



## Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith

By Andrew Wilson

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**Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith** By Andrew Wilson

The first and highly anticipated biography of the author of such classics of suspense as *Strangers on a Train* and *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.

The life of Patricia Highsmith was as secretive and unusual as that of many of the best-known characters who people her "peerlessly disturbing" writing. Yet even as her work - her thrillers, short stories, and the pseudonymous lesbian novel *The Price of Salt* - have found new popularity in the last few years, the life of this famously elusive writer has remained a mystery.

For *Beautiful Shadow*, the first biography of Highsmith, journalist Andrew Wilson mined the vast archive of diaries, notebooks, and letters that Patricia Highsmith left behind, astonishing in their candor and detail. He interviewed her closest friends and colleagues as well as some of her many lovers. But Wilson also traces Highsmith's literary roots in the work of Poe, noir, and existentialism, locating the influences that helped distinguish Highsmith's writing so startlingly from more ordinary thrillers.

The result is both a serious critical biography and one that reveals much about a brilliant and contradictory woman, one who despite her acclaim and affairs always maintained her solitude.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

While British journalist Wilson's portrait of Highsmith (1921-1995) is neither graceful nor fluid, it is as haunting and as chilling as the stories and novels Highsmith crafted over more than 50 productive years. The author of *Strangers on a Train* and five novels featuring the amoral and murderous Tom Ripley, Highsmith achieved considerable critical acclaim in her native United States, but never sold well here. She was better received in Europe and that was where she made her home. The biographer's exhaustive attention to detail coupled with his access to Highsmith's journals (or "cahiers," as she called them) and letters, and extensive interviews with her friends, lovers and associates, allow him to reveal in excruciating detail this very private person. Highsmith emerges as a woman of great intelligence, candor and curiosity, but also as a racially prejudiced, anti-Semitic and insensitive boor. She was an acute observer capable of seizing a single incident and transforming it into a complex story. But she was unable to transform her own unhappy life. Instead she transmuted her troubles, her experiences, her observations into her work. One of her lovers observed, "If she hadn't had her work, she would have been sent to an insane asylum or an alcoholics' home.... She was her writing." Highsmith's work has had an important impact on both crime fiction and gay and lesbian fiction, and Wilson has impressively documented that as well as the tremendous cost Highsmith paid for her achievements. 16 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW.

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### Review

"A tour de force, an account so generous and prescient that Highsmith seems to step from its pages like a hologram." *Los Angeles Times*

"One of the best biographies I've come across in years. It's a work of exquisite scholarship and ... much more." *Boston Globe*

"Highsmith ... has been lucky in her first biographer. A thorough, extensively researched, dispassionate account of her complex life." *Washington Post*

"A stunningly researched and insightful account ... Sympathetic but unblinking ..." *Entertainment Weekly*

### About the Author

**Andrew Wilson** has written for most of Britain's national newspapers, including the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent on Sunday* and the *Daily Mail*. This is his first book.

### Users Review

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##### **Katherine Sherrer:**

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style in this particular era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that may give you benefit in your life. Using book everyone in this world can share their idea. Publications can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their reader with their story or

perhaps their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the books. But also they write about the information about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your children, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some analysis before they write to the book. One of them is this Beautiful Shadow: A Life of Patricia Highsmith.

#### **Colleen Harman:**

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