THE STANDARD EDITION  
OF THE COMPLETE PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKS OF  
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jealousy at the beginning of their conversation the next day and with the help of a fresh pretext proceeded to touch the girl's body and, as he used to do in the far-off past, to hit her.

But it is now time to ask ourselves whether the method of constructing a delusion which we have inferred from our author's account is one that is known from other sources, or whether, indeed, it is possible at all. From our medical knowledge we can only reply that it is certainly the correct method, and perhaps the sole method, by which a delusion acquires the unshakable conviction which is one of its clinical characteristics. If a patient believes in his delusion so firmly, this is not because his faculty of judgement has been overturned and does not arise from what is false in the delusion. On the contrary, there is a grain of truth concealed in every delusion,¹ there is something in it that really deserves belief, and this is the source of the patient's conviction, which is therefore to that extent justified. This true element, however, has long been repressed. If eventually it is able to penetrate into consciousness, this time in a distorted form, the sense of conviction attaching to it is over-intensified as though by way of compensation and is now attached to the distorted substitute of the repressed truth, and protects it from any critical attacks. The conviction is displaced, as it were, from the unconscious truth on to the conscious error that is linked to it, and remains fixated there precisely as a result of this displacement. The instance of the formation of a delusion which arose from Hanold's first dream is no more than a similar, though not identical, example of such a displacement. Indeed, the method described here by which conviction arises in the case of a delusion does not differ fundamentally from the method by which a conviction is formed in normal cases, where repression does not come into the picture. We all attach our conviction to thought-contents in which truth is combined with error, and let it extend from the former over to the latter. It becomes diffused, as it were, from the truth over the error associated with it and protects the latter, though not so unalterably as in the case of a delusion, against deserved criticism. In normal psychology, too, being well-connected—'having influence', so to speak—can take the place of true worth.

I will now return to the dream and bring out a small but not uninteresting feature in it, which forms a connection between two of its provoking causes. Gradiva had drawn a kind of contrast between the white asphodel blossoms and the red rose. Seeing the asphodel again in the window of the Albergo del Sole became an important piece of evidence in support of Hanold's unconscious discovery, which was expressed in the new delusion; and alongside this was the fact that the red rose in the dress of the sympathetic girl helped Hanold in his unconscious to a correct view of her relation to her companion, so that he was able to make her appear in the dream as the 'lady colleague'.

But where in the manifest content of the dream, it will be asked, do we find anything to indicate and replace the discovery for which, as we have seen, Hanold's new delusion was a substitute—the discovery that Gradiva was staying with her father in the third, concealed Pompeii hotel, the Albergo del Sole? Nevertheless it is all there in the dream, and not even very much distorted, and I merely hesitate to point to it because I know that even those of my readers who have followed me patiently so far will begin to rebel strongly against my attempts at interpretation. Hanold's discovery, I repeat, is fully announced in the dream, but so cleverly concealed that it is bound to be overlooked. It is hidden behind a play upon words, an ambiguity. 'Somewhere in the sun Gradiva was sitting.' We have quite correctly related this to the spot where Hanold met her father, the zoologist. But

¹ [Freud expressed this view at many points throughout the whole course of his writings. It appears, for instance, in the first edition of the Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901b), Chapter XII, Section C (a), and in Moses and Monotheism (1939a), Chapter III, Part II, Section G.]
melted into a unity: some of the pairs of flies reminded him of the honeymooners, and he suspected that they too were addressing each other in their language as 'dearest Edwin' and 'darling Angelina'. Eventually, he could not but realize that 'his dissatisfaction was not caused only by his surroundings but that its source was in part derived from within himself'. (42.) He felt that 'he was discontented because he lacked something, though it was not clear to him what'.

Next morning he passed through the 'Ingresso' into Pompeii, and, after getting rid of the guide, strolled aimlessly through the town, without, strangely enough, remembering that only a short time before he had been present in his dream at its burial. When later on, at the 'hot and holy'1 mid-day hour, which the ancients regarded as the hour of ghosts, the other visitors had taken flight and the heaps of ruins lay before him desolate and bathed in sunlight, he found that he was able to carry himself back into the life that had been buried—but not by the help of science. 'What it taught was a lifeless, archaeological way of looking at things, and what came from its mouth was a dead, philological language. These were of no help to an understanding through the spirit, the feelings, the heart—put it as you please. Whoever had a longing for that must stand here alone, the only living creature, in the hot silence of mid-day, among the relics of the past, and look, but not with bodily eyes, and listen, but not with physical ears. And then ... the dead wakened and Pompeii began to live once more.' (55.)

