

# *Switzerland*

**A psychological thriller by Joanna Murray-Smith**

**3. September 2020 – 8. November 2020**

**English Theatre Frankfurt**

**Teachers' Resource Pack**

This teachers' resource pack includes factual information as well as tasks and topics to be dealt with in the classroom. Cut and paste as you please, and please consult the official programme for additional information. Activities for students are framed for your convenience.

## The Author – Joanna Murray-Smith

Joanna Murray-Smith is a Melbourne based playwright, screenwriter and novelist. Her plays, which include *Honour*, *Rapture*, *Bombshells*, *Nightfall*, *Redemption*, *Love Child*

and *Flame*, have been produced around the world. *Honour* has been produced in over two dozen countries, including productions on Broadway and at the National Theatre in London and most recently in the West End. Both *Honour* and *Rapture* won the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Best Play. Most recently, Melbourne Theatre Company produced *The Female of the Species*. Joanna has also published three novels *Truce*, *Judgement Rock* and *Sunnyside*.



## Content of Switzerland

*Switzerland*, a play by Joanna Murray-Smith, deals with the writer Patricia Highsmith, who wrote the Ripley novels, at the end of her career (and life), who, living as a recluse in the remote Swiss Alps, is visited by Edward Ridgeway, a representative of her New York publishing company keen to entice her to sign a new Ripley book deal. The play consists of three acts.

When Edward Ridgeway appears on Highsmith's doorstep at the beginning of the play, the writer is neither surprised nor enthused. Whilst Highsmith several times tells Edward to take a long walk off a short pier (so to speak), it is his flattery and apparent understanding of her writing style, along with the food items she has requested he bring from America that entices her to keep talking. Although she is less than impressed at receiving the wrong peanut butter and only six cans of Campbell's Cream of Mushroom soup, the foie gras from Fauchon and a rare collector's knife, to add to her substantial collection of weaponry, redeems him, as does his own fanatic interest in weaponry and his willingness to assist her with a plot for the next Ripley novel.

There's an electric chemistry between Highsmith and Ridgeway which increases while both work on a new Ripley plot. As they reach a dead end, Highsmith retires upstairs with the knife, perhaps to murder her house guest. This impression intensifies when she relates her extensive knowledge of poisons (tasteless and colourless) when serving him eggs for breakfast. However, her guest survives the first night and presents her an ending to her novel. The tides turn, when supposedly Edward Ridgeway answers one of Highsmith's calls from none other than the real Edward Ridgeway, who is still in New York. Highsmith enters the room, puts two and two together and is confronted with her own creation, Tom Ripley, who came to end her life.

<https://www.arbuturian.com/culture/theatre/switzerland>

## Patricia Highsmith – The Author

Mary Patricia Plangman was born in Fort Worth, Texas, in January 1921. Five months prior, her mother had drunk turpentine in an attempt to rid herself of her unborn child. “It’s funny, you adore the smell of turpentine”, her mother told her later.

She spent much of her early childhood being raised by her grandmother. But by age six, her mother had remarried – to Stanley Highsmith – and had moved with little ‘Patsy’ to New York. Little Patsy hated Stanley at first sight. “La maison n’était pas très heureux” was how she politely expressed it in an interview for French TV. She found succour in literature and was a precocious talent – her letters home from summer camp, written when she was 12, were published in *Woman’s World* magazine in July 1935.

At Barnard College, in 1942, her entry in the college magazine read, “Pat the distinctive... Pat the ultra... Pat the gal who reads standing up... all Barnard shivers to the tune of her smoothly-written Quarterly masterpieces... the magazine’s new Editor... woodcarves in her spare time... is glad that Barnard has made her less ‘ivory-towerish’.”

Her Southern, white, Protestant conservatism was deeply ingrained and resulted in contradictory internal attitudes. A lover of women and a few men, Highsmith tried to psychoanalyse her way out of homosexuality but described sex with a man as “steel wool in the face”. She was well-known for her extraordinarily vituperative rants against Jews (she referred to the Holocaust as the “semicaust”), yet many of her friends, colleagues and even lovers were Jewish.

Her friends called her pathologically stingy, neurotic, horrible. Graham Greene called her a poet of apprehension.

She died in Switzerland in 1995.

<https://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/magazine/posts/2014/october/feature-patricia-highsmith>

## The Characters

### Patricia Highsmith

The character Patricia Highsmith in *Switzerland* is based on the real-life Patricia Highsmith, the author of the “Riplied”, which are her most famous five novels centering around Thomas Ripley, an amoral but sympathetic killer.

