

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH ON SCREEN



Week Two

'Strangers are Just Murderers You Haven't Met Yet'

Welcome to *Patricia Highsmith on Screen*

Week Two

I hope you've enjoyed your time with Patricia Highsmith so far, if enjoyed is precisely the word when confronted with quite so many morally grey characters, not to mention a metric tonne of murder and mayhem.

From the beginning of Ms Highsmith's career with, as we have seen, a few detours such as *The Price of Salt (Carol)* and the as yet unadapted *A Game for a Living*, there was a marked concentration on the darker side of humanity, specifically: 'What would it take for any individual to cross the line?'

One is forced to contemplate, when you consider the path of the writer's life, how much their apparent, eventual bitterness bled into characters who faced moral quandaries. Were there crimes that Patricia Highsmith imagined she might have committed, given the right motivation and opportunity? Or perhaps it's the reverse – does spending that much time concentrating on the dark corners of humanity begin to affect one's view of the world adversely?

Then again, it can be a dangerous game attempting to psychoanalyse a writer based on their characters. To the best of my knowledge, Tolkien seldom fought Orcs. And if Stephen King's oeuvre were a key to his private life, he should probably be under surveillance, especially if he's shown any predilection for clown make-up.

The truth is probably this:

Patricia Highsmith experienced, in common with all of us, pain. She also inflicted, like so many of us, intentionally or otherwise, her fair share.

A writer uses everything.

A working writer quickly starts to identify several aspects of their work:

- 1) What am I good at?
- 2) What interests me?
- 3) What does the audience/publisher/world want from me?

We've seen for very different reasons both artistic slips in the form of *A Game for the Living* and deliberate obfuscation of authorship in the case of *Carol*, two of the few times she stepped outside of the pure suspense thriller form. It's also clear from the adaptations that have been made that there has been an appetite (particularly in European Cinema) for those thrillers. They have been made and remade, for new audiences.

And, most importantly, they were often – especially in book form, often in film form, excellent examples of the form.

Why shouldn't that be the furrow she chose to hoe?

FILMS WEEK ONE & TWO

Loving Highsmith (2022) – Dir. Eva Vitija

Strangers on a Train

Strangers on a Train (1951) – Dir. Alfred Hitchcock

Once You Kiss A Stranger (1969) – Dir. Robert Sparr

Throw Momma From the Train (1987) Dir. Danny DeVito

Once You Meet A Stranger (1996) – Dir. Tommy Lee Wallace

Do Revenge (2022) – Dir. Jennifer Kaytin Robinson

The Price of Salt (Carol)

Carol (2015) – Dir. Todd Haynes

The Blunderer

Enough Rope (Le Meurtrier) (1963) – Dir. Claude Autant-Lara

A Kind of Murder (2016) – Dir. Andy Goddard

Deep Water

Eux Profondes (1981) – Dir. Michel Deville

Tiefe Wasser (1983) – Dir Franz Peter Wirth

Deep Water (2022) – Dir. Adrian Lyne

This Sweet Sickness

The Alfred Hitchcock Hour – ‘Annabel’ (1962) – Dir. Paul Heinreid

Dites-lui que je l'aime (1977) – Dir. Claude Miller