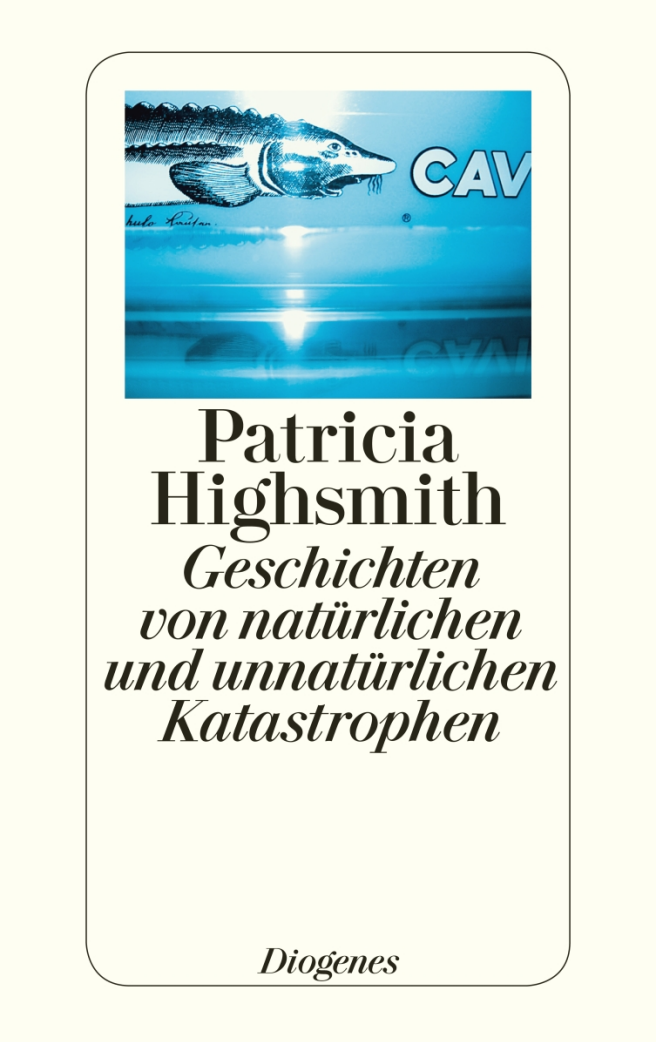
Diogenes

Book factsheet

Patricia Highsmith
Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes

Published by Diogenes as *Geschichten von natürlichen und unnatürlichen Katastrophen*
Original title: *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes*



›The thing looked bluish-white, was about fifteen centimetres high, rounded at the top with what looked like a convolution or crease half way down it that disappeared in the earth. (...) Oktavian returned to the gravediggers, and realized that he had been holding his breath. He supposed, he was almost sure, that the growths out there in the darkness were highly contaminous. They would combine the carcinogens injected by the doctors as well as the original berserk cells that had caused the cancer. How large would they become? And what was nourishing them? Terrifying questions! Oktavian, like most medical students, sent chums an odd part of the human anatomy once in a while. It was almost a token of affection when a fellow received such a present in the post from a girl student, but something like this? No.‹ Grotesque ulcerations, which grow to immense sizes; huge cockroaches resistant to all forms of insecticides, which take over the control of a New York apartment building; whales, the pope, a weapon-loving US president – all provide the material of which modern (natural and unnatural) catastrophes are made.

Contemporary Literature
272 pages
11.6 × 18.4 cm
March 1988

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Translation rights currently sold:
English/USA (Grove /Atlantic)
French (Calmann-Lévy)
Greek (Agra)
Italian (La nave di Teseo)
Spanish/world (Anagrama)

Movie adaptations

2024: Ripley
Director: Steven Zaillian
Screenplay: Steven Zaillian
Cast: Andrew Scott, Dakota Fanning, Johnny Flynn

2021: Deep Water
Director: Adrian Lyne
Screenplay: Zack und Sam Levinson Helm
Cast: Ben Affleck und Ana de Armas

2021: Loving Highsmith
Director: Eva Vitija
Cast: Bekannte und unbekannte Schauspieler

