

Due Dates

Both parts of the assignment are due Friday October 19. If you turn in the essay early enough, I will mark it up with corrections and comments for you to revise. If you turn in both parts early, you will receive a small incentive bonus (+3 points). If you miss the midnight deadline but turn in the assignment before eight hours have elapsed, there will be a small point deduction (-3 points). If you turn in the assignment between eight and twenty-four hours late there will be a larger point deduction (-10 points). If you turn in the assignment at any point after that, there will be a substantial point deduction (-20 points; this is a flat deduction, not a cumulative one based on the number of days late). If you turn in the assignment late, but do not want points deducted, you may earn back credit by doing the assignment AND completing another character map and another essay for *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante (using the same prompt, but without the requirement to integrate a Freudian analysis).

The character map will be recorded as one assignment and the essay four times that much.

Assignment One: Character Map

Complete a character map for a character in either *Sputnik Sweetheart*, *The Cat's Table*, or *Enemies, a Love Story* (see the specific directions for this on the last page of this handout).

Requirements

- It should be the same character for which you write your essay (see below).
- It should be connected in some way to your essay (using the same sort of evidence and engaging the same theme).
- The idea is for this to function as a graphic organizer for the essay or to function (at the very least) as an aid in generating ideas.

Assignment Two: Essay

Write an essay about this same character that uses the Freudian concepts contained in the Tsushima source packet. This is the lecture by Freud and the text about repression.

Prompt

The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time."

From either *Sputnik Sweetheart*, *The Cat's Table*, or *Enemies, a Love Story*, choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, influences, or ways of thinking. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict with one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.

Requirements

- You must use the novel to write the essay.
- It must be at least four paragraphs and somewhere between approximately 700-2000 words.
- You must also use at least one of the two Freud readings from the Tsushima source packet.
- Your conclusion must engage a theme from the novel (see specific advice about possible themes in the Additional Help section below).
- You must incorporate at least some quotation from the novel (though your evidence can be a mixture of quotation and paraphrase). You may just paraphrase from the Freud readings.
- You must use parenthetical reference (even for paraphrase).
- You must have a works cited at the end. Here is what it should look like:

Works Cited

Freud, Sigmund. *The Freud Reader*. 1915. Ed. Peter Gay. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989.

Freud, Sigmund. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis. The Standard Edition*. 1933. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton, 1965.

Author last name, author first name. *Title of Book*. Transl. [name of translator; this does not apply to *The Cat's Table*]. City published: Publisher, year published. → Do this for your book.

Note: 1) works are alphabetized by author's last name; 2) you indent after the first line of an entry; 3) you skip a space between entries; 4) you may find yourself only using one of the two Freud sources (the first is the repression reading, and the second is the lecture about id, ego, and super-ego), so adjust your Works Cited accordingly; 5) if you're not typing, underline titles instead of italicizing them.

Structure

Consider using one of the following structures to organize your essay.

- **Before/After** [I. Intro and thesis; II. Up until turning point X moment, Y is true (Y=an interpretation, not an event); III. After turning point X, Z is true (Z=an interpretation, not an event); IV. Sum up what you have proved; change shows something important in the text (from thesis)]
- **Contrast** [I. Intro and thesis; II. Concept X; III. Contrasts with Concept Y; IV. Sum up what you have proved; difference/Preference for X or Y shows something important in the text (from thesis)]
- **Idea/Qualification** [I. Intro and thesis; II. Idea/Expectation/Appearance; III. Idea/Expectation/Appearance is qualified/contradicted/reversed; IV. Sum up what you have proved; the gap between the two shows something important in the text (from thesis)]
- **Cause/Effect** [I. Intro and thesis; II. X is true; III. X causes Y; IV. Sum up what you have proved; Y shows something important in the text (from thesis)]

Additional Help

Novel Choice One: *Sputnik Sweetheart* by Haruki Murakami

Some Themes in *Sputnik Sweetheart*

Alienation

- Connection to others is fleeting.
- We ultimately end up alone.
- Even when we connect with others, we only occasionally understand them. These moments of understanding are not permanent.

Individual vs. Society

- Conformity stunts individual growth and expression.
- Individual desire trades off with societal norms. One can conform and be miserable, or one can choose not to conform and remain alienated from society. A balance can be struck, but it does not fully solve either problem.
- Denying one's creative potential for conventional pursuits leads to unhappiness.