While he was thus animating the past with his imagination, he suddenly saw the unmistakable Gradiva of his relief come out of a house and step trippingly over the lava stepping-stones to the other side of the street, just as he had seen her do in his dream the other night, when she had lain down as though to sleep, on the steps of the Temple of Apollo. 'And together with his memory something else came into his consciousness for the first time: without being aware himself of the impulse within him, he had come to Italy and had travelled on to Pompeii, without stopping in Rome or Naples, in order to see whether he could find any traces of her. And "traces" literally; for with her peculiar gait she must have left behind an imprint of her toes in the ashes distinct from all the rest.' (58.)

At this point the tension in which the author has hitherto held us grows for a moment into a painful sense of bewilderment. It is not only our hero who has evidently lost his balance; we too have lost our bearings in the face of the apparition of Gradiva, who was first a marble figure and then an imaginary one. Is she a hallucination of our hero, led astray by his delusions? Is she a 'real' ghost? or a living person? Not that we need believe in ghosts when we draw up this list. The author, who has called his story a 'phantasy', has found no occasion so far for informing us whether he intends to leave us in our world, decried for being prosaic and governed by the laws of science, or whether he wishes to transport us into another and imaginary world, in which spirits and ghosts are given reality. As we know from the examples of Hamlet and Macbeth, we are prepared to follow him there without hesitation. If so, the imaginative archaeologist's delusion would have to be measured by another standard. Indeed, when we consider how improbably it must be that a real person could exist who bore an exact resemblance to the antique sculpture, our list of alternatives shrinks to two: a hallucination or a mid-day ghost. A small detail in the account soon cancels the first possibility. A large lizard was lying motionless, stretched out in the sunshine, but fled at the approach of Gradiva's foot and darted away across the lava paving-stones. So it was no hallucination, but something outside our dreamer's mind. But could the reality of a rediviva startle a lizard?

Gradiva disappeared in front of the House of Meleager. We shall not be surprised to hear that Norbert Hanold pursued his delusion that Pompeii had come to life around him

1 [Gradiva, 51.]
the day before. She learnt about his dream, about the sculpture of Gradiva, and about the peculiarity of gait which she herself shared with it. She accepted the role of the ghost awakened to life for a brief hour, a role for which, as she perceived, his delusion had cast her, and, by accepting the flowers of the dead which he had brought without conscious purpose, and by expressing a regret that he had not given her roses, she gently hinted in ambiguous words at the possibility of his taking up a new position. (90 [p. 21].)

This unusually clever girl, then, was determined to win her childhood’s friend for her husband, after she had recognized that the young man’s love for her was the motive force behind the delusion. Our interest in her behaviour, however, will probably yield for the moment to the surprise which we may feel at the delusion itself. The last form taken by it was that Gradiva, who had been buried in 79 A.D., was now able, as a mid-day ghost, to exchange words with him for an hour, at the end of which she must sink into the ground or seek her grave once more. This mental cobweb, which was not brushed away either by his perceiving that the apparition was wearing modern shoes or by her ignorance of the ancient languages and her command of German, which was not in existence in her day, certainly seems to justify the author’s description of his story as a ‘Pompeian phantasy’, but it seems also to exclude any possibility of measuring it by the standards of clinical reality.

Nevertheless, on closer consideration this delusion of Hanold’s seems to me to lose the greater part of its improbability. The author, indeed, has made himself responsible for one part of it by basing his story on the premiss that Zoe was in every detail a duplicate of the relief. We must therefore avoid shifting the improbability of this premiss on to its consequence—that Hanold took the girl for Gradiva come to life. Greater value is given to the delusional explanation by the fact that the author has put no rational one at our disposal. Moreover the author has adduced contributory and mitigating circumstances on behalf of his hero’s excesses in

