

FIRE, CINDERS AND REBIRTH. SOME OF GRADIVA'S AFTERLIVES

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Abstract This paper is an analysis of Gradiva's affinities with (pre-)Christian symbolism through the discussion of two texts representing Gradiva: Ghirlandaio's *Birth of Saint John the Baptist* and Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva. A Pompeian Fancy*. This article analyses the symbolism of fire and cinders in Jensen's texts as well as the relations of this symbolism with Saint John the Baptist via the figure of Gradiva. Taking on theoretical concepts from Bachelard's *Psychoanalysis of Fire* and Derrida's *Cinders*, this paper suggests that Gradiva symbolizes the anima figure which, having been repressed through an Apollonian preference, reemerges in key moments in the art and literature of different epochs.

Keywords Gradiva, fire, cinders, baptism, anima

Gradiva is a figure emerging powerfully in Modernism's literature, art and philosophy: we can encounter her in Jensen's *Gradiva. A Pompeian Fancy*, in Freud's analysis of the aforementioned text, in Dali's *Gala Gradiva's* paintings or in Masson's painting titled *Gradiva* to cite only the most conspicuous instances. In our view, Gradiva is part of what Aby Warburg called the survival of images of Antiquity. First and foremost, from a chronological perspective and as appearing in the bas-relief representing her, Gradiva is part of the retinue of a god (most probably, Dionysus). As such, she is one of the three Horae accompanying the Dionysiac ritual. In this paper, we are interested in the relations between Gradiva and (pre-)Christianity through her affinities with fire and cinders. These last two figures which accompany the representation of Gradiva attest to her survival in spite of the fact that she has been suppressed since classic Antiquity. Firstly, we will look at her representation in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of Saint John the Baptist* and secondly at her instantiations in Jensen's *Gradiva. A Pompeian Fancy*.

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Preamble. Ghirlandaio's *Birth of Saint John the Baptist*

As an image of the repressed subconscious, Gradiva traverses times and spaces, uniting uncanny ideas and topoi. She appears in various periods of the Western culture and in different ontological places. One of the most mystifying of these instantiations is Ghirlandaio's *The Birth of Saint John the Baptist* (1486-1490). The Renaissance is famous for reviving the figures of Antiquity and I will not dwell here on this aspect. What is interesting, however, in this afterlife, to use Warburg's terminology, is the survival of a Dionysian rather than Apollonian repertoire. If Gradiva is also the nymph that Apollo obliterated in front of the Oracle of Delphi, she represents as such the vanquishing of the irrational by the rational. Her reappearance suggests that the irrational was not obliterated but that it reemerges in works of art and in culture in general. This has enormous implications for the Western culture which has boasted, only until very recently – the beginning of the twentieth century – a rational, classic, Aristotelian psyche.

Ghirlandaio's painting is a horizontal construction which displays the birth of Saint John in a room filled with women. There are eight women in the room, including Gradiva. The rest of the seven women are depicted in a classic tranquil position and they are clad in classical Renaissance garments. Gradiva is in a stark opposition with the rest of the women who occupy various positions in the room: Saint John's mother is lying supine in bed, there is a servant in the back setting the table, in the foreground there are two wet-nurses taking care of the baby and on the right-hand side there are three other women attending the birth. While the women in the picture are merely standing or sitting, Gradiva is emerging from the right-hand corner with the unmistakable buoyant step. As opposed to the other women who are inside, she is coming from the outside, she is an outsider. This strangeness is marked by other signs too: first of all she is dressed all in white, more like a nymph than like a Renaissance woman and she is wearing Roman sandals. There are several folds in her depiction, the most significant of which being the scarf which creates a space behind her back suggesting the sheltering of the subconscious which defines many others of her depictions. What recommends her for the Dionysian repertoire are, besides the position of her left foot which is perpendicular to the ground, the basket of exotic fruit she is carrying on her head and the bottle of (probably) wine she is carrying in her hands. So Gradiva brings the Dionysian in the life of Saint John the Baptist.

But before dealing with the implications of Saint John the Baptist's Dionysian destiny I would like to dwell on the implications of the presence of the Dionysian in the Renaissance. The Renaissance is mostly known for its cultivation of classical, Apollonian beauty; it is perhaps the culmination of the act of suppressing the subconscious which was started on the steps of the Delphic oracle by Apollo. Nevertheless, in most of these depictions Dionysus or Bacchus is depicted under a more benign light, devoid of his wilder, darker connotations. Thus, we can say the Dionysus is incorporated even in the culture of the Renaissance but by obliterating his

infernal, inebriating associations. The most striking example is perhaps Da Vinci's *Saint John in the Wilderness* in which the character is depicted in a saintly position carrying a staff and pointing to a God beyond himself.