Knowledge

- We do not truly know ourselves or those we love.
- True knowledge is elusive and may be impossible to define.
- Every idea contains within it its own opposite.
- The world is more mysterious than people give credit.

Duality

- Many things have a dual nature, and conflict is created by the opposition of the two opposing forces.
- Understanding and misunderstanding are linked. They are two sides of the same coin and should not necessarily be seen as opposites.
- Unconscious worlds of desire and conscious worlds of conformity can lead both to fragmentation and integration. The real world and the Other Side should be understood in Freudian terms (making literal the metaphor of a conscious mind that is accessible to us and an unconscious mind that operates according to a hidden logic of its own).

Desire

- Longing can never be quite divorced from true love. This longing is never completely fulfilled.
- People hunger for more than they can have. They want to understand and master the world around them, but this often proves impossible.
- One often desires that which is unattainable. Unfortunately, even something as simple as human connection may be beyond our capacity.

Murakami and Freud: Ways of Thinking about the Text

What does it mean to suggest that Murakami's writing can somehow be read as an evolving therapeutic discourse? The best place to find historical precedents for this kind of project, I would argue, is in the psychoanalytic movement of the twentieth century. Starting with Freud's work in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, psychoanalysis has continued to be an important and dynamic response to the lived experience of historical and cultural loss. The movement was, in part at least, a reaction to the cultural forces of modernity, secularisation, and the decline of tradition. This is not an original view of the psychoanalytic movement. It is, however, a useful one for understanding why it should provide such useful models for understanding the works of a contemporary Japanese novelist. As Peter Homans explains:

[P]sychoanalysis is a creative response to loss. It seeks to replace what is lost with something new. But mourning is only part of this picture; creativity is the other half. The creation of anything new and valuable, I argue, has its origins in the old and in the particular ways the old is abandoned and then altered.

Murakami's writing project, I would argue, is likewise a creative response to loss. It seeks to replace what is lost with something new. Murakami himself describes the development in his writing as a movement away from detachment and towards commitment. His early works are usefully seen as an attempt to mourn the past, a reflection of the deep sense of personal and cultural loss that marked his experience growing up in the late 1960's. Increasingly, however, his protagonists have begun to reengage with society. They have sought to overcome the temptation of retreating to an inner world and have started to think about the challenge of recommitting to the world outside. This thesis attempts to trace the trajectory of this development in Murakami's writing. It finds that certain popular psychoanalytic theories of the twentieth century offer useful precursors for understanding this creative psychological quest.

J. P. Dil, *Murakami Haruki and the Search for Self-Therapy*, 2007

The world of the grotesque is the darkness within us. Well before Freud and Jung shined a light on the workings of the subconscious, this correlation between darkness and our subconscious, these two forms of darkness, was obvious to people. It wasn't a metaphor, even. If you trace it back further, it wasn't even a correlation. Until Edison invented the electric light, most of the world was totally covered in darkness. The physical darkness outside and the inner darkness of the soul were mixed together, with no boundary separating the two. They were directly linked. [...] But today things are different. The darkness in the outside world has vanished, but the darkness in our hearts remains, virtually unchanged. Just like an iceberg, what we label the ego or consciousness is, for the most part, sunk in darkness. And that estrangement sometimes creates a deep contradiction or confusion within us.

Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*, 2002

At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, the Freudian uncanny can thus be summarized as a blend of psychological and aesthetic estrangement, political and social alienation resulting from a deeply rooted, disturbing unhomeliness that characterizes human existence in the world, but tempered by mild, surrealist undertones and the guise of familiarity. [...] As an aesthetic concept, then, the uncanny captures the mood that is expressed in late twentieth-century cultural manifestations. In literature one can think of authors like Haruki Murakami.