Like her real-life model, the character Highsmith spends her final years in Switzerland. She wears men’s clothes, has an innate gender-neutral style, and lives very secluded. She does not care about the world she lives in, does not know about celebrities and pop culture and appears very hostile towards her visitors and not even her direct neighbors know her. Right from the beginning she clarifies that she does not like people in general and constantly verbalizes her hatred against Jews, Catholics, People of Color, and male authors she does not like. She knows that her own life is about to end but she is determined not to go quietly. Moreover, on top of her verbal aggressiveness, she seems to be actively prepared to use violence. She held a knife to the throat of an agent sent by her publisher who came to convince her to write another Ripley novel. Scared to death, Bradley Applebee fled and left his task unfinished, which is why at the beginning of the play Edward Ridgeway turns up at Highsmith’s doorstep seemingly to take over from Applebee.

Congenial to her aggressiveness, she is a weapon fanatic and obsessed with poisons and death in general. Raised by unloving parents and a mother, who straightforwardly admitted

that she had tried to abort her, develops some kind of interest for Edward for the first time out of a morbid curiosity when she makes him tell her how his parents had died in a car crash and he had been raised by an aunt he did not like. Her morbidity is the foundation of her beliefs, too. According to Highsmith, tragedy, anxiety and misery are what makes a person interesting and serve as main motivation to achieve certain goals in life. She also admits that only social conventions have prevented her from murdering others herself. Instead, she redirects her criminal potential to her creative work.

The only true love she has felt in her life was the love for her character Tom Ripley. However, in the course of the play Highsmith slightly warms up towards Edward because of their shared love for weapons and because of the changes he undergoes within the play. When they discuss her weaponry there even emerges sexual tension, even though Highsmith is gay. However, it is not a new love that comes into existence, but she rather slowly discovers her visitor's true identity. In fact, the reason why she starts feeling a connection to Ridgeway is that he slowly reveals that in reality he is her long-lasting love and own creation: Tom Ripley. Highsmith gets killed by her own character at the end of the play.

### Edward Ridgeway/Tom Ripley

The character Tom Ripley, who pretends to be Edward Ridgeway, undergoes major changes within the play.

He is round about 25 years old, ordinarily handsome and, at the beginning of the play, inexpressively dressed. Within the first act, we get to know him as Edward Ridgeway, a rather ordinary person who is interested in the world around him, reading a magazine about pop culture and fashion and getting in touch with Highsmith's neighbors. He reacts to Highsmith's rudeness in a polite way, a little insecure at times, but determined to convince her to sign the new contract, nevertheless. At the beginning he claims to be the chosen agent because he knows her work like no one else but in the course of the first act, he changes his strategy and feigns to admit that nobody wanted to come near her and that this was his last chance to keep his job. Accordingly, he unsuccessfully tries to impress her with knowledge about her work and his admiration for her conveyed by wordy and pompous speeches but finally, what peaks her interest is his desperate situation, his unhappy childhood as an orphan raised by an aunt he did not like and what finally wins her over is their shared love for weapons.

When she challenges him to come up with an ending for her final Ripley novel, he plays along and does not protest when she uses his name as an alibi for her murderous protagonist. At the end of this first act, Highsmith starts philosophizing about the act of killing and Ridgeway is appalled but enthralled at the same time.

When Edwards reenters the stage at the beginning of the second act, which is the next morning in Switzerland, his appearance has changed. His ordinary clothes made way for a dandyish suit and a cut at his throat can be seen. Highsmith cut his throat at night but when addressed by her about it in the morning, he pretends to have cut himself while shaving. He is more confident than the day before and asks her personal questions like why she came to Switzerland and almost psychoanalyzes her when she refuses to answer his questions. In contrast to the day before, he himself refuses to answer personal questions i.e. about his sexual orientation, too, and the energy between them shifts. He starts gaining control over their conversations and stops being completely at her mercy. While she is fascinated with the idea of murder, his world view circles around transformation as the greatest of all human capacities. His comparison of the American nation with Jay Gatsby, who won his fortune by corrupting the American Dream and by assuming a fake identity, already connects Ridgeway to the con artist Ripley and a mindful audience will remember that in Highsmith's yet untold

Ripley story, the murderer takes on the name of Edward Ridgeway. At the end of the second act, he delivers her an ending for her novel and she signs his contract.

At the beginning of act three, Edward is very nattily dressed, smoking a cigarette and invades Highsmith's privacy by browsing through her notebooks. He even dares to answer her phone. He is polite on the phone but the minute the actual Edward Ridgeway hangs up he gets insulting and aggressive, much like Highsmith at the beginning of the play. Tom Ripley reveals his true identity pretending to still talk to the real Edward Ridgeway who called Highsmith from New York.

