Doppelganger, Dreams, and Delusions: A Freudian Reading of Marie Eugenie delle Grazie's Der Schatten

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Marie Eugenie delle Grazie's drama *Der Schatten* premiered in 1902 in the Hofburgtheater, Vienna's most prestigious stage at the time. The play deals with the poet Ernst Werner and his encounter with a character called "Der Schatten". The Shadow is Werner's double, meaning that it looks like the poet, but it does not have all of the abilities of a human. Although the idea of a double or "Doppelgänger" is ubiquitous in the literature and art of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, delle Grazie approaches the topic from a different angle. Many contemporary columnists, however, criticized her drama; to them it lacked depth and did not seem to add to the existing discourse (Münz 101). They interpreted the Shadow as a personification of evil or evil thoughts. Although this approach is certainly valid, the role of the Shadow is far more complex. In her play, delle Grazie alludes to several existing theories by important minds, such as Sigmund Freud, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Heinrich Heine, but employs their ideas in a unique way. As delle Grazie culminates these thoughts in the character of the shadow, the drama reflects the psychological complexity of life in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna. I will analyze the figure of the Shadow using

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Freud's concepts of "Das Unheimliche" (The Uncanny), dreams and repression, and his theory on the Id, Ego and Super-Ego.

Very few critics have dealt with delle Grazie's play, and those who have, have not considered the character of the Shadow in the way I am analyzing it here. Maria Mayer-Flaschberger mentioned the drama in her biography on delle Grazie, but without critical commentary. Similarly, even though more thorough, Bernhard Münz dedicated a few pages to Der Schatten in his book on the author. However, he approached the play from an angle very different to my analysis. For those unfamiliar with delle Grazie's drama, I will first give a short synopsis.

The drama uses a play within the play, which functions as a catharsis for the main character, poet Ernst Werner's envy toward his friend Walther Klang. Rather than giving in to his passions, personified by a shadow which looks like the poet, Werner works his envy into a play. Since the audience is not aware of this play within a play until the end, the line between imagination and reality is unclear. In Werner's play, Werner surrenders to the shadow, which results in a downward spiral from betrayal of his friend to deceit and the murder of an innocent young woman. As a result, Werner is filled with remorse and feels weak, whereas the Shadow, now the guilty conscience, grows stronger and more independent of him. The play within the play ends with Werner's confession, and the release of his friend from prison. It is not until then that the audience realizes that everything was just Werner's poetic creation and not reality.

As a background to my analysis of delle Grazie's drama, it will be necessary to first define Freud's ideas about "The

Uncanny;" second his theory on dreams and repression; and third, the Freudian Id, Ego and Super-Ego. First, in Sigmund Freud's *Das Unheimliche*, he points out that feeling uncanny is caused when something which should have remained hidden and secret becomes overt (Freud, "Das Unheimliche" 8). He continues to explain how a poet might trigger such a feeling in the audience:

> Der Dichter erzeugt zwar in uns anfänglich eine Art von Unsicherheit, indem er uns, gewiß nicht ohne Absicht, zunächst nicht erraten lässt, ob er uns in die reale Welt oder in eine ihm beliebig phantastische Welt einführen will […] [und] so müssen wir ihm darin nachgeben und diese Welt seiner Vorraussetzung für die Dauer unserer Hingegebenheit wie eine Realität behandeln. ("Das Unheimliche" 12)

For an audience, there is always something of an uncanny feeling at the beginning of a play, because it takes time to adjust to the "reality" of that play. According to Freud, the audience has to buy into and accept the realm of the play as their reality. As a result, there is an emotional shift. Freud explains: "Das paradox klingende Ergebnis ist, dass in der Dichtung vieles nicht unheimlich ist, was unheimlich wäre, wenn es sich im Leben ereignete, und dass in der Dichtung viele Möglichkeiten bestehen, unheimliche Wirkungen zu erzielen, die fürs Leben wegfallen" (Freud, "Das Unheimliche" 18). Since the reality of the play does not necessarily match the circumstances of the spectator's life, he or she might find that something in the play does not seem uncanny because it is fiction, whereas it would be uncanny if it were to happen in real life.