Anneleen Masschelein, *The Unconcept: The Freudian Uncanny in Late-Twentieth-Century Theory*, 2012

**Summer Reading: *Sputnik Sweetheart,*
*The Cat's Table, or Enemies, a Love Story***

Murakami's model of the human mind is fairly uniform throughout his literature, his motifs and terminology largely unchanged in the past 20 years. In general it is presented as a uniformly coded division between the world of the light and that of the dark, the latter corresponding to the unconscious realm. Murakami envisions the inner world of the mind as dark, cold, and lifeless. At times the unconscious is only symbolized, other times it is real. [...] [The unconscious] is this center, the location of the core identity that concerns us here. Murakami himself uses the expression "black box" to describe this portion of his narrator's unconscious. The expression first comes up in *Sekai no owari to hādo-boirudo wandārando*, when the protagonist is told by a scientist who has been tinkering with electrical circuits in his brain that the core consciousness is like the "black box" used to record flight data on aircraft: it contains all the information necessary to form the individual identity, but it is impervious to attempts to open it and observe its contents. This is identity.

Matthew C. Strecher, "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 1999

Sputnik Sweetheart was discussed by readers in a special "Forum" on Murakami's website just before it was discontinued in November 1999. One reader was convinced the call from Sumire at the end of the book was a hallucination, but others were equally certain it was a happy ending and Sumire would return. "I'm not asking you to tell me which is right," said the reader, and true to form Murakami did not. Deciding whether or not it was a happy ending was a "difficult problem" for him, he said, "because it impinges upon my place as a human being in this world. Inside me, those two values are always in opposition, struggling with each other, and finally blended together in appropriate proportions. I can't explain it any better than this. So if you felt you couldn't believe the novel had a happy ending, then it's a non-happy-ending type story."

Jay Rubin, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, 2002

Guiding Questions for *Sputnik Sweetheart*

- Japanese society is, by nature, conformist. Freud argues that such ideals are internalized by individuals as the super-ego. To what extent does the author use psychological conflict to critique these societal norms?
- Murakami's work usually contains multiple antagonistic worlds. To what extent can these worlds be explained as an unconscious world of desire versus the conscious world of outward conformity?
- Keeping in mind that psychoanalysis aims to lay bare the unconscious motives of the id, to what extent are the characters in the novel able to integrate both aspects of themselves into a more fully formed whole?
- What characters or events in the novel are associated with irrational desire (id), rational fulfillment of personal goals (ego), or sublimation of human needs (super-ego)?
- What role does repression play in the lives of the characters? Is this mechanism functioning healthily in their lives (helping them to cope with unhealthy emotions or memories)?

Novel Choice Two: *The Cat's Table* by Michael Ondaatje

Some Themes in *The Cat's Table*

Maturity

- That which has come before shapes that which follows.
- Personal identity is formed by the appropriation of the knowledge and formative experiences.
- Who we are is largely contingent on where we come from and who we encounter. In this way we remain connected to the past, even to events from long ago.

Truth

- Truth is not that which is obvious and apparent.
- Understanding requires exploration of hidden or submerged places.
- Even then, truth is contingent upon understanding and interpretation.
- Thus, meaning reveals and re-invents itself through this process of exploration and interpretation.

Memory

- The dividing line between past and present is not as sharp as it is often claimed.
- The boundary between memory and imagination is similarly fluid, though its unreliability does not make it less valuable.
- In a very meaningful way, we are the sum of the narratives we tell about ourselves, and these stories continue to change and accrue additional meanings.

Power

- Power is exercised both overtly (often through rank and privilege) and covertly (often by those who seem weakest).
- Transgression subverts power dynamics in subtle ways, drawing attention to the often hollow nature of overt authority.
- The exercise of overt authority and force is ultimately less powerful and durable than the authentic connections one forms with others.

Ondaatje and Freud: Ways of Thinking about the Text

The passenger ship *Oronsay*, an actual historical ship of the Orient Line, is something of an ark, its seven levels and 600 passengers representing a diverse cross-section of humanity. The ship contains a below-deck garden, a dog kennel and a mysterious prisoner who is watched closely by a retinue of guards. It exudes the atmospheric complexity of a Freudian dream awaiting interpretation. For example, hidden deeply within its interior is a mural of naked women that the three boys first hear about as a rumor and later discover as a taboo glimpse into their sexual futures. Also circulating through the ship are other rumors, of crimes minor and major, one of which leads to a dramatic confrontation worthy of any oceangoing swashbuckler tale.

