



# The Complete Stories

*Mary Butts*

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## **The Complete Stories** Mary Butts

The short stories of Mary Butts (1890-1937) possess an intriguing relation to the present moment. They both embody their time (the Lost Generation during the '20s and '30s) and possess a stylistic freshness and intellectual breadth that feels very akin to our present day. As John Ashbery remarks in his preface, "After reading Butts one is left with an impression of dazzle, of magic, but what made it is hard to pin down...One keeps getting the feeling that these stories were written yesterday." Now, for the first time in a single volume, all three of her story collections have been gathered, and seven uncollected stories have been added (including two pieces never before published). The power of hidden things and things of hidden power preoccupy these distinctive tales of love and betrayal, magic and mummery, belief and folly. Here, in the realm of active imagination, the veil between natural and supernatural may be rent apart in an instant, and just as quickly restored. The novelist and poet Glenway Wescott declared Mary Butts's first collection of stories, *Speed the Plough*, "the announcement of a new intellect, acute and passionate, to scrutinize experience with an unfamiliar penetration," which he then went on to compare with James Joyce's *Dubliners*. Marianne Moore, Evelyn Waugh, HD, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Ford Madox Ford, and Virgil Thomson all championed her work, and during her tragically brief lifetime Mary Butts's reputation rivaled Katherine Mansfield's and Virginia Woolf's. Her style is swift, elliptical and emotionally charged, exactly matched to the free-wheeling lives of her characters in Paris and London during an explosive era.

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