He reacts confident, almost cheeky, when Highsmith enters with breakfast and hints, she might poison him with it. He does not get worked up but stubbornly eats his eggs and not even pretends to feel guilty when she realizes that he has gone through her stuff and confronts him about it. He is completely in control of the situation and officially introduces his true self to her. They finally are at eye level and their interactions become tender and loving. When she gives him her knife, he kills her.

Throughout the play, Edward transforms slowly into Tom, starting out relatively shy and mainly reacting to Highsmith instead of taking the lead but with each act he gets more and more confident, challenging her and even impressing her. At the end of the play he is the active person, the one in charge, choosing the focus of the conversation as well as her way of dying. His clothes change symbolically according to these changes in behavior.

# Pre-watching activities

## Idioms

An idiom is a phrase that is common to a certain population. It is typically figurative and usually is not understandable based solely on the words within the phrase. A prior understanding of its usage is usually necessary. Idioms are crucial to the progression of language. They function in a manner that, in many cases, literal meanings cannot. We use them every day, sometimes without even realizing that what we're saying is nonsensical without the implied and widely accepted meaning behind it.

<https://www.britannica.com/list/7-everyday-english-idioms-and-where-they-come-from>

- A) Read the following excerpts from Switzerland.
- B) Find and underline the idiom
- C) And explain what it means in your own words.

1) PATRICIA: (...) young people ... they start out confident. Why? I'll tell you why! Because they're deluded. They're silly little fuckers! And then life has to take the wind out of their sails.

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2) PATRICIA: He woke me up in the dead of night. It's not my fault Hunter sent a kid with a capacity to hallucinate. I tell you what though, that kid could scream! Hitchcock could have bottled it. When Applebee gets out of therapy you could suggest he do it for a living.

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3) PATRICIA: Really? You're the company spokesman? You have still got your baby teeth!  
EDWARD: I am older than I look. And not to blow my own trumpet, but I think I have the sensibility to understand you.  
PATRICIA: Notice, how it's only trumpet blowers who use that phrase?

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4) PATRICIA: [New York -] The greatest city on earth! Full of pseuds and Jews and Catholics! The greatest city? Is that where you get your air of self-congratulations? Sitting there at your little desk in a publishing house [...]. What a joke! I can see you in your cheap suit sitting in Emmet's coffee shop thinking that those pretty girls eating pie and drinking coffee are going to be impressed that you're some big cheese because you get to fraternize with authors.

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5) EDWARD: [...] I said to Mr. Hunter: I'll do anything...[...] What's the one job that no one in the company would do?  
PATRICIA: No one else was game enough— [...] The “knife at the throat” thing put people off.  
EDWARD: It did not put me off!

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6) EDWARD: I'm young but I'm not stupid—  
PATRICIA: Congratulations on that immense achievement.  
EDWARD: I honestly believe—  
PATRICIA: Cut the crap! Stop beating around the fucking bush! I'm not writing a Ripley so that you and your colleagues can get rich.

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7) PATRICIA: How dare you! Stand in judgement of me, you little nothing! You're barely out of braces and you're lecturing me on the quality of a body of work that stretches over half a goddamn century! [...]  
EDWARD: Well, you can't always judge a book by - [its cover].  
PATRICIA: Yes, you can!

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## The Talented Mr Ripley – Getting to know the character

“Everybody should have a talent. What’s yours?” (Dickie Greenleave – The Talented Mr. Ripley)

- 1) *Flashlight*: Think about what your personal talent is. Everybody shares his/her talent with the group.

Thomas Ripley is Patricia Highsmith best known character. His answer to the question above was: “Forging signatures, telling lies, impersonating practically anybody.” Highsmith even identified herself with him, so of course, he plays an important role in *Switzerland*, too! *The talented Mr Ripley*, one of the novels centering around her favorite protagonist, was made into a movie.

2a) Watch the trailer to *The Talented Mr Ripley*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4e-Si4oGEw>

2b) Sum up in class what you understood.

2c) Watch the trailer again. Look for Ripley’s characteristics and motifs.

2d) Think: Take notes on what you have noticed.

Pair: Compare.

Share: Sum up your results and discuss possible storylines of the movie.

