



Ripley Under Water

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

Patricia Highsmith's admirers are well acquainted with Tom Ripley's checkered career. In the years since his first profitable murder, Ripley has managed to commit capital crimes and assorted misdemeanors sufficient to send him to the gallows several times. But, or so Ripley believes, the crimes of youth were just that, mere indiscretions, and the years of his retirement are to be comfortable and tranquil. Rather than scuffle around the edges of the good life grabbing at scraps from the table of wealth, he intends to enjoy the comfort afforded by his French country home and the immaculately coiffured, thoroughly sophisticated Heloise.

This placid existence is thoroughly shattered by the arrival of the Pritchards — David and Janice — who seem to be intent on disrupting Ripley's life by resurrecting the several ghosts in his past. Ripley is not inclined to suffer such behavior kindly, but he must first determine the source of the damning tidbits of information that David Pritchard casually interjects into their conversations. It would hardly do for Ripley to dispose of an immediate threat only to be blindsided by an unsuspected opponent. Heloise is dispatched on a tour of North Africa with a friend, while Ripley returns to the London art world, confident that Pritchard is connected with an earlier adventure involving forged paintings.

George MacDonald Fraser, in his Flashman series, has demonstrated the degree to which it is possible to create a sympathetic protagonist who is an utter rogue. Far more difficult is the task of generating favorable response from a reader when the central figure in the drama is not simply amoral but evil. It is a challenge that Highsmith fails to meet.

Copyright Notice

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/ripley-under-water-salem>