While there have been many parallels between the life of Christ and Dionysus (mainly due to the symbolism of wine in the Bible) there have been fewer (if any) links between the life of Saint John the Baptist and Dionysus. First let us look at the Bible's version of the birth of Saint John the Baptist. Quite interestingly, Luke 1:5-25 foretells the birth of Saint John the Baptist as one who will bring about joy and delight (just like Dionysus) but, unlike Dionysus, he will not drink wine or other fermented drink. In this we have the implication of incorporating and overcoming the Dionysian rituals and, by extension, the whole of the Roman Pantheon. However, as Ghirlandaio's painting implies, the Dionysian touched Saint John the Baptist's life in other ways too.

Just like Dionysus, Saint John the Baptist carried out his service *extra muros*, he was and remained a stranger. They both accomplished rituals which had to do with ancient traditions and they both "baptized" with water/liquid/wine which becomes significant in light of Christ's baptizing with the Holy Spirit. From the perspective of these two types of baptism (water versus air), Saint John the Baptist's represents the old world which was imbued with pagan traditions, sacrifice, repentance, the washing of sins (but the acceptance of them). All these elements draw Saint John the Baptist's world uncannily closer to that of Dionysus. These worlds are also marked by the powerful symbols of death and resurrection but at this stage only death remains literal whereas resurrection remains symbolic. In the world inaugurated by Christ, resurrection becomes literal and death no longer part of a ritual (although some may argue that Christ's death was ritualized by the symbolism of the Jewish Passover), but part of a curse.

Christ and Dionysus were both sacrificed and what was literally the eating of the flesh of the god in Dionysian rituals becomes the eating of the Words of Christ as He tells the apostles:

53 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.

57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”¹

In this passage we have both the preservation of an ancient ritual (the consummation of the god’s blood and flesh) but also the intention of superseding those other, similar old rituals (the eating of manna in the desert). Only Christ speaks metaphorically here, referring to the reading of His words which are His blood and flesh. The literalization of these acts has led to the perpetuation of Dionysian rituals inside the Christian faith such as the drinking of wine and the eating of bread during sermon. The survival of Gradya and Dionysus in, for instance, the Renaissance paintings on the lives of saints is there to attest to this phenomenon.

Unlike the birth of Saint John the Baptist, his death occurs in pagan, exotic circumstances which remind us of a Dionysian ritual in which the outcome of ecstatic dancing is the death of the god:

6 On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much

7 that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

8 Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

9 The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted

10 and had John beheaded in the prison.

11 His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother²

This presentation of John’s head on a platter reminds us of the platter Gradya was carrying upon entering the birth chamber in Ghirlandaio’s painting. As noted earlier, Gradya was bearing exotic fruit. It is as though the death of Saint John the Baptist in such circumstances symbolized the burial of all exotic, Dionysian influences in religion. However, we know nowadays that these rituals are far from being buried down or even repressed.

Gradya brings Dionysian gifts to the birth of Saint John the Baptist. In parallel, Christ receives gold, frankincense and myrrh from the three magi who also represent the old world of magic, astrology and idolatrous worshipping. So, if Christ has come to supersede the old world of idolatry, John the Baptist seems to be called to eradicate the Dionysian hubris: at his birth, the angel forbids him to drink wine. It is hard to speculate why it was John the Baptist who of all the prophets was given this mission. His ascetic life certainly created a stark opposition to the Dionysian debaucheries.

¹ John 6: 53-58.

² Matthew 14: 6-11

Da Vinci's *Saint John in the Wilderness* depicts Saint John the Baptist in an ambiguous fashion, mixing Christian references – Saint John is only wearing a rag of camel hair and holding a staff. At the same time he is holding a wrath of grapes in his left hand and wearing a crown of laurels on his head. One of his fingers is pointing upwards (probably towards God) and the other finger is pointing downwards towards the earth. This is probably signifying the marriage between sky and earth which was accomplished through his service. His is an intermediary status, forever caught between the old world and the new. We can surmise that his prophetic vocation and the passion with which he was preaching were inspired by a Dionysian flame which had been bestowed upon him at his birth. In the end also, he was killed by a Dionysian impulsion.