## Working with the Script – Create your own storyline

Within the first act, Edward Ridgeway has a hard time convincing Patricia Highsmith to sign a contract for a new Ripley novel. Revealing his tragic childhood to her and bringing her gifts from the US as well as a collector’s knife from Paris earns him a *maybe*. She will sign on one condition: He needs to come up with the perfect murder for her story by next morning. The excerpt below takes place right after this deal has been established.

Read the excerpt.

PATRICIA. [...] And in the morning... if you make it to the morning... I expect a murder. A good murder. A Highsmith murder.

EDWARD. You know, only you pulled it off at least in modern times: the complete corruption of the reader.

PATRICIA. It's called good writing.

EDWARD. [...] You smash our moral compass.

PATRICIA. Writers are exceptional because we don't care about your moral compass. We're beyond your moral compass. Moral liberty is the artist's compensation for impecunity, loneliness, and unlikability It's not my job to pass judgment. It is my job to persuade. The reader takes sides. I sit there, right in the middle.

EDWARD. In Switzerland.

PATRICIA. In Switzerland. The anatomy of a killer is always going to be more captivating than the anatomy of a victim. Because murderers are active. They transgress. Transgression... What a magnificent word. Fact is-we all have touches of evil.

EDWARD. We don't all commit murder.

PATRICIA. We all might.

EDWARD. Okay ...

PATRICIA. I like murder. I've committed thousands. With delight. Every time I write one, I'm plunging in the knife. I'm slicing, I'm dicing. I'd make a brilliant killer. In every single one of us, consciously or in the realm of dreams, we contemplate the thought of taking away life. The ultimate human power is to stop life. Take away what God made. Undo it. Who isn't interested in exercising that power? Only liars. Because underneath the social niceties, biding its time, is rage. Sometimes I wonder if it isn't the most exhilarating expression of aliveness: the act of killing.

EDWARD. You're talking about fiction.

PATRICIA. Don't you ever ask yourself: What would it be like: I don't think there's a human being alive who hasn't wanted to slay. We hate with a passion just that bit more robust than we love. But what sorts the wheat from the chaff is.... Who will act? Who has the guts to cross that line? (*Edward is enthralled but appalled.*) You put two people in the same room for long enough and if you let their true selves emerge, chances are... only ones going to make it. (She cackles. Blackout. Flickering firelight. Patricia is alone in the dark. She picks up the new knife and, with clear and devilish intent, climbs the stairs towards the sleeping Edward. Blackout.)

End of Act One

- a) Talk about what you have just read. What did you understand? Do you have questions? Discuss possible interpretations.
- b) Read the excerpt again. Take notes on Highsmith's character traits as portrayed in the play.
- c) Share your thoughts in class.
- d) Now, get together in pairs and think about what might happen next. Keep in mind that there are two more acts to come.
- e) Share your ideas in class.
- f) Get together in pairs again and write a short scene that could take place the next morning.
- g) Learn your scenes. Three pairs will be drawn by lot, these pairs present their scenes to the group.

## The Bizarre true Story of The Talented Mr Ripley by Jen Doll

Patricia Highsmith is a well-known author but was also a very controversial personality. Her diaries will be published in 2021 but autobiographers already had the chance to read them. The following article sums up some of the most interesting aspects about her and her most famous character Thomas Ripley.

- A) Read the following article.
- B) Ask three questions whose answers can be found in the text.
- C) When you have your three questions, look for a partner who has also finished task B. Ask him/her your questions and answer his/hers in return. Repeat two more times.
- D) The play Switzerland is about a stage of Patricia Highsmith's life. Talk to the person sitting next to you: Which of her phases in life would you choose for a play? Why?

Early one morning in the summer of 1952, Patricia Highsmith awoke in a room at the Albergo Miramare hotel in Positano, Italy. [...] As she gazed out at the sand, pulling on a cigarette, she watched “a solitary young man in shorts and sandals, with a towel flung over his shoulder, making his way along the beach. There was an air of pensiveness about him, maybe unease,” she recalled in a 1989 issue of Granta magazine. She started to wonder: “Had he quarreled with someone? What was on his mind?” The intrigue stuck with her. [...] Highsmith drew from that image as she began a new novel, about a man named Tom Ripley. Even then, she sensed that she was onto something special. [...]

Highsmith's instincts were correct: With the charming sociopath Ripley, she'd created a new type of character entirely. In five novels over the next four decades, he'd become not only her most acclaimed and memorable creation but the prototype for a new kind of antihero: the unlikable, immoral, cold-blooded killer we can't help but like anyway. Ripley was a character so fully realized, so simultaneously compelling and disturbing, it seemed as if he were based on someone Highsmith knew intimately. In a sense, he was.

