

# THE ROSE IN ANCIENT GREEK CULTURE

© Géczi, János  
geczijanos@vnet.hu

*The tablets of Pylos - On the rose motifs in Homeric poetry - Roses of the gods - The choruses - Roses transformed into people: Anacreon and Sappho - Roses in everyday life: From the garland to the floral carpet, from the daub to the artificial flower - Rose allusions in the worldview - Rose symbols of Greek poets of the Hellenistic era - The roses of pederasty, trend toward desanctification - Rose symbols in Greek poetry in the first through third centuries - Forest, park, garden? - Botany - The rose in medicine - Later sources: Summary of the Greek rose thematic - The Greek rose*

The meaning of the grammatically neuter Greek word for rose, is dual, referring to both the plant and the color pink. The word is probably closest to the Armenian word *ward*, ‘rose,’ which in turn may originate from Old Persian \**urda-* (Indo-European \**urdho-*). (Mayerhofer, however, may originate from the Arabic words *warada* ‘to bloom’ and *waruda* ‘to be red.’<sup>1</sup>) Of its components its color-related meaning – for example, in references to Dawn (Aios<sup>2</sup>) – indicate that the concepts were brought together by analogous thinking.<sup>3</sup>

The word primarily evokes a color, but it also designates a plant (more precisely, the flower of a plant) whose color reliably identifies it. The color and the plant (or the flower of the plant), as demonstrated by early Greek sources, appear interchangeable, although there are, indisputably, differences in their meanings. The differences in content in the two homonyms as used in everyday descriptions resulted in an expansion of the semantic content of the word *rose*, through the Greeks’ emphasis on subtle distinctions and individual thinking. At least as many differences are implicit between the name for the color and plant as there are between the plant and the flower associated by analogy with this color.

The rose bore the values of the spiritual world. As is the case with the majority of key concepts in archaic thinking, the plant was linked to two highly valued states: the preservation of the species and the individual. Understandably, these two extremely important manifestations of human life were placed under the supervision of the gods. Because the rose implied intellect, spirit, and the color of light, it could be used to describe the gods of fertility, and consequently the emotions, properties and attributes they represented in providing human fertility and physical and spiritual harmony.

The rose color originated, according to Greek thinking, from the world of the gods. This was not a metaphysical place: not even the sophists, with their natural philosophy, or other philosophers, who deduced the general from the particular, would have claimed that the color did not originate from

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<sup>1</sup> FRISK H. (1966) 661. *Archiv Orientalni* 1928. 18. 74.

<sup>2</sup> HOMER *Ilias* 23, 109.

<sup>3</sup> FRISK H. (1966) *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg, 660. WALDE, J. B. (1983) *Hofmann - Lateinische Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg, 443.

the physical world – if for no other reason than because the Greeks considered theology to be a part of physics.

The causal relationship between the place of origin of the color and the plant bearing that color is hypothetical. This marked the potential for traits appearing in the plant to have logical, ethical and other meanings with regard to the place of origin.

That the word *rose* referred to all this, in addition to its everyday use, is attested primarily and most abundantly from the era of the sophists. Furthermore, this philosophy did not limit itself to defining the set of ideas which the rose could evoke. As Sophia was linked to poets, to thinkers and to oracles, it defined what aspects of the gods and the world of men could or could not be described through the plant: this idea must be borne constantly in mind.

## The tablets of Pylos

The first written European references to the rose originate from the approximate period when the collapsed frescoes of Knossos were vandalized. One of these frescoes contained an image of a rosebush.

Cretan culture, the first European – Bronze Age – culture maintaining a link with the oldest period of Cycladic civilization, continued its overseas contacts after its independence: it conducted extensive trade with Cyprus, Egypt, and Syrian and Phoenician areas. For example, it was on the basis of the pharaoh's names written on the scarab sculptures which were brought to Knossos from Egypt that *A. Evans* was able to identify the various phases of the construction of the palace. Finds from numerous Cretan settlements demonstrate that the citizens dealt not only with agriculture and industrial production, but also with commerce in the Mediterranean, contributing greatly to the island's flourishing economy in the first half of the third millennium BC. Just as it does for the people of Thessaly, the archeological material also demonstrates Near East contacts for the Cretans.<sup>4</sup> The food acquisition, health and cleansing customs appearing in Minoan culture, as well as the related rituals and ceremonies, the plant, animal and mineral substances used in them and the technologies (e.g., copper and bronze working, glassblowing, and the production of preservatives, fragrances, powders, paints and ointments) in numerous cases show a relationship to the practices of the states of Asia Minor and Egypt. Devices made from precious materials through advanced technology, and luxury items (and their derivatives) available only to a few appear simultaneously in the various cities, kingdoms and empires. Of course, the spread of these items was due not only to commerce but also to the sequential rise and fall of expanding empires.<sup>5</sup>

The influence of the island cultures is clearly evidenced in the evolution of Mycenaean culture on the Peloponnesian peninsula in the beginning of the second millennium BC. As a result of the raiding campaign against Crete in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century BC, as well as advanced seafaring, balanced commerce evolved between the peoples, with Cretan elements appearing in the peninsular culture, along with the cultural influences of other peoples from areas further east. Then, after the volcanic eruption of Santorini, Greek Mycenaea became the most powerful state in the Aegean Basin.