Gerald T. Cobb, "Into the Deep," *American Magazine*,
09 April 2012

**Summer Reading: *Sputnik Sweetheart,*
*The Cat's Table, or Enemies, a Love Story***

Michael relates the shipboard escapades he has indulged in with two other boys, Cassius and Ramadhin, and their involvements with the adults around them, particularly those with whom they share the England-bound ship's "least privileged" Cat's Table, and in many ways this is a book about the ways in which adulthood remembers, or imagines, boyhood. The novel has an epigraph from Conrad's "Youth" and, like that tale, it seems to be concerned with the rite of passage that occurs as one crosses the shadow line into adolescence. In "Youth", the narrator Marlow says that some voyages "seem ordered for the illustration of life", serving as "a symbol for existence". At the time of Michael's journey to England, his voyage has been little more than an interlude to him, but in later life it will rekindle itself again and again in his memory, offering a similar "illustration of life".

John Thieme, "Rites of Passage: *The Cat's Table*,"
Literary Review, August 2011

As a grown man in London, Michael, narrator of *The Cat's Table*, attends an exhibition of paintings made by Cassius, whom he knew as a young boy when they were passengers from India to Britain on the Oronsay. The paintings, Michael reflects, remind him of photographs made by Jacques Henri Lartigue, noteworthy for being from "the natural angle of a small boy with a camera looking up at the adults he was photographing."

Cassius's paintings are also from the angle of a small boy-- they are of things he saw while on board the Oronsay-- but these views are supplemented by the years of memory and painterly skill grown up around them as Cassius has become an adult. *The Cat's Table*, a heavily autobiographical novel that Ondaatje insists is not a memoir, is a literary version of these paintings, one that will not only show us the views of a child recollected by an adult memory but will also dive into the space in between.

Scott Esposito, "*The Cat's Table*: The grand journey of youth," *The National*, 07 October 2011

Memories are fickle beasts, living alongside our dreams. We often don't realize when one devours the other, or when they meld into that hybrid of fantasy and reality that becomes our truth. In earlier novels such as *The English Patient* and *Divisadero*, Michael Ondaatje explored the agony of living while consumed by memory. His most recent book is imbued with acceptance: memory is unreliable and desire is a compulsive curator of the past.

The Cat's Table recollects a singular event in the life of Michael, a writer who, at 11 years old, embarked upon a three-week sea passage from Sri Lanka to England in the fifties. The narrative flips from past to present and back again, showing us that the journey's significance, for both Michael and his fellow passengers, is only absorbed in the years that follow. Their shared experience, compressed into fixed space and time, leaves its mark in myriad ways, affecting the most important choices of love, marriage, and the pursuit of dreams. Everyone is changed. The delight of Ondaatje's story is in the application of childhood lessons, in the slow reveal of what truly matters once time has earned the answers.

As with Ondaatje's previous novels, the lapping waves of thought and image present a nonlinear tale while the narrator guides us between past and present, connecting the dots of meaning. The passengers blend into one another in Michael's memory-- "I cannot remember who told us the first part of that story..."-- and they exist as a function of adult Michael's search for the origins of his expectations. The story is populated with many characters, rendered succinctly, most without full arcs. To pull any one of them forward is to take a magnifying glass to one thread of memory-- first love, first death, first crime, first freedom-- but in reality the vignettes are interconnected: a true rendering of seminal experience.

E.C. McCarthy, "Mixed Memories," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 27 February 2012

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*The Cat's Table, or Enemies, a Love Story***

The truths Ondaatje uncovers in *The Cat's Table* have less to do with historical accuracy and more with the psychic reality and emotional resonance of those childhood impressions that the author recalls, invents, or romanticizes. The identity that emerges is constructed in the gap between the fictionalization and reality of his existence, where “the intimate and truthful” also reside. [...]

Ondaatje's fictionalized account of his sea voyage across the waterways of the East captures those “personal event memories” that, according to cognitive, clinical, and developmental psychologists, involve two levels of representation, image and narrative, which coexist throughout one's life. Whereas the first is “sensory, perceptual, affective, and automatic,” the second is verbal, purposeful, and reflective. This essay explores the ways in which these modes of memorial expression interact in *The Cat's Table* and the implications they carry for the narrator's self-perception both as a boy and an adult (writer). “Some events,” he points out, “take a lifetime to reveal their damage and influence” (143), and desires are “fed by an earlier time” (145). [...] The pathways of feeling that course through the narrator also link him to others brought close to him not so much by right of birth as by accidental encounter. The other, Ondaatje invites us to imagine, could be “as accidental as a number plucked from a pail who would then be an intimate partner for the next decade, even for the rest of our lives.”