Second, according to Freud, repressed thoughts and

desires must eventually surface; if not expressed in real life, then in a dream. To Freud "a dream is a disguised fulfillment of a suppressed wish" (qtd. in Schorske 187). Since self-control prohibits the actual fulfillment of a thought or desire, a dream can be used as an outlet or catharsis, because the expressed needs have to be met in one form or another.

Third, in his theory about the Id, the Ego and the Super-Ego, Freud states that "the ego [common sense or reason] is not sharply separated from the id; its lower portion merges" (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 17). The Id, which represents passion, the search for pleasure, and the avoidance of pain, is, however, controlled by the Ego, which functions as the rational part of the mind (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 19). According to Freud's theory, the Id, much like the repressed desires, needs to be expressed. Therefore, the Ego has "the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own" (*The Ego and the Id* 19). This means that the Ego expresses the Id by the means of compromise. Rather than giving in to the urge of killing someone who was offensive, the Ego finds a more acceptable way of expressing this violent drive, for example, by going to the shooting range. The Ego also tries to negotiate between the Id and the Super-Ego. While the Id, as mentioned earlier, is the desire for pleasure, the Super-Ego strives for perfection within the expectations of society or religion (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 33). In a way, the Super-Ego is like the conscience shaped by societal and other expectations, able to create anxiety or guilt, if these standards are not met.

With this background we can now look at how "The Uncanny," Freud's ideas on dreams and repression, and the Id, Ego and Super-Ego apply to Marie Eugenie delle Grazie's

drama. In the prologue of the drama, it seems unclear to both poet Ernst Werner and the audience whether his encounter with the Shadow is real or a dream, a situation which creates an uncanny feeling. When Werner first sees the shadow, he calls it a "Zerrbild" and attributes that to "die schwüle Nachtluft und die Phantasie" (delle Grazie, *Der Schatten* 14, [hereafter referred to as DS]). He does not know how to react and asks the Shadow: "Wer seid Ihr? Und wie kamt Ihr herein? (DS 13). The fact that he uses the formal "Ihr" in addressing the Shadow shows Werner's initial perplexity and unfamiliarity with this appearance. The Shadow also starts with the more removed "Ihr" while getting to know Werner, which makes the encounter seem like a mutual process of becoming acquainted. As Freud asserted, it takes an adjustment period when we are confronted with something new, not knowing whether or not it is real. In the end, even though not completely sure, Werner accepts the Shadow as real, just as Freud describes, which becomes evident in the fact that both Werner and the Shadow end their first meeting by using the more familiar form "Du" (DS 18).

After the prologue, the scenery changes from Rome to the German shire Rottenwyl, and the play within the play commences. It is not until the last scene, which the author calls "Verwandlung," that the audience finds out that the character of the Shadow was made up, which creates in them a feeling of uneasiness or "the uncanny" as Freud would call it. In this last scene, Werner is again in his studio apartment in Rome, where he writes down the last lines of his play. The audience now has to wake up from "the dream" that delle Grazie had cast over them, because they realize that the shadow was only part of the play Werner just finished. The whole story was not real, but a

product of Werner's poetic creativity (Mayer-Flaschberger 107). While Freud points out that we feel the uncanny because we don't know whether that which is portrayed is reality or fiction, delle Grazie creates this feeling of the uncanny by making the audience believe they are in the reality, only to disillusion them afterwards.

Delle Grazie evokes the feeling of the uncanny by doing the exact opposite of what Freud advocated in order to cause uneasiness. She makes the audience first believe that the Shadow is real, which would be uncanny if it were to happen in real life. Once convinced that the whole story was not reality, the play within the play seems not to be frightening anymore, because the audience realizes that it is fiction. However, the fact that the people were tricked and made to believe that the shadow was real, creates an uncanny feeling, because it reveals the vulnerability of every spectator. Furthermore, it shows that the Shadow has a familiarity, something almost real about it, which, according to Freud, frightens the individual because it represents something dark that should have remained hidden, or in other words, repressed.