Ghirlandaio's *The Birth of Saint John the Baptist* is a prime example of Western culture's obliteration of the subtle influences and transfers between the old world (the idolatrous one) and the new world (inaugurated by Christ in the name of the one God). With Ghirlandaio's *Gradiva* we can think of a fruitful dialogue between the two worlds as well as of givens which are not to be destroyed not even through their symbolic death, not even through Christ's sacrifice.

Gradiva and Fire

Fire is one of the primary motifs of Jensen's novella. It underlies the whole story and it is the trigger for Hanold Norbert's beginning to succumb to delusion. As Gaston Bachelard showed in his book, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, we are dealing with an extremely powerful element which has a direct relationship with sexuality. In Jensen's novella, fire appears as a destructive force, which brings about death. Significantly, it first appears in the hero's dream.

Fire is an ambivalent figure being the instrument of destruction as well as healing. It is the matter out of which the soul is constituted. In *Gradiva. A Pompeiian Fancy* it acts as the element which brings about the death of Gradiva, after Norbert Handold had seen her on the streets of Pompeii on the fateful day of the year 79 when Vesuvius had erupted. As a destructive force, fire appears in its most accomplished expression in the guise of the Vesuvius volcano, the day it had erupted. A whole city and its inhabitants had been destroyed in its aftermath. The city of Pompeii is the trace of this devastating fire. That Norbert Hanold should decide to go to Pompeii in search of Gradiva's footsteps is telling of the fact that he prefers the world of the dead to the world of the living. But of what dead are we talking about in this case? Is it merely the people who had been killed by the eruption or is it rather a more mythological and archetypal figure?

Mary Bergstein showed that Gradiva is one of the three Horae. As such she is part of the Dionysian repertoire. Moreover, in his study of the nymph figure, Roberto Calasso reminded us that Apollo consecrated himself as the sun-god by killing the serpent which was guarding the oracle. It is significant that Gradiva goes to die on the steps of the temple of Apollo. It is as if this figure of the subconscious, who was muted by Apollo, were awaiting her reawakening on

the steps of the temple of the god who had defeated her. Gradiwa thus becomes the symbol of the world of the subconscious such as it is epitomized by the Dionysian and all that it brings to the fore. Nietzsche stated that in the Dionysiac ritual, the principle of individuation is interrupted:

Dionysiac art, by contrast, is based on play with intoxication, with the state of ecstasy. There are two principal forces which bring naive, natural man to the self-oblivion of intense intoxication: the drive of spring and narcotic drink. Their effects are symbolized in the figure of Dionysos. In both states the principium individuationis is disrupted, subjectivity disappears entirely before the erupting force of the general element in human life, indeed of the general element in nature.³

Indeed, we can state that Norbert Hanold is undergoing a ritual of initiation which has his individuation as the ultimate objective. The encounter with Gradiwa disrupts this process and projects him in a state of near madness. However, Zoe's Apollonian features help reinstate his mental balance and bring him out of the world of the dead into a more integrated, socially-friendly posture. However, his state of mind before this denouement closely resembles the Dionysian intoxication. This intoxication is fire unleashed. It is fire in its destructive, ominous instantiation, the fire that devours and sucks one dry. Norbert Hanold's mental fever is described several times in the novella. This fever is what keeps him in a state of confusion even after Zoe's ironies and attempts to bring him to the present. It makes him believe that he is in love with a woman who had died in Pompeii two thousand years before and who is now offering him strange encounters. Dionysian intoxication can be what would explain the fact that Norbert Hanold has completely forgotten his childhood friend, Zoe Bertgang: The ecstasy of the Dionysiac state, which destroys the usual barriers and limits of existence, contains, for as long as it lasts, a lethargic element in which all personal experiences from the past are submerged. This gulf of oblivion thus separates the worlds of everyday life and Dionysiac experience from one another. But as soon as daily reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such with a sense of revulsion; the fruit of these states is an ascetic, will-negating mood.⁴

But fire also has a healing, beneficent trait. We are reminded of this feature in the Gospel's baptism through fire. Or in the bird of Phoenix who becomes resurrected through fire. In the novella, it is necessary that the character of Gradiwa die in Hanold Norbert's dream to be resurrected afterwards in waking life. The passage which retells Gradiwa's death is very significant:

