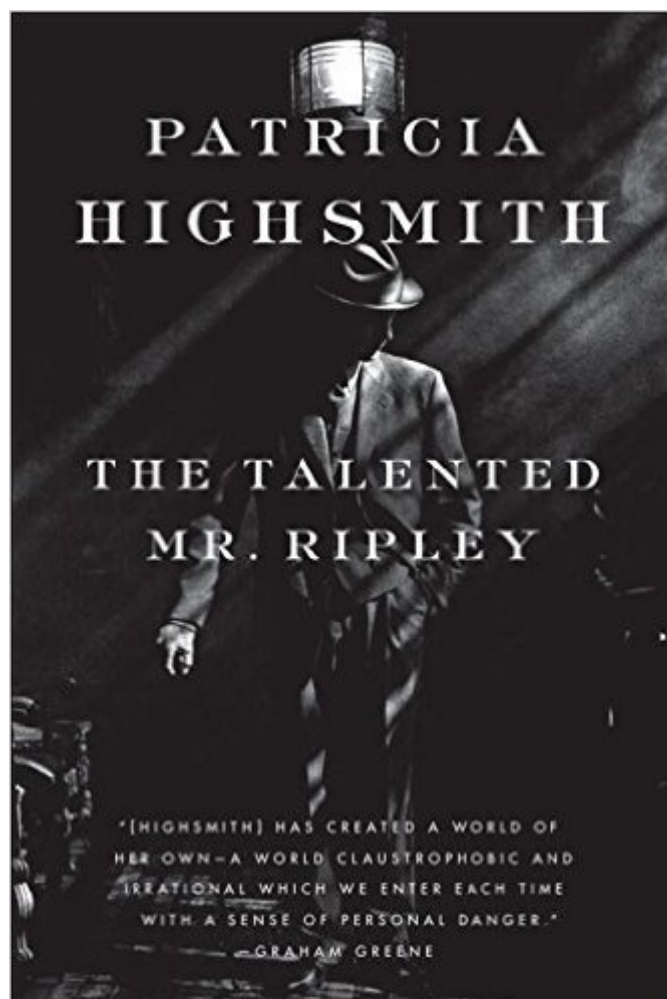


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The Talented Mr. Ripley



Synopsis

"Tom Ripley is one of the most interesting characters in world literature." — Anthony Minghella, director of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* Since his debut in 1955, Tom Ripley has evolved into the ultimate bad boy sociopath. Here, in this first Ripley novel, we are introduced to suave Tom Ripley, a young striver, newly arrived in the heady world of Manhattan. A product of a broken home, branded a "sissy" by his dismissive Aunt Dottie, Ripley meets a wealthy industrialist who hires him to bring his playboy son, Dickie Greenleaf, back from gallivanting in Italy. Soon Ripley's fascination with Dickie's debonair lifestyle turns obsessive as he finds himself enraged by Dickie's ambivalent affections for Marge, a charming American dilettante. A dark reworking of Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* serves as an unforgettable introduction to this smooth confidence man, whose talent for murder and self-invention is chronicled in four subsequent Ripley novels.

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Customer Reviews

If you like characters in fiction that get under your skin, then this anthology is for you. Under the darkened pen of Patricia Highsmith, Tom Ripley, her most memorable character of fiction, brilliantly comes to life. Growing from a poor, insecure boy, to a suave, albeit dangerous man of the world, Tom Ripley takes you along through the passages of his life, holding you as a willing hostage to the dark secrets he keeps. From the Sunny shores of Italy to the elegant French countryside, we are

allowed to eavesdrop into the inner workings of a master deceiver. Rarely do we get the chance to watch a character mature as the author matures, but over the course of several decades, Ms. Highsmith, accomplished the task by writing 5 books dealing with Tom Ripley. Her three best novels of the series are presented here. For a good old fashioned, up all night, reading marathon, you can't go far wrong with this anthology. If you enjoy the feelings of hope, excitement, despair, fear and loss then you'll love this compilation. Having read all the Tom Ripley novels, the only disappointment I have is that there are no more.

