

The ending of Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt* "subverts the traditional trajectory of queer novels" only in that neither Carol nor Therese dies, which allows the novel to successfully avoid the too-prevalent trope of queer death. With that said, however, allowing both characters to live does not necessarily equate to a "happy ending" for Therese and Carol, despite the fact that they do end up together. I believe that the answer to the question of whether or not this is a happy ending is extremely nuanced, as the answer relies entirely on the perspectives of both characters.

The anticlimactic nature of their road trip ending exactly where it began is a signifier of perspectival importance, as they both do return back to New York, but they are also both fundamentally changed as a result of the trip and their time together. Along with this, there is a sense of role reversal, as well. Before and during the majority of their time together, Carol is in charge, as she has the means to do so due to her having the car, the money, and the idea to leave town in the first place—all suggestive of the idea that Carol is, in fact, free. However, we see this shift when we understand that it is really Therese who is free. Therese has no family, no reliable job, and no relationships tethering her to New York. Theoretically, Therese could spend the rest of her years road-tripping around the country, as she has no obligations holding her back. Carol, on the other hand, is trapped in a harsh divorce and custody battle, which strips her of all freedom to continue traveling.

When analyzing Therese, we observe her growth and maturation as a character as a result of her time spent traveling with Carol. Upon looking at a painting that reminds her of Carol, Therese suddenly understands that she can be autonomous if she so desires. In fact, when they return to New York, it is Therese who decides to see Carol again, which is opposite to their usual dynamic. Even the people who Therese isn't necessarily close with recognize a change within her, and in this sense of self-realization, Therese's ending does appear to be happy.

Almost antithetically, however, is Carol's ending: she must make a choice between her relationship with Therese and her relationship with her daughter, Rindy. Sure, it is possible for Carol to be happy regardless of whom she chooses in this dilemma, but the relinquishing of ties to her daughter can be read as an unhappy ending as compared to Therese. However, this cutting of ties is not only a result of choosing sides, but is also a result of Carol's yearning to be free from Harge's grasp. The only reason Harge still had power over Carol was because of Rindy, and so by giving up her motherhood, Carol is able to obtain the freedom that she envied in Therese. Certainly, this wasn't an easy decision for Carol to make, but by removing herself from Harge's and Rindy's lives, Carol gives herself the ability to begin a new life with someone she truly loves, and it is this notion of a fresh start that holds all of the possibilities of a happy ending for Carol.