Werner expresses the same idea to his friend Klang in the prologue, where he explains that he sacrificed the "Mann der That, des Lebens" (DS 8) for his art. In my view, the Shadow is a manifestation of Werner's repressed desires; it is "der Zweite, den [er] für den Andern erschlug[t]" (DS 15). Werner admits that he knows that this desire, "dieser Zweite," could become one of those "die hoch auf sich recken, und ihren Schatten werfen durch die Welt, wie Satan" (DS 8). The shadow, which personifies Werner's envy toward Klang, is a threat and should have remained secret: "tot, …stumm zu [dessen] Füßen" (DS

15). Because Werner was afraid of his envy, he chained it "wie ein wildes Tier" and made it "zum Eunuchen für die Kunst" (DS 8). To Werner, the Shadow should be chained up or castrated. Both chaining and castration are to prevent "the beast" from coming into the open. Despite Werner's attempts to hide his envy, the Shadow appears, which causes him to feel uncanny.

In addition to creating the feeling of the uncanny, delle Grazie generates a dreamlike atmosphere when Werner interacts with the shadow. On the Freudian premise that a dream is a disguised fulfillment of a repressed wish, the appearance of the Shadow could also be interpreted as a dream. That Werner's encounters with the Shadow are only dreams, can be supported by looking at the stage directions: Delle Grazie uses words such as "traumhaft" (DS 31, 35), "träumend" (DS 71), and "müde" (DS 64) in her drama to describe Werner's mood. The expressions "wie aus einem Traum erwachend" (DS 103) and "wie ein Erwachender" (DS 73, 110) are used right after an interaction with the Shadow. Werner's envy toward his friend Klang comes from the suppressed wish to live Klang's lifestyle. Werner fulfills his desire by trying to win Klang's girlfriend and by not helping him when he is falsely imprisoned for treason. In fact, the roles are switched: Werner, who felt imprisoned by his life dedicated to art, is now chasing a woman, and the playboy Klang has to experience the limitations his friend has felt. Even though the Shadow is only a character in Werner's play, it is nonetheless an outlet for a repressed wish that seeks fulfillment, if not in a dream, then on paper.

While the Shadow could be seen as a dream manifesting a repressed wish, it could also be considered to be a mirror image of Werner's psyche. Both, the dream or the mirror of one's

own soul, according to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, are ways that people dealt with modern life, „Heute scheinen zwei Dinge modern zu sein: die Analyse des Lebens und die Flucht aus dem Leben… Man treibt Anatomie des eigenen Seelenlebens, oder man träumt. Reflexion oder Phantasie, Spiegelbild oder Traumbild" (qtd. in McFarlane 71). The play renders evidence for the idea that the Shadow is not a dream, but rather a reflection of Werner's soul. Martha, Klang's lover, rejects Werner's feelings for her, which triggers the appearance of the Shadow, who is now also visible to her. This leads her to cry out, "Den Zweiten- Den Fürchterlichen, ja… der neben Euch dort steht, mit Euren Zügen, Eurem Antlitz- nur ohne Maske! O, hinweg! Ihr wollt ihn verderben- Walther!" (DS 100). Martha does not just see a shadow, but a dark image of Werner's physical appearance, even with his facial expressions. Moreover, she sees Werner's true self without the mask: his envy towards Klang and his lust for her. In addition to Martha's observation, Werner too realizes that the Shadow "[d]ie Züge meiner Seele stahl, sein Wesen von meinem borgt" (DS 117). Furthermore, he sees that the shadow has his countenance (DS 132). The fact that delle Grazie explores both the dream and self-reflection, such as Hofmannsthal described, in her play, shows her genius, because she creates harmony between seeming opposites.

Likewise delle Grazie masterfully harmonizes two other opposites, the Freudian Id and the Super-Ego, which can both be attributed to the role of the Shadow. In the symbiosis of Werner and the Shadow, Werner can be seen as the Ego who tries to control the Shadow, which personifies the Id. As Freud explains, the Id and Ego are tightly connected. The same holds true for a shadow that seems to be connected to the person who

casts it. Werner has willpower over the Shadow and therefore could hold back his sexual desire for Martha and his envy towards Klang, just as the Ego can delay the Id's gratification. However, when Werner kills Martha, it is the Shadow who hands him the dagger and who then, together with Werner, stabs the young woman to death (DS 103). On the premise that the Shadow represents the Id, the passion and the desire personified by the Shadow take over; Werner, the Ego, mimics the Shadow's "will" to be his own will when he kills Martha.