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<sup>4</sup> RITÓÓK ZS. – SARKADY J. – SZILÁGYI J. GY. (1984) 16.

<sup>5</sup> ENDREI W. – MAKKAI L. – NAGY D. – SZÜCS E. (1987) 130–132.

The painstakingly precise administration of the palaces of Mycenaea, Tiryns and Pylos indicates an organized state and regulated economy – and the surviving inscribed tablets describing the state of production attest to the fact that supervision was the function of this administration in the regulation of common and specialized everyday life.

Based on finds discovered prior to World War Two, a joint Greek-American expedition began excavations in Pylos in 1952, and uncovered tablets which not only support the assumption of contact between Minoan and Mycenaean cultures but also, based on their inscriptions, appear to imply the use of aromatized oils, including olive oil mixed with some kind of rose extract. In Pylos, on the Mediterranean coast of the Peloponnesian peninsula, stood the palace of the "high city" and "well-built castle" mentioned by Nestor in the *Odyssey*. The excavations confirmed that Pylos was the economic and administrative center of Mycenaean culture in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. As the settlement was not guarded by city walls, unlike the fortresses of Mycenaea or Tiryns, it was easily destroyed by Doric tribes in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. The city was never rebuilt after its fall – and by the time the *Odyssey* was written down the exact location of the palace of Peleus and his son Nestor had been forgotten.

Opening to the courtyard of the fire-charred palace were propylaea, the left side of which is considered the tax supervisor's office, where nearly a thousand Linear B tablets were unearthed, containing tax records and other calculations. The tablets discovered in 1955 provide information on olive oil production, luxury goods quantities, and administration and commerce. These terracotta olive oil tablets were later studied by an expert on Linear B script.<sup>6</sup> After analysing the signs containing word roots, he concluded that the tablets preserved information on many varieties of oil of varying quality, including some that were used in the making of ointments and perfumes. The analyst identified oils of three different fragrances: one of cypress, another of sage, and the third of rose.<sup>7</sup> The text of scented oil tablet b. FR 1204 reads:

*To Trischeros rose-scented oil.*

This quantity suggests that the liquid, which took up considerable volume, was used for cultic purposes, but it is unknown which god or gods it was used to worship: only a few gods in the Mycenaean pantheon (e.g., Zeus, Hermes, Dionysus, Hera, Artemis, Athena) are known. The author postulates that these aromatized oils played the same role in early Greek life as described, for example, in the *Iliad* by Homer (8<sup>th</sup> century BC), when Aphrodite guards the unburied body of Hector:

*...but the dogs came not about the body of Hector, for Jove's daughter Venus kept them off him night and day, and anointed him with ambrosial oil of roses that his flesh might not be torn...<sup>8</sup>*

Then, when Achilles relents and returns to Priamus his son's dead body, stabbed repeatedly by spears and dragged through the dust:

*When the servants had washed the body and anointed it, and had wrapped it in a fair shirt and mantle, Achilles himself lifted it on to a bier, and he and his men then laid it on the wagon.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> BENNET E. jr. (1955).

<sup>7</sup> PHILLIPS, R. – RIX, M. (1993) 13.

<sup>8</sup> HOMER *Ilias* 23, 183–186. trans. S. Butler

<sup>9</sup> HOMER *Ilias* 24, 587–590. trans. S. Butler

The rose, although still only as rose-scented oil, already had a function in pious or burial rituals. (Oil will be observed in a similar role, as is included in the bucolic post-Hellenic poem *Death of Adonis*.) Along with this everyday custom a sacred quality is also obvious: the corpse stood under divine guard, Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus, watching over the body. The place of the text describes the body of the deceased with two, presumably interconnected, signs, both of which simultaneously determine the nature in which the memory is preserved. Divine authority promised a kind of eternal existence, and joined to this was the rose scent as the sign of the gods. At the same time, the practical – hygienic/medicinal – function of rose-scented oil is also obvious.

A practice which is similarly both sacred and profane can be encountered in the cultures of Asia Minor in the case of the roses in burial grounds. Thus the symbolism offered by the rose of the dead and – through them – of the underworld may have been traditional.