2016: A Kind Of Murder
Director: Andy Goddard
Screenplay: Susan Boyd
Cast: Patrick Wilson, Jessica Biel, Haley Bennett

2015: Carol / Salz und sein Preis
Director: Todd Haynes
Screenplay: Phyllis Nagy
Cast: Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara und Kyle Chandler

2014: The two faces of January
Director: Hossein Amini
Screenplay: Hossein Amini
Cast: Kirsten Dunst, Viggo Mortensen, Oscar Isaac

2009: Cry of the Owl
Director: Jamie Thraves
Screenplay: Jamie Thraves
Cast: Paddy Considine, Julia Stiles

2005: Ripley under Ground
Director: Roger Spottiswoode
Cast: Barry Pepper, Tom Wilkinson, Claire Forlani

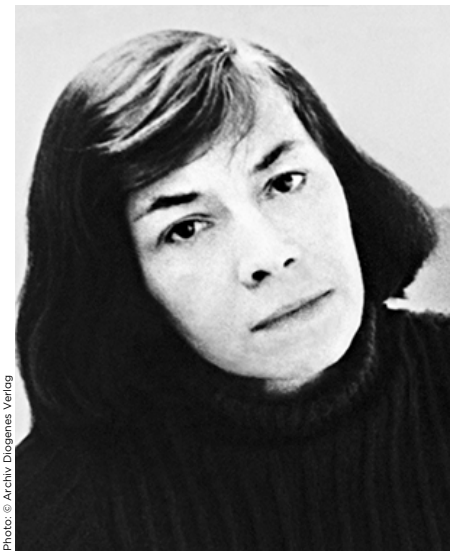
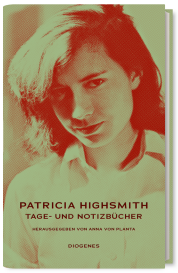
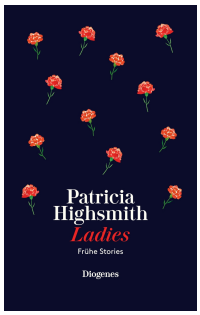


Photo: © Archiv Diogenes Verlag

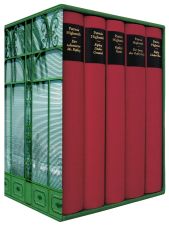
Patricia Highsmith (1921 – 1995), born in Fort Worth, Texas, grew up in Texas and New York and studied Literature and Zoology. She wrote her first short stories while still in high school and initially earned a living as a comic book writer. She had her first international hit in 1950 with her debut novel *Strangers on a Train,* and the film adaptation by Alfred Hitchcock catapulted her to worldwide fame. Patricia Highsmith died in Locarno in 1995.



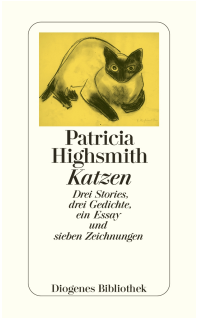
Her Diaries and Notebooks
1376 pages
2021



Ladies
320 pages
2020
Bestseller



The Complete Ripley Novels
2224 pages
2015



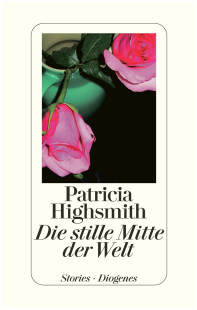
Cats
160 pages
2005



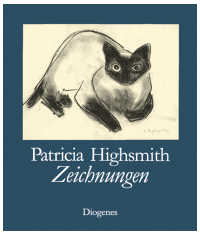
The Animal-Lover's Book Of Beastly Murder / Little Tales Of Misogyny
416 pages
2004



Posthumous Short Stories II
384 pages
2002



Posthumous Short Stories I
400 pages
2002



Drawings
144 pages
1995

Movie adaptations (cont'd)

1999: The Talented Mr. Ripley
Director: Anthony Minghella
Cast: Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law, Cate Blanchett

1996: Once You Meet a Stranger
Director: Tommy Lee Wallace
Cast: Jacqueline Bisset, Mimi Kennedy, Andi Chapman

