

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH ON SCREEN



Week Eight

‘And Now The End Is Near...’

Welcome to *Patricia Highsmith on Screen*

Week Eight

So here we've come to the end of our eight weeks together. (Audible 'Awww' please. I know you're reading this in the comfort of your own life, but I'll be able to hear it.)

We've covered a lot of material, in terms of both direct adaptations of Highsmith's books and short stories and those stories that have been inspired by her approach, her style and her attitudes towards the moral ambiguity of the human race.

In doing so, we've confronted a number of repeated themes.

Identity.

Obsession.

Rejection.

Guilt and the lack thereof.

Love and the lack *thereof*.

Those who fail to credit Patricia Highsmith's work as literature tackling the great themes ought to have a look at that list and then give themselves a stern talking-to. Even the precise, pared down writing style is evidence of a master craftsperson. It's not flowery, it's not verbose, but it knows precisely what it's doing and does it well.

Of course, we've also had to reckon with the fact that Patricia Highsmith objectively did and thought some terrible things. Some by dint of a growing bitterness and resentment towards the world which is understandable when you look at her background and the struggles foisted on her by a prejudiced world.

Others by dint of her choosing to let her own dark side colour her judgement. There are no excuses for bigotry. Many others have suffered similarly and come out of it *more* empathetic. Highsmith is no role model. Nor, I suspect, would she like to have been.

For all her flaws, her resentments and her poor life choices, however, she remains a fascinating figure whose work has bled into both literary and cinematic culture.

Without Highsmith, no *Gone Girl*. Perhaps no *To Catch a Thief*.

She influenced the arts in which she partook, simply by partaking in them with every fibre of her being. Well, I think we can appreciate that even as we interrogate the flies in the ointment.

Let me say, it has been a real pleasure to spend these weeks in your company, alongside the Talented Ms. Highsmith.

I look forward to doing it again. Provided I am not caught up in morally grey criminal conspiracy in the interim.

FILMS WEEK EIGHT

Loving Highsmith (2022) – Dir. Eva Vitija

Before I Sleep (2014) – Dir. Rowan Joffé

Memento (2000) – Dir. Christopher Nolan

Saltburn (2023) – Dir. Emerald Fennell

SOME SUGGESTED FURTHER WATCHING & READING

Flung Out of Space (Graphic Novel)

Grace Ellis & Hannah Templer

Highsmith: Her Secret Life (Documentary)(2004) – Dir. Hugh Thomson

The Crime Writer (Novel)

Jill Dawson

Devils, Lusts and Strange Desires (Biography)

Richard Bradford

Beautiful Shadow

Andrew Wilson

Talented Miss Highsmith

Joan Schenkar

N.B. If you care to check out what else Kenton has been up to...

<https://igg.me/at/swungsongs2/x/2263640#/>