Thus, contributing to the emotional waters that Michael (nicknamed Mynah) navigates in the course of his voyage are his interactions with the rich assortment of people he encounters onboard the Oronsay. Both strange and familiar in their otherness, he sees them with curiosity, if not fascination, and their stories become intimately entwined with Mynah's. Since most of these colorful characters are adults, they guide Mynah from his past to his future self, and this transformation is compared, as in *Running in the Family*, to the dismantling and reassembling of a ship: “You take that older life and you link it to a stranger” (72). [...]

Laura Savu Walker, “Rites of passage: moving hearts and transforming memories in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*,”
Ariel, January-April 2014

Guiding Questions for *The Cat's Table*

- How would Freud describe the process of moving from immaturity to maturity? In what ways does the ship's journey mirror this development in metaphor? How is the ocean that must be crossed a sort of boundary between these two worlds?
- If we assume Michael is trying to assimilate the influences of those around him into a coherent and mature identity, what do the passengers on the ship (broadly) represent? In what ways do the three boys correspond to the Freudian id, ego, and super-ego? What about the other passengers (as represented by their dilemmas and actions)?
- What is the relationship between the memories of the voyage that Michael describes and his later life as an adult? How do these formative experiences continue to define him and connect him with the past?
- How do experiences on the ship enact the tension between transgression and conscience, id and super-ego? To which are characters drawn and to which do characters ultimately choose? Is this struggle as simple as a straightforward conflict between good and evil?
- Many characters have secrets and hidden identities, and some characters even forge new identities (most notably the narrator, who even gains a new name for the duration of the voyage). In a similar way, the ship and the manner in which it operates have an apparent reality and a hidden underside. How would Freud explain this tension between appearances and reality, surface and the structures that lie beneath?

Novel Choice Three: *Enemies, A Love Story* by Isaac Bashevis Singer

Some Themes in *Enemies, A Love Story*

Past vs. Present

- The past determines the future, as nothing is ever truly left behind.
- The past may change our circumstances, but it rarely changes our personalities. We remain the victim not only of fate, but ourselves.
- It is possible to transcend the past, but it requires a faith in the future.

Belief

- The presence of evil in the world calls into question the existence of God.
- People need something larger than themselves in which to believe. This could be religion, politics, or a self-destructive fetishism of the past.
- The world is a terrifying place absent human solidarity or faith in the future.

Human Nature

- We are too often trapped by our own self-destructive behavior, pettiness, and stupidity.
- Only generosity of spirit allows for a way forward, allowing for the possibility of human solidarity.
- True fidelity is impossible without this generosity of spirit.

Truth vs. Deceit

- The breakdown of traditional values encourages the worst in people. People are weak and self-destructive absent its protective structures.
- Selfishness and human weakness is the root of all deceit.
- Modern society is more concerned with appearances than substance. It lays bare what has always been present.

Singer and Freud: Ways of Thinking about the Text

No other modern writer mirrors so clearly man's urge toward the sacred and yielding to the profane. Singer has read not only Freud but such Freudian precursors as Spinoza and Schopenhauer, as well as Dostoevski, who formulated for literature man's "satanic" aspects. But Singer's judgments are implicit rather than explicit, and his stories are not so much "morality tales," he insists, as narratives "constructed around a moral point of view." Whether good or evil wins out depends in his fiction on individual character as much as on events beyond human control. His refusal to condemn evil directly troubles those who miss or misread his moral concern.

Ben Siegel, *Isaac Bashevis Singer*, 1969

To read Singer's collected stories is to realize the extent of American Jewish piety toward the Old World, because of its total absence from Singer's fiction. [...] Like Freud, Singer focuses on the destructive energies of sexuality, which he sees pulsing just below the surface of a traditionally puritanical Jewish culture.

Adam Kirsch, "I.B. Singer, the Last Demon," *Tablet*, 2012

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Think of the Yeats line where the spirit comes to him and says, "I come to give you metaphors for poetry." In a way this is true for Singer as well. When he was growing up there he was someone who was very much involved in a world of ideas in Warsaw and elsewhere. The hot philosophy was rumors of Freud, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche. In other words, that element of modern culture, which is sort of the rediscovery of the irrational. And Singer had in his background-- in his world-- a fund of explanations that were very vividly dramatic explanations of the irrational. He then proceeded to live life in a century where the irrational seemed to be dominating modern history. And so, he had something that he either did or did not believe in, but obviously believed in at some level as a way of explaining the paradoxes, and the cruelties, and the violence, and the motivations of human life as they were-- then even more so-- writ large in the contemporary history that threw him and his people from one place to another, and destroyed many of them and subjected them to things that he felt he had a way of explaining-- or at least of dramatizing this material, using it.