According to the testimony of the oil tablets of Pylos, rose-scented oils were surely known even to the non-island cultures from the beginning of the Middle Mycenaean period. Early knowledge of plant extracts containing volatile oils is confirmed by another piece of Mycenaean evidence. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC fire destroyed the Mycenaean building known as the "oil merchants' house", in the cellar of which archeologists found the remains of oil storage vessels and accounting tablets in Linear B, some of which indicate that volatile oils were produced in this building.<sup>10</sup>

Through the economic and cultural contacts, art and literacy evolved similarly on Crete and in the Peloponessus. This homogenization began around 1500 BC with the Greek conquest of Crete, and lasted until 1100 BC when a new wave of Greek immigration from the north swept over the peninsula. The Mycenaean period was the time when Greek culture joined the rest of the Mediterranean world and received the direct – and indirect – benefits of its intellectual and material culture, at the same time that Greece itself became a rich cultural source. Early knowledge of the rose and the use of rose derivatives probably came in this manner, appearing on the peninsula through Cycladic or Cretan mediation, where in turn it became independent and went back to its place of origin in modified form. As a full-charactered plant readily adaptable to numerous forms of human life, the rose became both a source of symbols as well as one of the many plants and animals integrated into Greek mythology – which is known to have taken its "raw material" from precisely the time when Greek culture was beginning to make a place for itself in the Mediterranean. The Mycenaean sites demonstrate commerce of goods from Italy to the west and Asia Minor, Rhodes, Cyprus, Syria and Egypt to the east and south, as well as an impressive amount of oil trade as indicated by the extent of olive tree production within the Peloponessus.

Both the belief system and the other intellectual traditions demonstrate that this was the period in which existing knowledge and local experience, united by the influence of Mycenaean systemization, were joined by oriental influences, which resulted in the creation of the basis for a mythological system capable of evolving and able to explain the world around it. And the tales from which the later epics grew can be identified in terms of their location. The archeological finds give material confirmation to the significance of this era.

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<sup>10</sup> IAKOVIDIS, S. E. (1996).

## On the rose motifs in Homeric poetry

Set down in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, at the chronological border between oral tradition and literacy, the epic poems (including the longest, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) contained – as pointed out by Friedrich Foche in his layers theory<sup>11</sup> – both discontinuous tales abounding in miracles and mysterious elements, as well as a central adventure with a specific goal and, as a third feature, referential elements indicating the era. The tale elements are where the Homeric epics have the greatest similarity to the motifs of works of earlier oriental works – including the rose's properties as the Tree of Life or Tree of the World. With its woody stem, the rose was well suited for the custom of uniting in it the symbolism of vitality and fertility associated with soft-stemmed flowering plants, and that of eternal existence linked to woody-stemmed plants. Although the rose initially appears in the texts of various sources with the exclusive emphasis on the annually recurring brief blooming of its flowers, or on certain characteristics of the flower, in the background of each reference – if for no other reason than because it contains information about gods – is the hint of eternal existence.

This poetry rarely referred to the rose compared to the number of mentions of animals or other plants; the number of poetic structures featuring the flower – with the exception of one formulaic usage – was extremely small. The expression "rose-fingered Dawn" was linked to the immortal goddess of the sunrise, Eos, lover of men and sister of Helios – the similarity between the reddish color of early morning and the shades of the flower invited this description of her skin. The son of Eos was Memnon, who became the commander of the armies in the Trojan War following the death of Hector, Priamus' son. Memnon died at the hands of Achilles. His body was taken by Eos to Ethiopia. The Homeric passage is one which expressively combines description of the environment with mythic roles, with the particular feature that – as will be found in increasing strength as one aspect of later rose symbols – it suggests a similarity with luminosity or light, which the ancient worldview associated with intellect.

In these early works the plants mentioned most frequently were those appearing in eating habits and related technologies: various fruits and vegetables, and the olive tree as a source of oil. The value of these plants is indicated by how closely they are linked to the figures of gods in mythic stories – also indicating which gods seemed the most important to the given era. Homeric poetry, like other sources preceding the formulation of the Olympic generation of gods, scarcely mentions the story of the creation of plants, the framing of which would be undertaken by later works, along with ideas of more structured and complex personalities for the figures of the Pantheon; nevertheless, the basic mythological functions of the plants were constant.

Although its bud is edible, the rose was never an important part of eating habits, as it was considered of little nutritional value and difficult to preserve; thus it rarely played a role in harvest accumulation or trade and barter. Still, like all edible plants, it did have some supplementary significance in eating habits. However, the most important plant goods were those which could be properly stored, delivered, or traded – those increasing or mediating in value – inasmuch as, of the cyclically produced plant goods, these were the ones that provided the maintenance of human biological

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<sup>11</sup> DEVECSERI G. (1971) 586-588.

existence. Nevertheless, the rose is found among listed plants. To what can this special station be attributed?

The plants and animals appearing in Homeric poetry occur in passages where the civilizational background is either fully depicted or else blurred, depending on whether the text is of mythic or descriptive value.<sup>12</sup> In general the reason for the use of plants appears to be characteristically distinguishable: one trait of the evolving worldview was that named living things appeared with cultic/sacral motifs, which in turn colored all occasions of mention, even those far removed from the religious. Their application was linked to one or more figures, with which the link was strengthened by some essential attribute, frequently as a Homeric expression or standardized turn of phrase. These related a specific characteristic of the gods. This nomenclature also made it possible that whoever was associated in some way with a given plant or animal would also fall under the sphere of the god represented by that plant or animal, regardless of whether that association came at the initiative of the figures of the Pantheon or by human choice.

