

investigates his way into the lives of the wealthy East Coast elite and, when it seems his con is about to be found out, murders them. Ripley has no moral core.

Or you could study Bernie Madoff, the creator of the world's biggest Ponzi scheme. Ripley is fictional, Madoff is real: but in the mind of a psychopath reality is only a construct, so what's the diff? Like Ripley, Madoff was an impostor in the moneyed world he inhabited until his downfall. Like Ripley, Madoff also appeared not to feel any shame for his crimes. At the time of his trial a *Vanity Fair* reporter observed that Madoff smirked and did not say sorry. "A sincere apology would imply remorse – a conscience. But then, if Madoff had a conscience, he would have committed suicide by now."

This week Bernie Madoff's son did just that. It had been two years since Mark and his brother Andrew blew the whistle on their father's Ponzi scheme, putting him behind bars for 150 years. "No one wants to hear the truth, take care of my family," Mark Madoff was quoted as writing in an email shortly before he hanged himself with his dog lead in his New York apartment.

Article continues below



He was 46. His 2-year-old son was asleep nearby. Friends said Mark had been increasingly despondent as he tried to move on with his life and get a job. He could barely get anyone to even call him back, the source said.

Should the sins of the father be visited on the sons? The trustee, who was trying to claw back Madoff's millions, seemed to think so. So did Madoff's victims. One has sympathy for those who are elderly and living without pensions. But many of Madoff's investors were the super-privileged. One victim moaned about her losses while wearing a sheared mink coat. Her husband had lost most of "his Foundation" to the scam. Another Madoff victim boasted she spoke three languages and couldn't get a publisher for her book about her Madoff experience. My heart-bleeding.



During his trial Bernie Madoff showed no remorse for his crimes and did not offer an apology. Photo / AP

The talented Mr Ripley

Deborah Hill Cone
Sometimes it's smart to be slow

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psychopath? It's not easy. You can start by reading or watching the film of *The Talented Mr Ripley* by Patricia Highsmith. Tom Ripley is a man with no prospects who inveigles his way into the lives of the wealthy East Coast elite and, when it seems his con is about to be found out, murders them. Ripley has no moral core.

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