



# Split Image: the Life of Anthony Perkins

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## **Split Image: the Life of Anthony Perkins** Charles Winecoff

Compelling and surprising, here is the first in-depth look at the double life of one of the world's most recognizable film stars. Split Image insightfully and comprehensively documents the life of Anthony Perkins, who was forced to act the part of a sexy ladies' man while privately struggling with his own homosexuality. Years of careful research and more than 300 interviews with prominent Hollywood figures went into this insightful book. of photos.

## **Split Image: the Life of Anthony Perkins Details**

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## From Reader Review Split Image: the Life of Anthony Perkins for online ebook

### Isaac says

The first time I watched *Psycho* was October 19th, 2013, and I've been a major fan of Anthony Perkins ever since. I own a number of his movies and I've seen all but six of them, and boast a collection of over 700 pictures of him and a poster of one of the pictures on my wall. That being said, I knew a good amount about him before I read this book, and I had been purposely keeping off reading this because I was nervous after reading multiple reviews.

I've written essay length blog posts about my issues regarding things that have come from this book and I'm going to do my best to avoid doing the same thing here (because it focuses on things that aren't really solely about him). My real rating of this book is **2.5/5 stars** but I can't do halves so I rounded up.

Winecoff did do a lot of work in this book and it clearly shows. There were a variety of things about Tony I did not know until now and while I do appreciate these stories, there's a lot of things I'm iffy about. In the Author's Note, Winecoff describes his times seeing *On the Beach* and *Psycho* and confesses he was never really a fan and instead was only interested in him because he lived near Perkins his entire life.

I don't want to coddle Tony or ignore any of his bad features, and I've always been fairly sure that I've been good at not ignoring his negative attributes, but the issue with this book is it seems more like the author is out to make Tony look as bad as he can. Sure, there are good comments and stories, but around the middle of the book, he gets particularly vicious. Sometimes his wording nauseated me, grossly exaggerating things (like Tony's performance of *Never Will I Marry* during the early 80s - it's not the greatest thing in the world, no, but it's nowhere near as terrible as Winecoff makes it out to be).

There are a number of things in this book that puzzled me, such as contradictions in how portrayed Perkins' personality. Adding to that, there were numerous sources and bits of information that were greatly questionable. At one point it seemed to me he was using every bad thing said about Tony and ignored any good things. If it was unbiased, I wouldn't mind so much, because I know Tony could be difficult sometimes, but to blatantly ignore things that I know have been said from reading and watching interviews with colleagues and present this strange image of him that I've never seen before leaves me a bit skeptical of the truth and the author's intentions.

The book only got progressively worse in its attitude towards its subject. When Winecoff wasn't completely ignoring many of Tony's movies (most of which only got a paragraph or two most about them), he seemed fixed on completely ripping apart Tony's performance. For example, he claimed Tony was miscast in *Is Paris Burning?* when all his part was in it was a 2 1/2 minute cameo. I'm not quite sure how someone is miscast in a cameo, but Winecoff claims Tony was miscast in a multitude of his roles. When Winecoff *wasn't* saying Tony was miscast, he'd go on some weird tangent about how the role related back to Tony's sexual orientation or "tortured" past or whatever else.

Which is my other issue with this book: when Winecoff discusses Tony's sexual orientation. He appeared to feel the need to throw in random analyses on Tony's sex life and relate it back to everything else he was doing. It got a bit obnoxious after a while, especially when he made fleeting remarks that had no source to them. Although I have to admit that when Winecoff made rather specific remarks on various parts of Tony's body, I was amused.

Although I do appreciate learning more about Anthony Perkins, Winecoff didn't really delve into his head

any. This "split image" he claims exists seems more like "tortured, closeted gay man" with some murky evidence to back him up. Tony was complex, but I don't feel like he's odd. Perhaps it's because my personality is very much like his.

At the same time there were numerous occasions where I had to stop reading because the negativity directed towards him was so exhausting to read. He seemed human at the beginning and at the end but in the later half of the book he was portrayed as this prissy drug addict that was full of himself when that's not what I've ever heard anyone describe him as. Once again, I question many of his sources and much of his word choice.

