



## Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950's

By *Marijane Meaker*

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### **Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950's** By Marijane Meaker

Patricia Highsmith, author of such classics as *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Strangers on a Train*, was a writer who defied simple categorization. Gore Vidal called her: "One of the greatest modernist writers." The Cleveland Plain Dealer rightly commented: "Patricia Highsmith is often called a mystery or crime writer, which is a bit like calling Picasso a draftsman." To young novelist Marijane Meaker, however, Highsmith was more than a role model. Shortly after the two met in a New York City lesbian bar, they became lovers and embarked on a two year romance amidst the bohemian set of Greenwich Village and the literary crowd of Fire Island. There, the pair navigated the underground lesbian scene, lunched with literary stars like Janet Flanner, shared intimacies, and gossiped with abandon. Written with wit and brassy candor, *Highsmith: A Romance of 1950s* is a revealing look at the controversial icon of popular American fiction.

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## **Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950's** By Marijane Meaker Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

*Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s* begins like a brainy, romantic novel complete with exotic settings, fast-paced dialogue, and a who's who of the 1950s New York literati. All this should not be surprising given that Marijane Meaker's tale of her two-year relationship with famed mystery novelist Patricia Highsmith comes from a pen that has crafted more than 40 works of fiction and non-fiction.

Meaker's touch is light and clear. She backlights her memoir with glimpses of the New York scene of the era: the Mafia-controlled lesbian bars, the rise of Fire Island, the rage for Freudian psychoanalysis. She doesn't attempt a detailed literary biography, nor is the book a complete psychological portrait of Highsmith. But Meaker, a self-proclaimed lover of pseudonymous disguises, does peer beneath Highsmith's public mask to reveal her constant despair over a disapproving mother, her fascination/obsession with Germany, and her discomfort around intellectuals. This, and Meaker's persistent jealousy and constant fear that her beloved Pat would leave her to write in Europe slowly edges the narrative into darker territory. Inevitably, the lovers part, as each author kills off the other, albeit in fictional form, with their first post-relationship murder mysteries.

Meaker closes the book by describing her difficult 1992 reunion with Highsmith. Meaker depicts her ex-lover as a hard-drinking, grizzled, chain-smoking, bigoted woman recently returned from Europe and recovering from a bout with lung cancer. Far from the bright beginnings of young love in the 1950s, this segment provides a depth absent from the earlier, more novelistic chapters and provides a glimpse of what a further, more complete biography might have to offer. --*Patrick O'Kelley*

#### Review

"...a fascinating chronicle of life among the New York literati and the city's lesbian scene of the era..." --  
*Toronto Globe & Mail*

"Meaker's memoir is a wonderful book....a romance in so many ways." -- *Boston Globe*

"...a confessional style animates 'Highsmith,' [Meaker's] sincere account of their relationship, which took place between 1959 and 1961." -- *New York Times*

"...written with intelligence...a fascinating study of Highsmith..." -- *Dallas Star-Telegram*

Gives an intimate insight into lesbian relationships as lived in 1950s America—not the easiest of times to be openly queer... -- *Diva (UK)*, October 2003

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