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PATRICIA HIGHSMITH DIARIES TO BE PUBLISHED FOR FIRST TIME

Diaries and notebooks cover her entire writing career and explore the origins of the Tom Ripley novels, *Strangers on a Train*, and *The Price of Salt*, among many other works

Liveright Publishing to tie-in to centenary of author’s birth in 2021

Liveright Publishing, an imprint of W.W. Norton & Company, has acquired the North American rights from the Swiss-based Diogenes Verlag, which controls the Highsmith estate, to publish the diaries of Patricia Highsmith, the first time the legendary author’s personal journals will be available to the public. The diaries and notebooks span the Texas native’s adult life and document her professional writing career, beginning in 1938 during her freshman year at Barnard, and continuing over the course of 8,000 pages and 56 thick journals, until her death in 1995. The published diaries (edited down to 650 pages, and illustrated with Highsmith’s own drawings and watercolors) will come out in 2021, the centenary year of Highsmith’s birth.

The diaries, which reveal dozens of new facets of an author whose fiction marked the apotheosis of psychological thrillers, were discovered by Anna von Planta, Highsmith’s longtime editor, and Daniel Keel, the executor of her estate, after Highsmith’s death in 1995. Hidden behind bedclothes and towels in her home in Ticino, Switzerland, they have only been viewed by a handful of scholars in subsequent years. A scrupulous journal keeper, Highsmith was meticulous about her medium, recording her thoughts in the same Columbia University spiral notebooks (“which measure 7 inches by 8 ¼ – have faintly greenish paper, emblazoned with Columbia on the front cover”) for nearly six decades.

Robert Weil, Editor-in-Chief and Publishing Director of Liveright, commented:

“The discovery of these diaries and their forthcoming publication promise to be an extraordinary event in world literature. They will be a boon not only to Highsmith scholars and Highsmith readers, but also represent a key literary and cinematic development in our understanding of gender and sexuality in America in mid-twentieth-century. Written with Highsmith’s characteristic psychological acuity and with brutal and self-critical personal honesty, the diaries bear witness to the horrific prejudices that Highsmith as a young lesbian faced. Moreover, the quality of the writing and the profusion of personal revelations position this volume as one of the most important new documents in female sexuality in many decades.”

Anna von Planta, Highsmith’s editor at Diogenes Verlag, commented:

“What amazed and touched me most when delving into the diaries and notebooks was to discover the raw and unrestrained voice of the young Pat (self-conscious in her early notebooks, in which she hatched her first stories; often gushing in her diaries, which tell of frequent heart-break, difficult choices, hard-won professional triumphs and a furiously fast-paced social life). It was to witness the painful becoming of Patricia Highsmith. ‘I don’t see it that way. I never will. I just don’t see it that way,’ Pat wrote at twenty-one, meaning her aloofness to most everybody’s world view in her time. Yet it is exactly this fierce independence, her very own view of things, which make her so acutely relevant in ours.”

Highsmith writes at length on the process and inspirations for her iconic works, beginning with *Strangers on a Train* (including her interactions with Hitchcock, who would adapt the novel) in 1950. But of particular interest will be the personal and professional challenges of bringing to life the story of Carol and Therese in *The Price of Salt*, a groundbreaking work of fiction, first published in 1951, that represented the first literary depiction of love between two women without tragic consequences (which would later be adapted into the 2015 acclaimed film, *Carol*). Liveright’s publication will be a necessary complement to W.W. Norton’s own editions of Highsmith’s backlist, which include *The Price of Salt*, *Strangers on a Train*, her collected and uncollected short stories, and all five Ripley novels. And her fiction remains highly popular for adaptation, as proven by the recent announcement that Showtime is developing a tv series based on the Ripley novels (written and directed by Steve Zaillian and to star *Fleabag*’s Andrew Scott).

Throughout, there is much personal information about her relationships and romantic yearnings, including her feelings both towards women and men. She did, in fact, given the severe prejudices of the times, date men and attempted to have a more “conventional” life when she was young, but used her diaries to express more bluntly her lack of attraction to the opposite sex: “He has a knack of not knowing what I want. Life with him is like life in the army, an undisciplined army.” Moreover, she writes that “the American male does not know what to do with a girl once he has her. He is not really depressed or inhibited by his inherited or environmentally conceived Puritan restraints: he simply has no goal within the sexual situation.”

Laid bare are Highsmith’s ambivalent relationship with her parents, her side career as a comic book writer (working for the predecessor to Marvel), her appraisal of the contemporary literary scene, her social circles (which early on included Jane Bowles, Aaron Copland, John Gielgud, Truman Capote, Carson McCullers Arthur Koestler, and W. H. Auden), her world travel and fascination for ex-pat life (which she would mine to brilliant effect in her Ripley novels), as well as her unwavering literary ambitions that often came at huge personal sacrifice.

Zurich-based publishing house Diogenes Verlag serves as Highsmith’s worldwide representative and international rights holder, a role that the founder Daniel Keel established after years of being the author’s German-language publisher. Keel—who as a young man had seen Hitchcock’s adaptation of *Strangers on a Train* and stayed seated in the theater till the author’s name rolled in the credits—was determined to publish her books in hardcover, because he considered them more than just genre fiction.

Philipp Keel, Daniel Keel’s son and the current publisher of Diogenes Verlag, commented:

“I got to know Patricia Highsmith as a frequent guest at my parents’ dinner table. My father was endlessly devoted to her, wanting her to be recognized as an icon of world literature and as a popular and compulsive read for a wide readership. He succeeded, and in doing so, won both Pat’s trust and her friendship. Highsmith is to literature what Hitchcock is to film: a master of psychological suspense, one of the rare writers whose capacity to inspire and fascinate has even increased since her demise, and particularly with younger generations, women and men alike.”

Liveright Publishing Corporation is a wholly owned subsidiary of W.W. Norton & Company. Founded in 1917 (originally as Boni & Liveright), Liveright established itself early in the twentieth century as one of America’s most important publishers through its championing and publishing of such writers as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, T. S. Eliot, Bertrand Russell, and Sigmund Freud.

In 2012, W.W. Norton & Company re-launched the storied imprint, building on its rich tradition as a home for outstanding works that define and redefine our culture.

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