Highsmith's books--all of which feature murders--are not typical murder mysteries because Highsmith never leaves the reader in the dark as to the identity of the murderer. (The sole exception runs for only three pages in the third novel, in which Highsmith playfully leaves the reader wondering, with other characters, whether Ripley was responsible for the unnecessary demise of third-tier character.) A mystery novel that discloses the identity of the murderer may create tension by dealing with the question whether other characters, such as a law enforcement officer or a spouse, will learn the identity of the murderer. The first book contains considerable dramatic tension of this type, but the second two contain considerably less (especially for the reader familiar with the Ripley series). The strange appeal of these novels--especially the latter two--lies more in their overall lack of dramatic tension. In the second and third books, Ripley's easy, cultured life invites the reader to relax, perhaps brew himself or herself a cup of tea, and, above all, let his or her guard down. Never mind that the purpose of a quick trip is murder most foul; Ripley never lacks the time to pick up a tasteful gift for Heloise, his wife. Never mind that Ripley and a friend must dispose quickly of bodies; Ripley never lacks the time to prepare (true, in this instance, hastily) a sumptuous meal after the murders. As unusual as these books are in their lack of dramatic tension, they are even more unusual in their presentation of Ripley. Many reviews describe him as amoral. He is amoral, but only if that word permits one to display some morals. In the second and third books, Ripley emerges as a person who is deeply in love with, and committed to, his wife. He is nearly as loyal to his housekeeper, Madame Annette. He is capable of surprising loyalty to others. By the third novel, he has even displayed some growth in his ability to show concern for others (ok, maybe only two other persons). Undoubtedly, though, the distinction of these three works is the ease with which Ripley murders. He murders as he lives--efficiently and effortlessly. Each murder seems the product of impulse, although Ripley commits each with as much composure as circumstances permit and the murders themselves are never devoid of purpose. The achievement of the second and third novels, which in many respects are superior to the first, is that the murders blend into Ripley's life in such a

way that the reader may not find it jarring that other characters, who discover that Ripley has committed these murders, do not themselves find the acts more repulsive than they do. Highsmith accomplishes this unusual effect in part by her characterization of Ripley. Most readers will find appealing Ripley's taste and composure. Even more readers will find appealing his loyal devotion to his wife. In the third novel, Ripley's murder victims were dangerous, hardened criminals. But, most of all, Highsmith eases the murders into her narratives through skillful prose. She writes in a spare, easy style, just as Ripley lives. In short, clear sentences, Highsmith captures the few details that quickly render a scene or a minor character. Her word choice is simple, but apt. Despite her efficiency, Highsmith is patient in dialogue. Heloise asks Ripley if he and another character had a fling. Never mind that they were discussing murder, Ripley invariably answers that they did. Above all, read these novels for the rare pleasure that good writing provides. I must also commend the publisher. Although nearly 900 pages, the book is the perfect size and handles well in a variety of reading position (although I found myself responding to the cultured world of Ripley by abandoning my favored reading position--prone--for the more formal one of sitting upright). The slightly rough texture of the red book (dustjacket removed) also facilitates easy handling. The print is pleasing to the eye. Suggestive of more devotional literature, my book came with a handsome gold ribbon to mark the page on the few occasions that I was able to put the book down. bartleby@sprintmail.com

I read this novel with a great deal of interest and anticipation and I was not disappointed. What can one say about the "talented" Patricia Highsmith that has not already been said. I loved this novel and I loved the way that Highsmith, so cleverly and astutely enters into the mind and tortured psyche of what could now be considered a modern day sociopath. Even though you know Tom Ripley is bad and what he does to Dickie is wrong, you really do wish he will get away with it. Tom Ripley is the ultimate anti-hero: calculatingly cruel yet strangely vulnerable. The author does a dashing job in conveying Tom's fears, longings, desires and upsets. Another highlight of the novel is its fabulous settings: Southern Italy has never looked so beautiful along with Venice, Cannes, and Paris. This novel makes for an extremely exotic, fascinating read and it also works as a wonderful portrait of a figure who has strangely removed himself from others and from society. Patricia Highsmith manages to embody the spirit of Italy while at the same time writing a terrific suspense thriller. Michael Leonard

As good as the new movie is, Highsmith's novel offers details that let you know from the beginning that Tom Ripley is not your average 'good boy gone wrong.' His little game with the IRS in the first

chapter displays a kind of cat-like cruelty absent from Matt Damon's character. His ability at mathematics, especially finance, was also replaced with music in the film, perhaps to move the story along, but abstract calculation is the key to Tom's 'success'. And Tom's final touch of forging Dickie's will is much more convincing than the 'gift' of part of the trust fund in the film. This is the first of Highsmith's five Ripley stories. The first three are stunning, frightening, and wonderful, as we watch Ripley evolve in power and confidence. The last two are interesting but as Tom grows mature and secure, he also grows complacent. While he is always cunning, in 'The Boy That Followed Ripley' and 'Ripley Under Water' he is very slow to anger and his 'crimes' are more like self-defense. Another thing missing from the film that permeates the novels is Highsmith's drole humor. Tom Ripley's stories are quite funny if viewed with an eye toward reality. No one can possibly be so reprehensibly lucky. I've often tried to imagine what his astrological chart must look like.

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