How is the rose depicted in Homeric poetry? Who are the figures who have a specified link to the rose or to one of its characteristics? Which form of the seasonally changing plant is selected: the full life of the plant, its appearance, or certain components? What botanical properties of the plant are featured, and into what symbols are they incorporated?

As fewer passages contain references to the rose than to some other plants, a comparison with the description of other plants would be in order. Do the texts have a specific reason for the appearance of the rose, or is its role similar to that of other plants, such as the olive tree?

The olive tree is always a reference to Pallas Athena and her role as guardian and decider of fates.<sup>13</sup> Odysseus, after being shipwrecked on the island of the Phaeacians, fell asleep exhausted under a strange olive tree – which will be mentioned frequently later – with two dissimilar trees growing from one trunk, where he would be awakened the next day by the loud cries of the princess' attendants playing ball. Odysseus, according to the epic, was just exhausted:

*So he entered a coppice which he found close to the river; with a clear space round it: there he crawled under a couple of low trees which were growing close together out of one root, a wild garden olive and a blackthorn. So thick and close they grew that no damp wind could blow through, nor could the sun send down his blazing rays, nor could rain penetrate.<sup>14</sup>*

The fact that Odysseus is received by Alconoos and Nausicaa under olive trees "...in the famous holy orchard of Pallas Athena" clearly anticipates the manner in which he will be received, the degree of hospitality and respect. The "long-leafed wild olive tree" is an attribute of Athena as a decider of

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<sup>12</sup> The dual meaning of the olive tree is exemplified by the description of the garden of the Phaeacian king: where the plant symbolizes lasting wealth and well-being through its biological characteristics, but also shows that the area is under the benefices of Pallas Athena: *Outside the gate of the outer court there is a large garden of about four acres with a wall all round it. It is full of beautiful trees - pears, pomegranates, and the most delicious apples. There are luscious figs also, and olives in full growth. The fruits never rot nor fail all the year round, neither winter nor summer; for the air is so soft that a new crop ripens before the old has dropped. Pear grows on pear, apple on apple, and fig on fig, and so also with the grapes, for there is an excellent vineyard....* trans. S. Butler

<sup>13</sup> If any device is shown to be made of, say, olive wood, readers may be sure they have encountered a sign of the divine protection of Athena. *Odyssey* 7 lines 266–299, through the uses of Athena's holy tree are harbingers of a turn of fate, since Calypso on divine orders allows her lover to leave, as in spite of the promise of immortality he yearns for his family: *She at once set herself to think how she could speed Odysseus on his way. So she gave him a great bronze axe that suited his hands it was sharpened on both sides, and had a beautiful olive-wood handle fitted firmly on to it.* trans. S. Butler

<sup>14</sup> HOMER *Odyssey* 5, 475–481. trans. W. H. D. Rouse

fates, just as many other plants and animals bear their own reference to a given mythological personality.

No living olive tree is found on hooded Calypso's island of Ogygiae, nor on that of the sorceress Circe, daughter of the sun: with these women, along with oak, poplar and cedar, the trees that occur are cypress, pine and alder – the trees associated with death, signifying that the hero is on the no-man's land, at the border between life and death.<sup>15</sup> The path to the house of Hades is lined with "slender poplars and barren willows," between which the souls of the dead may be found.

Thus the Homeric texts appear to maintain their distance from the rose. It appears less often than the other plants and animals in the phrase structures – except of course for the expressive "rose-fingered Dawn," built on the color effect<sup>16</sup> – all of which may be explained by the fact that Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and Dionysus, the god of wine, receive less of a role than their fellows in the hero cultus which is espoused in the depiction of these poems. This plant, even if only through its color, is a flower associated with gods.

Examples of the special use of oil can also be found. Certain valuable, uncommon oils were used at altars and for giving fragrance to clothes.<sup>17</sup> Aphrodite herself also used oils to freshen and beautify her body. Elsewhere she cleansed the body of the dead with rose oil (*Iliad* 23, 183–186). Oil was an accessory of cults, serving to aromatize the altar. Oil and anointment with it were signs of eternity.

The use of expensive beautifying oils is further confirmed in the hymn *To Aphrodite*, where the "flower-garlanded," "gold-garlanded," "beautifully garlanded"<sup>18</sup> goddess sees Anchises.

