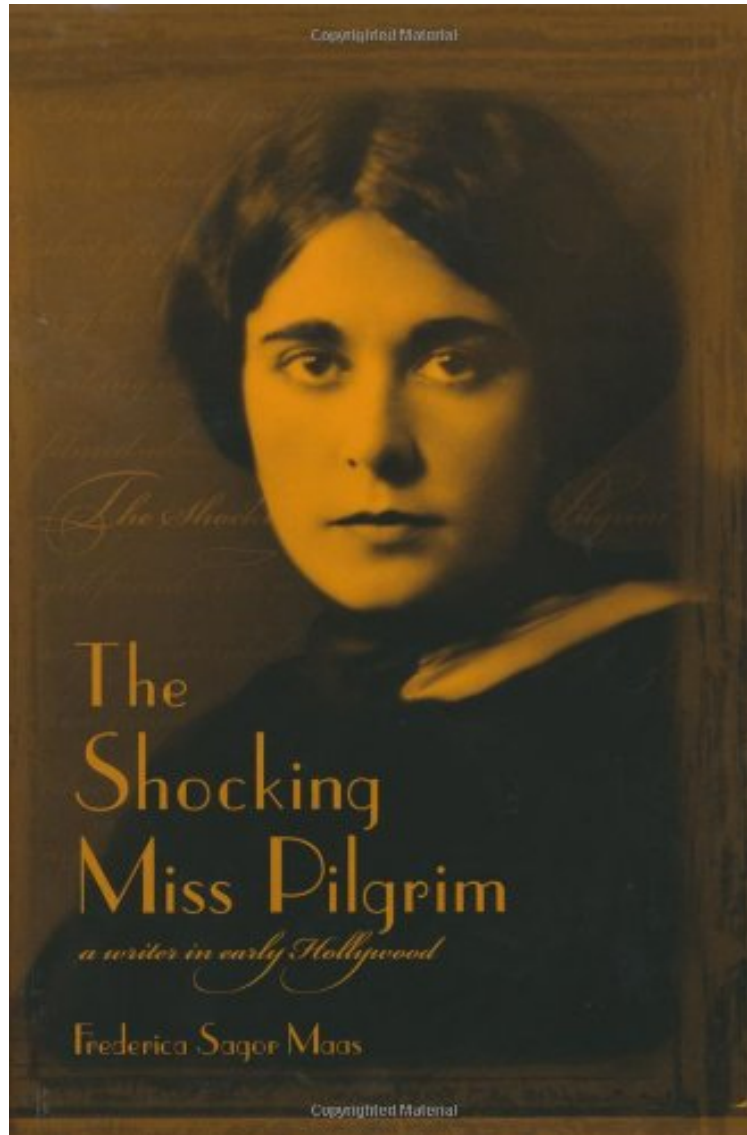


[PDF] The Shocking Miss Pilgrim: A Writer in Early Hollywood

The Shocking Miss Pilgrim: A Writer in Early Hollywood

Frederica Sagor Maas
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Frederica Sagor Maas : The Shocking Miss Pilgrim: A Writer in Early Hollywood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Shocking Miss Pilgrim: A Writer in Early Hollywood:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Interesting Miss MaasBy R PRIUSYears ago I read a book by Paul Zollo which was a collection of interviews with (at the time) living and still cognizant pioneers of the film industry. A screenwriter, Sagor Maas was the first interviewee and the oldest one as well. The entire collection of

interviews was interesting and revealing and Sagor Maas' interview was among the best in my opinion. That's how I came to read this book the first time. Sagor Maas came up in conversation a couple of weeks ago and I figured her death might have gone unnoticed. Reasoning that very few people make it to 110+ I did the perfunctory check online and could not confirm or deny her passing. The other day I saw her obituary and decided to reread her book. At 111, she had survived her earliest contemporaries and was probably one of the last links from the silent era excluding some juveniles that may still be with us. On my first reading of this book, I liked it quite a bit. I still like it. While the writing wasn't /isn't all that great, she was extremely old when she wrote it. With that in mind, this is a good book that serves as a portal to the past that starts before movies talked. Sagor Maas was unique in many ways. The daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, she had unique opportunities for a young woman of her time. She had a university education, was intelligent and imaginative, and she had the chutzpah that even a man could appreciate and begrudgingly admire. While women had not broken through the glass ceiling in the film industry, in many ways they banded together both literally and figuratively to make their presence known. Sagor Maas enjoyed the upward mobility that her position afforded her, but she was hindered by many things. She was unflinchingly blunt and advocated unpopular causes. This book was enjoyable because it was crammed with anecdotes depicting life on the MGM lot and beyond. While not a star herself though she possessed the looks to have been one, she had access to well-known celebrities such as John Gilbert, Norma Shearer, and Greta Garbo. She viewed the talent as somewhat bereft of intellectual gifts, but still I found myself swooning a bit as she talked about the old days, her perceptions, and spiced things up with anecdotes aplenty. By the time she and her husband Ernest Maas sold their screenplay of what became *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*, the face and landscape in Hollywood was rapidly changing. The Maas' felt their concept/story was savaged (an understatement). Their socialist leanings put the final nail in the coffin as they were broke as well as finished in the film industry which was increasingly ruthless. They contemplated suicide but reconsidered it because they realized quite accurately that they had one another and left the film industry. Their story alone is worthy of a screen treatment. I'm in no position to evaluate their work as writers/scenarists, but given the post WWII sentiment which preceded full-blown McCarthyism it is safe to assume that Sagor Maas was not exaggerating on that aspect of her life. Given this book's limited availability, if you can score a copy it is an interesting read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. not a feminist view of Hollywood, but still a good story By kitza rather odd book, you do get the authors personality and aren't sure if you like her or not! She plays the sophisticate to the naive newbie as it pleases her. But, not too many problems being a woman in Hollywood.. which I rather expected to hear more about. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Roads no taken By John G. Watt Rather sad reflections on a life which really did not go anywhere despite some astounding opportunities.