Altogether, though, this did give me better insight to who Tony was and I admire him as a person and an actor even more than I did before. If his intention was to leave a bad taste about Anthony Perkins in my mouth, it didn't succeed, and I love him all the same. Everybody has their bad sides and their bad moments, and Tony is no exemption.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go watch another one of his movies.

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### **Bleedingorange says**

informative and sometimes very cruel. still, as intriguing as i thought.

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### **Shana says**

I enjoyed this book a lot especially the start of the book. As it goes on, there is a lot of hate it seems. It seems that the author didn't like any of Tony's work after he had done Psycho.

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### **Laura says**

Winecoff, you're going to have to work a lot harder than this to make me hate Tony.

I read this while couch-ridden thanks to a foot injury (I fell while mopping, my toe got caught in a crack in the floor, and my toe nail was torn out of my foot from the root. Let's just say I understand why it's used as a form of torture.) I have to second the other reviews here. While Winecoff obviously did a huge amount of research for this book, some of his sources are questionable at best. Are we really supposed to believe all of these kiss-and-tell stories, most of which are second- or third-hand gossip? I took most of those stories with a grain of salt. Sadly, this oversight was not the worst part of the book; that would be Winecoff's refusal to see anything positive about Tony. Seriously! The most ridiculous example is when he discusses a performance Tony gave when he was about 45 at a televised Broadway special. He sang "Never Will I Marry," from a Broadway musical he performed in his 20s. Tony had a FANTASTIC voice, and he sounds great in that performance. However, Winecoff (or "Whine-coff," ha ha!) describes it as "grotesque." Really? REALLY? It's on youtube, so you can judge for yourself. Tony also put out a few albums in the 60s, and they're really good, but Winecoff mentions them in a footnote. He never wastes an opportunity to demean Tony's acting or singing, and always judges Tony's personal life.

The only reason I gave this book two stars is for the subject matter. The actual facts in the book are fascinating to read about, and I did learn a lot from reading this. That being said, I find Whiny-coff too catty

and petty for my taste. As I said, he has to work MUCH harder than this to make me hate Tony. I think I'll go watch "Fear Strikes Out" now.

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## Mary says

In *Split Image: The Life of Anthony Perkins* (Dutton, \$24.95, 482 pages) Charles Winecoff, a graduate of the UCLA film school, attempts to shed perspective on the real person rather than the public image the troubled actor contrived to satisfy both a homophobic society and a tyrannical entertainment industry. Like many before him and since, Perkins was a victim of Hollywood's infamous closet, compelled to be a romantic leading man while privately struggling with his homosexuality. Furthermore, he was a casualty of typecasting early in his career after his role as homicidal transvestite Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960).

Although Winecoff's research spanned several years and 300 interviews, his book is ponderous, sometimes shocking, reading. Occasional factual blunders like making Winter Park philanthropist Jeannette Genius McKean a widow in the early 1980s and gossipy tidbits from anonymous sources mar the book's veracity, although one cannot deny the tragedy of its subject.

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## Eric Klee says

I admit that I haven't read a lot of biographies, so I'm not sure if *SPLIT IMAGE* is how they typically are or not. It's a huge book/doorstop (almost 500 pages), but it's just fact after fact strung together. There's no real story to it. You don't get involved with the characters (in this case, Anthony Perkins). It just felt like I was reading a very long Wikipedia entry.

I can tell a lot of research went into creating this book. The author certainly did his homework, pulling together quotes from various interviews over the years, and from many people with whom Perkins came into contact during his 60 years. Unfortunately, the facts and quotes are all just observations. They don't really come from anyone who knew the "real" Perkins (AKA the man who kept his homosexuality a "secret"). There's a lot of name-dropping of celebrities and other supposedly famous people. After awhile, I couldn't even keep straight (no pun intended) who was who.

Oft times, I skimmed over certain chapters. It would have been a more engaging read if each chapter was an actual story about a part of Perkins' life instead of facts put together like "he did this, then he did this, and then he did this." And the stories I wanted to hear most about (his hidden life, his relationship with Tab Hunter, and even the making of "Psycho" felt glossed over). When I came to the chapter titled "The Black Hole," I thought, "Oh yeah! I loved that movie as a kid. I forgot he was in it. I can't wait to read about it." And then the movie was relegated to two paragraphs within the big chapter.