*And when she saw  
him, Aphrodite, lover of laughter, she  
loved him, and a terrified desire seized her heart.  
She went away  
to Cyprus, and entered her fragrant  
temple at Paphos, where she has a precinct  
and fragrant altar. After going inside  
she closed the bright doors, and the  
Graces gave her a bath, they oiled her  
with sacred olive-oil, the kind that the  
gods always have on, that pleasant ambrosia  
that she was perfumed with.<sup>19</sup>*

*To Demeter* is the Homeric hymn where the rose also appears in concrete form in a bouquet to increase its beauty. This is where it took over the

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<sup>15</sup> HOMER *Odyssey* 5, 58-65. *till he came to the cave where the nymph Calypso lived. He found her at home. There was a large fire burning on the hearth, and one could smell from afar the fragrant odor of burning cedar and sandal wood. As for herself, she was busy at her loom, shooting her golden shuttle through the warp and singing beautifully. Round her cave there was a thick wood of alder, poplar, and sweet smelling cypress trees, wherein all kinds of great birds had built their nests - owls, hawks, and chattering sea-crows...* trans. S. Butler

HOMER *Odyssey* 5, 72-73. *All around, the fresh fields were lush with violets / and parsley.*

<sup>16</sup> E. g. HOMER *Iliad* 23, 109. *...till rosy-fingered morn appeared. HOMER Iliad 24, 788-789. Then when the child of morning, rosy-fingered dawn appeared on the eleventh day, the people again assembled round the pyre of mighty Hector.* trans. S. Butler

<sup>17</sup> HOMER *Odyssey* 6, 79-80. *...n and her mother gave her also a golden cruse of oil, that she and her women might anoint themselves.* trans. S. Butler HOMER *Odyssey* 8, 360–362. *they scampered off: Ares to Thrace and laughter-loving Aphrodite to Cyprus and to Paphos, where is her grove and her altar fragrant with burnt offerings.* trans. S. Butler

<sup>18</sup> *Homeric hymns* 5. *To Aphrodite* 1-10.

<sup>19</sup> *Homeric hymns* 4. *To Aphrodite* 56-63. trans. Ch. Boer

emphasized role previously held by oils, the aroma now necessarily linked to flowers (alluded to variously by the "fragrant bedchamber," "fragrant city," "fragrant great Olympus," the "fragrant shrine," or the gown scented to arouse desire).

The rose is again encountered together with death and the netherworld (which, it should be noted, also signifies the heroine's immortality):

*Far away from Demeter and her gold sword her good harvest, to play with those big-breasted daughters of Oceanos, picking flowers, roses and crocus and beautiful violets, in lush meadow, and iris, and hyacinth, narcissus even which Earth, as a trick, grew for this girl, as a favor for Him Who Receives So Many, and with Zeus allowing it.*<sup>20</sup>

Causing saffron, narcissus and roses to bloom at the same time refers to a narrative technique already known by that time: the plants' appearance together is not based on botanical or seasonal criteria. Each expresses the proximity of divine persons and at the same time is a flower from the fields of the netherworld.

The rose as a flower in garlands also appears in the Homeric epigrams. The garland (which was mostly tribute to the gods), just like the clothes made of flower petals by the Graces and the Seasons, had the primary attribute of being fragrant. The head, or anything on which a garland was placed, received the function of a scented altar. A garland woven from flowers is recalled by the author of *Cypria*, either Hegesias or Statinus – whoever the poet was, his book followed the important tradition of garland use, saying:

*So she donned the robe the Graces and Seasons  
made for her, seeped in petals of springs,  
such as the Seasons wear; hyacinth, crocus,  
lovely petalled rose and blossoming violets,  
ambrosia buds and honey-nectar petals,  
and narcissus and lily: thus Aphrodite  
in all seasons of the year wears such fragrant dress.*

.....  
*For smile-loving Aphrodite servants now  
wove many fragrant garlands from earthly flowers;  
brightly veiled goddesses put them on their heads,  
and nymphs and the Graces, and golden Aphrodite with them,  
sing beautifully on the many-rivered Mount Ida.*<sup>21</sup>

Garlands – eventually – would be not only for the gods, but also for holidays celebrated under divine signs, for the participants in the holiday celebrations, or even for the devices in use at such time. Aphrodite wore a garland when she prepared for marriage<sup>22</sup> – she was entitled to this both as a god and due to the occasion.

These data on the rose confirm that the flower was a plant of the gods. It always appears as property of the female gods, characterizing them and their immortal nature, or alluding to them, primarily by its scent but also by its

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<sup>20</sup> However, in the same hymn this scene is related by Persephone, again with a precise list of the flowers blooming side by side in the spring glade. *Homeric hymns 2. To Demeter 425-430. we were playing and gathering sweet flowers in our hands, soft crocuses mingled with irises and hyacinths, and rose-blooms and lilies, marvellous to see, and the narcissus which the wide earth caused to grow yellow as a crocus. That I plucked in my joy but the earth parted beneath.* trans. Ch. Boer

<sup>21</sup> ATHENAIOS XIV, 682 D, F. In. *Homeric hymns Kypria*.

<sup>22</sup> In Song 8 of the *Odyssey*, when the hero in the land of the Phaeacians hears the story of Demodocos sung to accompaniment on the lyre, he discovers. HOMER *Odyssey* 8, 267. *loves of Ares and Aphrodite, and how they first began their intrigue.* trans. S. Butler



beauty. Rose scent dissolved in oil was the device of the undying body, and thus the liquid was also used in cults. In addition to rose oil, or, in its absence, the natural source of the scent was also used: the flower was put in a bouquet (which gave no sign of its later usage), or more commonly was woven into a garland along with other plants.