" Freddie Maas's revealing memoir offers a unique perspective on the film industry and Hollywood culture in their early days and illuminates the plight of Hollywood writers working within the studio system. An ambitious twenty-three-year-old, Maas moved to Hollywood and launched her own writing career by drafting a screenplay of the bestselling novel *The Plastic Age* for "It" girl Clara Bow. On the basis of that script, she landed a staff position at powerhouse MGM studios. In the years to come, she worked with and befriended numerous actors and directors, including Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, and Eric von Stroheim, as well as such writers and producers as Thomas Mann and Louis B. Mayer. As a professional screenwriter, Frederica quickly learned that scripts and story ideas were frequently rewritten and that screen credit was regularly given to the wrong person. Studio executives wanted well-worn plots, but it was the writer's job to develop the innovative situations and scintillating dialogue that would bring to picture to life. For over twenty years, Freddie and her friends struggled to survive in this incredibly competitive environment. Through it all, Freddie remained a passionate, outspoken woman in an industry run by powerful men, and her provocative, nonconformist ways brought her success, failure, wisdom, and a wealth of stories, opinions, and insight into a fascinating period in screen history.

.com Frederica Sagor Maas's life encompasses nearly the entire 20th century (she was born in early July 1900), and during the early years of the Hollywood film industry, she was as fierce a competitor for success as any man. Miss Sagor, still a student at Columbia College, was hired by Universal Pictures as an assistant story editor in 1920, when the job basically entailed attending Broadway plays and determining whether the studio should buy the film rights. Because her boss was an alcoholic, she soon found herself in complete charge of the story department. But she wanted to write screenplays herself, so she went to Hollywood and landed a job adapting a novel called *The Plastic Age*, which Preferred Pictures had acquired as a perfect vehicle for the "It Girl," Clara Bow. In *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*, Frederica--who met and married filmmaker Ernest Maas in 1927--shows how, despite her screenwriting abilities, her career in motion pictures was stymied by her outspoken disagreements with studio bosses, and how many of those around her gave into debauchery. (At one party, she reports, "undressed, tousled men chased naked women, shrieking with laughter. Included in this orgy was Ray Long, Mr. Hearst's representative; Harry Rapf, my own producer; and even the immaculate Irving Thalberg--all drunk, drunk, drunk.") Her memoir's prose has a charming tone, perfectly matching her Jazz Age exploits, which take up the bulk of the story. She also discusses the decline of the Maas's

careers, which they finally abandoned after the Second World War, but not before writing a musical (called *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*) for Betty Grable. The best passages concern Frederica's adventures in a young industry that was still discovering itself, such as her part in the creation of a motion picture legend: newly arrived actress Lucille LeSueur came up to her one day and said, "I like the way you dress. You dress like a lady. I need that. I want to be dressed right. Smart. I figured you could help." One shopping expedition later, and Joan Crawford was taking her first steps toward stardom. --Ron Hogan

From *Publishers Weekly* "This is a story that will make you angry," warns Brownlow, a noted film historian. Maas, a screenwriter during the 1920s, '30s and '40s, delivers on that promise. In 1920, she answered a New York Times classified ad from Universal Pictures, becoming, at age 23, Universal's N.Y.C. story editor. In 1925, she arrived in Hollywood, turned down a screen test and instead scripted a Clara Bow vehicle, *The Plastic Age*. Installed in the MGM writers' bungalow, she tackled a rewrite of *Dance Madness* (1926) but proved so "ignorant of studio politics" that she was labeled a "troublemaker" by producer Harry Rapf. After her 1927 marriage to script writer and producer Ernest Maas, the couple survived the coming of sound films, the Depression and various earthquakes, but dry scripting spells and the constant theft of their ideas, stories and credits led them to quit the business. In 1950 she "bid farewell, without tears, to the Hollywood screen industry that had so entangled and entrapped me in its web of promises." Maas trashes Hollywood legends, recalling Louis B. Mayer as "a very fearful, insecure man"; Clara Bow dancing nude on a tabletop; Jeanne Eagels squatting to urinate in the midst of a film set; and Marion Davies commenting on her affair with Hearst: "I'm a slave, that's what. A toy poodle." In this memorable tell-all, rise-and-fall memoir, Maas brings the gimlet hindsight of Julia Phillips's *You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again* to early Hollywood, and the results are thoroughly captivating. Photos. (June) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From *Library Journal* Film criticism has inspired curiosity about those "behind the screen" who shaped film history. In this spirit, Maas's chronicle of her writing career, which spanned over a quarter of a century, is a valuable contribution to the literature on women in Hollywood. Maas arrived at Universal in 1920 as a lowly story editor's assistant and worked her way up to screenwriter at MGM, enduring close encounters with megalomaniacal moguls. She quickly learned to forego integrity in the name of profits and was not above denigrating what serious reputation she might have cultivated by adapting vacuous star vehicles for the likes of Norma Shearer and Clara Bow. Her reward? The occasional credit, when the powers-that-be deigned to dole out accolades. Rejecting studio politics, Maas ultimately paid the price for playing maverick. Peppered with fascinating anecdotes from yesteryear, this account of the author's life bespeaks frustration with the vapidity of Hollywood: a fickle business world that relied on formula for its success. Things haven't changed much. Recommended. AJayne Plymale, Univ. of Georgia, Athens Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.