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 129

Soon after his pedestrian investigations had yielded him this knowledge, he had, one night, a dream which caused him great anguish of mind. In it he was in old Pompeii, and on the twenty-fourth of August of the year 79, which witnessed the eruption of Vesuvius. The heavens held the doomed city wrapped in a black mantle of smoke; only here and there the flaring masses of flame from the crater made distinguishable, through a rift, something steeped in blood-red light; all the inhabitants, either individually or in confused crowd, stunned out of their senses by the unusual horror, sought safety in flight; the pebbles and the rain of ashes fell down on Norbert also, but, after the strange manner of dreams, they did not hurt him, and in the same way, he smelled the deadly sulphur fumes of the air without having his breathing impeded by them. As he stood thus at the edge of the Forum near the Jupiter temple, he suddenly saw Gradiva a short distance in front of him. Until then no thought of her presence there had moved him, but now suddenly it seemed natural to him, as she was, of course, a Pompeiian girl, that she was living in her native city and, without his having any suspicion of it, was his contemporary. He recognized her at first glance; the stone model of her was splendidly striking in every detail, even to her gait; involuntarily he designated this as “*lente festinans*.” So with buoyant composure and the calm unmindfulness of her surroundings peculiar to her, she walked across the flagstones of the Forum to the Temple of Apollo. She seemed not to notice the impending fate of the city, but to be given up to her thoughts; on that account he also forgot the frightful occurrence, for at least a few moments, and because of a feeling that the living reality would quickly disappear from him again, he tried to impress it accurately on his mind. Then, however, he became suddenly aware that if she did not quickly save herself, she must perish in the general destruction, and violent fear forced from him a cry of warning. She heard it, too, for her head turned toward him so that her face now appeared for a moment in full view, yet with an utterly uncomprehending expression; and, without paying any more attention to him, she continued in the same direction as before.⁵

One of the elements which signal this dream as a particular one is the fact that it is carefully dated. Moreover, the imagery – sulphur fumes, the red glow of Mount Vesuvius – all create an image consumed by destructive fire. It is this fire that kills Gradiva, its intoxicating fumes suffocating her. We are reminded of the dangerous aspect related to the first mythology

⁵ Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva. A Pompeian Fancy*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/44917/44917-h/44917-h.htm> accessed on 13.12.2018.

of fire: the gods must have been mad with Prometheus because they knew that mankind was not ready for fire and that fire would be put to a bad use. The Vesuvian eruption in its amplitude seems to be a punishment from the Gods: the end of the city of Pompeii being similar to the end of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But let us return to the volcano: it could be a symbol of the animus, just as much as Gradiva is a symbol of the anima. The eruption of the animus could signify the fact that the animus is overused, that the female animus projection has constructed a strong male character. Indeed, Zoe has a strong personality, she is witty and reasonable. She represents the Apollonian personification of the psyche. By the same token, Gradiva is Norbert Hanold's anima projection. Her death on the stairs of the temple of Apollo reiterates the Apollonian conquest of the infernal and the irrational. Her death also amounts to a loss of soul on the part of the hero. This loss of soul is also signified through the frantic searches Norbert Hanold makes in his quest for Gradiva.

These searches take him on an intricate path among temples and houses. The hero seems to be struggling in search of his lost soul and he goes to look for it in many different places and temples:

A little to the right something suddenly stepped forth from the Casa di Castore e Polluce, and across the lava stepping-stones, which led from the house to the other side of the Strada di Mercurio, Gradiva stepped buoyantly.

Of course, as he walked now along by the wall below Paris awarding the apple, he perceived Gradiva before him, just as on yesterday, in the same gown, sitting between the same two yellow pillars on the same step.⁶

According to Gaston Bachelard, fire is an extremely sexualized element, so we could take the fire coming from Mount Vesuvius as Hanold Norbert's repressed sexuality which erupts on the subconscious level. We can see that Hanold Norbert is repressing his sexuality as well as his persona in the ironic remarks he makes on the happiness of the couples he encounters in Italy. His repressed sexuality becomes concentrated on the position of Gradiva's right foot which he obsessively looks for in Italy. In this context, it is easy to understand the fire that comes from Mount Vesuvius as Hanold Norbert repressed sexuality. In the view of Gaston Bachelard, sexualized fire has the capacity to unite contraries, to bring together matter and spirit:

Sexualized fire is preeminently the connecting link for all symbols. It unites matter and spirit, vice and virtue. It idealizes materialistic knowledge; it materializes idealistic knowledge. It is the principle of an essential ambiguity which is not without charm, but which must be continually

⁶ Ibid.

recognized and psychoanalyzed in order that we may criticize both the materialists and the idealists⁷.