1993: Trip nach Tunis
Director: Peter Goedel
Cast: Hunt David, Sillas Karen

1991: Der Geschichtenerzähler
Director: Rainer Boldt
Cast: Christine Kaufmann, Udo Schenk, Anke Sevenich

1989: L´Amateur de Frissons
Director: Roger Andrieux
Cast: Jean-Pierre Bisson, Marisa Berenson

1989: Le jardin des Disparus
Director: Mai Zetterling
Cast: Ian Holm, Eileen Atkins

1989: L´Epouvantail
Director: Maroun Bagdad
Cast: Jean-Pierre Cassel, J. Fox

1989: A Curious Suicide
Director: Bob Biermann
Cast: Nicol Williamson, J. Lapotaire

1989: La ferme du malheur
Director: Samuel Fuller
Cast: Philippe Léotard, Assumpta Serna, Chris Campion

1989: Legitime Défense
Director: John Berry
Cast: T. Weld, D. Olbrychski

1987: Le cri du hibou
Director: Claude Chabrol
Screenplay: Odile Barski
Cast: Christophe Malavoy, Mathilda May, Jean-Pierre Kalfon

1986: Die zwei Gesichter des Januars
Director: Wolfgang Storch
Cast: Yolande Gilot, Charles Brauer, Thomas Schücke

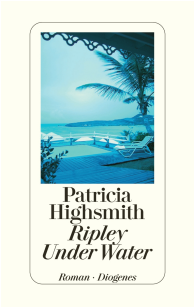
1983: Tiefe Wasser
Director: Franz Peter Wirth
Cast: Jo Nasch, Vic van Allen

1983: Ediths Tagebuch
Director: Hans Werner Geissendörfer
Cast: Angela Winkler, Vadim Glowna, Leopold Verschuer

1981: Eaux profondes
Director: Michel Deville
Screenplay: Florence Delay
Cast: Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Jean-Luc Moreau



Small g - a Summer idyll
432 pages
1995



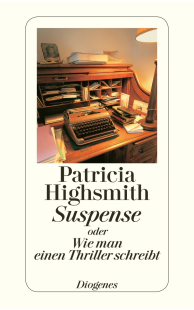
Ripley Under Water
432 pages
1991



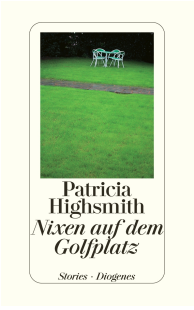
Carol or The Price of Salt
408 pages
1990
Movie Adaptation



Found in the Street
360 pages
1986



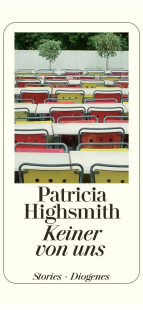
Suspense
136 pages
1985



Mermaids on the Golf Course and Other Stories
232 pages
1985



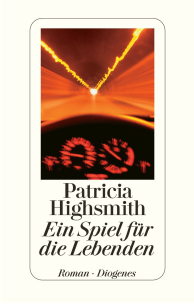
People Who Knock on the Door
384 pages
1983



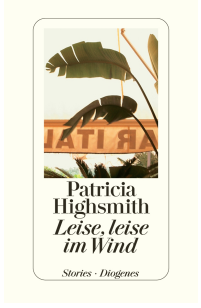
The Black House
352 pages
1982



The Boy who Followed Ripley
496 pages
1980



A Game for the Living
336 pages
1979



Slowly, Slowly in the Wind
288 pages
1979



Edith's Diary
436 pages
1978
Movie Adaptation



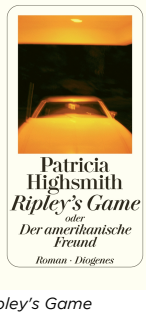
The Glass Cell
288 pages
1976
Movie Adaptation



Deep Water
304 pages
1976
Movie Adaptation



The Cry of the Owl
320 pages
1976
Movie Adaptation



Ripley's Game
384 pages
1976

Movie adaptations (cont'd)

1977: Dites-lui que je l'aime
Director: Claude Miller
Cast: Gérard Depardieu, Miou-Miou