Of the various human activities, two – insurance of the life of the individual and the sustaining of the species – are particularly important, as indicated by the fact that a mythic explanation for nutrition and reproduction was promised by the worldview, and by the Homeric poetry which transmitted it. All of the plants appearing in the text had a close or distant connection with these two fundamental needs of the human race. According to the limited data available, the rose was not associated with the individual's everyday struggle for survival, the biological maintenance of the body; rather, it was linked solely to the maintenance of the species, the reproduction of the body. The rose – also supported emotionally by love – appears in the context of the godlike figures of fertility, Greek thinking here following the traits of preceding Mediterranean cultures. Fertility and procreation found its own metaphor in the rose. The designative function of roses can be interpreted as an extension of reproduction when the flower was used to describe bodies possessing the health necessary for human biological functions. The signs and instructions of the rose with regard to the human body will be further strengthened by the medicinal and hygienic appearance of plants: the motif of the rose and its extract and aroma being imbued with a sacred nature is found even in the Homeric texts.

These considerations also suggest why the rose was relegated to a secondary role among plants. The explanation of the obtaining of nutrition and maintenance of the species in the myths contributed to the practice of the maintenance of the community, providing information on how the individual was supposed to fit into his own society. For individual life the acquisition of food and maintenance of the body had priority over reproduction and procreation. The formulation of the image of past and present in all likelihood took place when the singular myths were organized into a unified whole, while the explanations of human fertility, supplementing the image of the future and promising longevity, were a later development, along with the rose symbols linked to them.

The rose is at all times an earthly creation – even if it alludes to immortality. With it (and its derivatives) contact between the upper and the lower worlds also appears. Goddesses wore garlands, dresses and scents made from it – of earthly things they surely chose the most valuable. At the same time, those assigned to the netherworld also use it – the rose thus is a sign of the earthly sphere, but one which is capable of pointing to earthly things that are pleasing to the gods.

The rose, according to the data, grows in the field, but there is no information on the environmental characteristics of this field. The flowers of the environment of Aphrodite do not have identical environmental needs; it is difficult to imagine a single place where they all would grow. Their grouping was signified by their fragrance and chosen beauty (and perhaps also the mass of conspicuous, characteristically colored leaves and petals). Of the possible botanical qualities of the rose, attention focused on just one, the plant's colorful flower. And for the flower – as with similar flowers – two specific properties were emphasized: its fragrance and beauty. In the living world, Greek thinking held plants to represent a higher value than animals did.

## Roses of the gods

Early Greek culture was familiar with the rose, which – as confirmed by archeological findings – came to them through the Cycladic and especially the Cretan cultures. The rose bush in the fresco of Knossos, the Pylos terracotta tablets, and finally the Homeric poems all demonstrate a thorough familiarity with the plant as well as the beginnings of its symbolic use. On this basis it is a certainty that rose flowers were used in various cults, as garlands and scents for oils. The plant – based on its properties suggesting immortality and beauty – received a justified role in early medicine and disease prevention, and later in body care and cosmetics, and in the symbolism, in which everyday life and mythic images (and mysteries) were repeatedly interwoven. Use of the rose was associated with many aspects of religious holy days, secular holidays, important everyday events, family holidays, weddings, and burial customs; in Greek mythology the rose appears the most fully in the stories of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, Persephone, the goddess of the underworld, and Dionysus, who was revered in a wide variety of forms.

The bird in the Knossos painting indicates a potential cultural connection which cultural historians have hitherto failed to notice, although the cultural ties between Cretan and eastern cultures have been thoroughly explored and analyzed. If one accepts the premise that the scenes of the frescos have multiple layers of interpretation, divided into functions of illustration and explanation for the contemporary population, then an explanation must be found not only for the rose, saffron and sage, or the properties these three plants had in common, but also for the presence of the squat, small-headed bird – a dove, or a dove-shaped bird.

Indeed, the dove had the potential to gain symbolic significance: as people considered it to be peaceful, loving, living in pairs, and tame (despite the bird's actual behavior patterns), eastern Semitic peoples had already associated it with the goddess of love, Astarte.

It seems likely that the presumably linked appearance of the bird and the plants in the fresco emphasizes the role of Aphrodite and mythological persons closely associated with her, and of stories relating to fertility and what was considered its substylistic manifestation, love.

The connection between the dove and Ishtar (later Astarte), the avaricious and ecstatic goddess of Asia Minor, is found in *Germanici Aratus*:<sup>23</sup> fish found a large wondrous egg in the Euphrates. They pushed it to the shore, where it was hatched by a dove, from which was born the goddess who was said to be the most benevolent and merciful toward people. In the story of her young lover, Tammuz, she may have caused the death of the youth with her over-ardent love. This story is akin to that of Adonis (Semitic *adon* = "lord").