[...] In many ways, Ripley is not unlike Highsmith herself. Throughout her life, she was plagued by the sense that she didn't belong, that she deserved a higher social class or standing, and that she'd been orphaned (her mother lived to be 95, but she told a young Patricia that she'd tried to abort her by drinking turpentine). “I learned to live with a grievous and murderous hatred very early on,” she once said. “And learned to stifle also my more positive emotions.” As a teenager, she became aware of her attraction to women. [...] And at the age of 27, upon beginning psychoanalysis to “cure” her homosexuality, she began seducing the women in her group therapy sessions.

Ripley provided a window through which Highsmith could channel her rage. In her writing, she could seek revenge for the hurts and misdeeds she sustained throughout life at the hands of others—not only her mother (Highsmith loved and hated her with a passion), but also her lovers (for failing to love, or for loving poorly, or for being unlovable), the government (for taxing unfairly or too much), society (for being a place in which homosexuality was a disease to be “treated”), her birth father (for abandoning her), her stepfather (for stealing her mother and never adopting her properly), editors and publishers (for rejecting her), and so forth. [...] The brutalities of life drove her to alcohol, but they also drove her—in a fervor that kept her typing about greater brutalities into the wee hours—to write. And Ripley was the character she wrote the most.

[...] Of course, novelists often relate deeply to their characters, but Highsmith identified with Ripley so intensely that she referred to herself as “Pat H, alias Ripley.” Often, she felt Ripley was writing his book.

In detailing Ripley, Highsmith imbued him with many of her own traits and “obsessive little habits,” Schenkar writes. And much like Ripley, hiding in plain sight was Highsmith’s *modus operandi*. [...] She published her one “lesbian” novel, *The Price of Salt*, under the pen name Claire Morgan. [...] She put forth a revisionist history even in her own diaries, which she kept throughout her life, and, in one of the more odious details of her history, created numerous aliases with which she wrote letters to newspapers and governmental bodies espousing anti-Semitic and racist views. The French government suspected her of tax fraud, perhaps fairly.

“There’s always a dichotomy in her, which ended up evidenced in her writing,” Weinman says. She preferred writing about men, as she told Joan Dupont in an interview for *The New York Times* in 1988, because “women are tied to the home, tied to somebody, not as independent to travel—and they don’t have the physical strength, if needed. Men can do more, like jump over fences.” Highsmith loved woodworking, traveled frequently, and owned a number of homes. (It’s unclear whether she jumped over fences.) She kept snails as pets, entranced by their self-sufficiency and the lack of a perceptible difference between the male and the female of the species.

Ultimately, it wasn’t just Highsmith’s internal life that was marked by duality but also her career. She was very successful, critically and commercially, in Europe, where she lived for most of her life, but she harbored an unfulfilled desire to be recognized in America (just like Ripley did). Though *The Talented Mr. Ripley* won awards in both France and the United States, Highsmith never achieved much literary recognition in America.

[...] Today, we see Ripley’s mode replicated in such TV antiheroes as Walter White, Tony Soprano, and Dexter, and in literature from writers like Stephen King, Bret Easton Ellis, and Gillian Flynn. [...] “That’s Highsmith’s gift,” says Weinman, “creating fascinating characters, even if we can’t relate to them or, worse, find that we do. Everybody’s got their inner psychopath.” Not everybody, of course, can harness their inner psychopath in writing, to entertain, terrify, astound, attract, and amaze the way “Pat H, alias Ripley” could.

The woman looking down at the beach that morning in 1952 hadn’t yet met her character Ripley; the solitary boy in shorts and sandals was just the spark of an idea. Forty-three years later, as Highsmith battled aplastic anemia and cancer at the age of 74 in Switzerland, he was still on her mind. Schenkar writes that on the inside back cover of the last notebook Highsmith used, “Pat wrote down two new titles for a novel about the talented Mr. Ripley. [...] There would be no sixth book in Highsmith’s *Ripliad*. Highsmith died in 1995, leaving a lengthy bibliography and millions of dollars in the bank, though how much, exactly, or at which banks, remains a mystery.

<https://mentalfloss.atavist.com/the-bizarre-true-story-behind-the-talented-mr-ripley>

# While-Watching Activities

## QUIZ Switzerland

What has happened to Bradley Applebee before Edward Ridgeway arrives in Switzerland?

- A) He got run over by a bus.
- B) He wanted to marry Patricia Highsmith and got rejected.
- C) Patricia Highsmith scared him by holding a knife to his throat.

What is Ridgeway's alleged agenda at the beginning of the play?