1977: Die gläserne Zelle
Director: Hans Geissendörfer
Cast: Helmut Griem, Brigitte Fossey, Dieter Laser

1976: L'ami americain
Director: Wim Wenders
Cast: Bruno Ganz, Dennis Hopper, Lisa Kreuzer

1969: Once You Kiss a Stranger
Director: Robert Sparr
Cast: Paul Burke, Carol Lynley, Martha Hyer

1963: Le meurtrier; Enough Rope
Director: Claude Autant-Lara
Cast: Gert Fröbe, Maurice Ronet, Robert Hossein, Yvonne Fourneaux, Marina Vlady

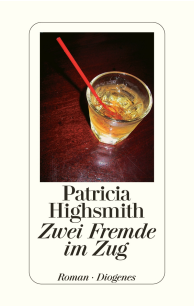
1962: Le meurtrier
Director: Claude Autant-Lara
Cast: Robert Hossein, Marina Vlady, Gert Fröbe, Maurice Ronet

1959: Plein soleil
Director: René Clément
Cast: Alain Delon, Maurice Ronet, Marie Laforet

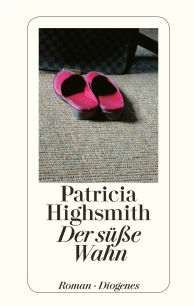
1951: Strangers on a Train
Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Cast: Farley Granger, Ruth Roman, Robert Walker

Awards

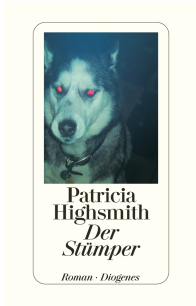
2015 *Carol*-Kinofilm von Todd Haynes bekommt ›Preis der Frankfurter Buchmesse‹ als ›beste literarische Verfilmung‹
1993 ›Finnischer Krimipreis‹ der Suomen dekkariseura für ihr Gesamtwerk
1990 ›Officier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres‹
1987 ›Prix Littéraire‹ des Festival du cinéma américain von Deauville
1979 ›Schwedischer Krimipreis‹ in der Kategorie ›Grand Master‹ der Svenska Deckarakademin als Auszeichnung für das Lebenswerk der Autorin
1975 ›Grand Prix de l'Humour Noir‹ für *L'Amateur d'escargot* (dt. *Der Schneckenforscher;* Original: *The Snail Watcher*)
1964 ›Dagger Award‹ in der Kategorie ›Best Foreign Novel‹ für The *Two Faces of January* (dt. *Unfall auf Kreta/Die zwei Gesichter des Januars*)
1957 ›Grand prix de littérature policière‹ in der Kategorie ›International‹ für *Plein Soleil – Monsieur Ripley* (dt. *Der talentierte Mr. Ripley*; Original: *The Talented Mr. Ripley*)



Strangers on a Train
256 pages
1974
Movie Adaptation
Bestseller



This Sweet Sickness
272 pages
1974
Movie Adaptation



The Blunderer
272 pages
1974
Movie Adaptation



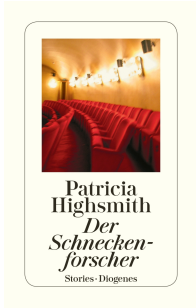
A Dog's Ransom
400 pages
1974



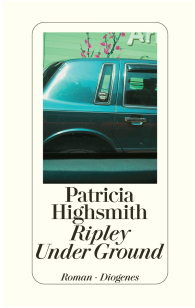
The Two Faces of January
256 pages
1974
Movie Adaptation



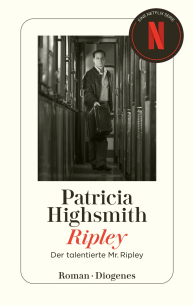
A Suspension of Mercy
224 pages
1974
Movie Adaptation



The Snail Watcher
256 pages
1973



Ripley Under Ground
368 pages
1972
Movie Adaptation



The Talented Mr. Ripley
336 pages
1971
Movie Adaptation



The Tremor of Forgery
288 pages
1970



Those Who Walk Away
336 pages
1968

Awards (cont'd)