Adapted from Astarte, the Greek figure of Aphrodite remained the goddess of love, with the same retinue of plant and animal symbols.

The name Aphrodite (*aphros* = "foam") reveals her origin. According to stories prior to the Olympic generation of gods, she was born from foam, although the various authors disagree on who her father was. Hesiod considered her one of the Oceanids, the Orphics calling her the daughter of

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<sup>23</sup> KERÉNYI K. (1977).

Uranus who was born from the father's sexual organ which had been cut off and thrown into the sea.<sup>24</sup>

The father's sexual organ was cut off with a sickle and thrown into the sea, where white foam – *aphros* – rose from its skin,<sup>25</sup> and from this grew Aphrodite. For this reason she was named "born of foam." White roses also grew from this foam and became the heraldic flower of Aphrodite, designating the goddess' virginity. Simultaneous to her acceptance as a god, Aphrodite would be marked with very human contrasts: she was at the same time chaste and pure, and also seductively suggestive of the splendors of love – like the Sumerian Innin and the Assyrian Ishtar, she was the symbol of the eternal and inexhaustible regenerative power of Nature. These intermerged figures of Innin/Ishtar/Astarte/Aphrodite expressed the early mythic worldview's notion that matter was created from water or moisture, that the liquid was to be considered principle among the four elements. Also, these goddesses were the matriarchal goddesses of matriarchal societies.

In Homer Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus and Dione; that is, her role was reinterpreted in the Olympic order: she became a woman figure with emphasis on beauty and love.<sup>26</sup>

The Homeric hymns do not associate Aphrodite with roses. However, her shrine in Cyprus (where she was received and dressed by the Seasons after her birth) is described in *Hymn IV* as standing in a grove, and its altar is fragrant, like that of any god. The goddess herself – having been anointed and bathed in expensive oils and balsams – is characterized as aromatic, and even Cyprus itself is described as balsam-scented. Also, *Hymn V* reports of her arrival at the shores of Cyprus that the gods on high stared at her as at someone wearing a garland of flowers on their head.

Aphrodite's husband was originally Ares, the god of war, while according to Homer it was the lame blacksmith of the gods, Hephaestus. How she and Ares cuckold her husband while Hephaestus is crafting moving, thinking maidens out of gold is recounted by Homer in the *Odyssey*, when the gods send the hero among the Phaeacians. The beautiful goddess' other lover was the mortal, Adonis.

The person of Adonis had already appeared in early fertility myths, his story supplementing the cults of matriarchal fertility goddesses. Worship of Adonis appears among the Greeks in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, reshaping the story and role of the lover of the Phrygian mother-goddess, who died, was reborn and flourished in accordance with the generative and destructive order of nature and the rhythm of vegetation. In the Greek version Adonis was the child of the princess Myrrha, who became pregnant by her own father, the king of Lebanon or Cyprus. In her shame, Myrrha prayed to the gods that she should have no place among either the living or the dead. Thus she was transformed into a plant, the lowest degree of living thing possessing a soul. From the bark of this myrrh plant was born Adonis, the fragrant resin-like tears of the mother shrub producing the son (Ovid. *Met.*, X. 512-513). Myrrh<sup>27</sup> was an aromatic, used mainly in censers for disinfection or the

<sup>24</sup> HESIOD *Theogonia* 189-206.

<sup>25</sup> This scene is strikingly similar to the (Medieval) stories on the origin of the plant mandrake: it was created from the erection occurring at the moment of death in men who were hanged. Mandrake was a necessary witching ingredient in matters of love.

<sup>26</sup> HOMER 2. 5. 370.

<sup>27</sup> According to RÁPÓTI J. – ROMHÁNYI V. (1980): Gumiresina myrrha: Resin from Commiphora, a species of tree indigenous to Africa and Arabia, flowing or cut from the sap onto the bark and drying in air. Walnut-sized, reddish orange-brown, fragrant pieces, sometimes porous. Contains: volatile oil, resin, mucilage, bitters. Used mainly in external ointments against inflammation of the gums, for gargling, in censers, in mouth-washes and for burial balsams.

removal of odors. Thus it was a natural association for the balsam sap of this shrub to appear on the altar of Aphrodite – or any other god – and those who turned to aromatics in fertility rituals or moments of love discovered myrrh.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly to Adonis, Tammuz was worshiped in the fertility rituals of the Syrians and Babylonian Semites. The Syrian origin of the Adonis festival is also described by Lucianos (*On the Goddess of the Syrians*, 8), while the Semite version is alluded to in the Old Testament (*Ez* 8:14). In the Greek Adonis festival, the Adonia, in early spring an effigy of Adonis was placed on a bier decorated with flowers, and thrown into the sea. Adonis gardens were combinations of plants which bloomed rapidly, then wilted and dried, planted in broken clay vessels and placed on the roofs of houses in commemoration of the death of Adonis as well as the rejuvenation of Nature. In some Oriental shrines, according to *Károly Kerényi*<sup>29</sup>, during the Adonis festivals women gave themselves to strangers. Those who did not sacrificed their hair to Adonis.