Do we get to know Anthony Perkins? Not really. I did learn some interesting "facts," but that was about it. One interesting fact not included (that I learned from Wikipedia because the book was printed in the 1990s) is that Perkins' wife was killed during 9/11. She was on one of the airplanes that hit one of the World Trade Center towers. How sad is that? Their children lost one parent to AIDS and one to a major terrorist attack.

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## Lizzie says

Attempting a biography of someone who's known for withholding facts about himself and leading a double life is a challenge. Winecoff talked to something like 700 people, going back to Perkins' childhood and college days (surprise guest star: Mr Rogers. they went to school together). He does a pretty good job of showing what Perkins was like as a friend and fellow actor, though he never gets under his skin. I actually found this more satisfying than those biographies that purport to have the key to the thing that drove the person's life, something I don't think is accurate.

Anyway, Tony Perkins's father was a famous actor who died when he was 5; his mother was domineering and withholding. She was in a long term relationship with another woman. Through his life older women were drawn to him and took care of him and he lived a closeted gay life until he made a conscious decision to become straight, encouraged by his therapist, Mildred Newman of *How To Be Your Own Best Friend* fame. He was convinced that all the problems in his life were because he was living the "empty" gay lifestyle, and he wanted a conventional family. He married Berry Berenson and they had two kids and apparently a happy marriage, though the book has plenty of gossip about whether he continued to have gay relationships. He died of AIDS. He was driven by worry about how good his acting was and he could be cruel to people who cared about him; he was unhappy for much of his life.

I hadn't known a lot about his career beyond *The Friendly Persuasion* where I developed a crush on him, and *Psycho*. The book goes into great detail about his stage and movie jobs which I found interesting, along with the descriptions of other theater people. I'm surprised at how many of his movies I'd seen and forgotten, and enjoyed the 60s-70s-80s nostalgia. It's a good biography though I was annoyed by the constant foreshadowing ("Ten years later they would meet again under very different circumstances.")

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## Aric Cushing says

There have been a few books written about Perkins. This is the best. Very well researched, with all the 'hidden gay side of Perkins' out (literally, ha ha), on the page.

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## George Ilsley says

It is always astonishing to realize how many crappy movies have been made.

This biography was somehow disappointing. Not as salacious as other reviewers here have promised, not that interesting or insightful. A lot of detail, not much overview. Mean at times, such as when Winecoff kept mentioning that Berry was not even considered for a role. First of all, he does not know everything producers had talked about, and second, just mean-spirited I thought to keep saying it.

Why do actors remain closeted for their careers? Winecoff has little sympathy. However, for young actors, all the pressures are still in place. Also this biography was written before the gay baby boom, so the biographers attitude towards Perkins having children seems a bit dated.

(As a sad update, I just learned that Perkins' widow died 9 years after his death, as a passenger in a plane that hit the World Trade Center on 9/11.)

## Abbe says

I was one of the 300 interviews that Charlie Winecoff made in the early-mid 1990's when writing his biography on Tony Perkins. I cannot say he did not like Tony P. I will say that Charlie preferred to focus on the angst Tony had as an extremely attractive and sexy gay man in a matinee idol-world. He had many mountains to climb, including that in the acting profession. Osgood Perkins was called the greatest actor of his generation in 1926 I believe, and 30 years later Tony came close as Thomas Wolfe in the theatrical adaptation of "Look Homeward, Angel".

As for my appearance in this bio/memoir: I was a 14 year old fan in 1970, a high schooler from Chicago with a substance abusing mother and three younger siblings. I wrote a play with a role for Tony, where he would rescue my mother. I was so persistent to see if he received it I called his attorney's office, which I thought was completely normal. Later I received a letter from Mrs. Janet ("Jane") Perkins, Tony's mother, acknowledging that he had received it, and that for someone my age I had a flair for dialogue. We stayed close friends and she mentored me for the next nine years.