Even though the Shadow can be interpreted as the "Id", there are similarities with the Freudian "Super-Ego" as well. It seems almost contradictory to say that the Shadow represents both the Id and the Super-Ego, because they seem to be on opposite ends of the spectrum. While the Id would forget about the murder Werner committed in order to avoid pain and maximize pleasure, the Super-Ego would bring up the unacceptable. So it is with Werner; he would like to forget about his deed and believe that it was just a dream (DS 119). However, after the evil thought has expressed itself in the murder and Klang is about to be executed, the Shadow re-appears, this time not as envy and lust, but as Werner's guilty conscience, which stares him in the eye (DS 110). The count who ordered the execution and does not know of Werner's betrayal, feels sorry that Werner is losing his friend and tries to comfort him, but unknowingly condemns him: "Was auch mein Wille sei und meine Macht, und ob zur Hand mir auch die Gnade stehe—Es gibt ein Stärkeres in diesem Fall, und einen Schatten- … an dem, was Recht und Pflicht und Macht, so wenig vorüberkommt als Ihr an Eurem Freund!" (DS 111). In other words, there cannot be any mercy for Klang because something stronger, the

Shadow, namely Werner's conscience, blocks the path. And just as much as justice and duty and power cannot pass the Shadow by, so Werner's path to his friend is blocked by his guilty conscience, and only true remorse can clear the path. Whereas before, Werner had the power to make the Shadow disappear, it has now grown strong through the murder he committed, and will remain visible for Werner until he is truly penitent (DS 121, 122). The fact that the shadow can be both Id and Super-Ego, which, according to Freud, should not be possible, shows the modern thought of delle Grazie's drama.

Through delle Grazie's harmonization of two contrary functions in the character of the Shadow who leads Werner to commit murder, but is also the means to repentance, the author suggests that opposites are not necessarily irreconcilable, which was a contemporary idea shared by Herman Hesse:

> Beständig möchte ich zeigen, dass Schön und Hässlich, Hell und Dunkel, Sünde und Heiligkeit immer nur für einen Moment Gegensätze sind, dass sie immerzu ineinander übergehen. Für mich sind die höchsten Worte der Menschen jene paar, in denen diese Doppeltheit […] zugleich als Notwendigkeit und als Illusion erkannt werden. (qtd. in McFarlane 89)

According to Hesse, opposites are not two independent entities. They not only depend on one another, but one opposite blends into the other; in other words they are closely connected.

With the same understanding, delle Grazie uses the opposites of light and dark to show that there is a symbiosis, with the Shadow being "Der indirekte Beweis des Lichtes" (delle Grazie "Der Sinn" 97). Throughout the play, she expresses this

causality between light and dark: Right before Werner kills Martha, he says, "Die Sonne sinkt—" upon which the Shadow answers, "Die Schatten wachsen" (DS 86), expressing Werner's growing passion. After his repentance, Werner exclaims, "Die Sonne steigt—die Schatten fliehen" (DS 140) showing the victory over evil, as he overcomes the guilt of his murder. Rather than separating light and darkness, delle Grazie explores their dependence: The sunlight and its angle has bearing on the size of a shadow; likewise, evil can fade to goodness and vice versa. Another way through which delle Grazie reiterates the possibility of harmony between opposites is the interaction between Werner and the Shadow, the virtuous against the passionate side. Both are parts of Werner's soul. When Werner tries to deny his evil side by commanding the shadow to leave: "Dann geh' mir aus der Sonne!" (DS 118), the Shadow replies "Ich kann nicht mehr!" (DS 118). Even though it is physically impossible for any shadow to be between the sun and the person who casts the shadow, delle Grazie allows this phenomenon to occur in order to challenge the common way of thinking about opposites.

In conclusion, delle Grazie's masterful depiction of the Shadow illustrates several omnipresent psychological ideas in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: The Uncanny, dreams and repression, the human psyche, and the conflict of opposites, yet she finds ways to explore the themes in a unique and new way. Delle Grazie applies Freud's concept of the uncanny in reverse to disillusion and awaken her audience. Furthermore, she combines binary opposites and brings them into harmony, which presents concretely on stage what Hesse explains in theory. Instead of making the character of the Shadow one-dimensionally evil,

delle Grazie assigns to him a myriad of functions, of which I have analyzed only a few. Her multifaceted Shadow becomes a symbol of the plethora of ideas that co-existed in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, additional research is needed to bring out more features of the shadow and through this, of its society.

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