Morris Dickstein, "The Achievement of Isaac Bashevis Singer: A Roundtable Discussion," 2004

Despite its connotative religious meaning of sacrifice that comes from the biblical offering of animals to God, "Holocaust," which literally means a whole burning, cannot anchor the lost lives of its victims in any meaningful religious or ethical system of purpose. Nor can anyone endow them with a consolatory significance even retroactively. The dubious assertion that the Holocaust and its victims ultimately led to the establishment of a Jewish state, or even the Jewish mystical tradition and its philosophy of creation positing and emphasizing the final stage of *tikkun* or repair after the stage of disruption and chaos, sounds too contrived and loses its redemptive power against the heavy silence engulfing victims and the survivors' unspeakable stories finally spoken often in a highly fragmented manner. [...]

In many ways, the traumatized person is comparable to the melancholic Freud analyzes in "Mourning and Melancholia," in that they both share an open wound that constantly drains their energy and hinders them from letting go of the past to move on with their present lives. As Freud writes, "The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathetic energies... from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished." The traumatized and melancholics are both fixated on the past, and their bleeding from the open wound does not stop with the passing of time. As Freud emphasizes, successful mourning of an object loss requires a certain level of detachment from, and giving up of, the loved object as something dead and no longer part of the bereaved's world. Additionally, it also requires reinvesting or rechanneling energy into a new direction. Likewise, an adequate mourning in cases of trauma means that survivors work through their loss and pain to relieve themselves of the burden of their past. Mourning is "a protracted process of detachment" from the past. Or, more precisely, it is a ritual wherein the past, the present, and the future converge in the complex process of letting go of the past and projecting a new life. Mourning connotes detachment, symbolic reinvestment, and agency. So does narrative. [...]

Singer's novel [*Enemies, a Love Story*] effectively portrays the never-ending, often convoluted process of mourning, along with the negative impacts of trauma that manifest in survivors' already fragmented and highly dysfunctional lives as repetitive reliving and enigmatic encounters with the past.

Kyeong Hwangbo, *Trauma, Narrative, and the Marginal Self in Selected Contemporary Novels*, 2004

Singer assumes that there is no such thing as the Holocaust experience per se apart from the experiences of a host of individual survivors, and therefore no possibility of arriving at general assertions about the ultimate meaning of the Holocaust that are not qualified by our awareness of the peculiarities of the victims. Neither is it possible to speak about the effects of the Holocaust even on an individual survivor without knowing that person's prior history. He warns in his prefatory note that his "characters are not only Nazi victims but victims of their own personalities and fates. If they fit into the general picture, it is because the exception is rooted in the rule. As a matter of fact, in literature the exception is the rule." By way of illustrating his meaning, Singer often in

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the novel reminds us that his hero Herman Broder “had been a victim long before Hitler’s day” (121), and that his suicidal hedonism and fatalism had been confirmed, but not caused, by Hitler.

Edward Alexander, *Isaac Bashevis Singer*, 1980

Guiding Questions for *Enemies, A Love Story*

- Which characters can be identified with irrational desire (id), rational fulfillment of secular goals (ego), or dedication to moral and religious ideals (super-ego)?
- To what extent does trauma from the past function as a sort of waking nightmare? What is the connection between these experiences, the Freudian id, and the irrational fear experienced by some of the characters?
- Freud argues that societal, moral, and religious norms are internalized as an individual’s super-ego. To what extent are these norms challenged by events from the past, and how do characters react to this challenge?
- Many of the characters in the novel are weak-- seemingly unable to make the decisions they believe they should. To what extent does Singer wish the reader to condemn these characters, and to what extent does he wish the reader to sympathize with them (even if the reader does not necessarily approve of the choices they make)?
- What role does repression play in the lives of the characters? Is this mechanism functioning healthily in their lives (helping them to cope with unhealthy emotions or memories) or is it somehow pathological?