- a) He wants to kill Highsmith in revenge for what happened to Applebee.
- b) He wants Highsmith to write a new novel.
- c) He wants to take a vacation and see Switzerland.

What are the things Highsmith and Ridgeway have in common?

- a) abusive parents, love for weapons, morbid fantasy
- b) unhappy childhood, love for weapons, morbid fantasy
- c) unhappy childhood, love for white bread, interest in the author Vonnegut.

What is the name of Highsmith's most famous protagonist?

- a) Tom Ripley
- b) Hannibal Lecter
- c) Jean Baptiste Grenouille

On what condition does Highsmith agree to sign a new contract?

- a) Ridgeway needs to bring her more soup.
- b) She wants more money.
- c) Ridgeway needs to come up with the perfect murder for her novel.

What does Ridgeway's ending for her novel look like after his first night in her apartment?

- a) Tom Ripley shoots the old woman to inherit the money.
- b) The old woman gets poisoned and Ripley inherits the money.
- c) The old woman dies from fear of Tom Ripley and leaves the money to her niece and her niece's husband.

What changes does Ridgeway go through during the play?

- a) He gets more and more confident and dresses better.
- b) After being attacked at night he gets more and more anxious.
- c) He does not change.

What does Highsmith like about snails?

- a) She likes their taste.
- b) She likes their ambiguous sexuality.
- c) She likes their peaceful nature.

Which statement describes Highsmith's character best?

- a) She is a feminist, a lesbian and a creative person.
- b) She is racist, arrogant and abusive.
- c) She is very sick, an alcoholic and ready to die.

What is the final twist in act three?

- a) Ridgeway turns out to be Tom Ripley and he gets killed by Highsmith.
- b) Highsmith writes the ending to her novel and then kills herself.
- c) Ridgeway turns out to be Tom Ripley who came to kill his creator, Patricia Highsmith.

8-10 correct answers	4-8 correct answers	0-3 correct answers
😊😊 Congratulations! You understood a lot!	😊 Quite good already! Talk to your classmates again about the show, you might tap into new levels of understanding!	😞 Don't give up! Talk to your classmates about the parts of the show that are still a bit fuzzy to you.

## Self as Other – The Doppelgänger

- 1) Create a mind map. Collect what you already know about doppelgängers in class.
- 2) Sigmund Freud's theory about the id, ego and super ego is closely interwoven with the doppelgänger motif.  
Get together with your partner sitting next to you. Split the texts between you and read your text. Take notes and write down questions you have.
- 3) Find someone who read the same text you read. Discuss what you have learned and try to find answers to your questions together.
- 4) Return to your partner. Tell him what you have learned and listen to his/her insights. Take notes on your partner's findings.
- 5) Relate the doppelgänger motif and Freud's theory to *Switzerland*.
- 6) Share your ideas in class.
- 7) HW: Write an essay about the following question: Is the appearance of Tom Ripley in *Switzerland* a symptom of insanity in the protagonist or an actual paranormal presence?

## Constructing the Self

The **id**, **ego**, and **super-ego** are the three distinct, interacting agents in the psychic apparatus defined in Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche. The three agents are theoretical constructs that describe the activities and interactions of the mental life of a person. In the ego psychology model of the psyche, the id is the set of uncoordinated instinctual desires; the super-ego plays the critical and moralizing role; and the ego is the organized, realistic agent that mediates, between the instinctual desires of the id and the critical super-ego. [...]

### Id

The id (Latin for "it", German: *Es*) is the disorganized part of the personality structure that contains a human's basic, instinctual drives. Id is the only component of personality that is present from birth, and is the source of a person's bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses, particularly their sexual and aggressive drives. The id contains the libido, which is the primary source of instinctual force that is unresponsive to the demands of reality. The id acts according to the "pleasure principle"—the psychic force that motivates the tendency to seek immediate gratification of any impulse—defined as seeking to avoid pain or displeasure (not "displeasure") aroused by increases in instinctual tension. [...]

...contrary impulses exist side by side, without cancelling each other out. ...There is nothing in the id that could be compared with negation...nothing in the id which corresponds to the idea of time. [...]

The id "knows no judgements of value: no good and evil, no morality. [...] It is regarded as "the great reservoir of libido",<sup>[17]</sup> the instinctive drive to create—the life instincts that are crucial to pleasurable survival. Alongside the life instincts came the death instincts[.] [...] For Freud, "the death instinct would thus seem to express itself—though probably only in part—as an *instinct of destruction* directed against the external world and other organisms" through aggression. Freud considered that "the id, the whole person...originally includes all the instinctual impulses...the destructive instinct as well", as *eros* or the life instincts.