It is this figure of *coincidentia oppositorum* which will be the channel for Hanold Norbert's roundabout healing. Seeing Gradiva dead fuels Hanold Norbert's dream and delusion and when he encounters Zoe, it is easy to make the parallel between her and the character who had died in Pompeii due to their manner of walking.

From Fire to Cinders

In Derrida's *Cinders* ashes are taken to be the trace of something that *was*. *Il y a là cendre* (*Cinders* 31) says Derrida, cinders *there* are. This "there" emplaces a possibility (of sense), it makes way for the narrative and history to be developed. In a similar way, we can say that there is, there, Gradiva, a Gradiva that makes room for various discourses and stories. There are at least two Gradivas: a Gradiva before the fire and a Gradiva after the fire. The one before the fire tells the story of a woman or nymph involved in a ritual. In Jensen's story, she tells the narrative of a beautiful woman walking the streets of Pompeii. In psychoanalytical terms, she incarnates Hanold Norbert's soul which he temporarily loses in his attempt to catch hold of Gradiva. The one after the fire is the one related to cinders as a trace of something that has been and is no longer. But its affinity with Pompeii also implies a crystallized presence of something that has been preserved, an image that recurs obsessively and which attracts Hanold Norbert with the force of a magnet - her footstep:

As soon as he caught sight of her, Norbert's memory was clearly awakened to the fact that he had seen her here once already in a dream, walking thus, the night that she had lain down as if to sleep over there in the Forum on the steps of the Temple of Apollo. With this memory he became conscious, for the first time, of something else; he had, without himself knowing the motive in his heart, come to Italy on that account and had, without stop, continued from Rome and Naples to Pompeii to see if he could here find trace of her—and that in a literal sense—for, with her unusual gait, she must have left behind in the ashes a foot-print different from all the others.⁸

Gradiva's footstep is her trademark and it will follow her in most of her subsequent representations in particular in the figurative ones. It is worthwhile turning our attention to

⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), 55.

⁸ Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva. A Pompeian Fancy*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/44917/44917-h/44917-h.htm> accessed on 13.12.2018.

this element for a while. The effect that this foot position produces is a defamiliarizing one and, try as he might, Hanold Norbert is unable to find a similar footstep until he meets Zoe. In the novella, this footstep is the mark of buoyancy and presence. It particularizes its heroine and makes it possible for Hanold Norbert to identify the one he is searching for. It is a highly erotic representation which makes up for Hanold Norbert's lack of erotism. At first, he approaches the matter scientifically, seemingly unaware of the eroticism involved in beholding a woman's foot:

These conjectures or discoveries could, however, establish no real archæological interest in the little relief, and Norbert was well aware that something else, which no doubt might be under the head of science, made him return to frequent contemplation of the likeness. For him it was a question of critical judgment as to whether the artist had reproduced Gradiva's manner of walking from life. About that he could not become absolutely certain, and his rich collection of copies of antique plastic works did not help him in this matter. The nearly vertical position of the right foot seemed exaggerated; in all experiments which he himself made, the movement left his rising foot always in a much less upright position; mathematically formulated, his stood, during the brief moment of lingering, at an angle of only forty-five degrees from the ground, and this seemed to him natural for the mechanics of walking, because it served the purpose best. Once he used the presence of a young anatomist friend as an opportunity for raising the question, but the latter was not able to deliver a definite decision, as he had made no observations in this connection. He confirmed the experience of his friend, as agreeing with his own, but could not say whether a woman's manner of walking was different from that of a man, and the question remained unanswered.

In mythological terms, this particular foot position rather reminds one of dancing, as though its heroine were engaged in a (probably) Dionysian ritual. From this perspective, Gradiva remains exterior to the story and to Hanold Norbert's wishes. She is merely an apparition of something that was and no longer is. Something that was dislocated (like the woman in Norbert Hanold's dream) by something else. What remains are the cinders (hence, something else) of what once was. The position of the right foot is there to remind us that this figure although dead, killed or dislocated, does not fade away, she makes her way through figures, history, stories and pictures. The fact that Gradiva is *there* tells us, on a larger plane that the subconscious, although submerged and muted, lingers on, it survives, as Warburg's survival of the figures of Antiquity also shows.

