

## Patricia Highsmith *Suspense*

Published by Diogenes as *Suspense*  
Original title: *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction*



## Patricia Highsmith *Suspense* oder *Wie man einen Thriller schreibt*

*Diogenes*

In this book, Highsmith analyzes the key elements of suspense fiction, drawing upon her own experience in four decades as a working writer.

Throughout the book, Highsmith illustrates her points with plentiful examples from her own work, and by discussing her own inspirations, false starts, dead ends, successes, and failures, she presents a lively and highly readable picture of the novelist at work.

## Book factsheet

Biographies, Contemporary Literature  
136 pages  
11.6 x 18.4 cm  
February 1985

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### Translation rights currently sold:

Catalan (L'Altra)  
Chinese/CN (Shanghai 99)  
English/UK (Little, Brown)  
French (Calmann-Lévy)  
Greek (Patakis)  
Italian (Minimum Fax)  
Japanese (Film Art)  
Korean (Booksphere)  
Portuguese/BRA (Intrínseca)  
Portuguese/PT (Cavalo de Ferro)  
Spanish/ES (Derecho y Reves)  
Spanish/ES (Ediciones UDP)

### 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



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



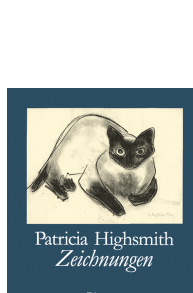
*The Animal-Lover's Book Of Beastly Murder / Little Tales Of Misogyny*  
416 pages  
2004



*Posthumous Short Stories II: Die Augen der Mrs. Blynn*  
384 pages  
2002



*Posthumous Short Stories I: Die stille Mitte der Welt*  
400 pages  
2002



*Drawings*  
144 pages  
1995

**Movie adaptations (cont'd)**

**2005: Ripley under Ground**

Director: Roger Spottiswoode  
Cast: Barry Pepper, Tom Wilkinson, Claire Forlani

**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'Épouvantail**

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 Schücker

**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



Patricia Highsmith  
*Small g - eine Sommeridylle*

Roman · Diogenes

*Small g - a Summer idyll*  
432 pages  
1995



Patricia Highsmith  
*Ripley Under Water*

Roman · Diogenes

*Ripley Under Water*  
432 pages  
1991



*Carol or The Price of Salt*  
408 pages  
1990

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Geschichten von natürlichen und unnatürlichen Katastrophen*

Diogenes

*Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes*  
272 pages  
1988



Patricia Highsmith  
*Elsies Lebenslust*

Roman · Diogenes

*Found in the Street*  
360 pages  
1986



Patricia Highsmith  
*Nixen auf dem Golfplatz*

Stories · Diogenes

*Mermaids on the Golf Course and Other Stories*  
232 pages  
1985



Patricia Highsmith  
*Leute, die an die Tür klopfen*

Roman · Diogenes

*People Who Knock on the Door*  
384 pages  
1983



Patricia Highsmith  
*Keiner von uns*

Stories · Diogenes

*The Black House*  
352 pages  
1982



Patricia Highsmith  
*Der Junge, der Ripley folgte*

Roman · Diogenes

*The Boy who Followed Ripley*  
496 pages  
1980



Patricia Highsmith  
*Ein Spiel für die Lebenden*

Roman · Diogenes

*A Game for the Living*  
336 pages  
1979



Patricia Highsmith  
*Leise, leise im Wind*

Stories · Diogenes

*Slowly, Slowly in the Wind*  
288 pages  
1979



Patricia Highsmith  
*Ediths Tagebuch*

Roman · Diogenes

*Edith's Diary*  
436 pages  
1978

**Movie Adaptation**

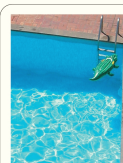


Patricia Highsmith  
*Die gläserne Zelle*

Roman · Diogenes

*The Glass Cell*  
288 pages  
1976

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Tiefe Wasser*

Roman · Diogenes

*Deep Water*  
304 pages  
1976

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Der Schrei der Eule*

Roman · Diogenes

*The Cry of the Owl*  
320 pages  
1976

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Ripley's Game*  
oder  
*Der amerikanische Freund*

Roman · Diogenes

*Ripley's Game*  
384 pages  
1976

## **Movie adaptations (cont'd)**

### **1981: Eaux profondes**

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

### **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 américain**

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 Fröhe, Maurice Ronet, Robert Hossein, Yvonne Fourneaux, Marina Vlady

### **1962: Le meurtrier**

Director: Claude Autant-Lara  
Cast: Robert Hossein, Marina Vlady, Gert Fröhe, 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*)



Patricia Highsmith  
*Zwei Fremde im Zug*  
Roman · Diogenes

Strangers on a Train  
256 pages  
1974

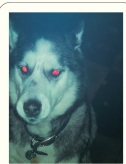
**Movie Adaptation**  
 **Bestseller**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Der süße Wahn*  
Roman · Diogenes

This Sweet Sickness  
272 pages  
1974

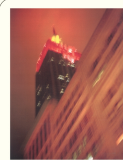
**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Der Stümper*  
Roman · Diogenes

The Blunderer  
272 pages  
1974

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Lösegeld für einen Hund*  
Roman · Diogenes

A Dog's Ransom  
400 pages  
1974



Patricia Highsmith  
*Die zwei Gesichter des Januars*  
Roman · Diogenes

The Two Faces of January  
256 pages  
1974

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Der Geschichten-erzähler*  
Roman · Diogenes

A Suspension of Mercy  
224 pages  
1974

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Der Schneckenforscher*  
Stories · Diogenes

The Snail Watcher  
256 pages  
1973



Patricia Highsmith  
*Ripley Under Ground*  
Roman · Diogenes

Ripley Under Ground  
368 pages  
1972

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Ripley*  
Der talentierte Mr. Ripley  
Roman · Diogenes

The Talented Mr. Ripley  
336 pages  
1971

**Movie Adaptation**



Patricia Highsmith  
*Das Zittern des Fälschers*  
Roman · Diogenes

The Tremor of Forgery  
288 pages  
1970



Patricia Highsmith  
*Venedig kann sehr kalt sein*  
Roman · Diogenes

Those Who Walk Away  
336 pages  
1968

## Awards (cont'd)

- 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*)
- 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

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

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

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## Praise (cont'd)

»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.« – Maik Alboth / 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

»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

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## Praise (cont'd)

»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

»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

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## Praise (cont'd)

»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