the shape of the glare of the campagna sunlight and the intoxicating magic of the wine grown on the slopes of Vesuvius. But the most important of all the explanatory and exculpatory factors remains the ease with which our intellect is prepared to accept something absurd provided it satisfies powerful emotional impulses. It is an astonishing fact, and one that is too generally overlooked, how readily and frequently under these psychological conditions people of even the most powerful intelligence react as though they were feeble-minded; and anyone who is not too conceited may see this happening in himself as often as he pleases. And this is far more so if some of the mental processes concerned are linked with unconscious or repressed motives. In this connection I am happy to quote the words of a philosopher, who writes to me: ‘I have been noting down the instances I myself experience of striking mistakes and unthinking actions, for which one finds motives afterwards (in a most unreasonable way). It is an alarming thing, but typical, to find how much folly this brings to light.’ It must be remembered, too, that the belief in spirits and ghosts and the return of the dead, which finds so much support in the religions to which we have all been attached, at least in our childhood, is far from having disappeared among educated people, and that many who are sensible in other respects find it possible to combine spiritualism with reason. A man who has grown rational and sceptical, even, may be ashamed to discover how easily he may for a moment return to a belief in spirits under the combined impact of strong emotion and perplexity. I know of a doctor who had once lost one of his women patients suffering from Graves’ disease, and who could not get rid of a faint suspicion that he might perhaps have contributed to the unhappy outcome by a thoughtless prescription. One day, several years later, a girl entered his consulting-room, who, in spite of all his efforts, he could not help recognizing as the dead one. He could frame only a single thought: ‘So after all it’s true that the dead can come back to life.’ His

1 Exophthalmic goitre.
dread did not give way to shame till the girl introduced herself as the sister of the one who had died of the same disease as she herself was suffering from. The victims of Graves' disease, as has often been observed, have a marked facial resemblance to one another; and in this case this typical likeness was reinforced by a family one. The doctor to whom this occurred was, however, none other than myself; so I have a personal reason for not disputing the clinical possibility of Norbert Hanold’s temporary delusion that Gradiva had come back to life. The fact, finally, is familiar to every psychiatrist that in severe cases of chronic delusions (in paranoia) the most extreme examples occur of ingeniously elaborated and well-supported absurdities.

After his first meeting with Gradiva, Norbert Hanold had drunk his wine first in one and then in the other of the two restaurants that he knew in Pompeii, while the other visitors were engaged in eating the main meal of the day. ‘Of course it never came into his head to think of the nonsensical idea’ that he was doing it in order to discover in which of the hotels Gradiva was living and taking her meals. But it is difficult to say what other sense his actions could have had. On the day after their second meeting in the House of Meleager, he had all kinds of strange and apparently unconnected experiences. He found a narrow gap in the wall of the portico, at the point where Gradiva had disappeared. He met a foolish lizard-catcher who addressed him as though he were an acquaintance. He discovered a third hotel, in an out-of-the-way situation, the ‘Albergo del Sole’, whose proprietor palmed off on him a metal clasp with a green patina as a find from beside the remains of a Pompeian girl. And, lastly, in his own hotel he noticed a newly-arrived young couple whom he diagnosed as a brother and sister and whom he found sympathetic. All these impressions were afterwards woven together into a ‘remarkably senseless’ dream, which ran as follows:

‘Somewhere in the sun Gradiva was sitting, catching lizards and speaking.’ What impression of the previous day finds an echo in this part of the dream? Undoubtedly the encounter with the elderly gentleman, the lizard-catcher, who was thus replaced in the dream by Gradiva. He sat or lay ‘on a sun-bathed slope’ and he, too, spoke to Hanold. Furthermore, Gradiva’s remarks in the dream were copied from this man’s remarks: viz. ‘The method prescribed by our colleague Eimer is a really good one; I have made use of it with excellent results.’” [P. 25.]

He fended off this dream while he was still asleep, with the critical thought that it was utter madness, and cast around in all directions to get free from it. He succeeded in doing so with the help of an invisible bird, which uttered a short laughing call and carried off the lizard in its beak.

Are we to venture on an attempt at interpreting this dream too—that is, at replacing it by the latent thoughts from whose distortion it must have arisen? It is as senseless as only a dream can be expected to be; and this absurdity of dreams is the mainstay of the view which refuses to characterize dreams as completely valid psychical acts and maintains that they arise out of a purposeless excitation of the elements of the mind.

We are able to apply to this dream the technique which may be described as the regular procedure for interpreting dreams. It consists in paying no attention to the apparent connections in the manifest dream but in fixing our eyes upon each portion of its content independently, and in looking for its origin in the dreamer’s impressions, memories, and free associations. Since, however, we cannot question Hanold, we shall have to content ourselves with referring to his impressions, and we may very tentatively put our own associations in place of his.

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[Cf. The Interpretation of Dreams, Standard Ed., 4, 103–4.]