1946 ›O. Henry-Preis‹ in der Kategorie ›Best First-Published Story‹ für *The Heroine* (dt. *Die Heldin*. Dt. in: *Der Schneckenforscher*; in Original: *The Snail Watcher*)

Praise

Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes

»These stories leave us haunted with after-images that will tremble - but stay in our minds.« – The New Yorker

Patricia Highsmith

»Many of her stories reflect the kind of breathtaking misanthropy that could only have been achieved over a lifetime. And virtually all share the same sense of macabre inevitability, which means that the number of stories end up in almost that many deaths. Ms. Highsmith was never one for halfway solutions. What is interesting about Ms. Highsmith is that instead of describing such an denouement with suitably ghoulish overtones, she typically treats it in almost businesslike fashion. Her interest is in the generally unspeakable tensions and resentments that lead up to such outbursts, not in the messy side of murder.« – Janet Maslin / The New York Times

»Patricia Highsmith is a giant of the genre. The original, the best, the gloriously twisted Queen of Suspense.« – Mark Billingham

»Patricia Highsmith was every bit as deviant and quirky as her mischievous heroes, and didn't seem to mind if everyone knew it.« – J.G. Ballard / Daily Telegraph, London

»Patricia Highsmith should be considered an essential postwar writer who captured the neurotic apprehensions of her times. By her hypnotic art Patricia Highsmith puts the suspense story into a toweringly high place in the hierarchy of fiction.« – The Times, London

»One thinks of comparing Miss Highsmith only with herself; by any other standard of comparison, one must simply cheer.« – Auberon Waugh

»To call Patricia Highsmith a thriller writer is true but not the whole truth: her books have stylistic texture, psychological depth, mesmeric readability.« – Sunday Times, London

»Although she is today one of the world's most widely read contemporary authors, there is still more of Patricia Highsmith to discover...« – Le Monde, Paris

»Patricia Highsmith keeps moving, darting in and out of our fields of vision, making afterimages that will tremble – but stay – in our minds.« – The New Yorker

»For eliciting the menace that lurks in familiar surroundings, there's no one like Patricia Highsmith.« – The Times, London

Praise (cont'd)

»Patricia Highsith was the undisputed mistress as well as one of the creators of the modern psychological crime novel.« – Simon Shaw / Mail on Sunday

»Miss Highsmith is a novelist whose books one can re-read many times. There are very few of whom one can say that. She has created a world of her own - a world claustrophobic and irrational which we enter each time with a sense of personal danger. [...] Highsmith is the poet of apprehension.« – Graham Greene

»One of our greatest modernist writers.« – Gore Vidal

»Patricia Highsmith, the greatest of all crime writers.« – The Times, London

»Ripley has always been a source of inspiration for cinema, which is what makes him lively, shining and omnipresent still today.« – Nadia Terranova / La Stampa, Torino

»Everything appears entirely causal in Highsmith's books. Logically inferred, and presented in a dramaturgically polished manner.« – Ronald Pohl / Der Standard, Vienna

»To read Highsmith's stories is a delight, a real celebration.« – Alex Rühle / Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich

»For some unknown reason Patricia Highsmith, one of the most important modern narrators, is regarded as an author of crime novels. She is both.« – Gore Vidal

»In the best stories, there is a clarity in terms of composition and a unity in tone that reminds you of Edgar Allan Poe, staged with a backdrop that evokes Edward Hopper.« – Tiziano Gianotti / La Repubblica, Rome

»The grande dame of the thriller turns 100 and is more up to date than ever. Her creatures are patrolling the moral low life of our nature, committing their cruelest crimes.« – Laura Ventura / La Nación, Buenos Aires

»Truly, Highsmith, who was an avid reader of Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard, illuminates the shimmering shades of good and evil.« – Maike Albath / Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich

»Highsmith's unfathomable nature is every bit as deep as Fyodor Dostoevsky or Joseph Conrad's hellscapes.« – Jan Wilm / Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Zurich

»... queen of psychological suspense.« – The Guardian, London

»Patricia Highsmith will take you on a journey, into temptation, passion, guilt, cruelty and danger. She is the voice that dogs you in the dark, seductive and persuasive, nightmarish yet irresistible.« – Amanda Craig

Praise (cont'd)