### Ego

The ego (Latin for "I", German: *Ich*) acts according to the reality principle; i.e., it seeks to please the id's drive in realistic ways that, in the long term, bring benefit, rather than grief. [...] The reality principle that operates the ego is a regulating mechanism that enables the individual to delay gratifying immediate needs and function effectively in the real world. An example would be to resist the urge to grab other people's belongings, but instead to purchase those items.

The ego is the organized part of the personality structure that includes defensive, perceptual, intellectual-cognitive, and executive functions. Conscious awareness resides in the ego, although not all of the operations of the ego are conscious. [...]

The ego separates out what is real. It helps us to organize our thoughts and make sense of them and the world around us. "The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. ...The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions... [...]" "it serves three severe masters...the external world, the super-ego and the id." Its task is to find a balance between primitive drives and reality while satisfying the id and super-ego [...]

It is said, however, that the ego seems to be more loyal to the id, preferring to gloss over the finer details of reality to minimize conflicts while pretending to have a regard for reality. But

the super-ego is constantly watching every one of the ego's moves and punishes it with feelings of guilt, anxiety, and inferiority.

## Super-ego

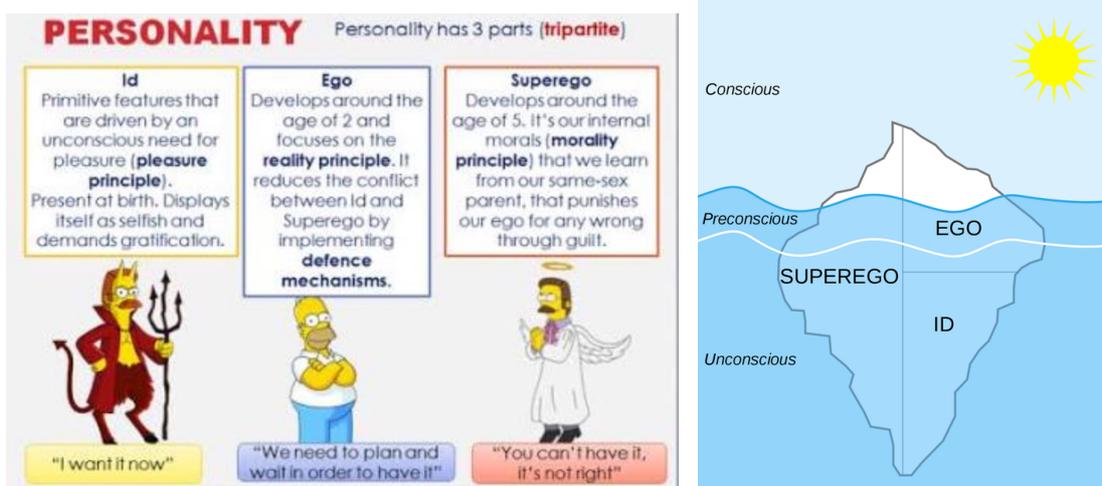
The super-ego<sup>[31]</sup> (German: *Über-Ich*) reflects the internalization of cultural rules, mainly taught by parents applying their guidance and influence. [...] "[T]he installation of the super-ego can be described as a successful instance of identification with the parental agency," while as development proceeds "the super-ego also takes on the influence of those who have stepped into the place of parents — educators, teachers, people chosen as ideal models". [...]

The super-ego aims for perfection. [...] "The Super-ego can be thought of as a type of conscience that punishes misbehavior with feelings of guilt. For example, for having extra-marital affairs." [...]

The super-ego works in contradiction to the id. The super-ego strives to act in a socially appropriate manner, whereas the id just wants instant self-gratification. The super-ego controls our sense of right and wrong and guilt. [...]

The super-ego's demands often oppose the id's, so the ego sometimes has a hard time in reconciling the two.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id,\\_ego\\_and\\_super-ego](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id,_ego_and_super-ego)



<https://powerofsubconsciousmindblog.wordpress.com/2017/11/04/our-mind-a-better-understanding/>  
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html>

## The Other – Doppelgänger Motif

The doppelgänger is an uncanny motif comprising two distinct types: (1) the alter ego or identical double of a protagonist who seems to be either a victim of an identity theft perpetrated<sup>1</sup> by a mimicking supernatural presence or subject to a paranoid hallucination; (2) the split personality or dark half of the protagonist, an unleashed monster that acts as a physical manifestation of a dissociated part of the self.