If Gradiva opens the possibility of sense or creativity as so many of the art works that have incorporated her show, what sense is it and what spaces are opened in her presence? First of all, Gradiva makes possible the gaze back in time. Her presence is an invitation to explore the dark recesses of the past, be it historical or biographical. Because Gradiva comes with a double retrospective: that of her own historicity which has remained inscribed in the Pompeiian ashes and that of Norbert Hanold's biography, as his childhood friend, Zoe Bertgang. The character's duplicity both at Gradiva and as Zoe seems to compliment the two hypostases of Gradiva I was mentioning earlier, the one before, and the one after the fire. The

linking element between the two is again the perpendicular position of Gradiva's right foot. Norbert Hanold follows the woman in his dream by this particular sign everywhere:

Gradually his perseverance resulted in the collection of a considerable number of observations, which brought to his attention many differences. Some walked slowly, some fast, some ponderously, some buoyantly. Many let their soles merely glide over the ground; not many raised them more obliquely to a smarter position. Among all, however, not a single one presented to view Gradiva's manner of walking. That filled him with satisfaction that he had not been mistaken in his archæological judgment of the relief. On the other hand, however, his observations caused him annoyance, for he found the vertical position of the lingering foot beautiful, and regretted that it had been created by the imagination or arbitrary act of the sculptor and did not correspond to reality.⁹

However, this 'unmistakable' sign is the inducer of his delusion as he will take the one who displays this position of the foot for the character who had been killed centuries before in the Vesuvian fire.

Secondly, Gradiva posits a mythological space and time which, when entering dialogue with the profane space and time, creates a space-between reality and fiction, dream and awakening. In this space-between, we are given to contemplate the ways in which myth merges with reality and how reality is affected by the myth. It is only Gradiva's intricate connection with the world of myth which can explain the strong disturbing effect this figure has on the hero of the novella who almost loses his mind in this encounter. As a figure of mythology, Gradiva makes possible the positing of a sacred time and space which are the grounds upon which Norbert Hanold undergoes a ritual of initiation into the mysteries of the Roman or Greek mythological world. This initiation entails the hero's identification with a subject who submits himself to the stages of a ritual. This ritual is represented by the recurrent evanescent figure of Gradiva and by Hanold Norbert's incursions in search of her. It will take the hero to the very end of the delusion until he is forced to admit that he had been living in a world of dream and had ignored the reality. The mythological world helps speed up Hanold Norbert's coming back among the world of the living and abandoning the world of the dead. The cinders in Pompeii are there to bring to life the world of those dead in the Vesuvian fire: The ashes of Vesuvius had penetrated into this also, and the skeletons of eighteen women and children had been found here; seeking protection they had fled, with some hastily gathered provisions, into the half-subterranean space, and the deceptive refuge had become the tomb of all. In another place the supposed, nameless master of the house lay, also stretched out choked on the ground; he had wished to escape through the locked garden-door, for he held

⁹ Ibid.

the key to it in his fingers. Beside him cowered another skeleton, probably that of a servant, who was carrying a considerable number of gold and silver coins. The bodies of the unfortunates had been preserved by the hardened ashes; in the museum at Naples there is under glass, the exact impression of the neck, shoulders and beautiful bosom of a young girl clad in a fine, gauzy garment.¹⁰

Thirdly, Gradiva mediates the encounter with the subconscious which is never easy. This encounter brings Handold Norbert in dangerous proximity with the subconscious after the temporary loss of soul. In this encounter, Gradiva is the one who will bring Handold Norbert closer to the reality of his insulation from social life and from a persona that would safeguard this same social life. That which had died in the conflagration was not only the Pompeiian woman but also the anima which then reappears in various guises to lead Norbert Handold back to more solid grounds.

As Zoe Bertgang, Gradiva enables the healing, she renders possible the idea that there is a cure to the temporary loss of soul. In one of Dali's paintings, "Gradiva Finds the Anthropomorphic Ruins", Gradiva embraces a male character whose heart has left a vacant space in his chest. In this painting, we can behold Gradiva's healing force and her agency as a purveyor of health and well-being. Therefore, Gradiva is both an inducer of madness and a provider of well-being. She drives mad by the same token as she renders healthy.

To conclude, Gradiva is a beneficial figure of the repressed subconscious both as part of the Greek as well as the Christian repertoire. In Ghirlandaio's painting she comes to create a relation between the old gods and the new. In Jensen's text, taking on powers akin to Saint John the Baptist, she comes to heal through fire.

¹⁰ Ibid.