Another young lady, ten years my senior, with looks, wealth and the Jet-Set, was also a huge fan. Since she was 14. And she was a one heck of a writer. Berry Berenson interviewed Tony for Andy Warhol's Interview magazine. As fate would have it, she became pregnant. She and Tony married. She had two sons, Oz and Elvis, all who declined to be interviewed by Charles Winecoff.

If the book were more celebratory of, the acting, intertwined with the ouerve of typecasting in entertainment, perhaps it would not have been panned by so many. But the sex was too steamy about a thespian who had a 'Split Image' but one enormous legacy. And not once previously did I mention Norman Bates, Psycho, Hitchcock or what happened ...

Abbe Miller Buck

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## Lisa Burgess says

[aggressively hugs this book]

apparently everyone hates this book but I don't. it didn't make me hate tony, no, quite the opposite.

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## Julie\_ian\_curtis says

Much better than anthony perkins the life. Author was way harsh on Tony's singing - not much info given on it which I think is the authors opinion. Taking the s&m stuff with a grain of salt. Taub hunter fans - lots more taub here. Good things were said about daughter of darkness. The author seemed to dislike tony this was obvious in his writing.

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## Lukas (LukeLaneReads) says

This started off being a very informative book about the actors life...but then it slipped into a bunch of

information connected by kiss and tell stories.

It starts off well, the information on Perkins childhood is very well researched but the further into the book you get, the more it seems like the author has some kind of agenda. I will agree with the other reviewer in the fact that it seems as if the writer HATES Perkins, every one of his roles that isn't 'Psycho' is lauded here as a failure, or with the author saying he was 'mis-cast'. Despite the fact that Perkins won awards for a lot of these performances. He also glosses over any of the successful moments of his career to instead focus on the negative. Perkin's role in 'Psycho' is referenced to throughout the book, yet when we get to that period in his life, the author barely mentions it at all.

The kiss and tell stories got a bit repetitive too, with their only reason being there for the potential to shock the reader, as each story gets more and more salacious than the last one, resulting in me believing they aren't that true.

Overall a disappointing read, there were some interesting aspects to it, but you have to dig through the writers agenda and a lot of negativity to see it.

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## **G says**

Not bad, some interesting things here and there... but the author HATES Tony (and love the sexual life of the actor - although many things seem to be too fantastic to be true!)

I must give one example: Tony has recorded 3 albums during his life - great albums, all of them (go check the reviews or listen to them yourself). But the writer gives only very brief comments about them, not caring about them, just as some passing thoughts. But on the 80's Tony did a live version of one of his most famous songs ("I'll never marry") and the author DESTROYS Tony, he says that Tony was terrible at the show, that Tony's voice cracks etc, he spends many paragraphs saying that the show was a shame, etc. But go and watch this performance at youtube. I believe it's not that bad for someone with more than 50 years and after decades since his last recording. But it seems the author rejoices in seeing Tony suffering.

Another example: the author loathes the movie Green Mansions and spends a lot of pages saying how bad the movie is. But Tony is good at the movie, his acting is very good despite the bad script. But those things don't matter for the author - he just wants to destroy Tony's image.

Anthony Perkins is a far better actor than this biography suggests.

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## **Paul Monroe says**

This was a very interesting read about the life of Tony Perkins. It's really sad what society can do to you. It seems to me like Tony felt the need that he HAD to have a wife in kids in order to be accepted by the world. I'm sure he loved his wife and sexuality is way more complex than gay straight or bi. Fact is he loved men and loved having sex with them and psychoanalysis that was very popular back in the 50s/60s messed with his head completely.

I don't agree with the comments that the author 'hated' Perkins. Sure, I see that to (mostly) everything Tony has done professionally there is some negative undertone to it and I know way too little about his work (yet)

to be able to agree or disagree with the author. Fact is that Tony did some bad movies though and he should have stayed in Hollywood and not ventured off to Europe to become a movie star there The big bucks were always in Hollywood at that time. I started buying Perkins movies and so far I've been enjoying them. Do you love Brahms was lovely. Psycho is a classic (that haunted Perkins his entire life) and Green Mansions is rather bad (not even Hepburn could save the bad plot). I'm looking forward to see many more movies with the handsome Tony Perkins. Looking at his pictures I can see why many girls and boys;) fell in love with this handsome man.

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