»I love the addictive quality of Highsmith's novels, her ›low hypnotic murmur‹ or the feverish, lyrical prose in *Carol.*« – Jill Dawson

»Although I'm a great admirer of Patricia Highsmith's thrillers and the complex moral landscape she explores, for me the high watermark will always be *Carol,* aka *The Price of Salt*« – Val McDermid

»Highsmith (1921-1995) introduced new layers of psychological complexity to the crime thriller, one key reason why filmmakers continue to be so attracted to her.« – Geoffrey Macnab / The Independent, London

»Whereas other crime writers' work often becomes dated or seems tied to a specific period or place, Highsmith's books have enduring and universal appeal.« – Geoffrey Macnab / The Independent, London

»We are often drawn into Highsmith's claustrophobic world like flies tentatively exploring the gossamer strands of a spider's web.« – Andrew Wilson / The Sunday Times, London

»The canonization of Patricia Highsmith – doyenne of the psychological suspense novel, depressive homosexual, mean drunk, and one of the greatest, darkest American storytellers since Poe – has officially begun.« – Terry Castle

»When you read one of Highsmith's stories, you've given her permission to follow you, catch you, take you apart. Get ready to run.« – Carmen Maria Machado / The Guardian, London

»The 21st century – when imposture is at the heart of online life, when self-identification precedes authenticity – seems more and more like the age of Tom Ripley, Highsmith's greatest creation.« – Matthew Sperling / Apollo Magazine, London

»She revolutionized the detective novel by inventing, just after the Second World War, the psychological thriller.« – Élise Lépine / Alibi, Paris

»Nobody describes the horror of murder more vividly.« – Nando Salvà / El Periódico, Barcelona

»And ever since Hitchcock's classic *Strangers on a Train* (1951), Highsmith grows more filmable every year, perhaps because our world is so swiftly catching up with the sort of people she wrote about: men and women who lie, commit forgery, and develop manipulative fictions to damage everyone around them.« – Scott Bradfield / The Spectator, London

»Her works keep their powerful attraction intact, the sensation that, by them, we draw closer to the abyss from which we are trying to run away from.« – Guillermo Altares / El País, Madrid

Praise (cont'd)

»Reading her is like having a devil on your shoulder arguing that decency and good citizenship are boring and cowardly, and so compellingly that you've acquiesced before you know it.« – Jake Kerridge / The Telegraph, London

»She was also the first to make short work of the hitherto almost sacred dualism of good and bad, and cancelled out the traditional ending« – Charles den Tex and Anneloes Timmerije / De Volkskrant, Amsterdam

»With a concise and minimalistic style, inspired by Maupassant, Highsmith draws a character who is the pinnacle of the inversion of values postulated by Nietzsche and who tramples traditional values.« – Rafael Narbona / El Cultural, Madrid

»Highsmith wanted to show the murderers, almost murderers and murder fantasists from the inside because it rarely shows from the outside.« – Jürgen Kaube / Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, Frankfurt

»The constant inner apprehension, which one is subject to while reading, does not end after the last sentence.« – Linda Stift / Die Presse am Sonntag, Vienna

»You should read Highsmith because she dared to look into the abyss where our blackest thoughts reside.« – John Vervoort / De Standaard, Brussels

»The notion that her books do not belong on those shelves because the complexity of their characters or the acuity with which they interrogate social mores, is laughable – for this is exactly what the very best crime novels do.
It is why they endure. It is why we find them irresistible.
And it is why we will likely be reading Patricia Highsmith for the next one hundred years, too.« – Paula Hawkins / crimereads.com

»The profusion of *Ripley-esque* stories is perhaps no coincidence. For the con-artistry of *Ripley* speaks more than ever to our Instagram age, where the carefully-curated and crafted image trumps reality.« – Hugh Montgomery / BBC, London

»Highsmith's writing style keeps you on the edge of your seat.« – Terri-Jane Dow / Mslexia, Newcastle Upon Tyne

»Tense, compelling and disturbing, though her subject matter is, Highsmith's writing is sharp and witty – and incredibly readable.« – Terri-Jane Dow / Mslexia, Newcastle Upon Tyne