The central premise of the doppelgänger motif poses the paradox of encountering oneself as another; the logically impossible notion that the 'I' and the 'not-I' are somehow identical. Originating in the German Schauerroman and the British Gothic novel, the doppelgänger, like the vampire, was a product of early nineteenth-century fascination with folklore; derived from the superstitious belief that seeing one's double is an omen of death, the doppelgänger motif fuses supernatural horror with a philosophical enquiry concerning personal identity and a psychological investigation into the hidden depths of the human psyche.

Specifically, doppelgänger narratives involve a duality of the main character who is either duplicated in the figure of an identical second self or divided into polar opposite selves. These two modes of doubling have since the earliest studies of the doppelgänger motif been categorized as distinct types: firstly, the *alter ego* is an identical double; the 'duplication' of a protagonist who seems to be either the victim of an identity theft perpetrated by a mimicking paranormal presence or subject to a paranoid hallucination. [...]

Secondly, the 'divided' or *split personality* features a monster double; the dark half of the protagonist, an unleashed vengeful fiend that acts as a physical manifestation of a dissociated part of the primary self, such as the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or, more explicitly, in the case of Dr. Jekyll's too intimate companion, Mr. Hyde [1].

[...]

Doppelgänger narratives have traditionally been interpreted in Freudian terms as allegorizing the struggle for domination between the ego and the id (or alternatively the superego). [...]

This kind of interpretation of the double as representing the repressed emotion and acting out the forbidden desire of the main character works well with the split personality doppelgänger: deformed and violent beastlike outcasts, who contrast with their civilized hosts. [...]

<http://www.doubledialogues.com/article/self-as-other-the-doppelganger/>

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<sup>1</sup> verüben

## Post-Watching Activities

### Acrostic – Switzerland

You have seen the play Switzerland. Write down associations, questions, ideas you have using the acrostic below.

(An acrostic is a poem (or other form of writing) in which the first letter of each spells out a word)

*S*

*W*

*I*

*T*

*Z*

*E*

*R*

*L*

*A*

*N*

*D*

### Comment

Your local newspaper has asked you to write a comment on the play you have just seen. Use at least four words/ideas you have used in your acrostic.

Comments are used to express one's own opinion on a topic, to write a review, to express a criticism, to compare something, ..... Basically, a comment gives an opinion and follows the basic scheme of texts (introduction, main part, conclusion).

## Solutions

What has happened to Bradley Applebee before Edward Ridgeway arrives in Switzerland?

- D) He got run over by a bus.
- E) He wanted to marry Patricia Highsmith and got rejected.
- F) Patricia Highsmith scared him by holding a knife to his throat.**

What is Ridgeway's alleged agenda at the beginning of the play?

- d) He wants to kill Highsmith in revenge for what happened to Applebee.
- e) He wants Highsmith to write a new novel.**
- f) He wants to take a vacation and see Switzerland.

What are the things Highsmith and Ridgeway have in common?

- a) abusive parents, love for weapons, morbid fantasy
- b) unhappy childhood, love for weapons, morbid fantasy**
- c) unhappy childhood, love for white bread, interest in the author Vonnegut.

What is the name of Highsmith's most famous protagonist?

- d) Tom Ripley**
- e) Hannibal Lecter
- f) Jean Baptiste Grenouille

On what condition does Highsmith agree to sign a new contract?

- d) Ridgeway needs to bring her more soup.
- e) She wants more money.
- f) Ridgeway needs to come up with the perfect murder for her novel.**

What does Ridgeway's ending for her novel look like after his first night in her apartment?

- d) Tom Ripley shoots the old woman to inherit the money.
- e) The old woman gets poisoned and Ripley inherits the money.**
- f) The old woman dies from fear of Tom Ripley and leaves the money to her niece and her niece's husband.

What changes does Ridgeway go through during the play?

- d) He gets more and more confident and dresses better.**
- e) After being attacked at night he gets more and more anxious.
- f) He does not change.

What does Highsmith like about snails?

- d) She likes their taste.
- e) She likes their ambiguous sexuality.**
- f) She likes their peaceful nature.

Which statement describes Highsmith's character best?

- d) She is a feminist, a lesbian and a creative person.
- e) She is racist, arrogant and abusive.**
- f) She is very sick, an alcoholic and ready to die.

What is the final twist in act three?

- d) Ridgeway turns out to be Tom Ripley and he gets killed by Highsmith.
- e) Highsmith writes the ending to her novel and then kills herself.
- f) Ridgeway turns out to be Tom Ripley who came to kill his creator, Patricia Highsmith.**