The death of Adonis was also treated by authors from the early Hellenic period, including Theocritus (3<sup>rd</sup> century), who reported on the Adonis festivals, and Bion (1<sup>st</sup> century) and others.

In Bion's version Adonis is lamented by the cherubs: they awaken Aphrodite, goddess of Crete, to mourn her lover, mortally wounded by a wild boar:

*The lovely Adonis lies in the hills, his thigh struck with the tusk, white against white, and Cypris grieves as he breathes his delicate last. His black blood drips down his snowy flesh, his eyes are numb beneath his brows, and the rose flees from his lips. The kiss dies too. Cypris will have it never again. The kiss of the dead is enough, but Adonis knows not that she's kissed him dead. I weep for Adonis. The Loves weep too. Savage the wound that Adonis has in his thigh. Cythereia bears a greater wound in her heart. His own hounds howl for that boy. The Oread nymphs bewail him too, and Aphrodite unbraids her hair, and through the oak woods she wails, distraught, disheveled, unsandaled, and the wild brambles tear and cull her sacred blood. Shrilling through the long glens she goes, calling her Assyrian lord, her child.*<sup>30</sup>

In her pain Aphrodite's beauty is dispersed, and everywhere she goes turns red with sorrow – mountains and rivers, forest springs, valleys and flowering meadows. She finds Adonis' body and tries in vain to revive him: she is forced to realize he has left her. Finally she commends her lover to the mercy of Persephone.

*The Paphian sheds as many tears as Adonis shed blood and every drop becomes a bud; the blood bears roses; the tears, anemones.*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> OVID's story of Venus and Mars in *Metamorphoses* (IV, 167-270) gives a largely similar account of the creation of frankincense. Here it can be seen that, even in the case of plants, identical methods of use may blur materials of differing origins. That is, for aromatics – frankincense and myrrh – the situation in which they are used is more important. *Protinus inbutum caelesti nectare corpus / deliquit terramque suo madefecit odore, / virgaque per glaebas sensim radicibus acti. Washed in heavenly nectar, the lovely body of the girl / decomposed – and the ground bathed in the fragrance of the body. / deep beneath the mound frankincense gradually took root, / growing a stem, the tip of which eventually emerged from the grave.*

<sup>29</sup> KERÉNYI K. (1977) 45.

<sup>30</sup> BION *Epitaphius Adonis* 5-19. in *Bucoliques Grecs*. Texte établi et traduit par Ph. E. Legrand, Paris Coll. Univ. Ass. Guillaume Budé, Tome I. *Théocrite*. 1925. Tome II. *Pseudo-Théocrite, Moschos, Bion, Divers*, (1927). trans. B. H. Fowler

<sup>31</sup> BION *Epitaphius Adonis* 64-66. trans. B. H. Fowler

Adonis is laid on a bier and mourned by the shaven-headed cherubs; they wash his body, take apart the wedding garland and scatter its flowers. The body is prepared for its journey in the underworld.

*Cover him with garlands and flowers. As he died, so also all the blossoms withered. Sprinkle him with Syrian ointments and myrrh. Let all the perfumes die. Your perfume is dead.*<sup>32</sup>

The poem suggests the flowers and garlands placed on the corpse have multiple meanings. In part they are sacrificial plants: they must perish along with the happiness lost, signifying all the beauty and magnificence of the past. At the same time they are the flowers of the underworld: they follow and pay tribute to the body, as a message from this world to the god and inhabitants of Hades – ultimately, although they allude to the other world, they indicate the value of the deceased and are offerings to honor the new world. Finally, they are plants arising from Aphrodite's thorn-pricked feet and the wound on Adonis' thigh – the mutual creation of the lovers – a symbol alluding to the depth of their relationship. And this sign of their love can be interpreted for others as well, by appearing annually every spring. It announces the permanence of fertility, and the resurrection of love in the form of a rose suggests eternal life after death.

Symbolizing the renewal of Nature and the vegetative cycle of plant life, Adonis dies each year and withdraws to the underworld, whence he is reborn to become the symbol of blossoming, rebirth and fertility, and thus was linked early on to the braized aromatics of the underworld used in burial rituals, as well as with the sharp fragrant blood-colored (i.e., imbued with a soul) flowers of earthly life.

Adonis' worldly and underworldly role created a link between the two realms, and provided the opportunity for the common usage of scents, ritual garlands, and floral decorations such as roses. Death and rebirth each presumes the other, one consequence of which is the mixing of function of articles and objects associated with them. The plants used in the cults offered in and of themselves this dual usage, including plant secretions like myrrh or frankincense, which had both worldly and underworldly functions.

As part of the group of Aphrodite-myths, the death of Adonis and related stories explain the origin of certain plants – later to be mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as well. In these stories blood – where early ancient philosophy thought the spirit to be found – was a precondition for the creation of any plant species. An unbreakable bond was formed between a personality shedding blood and the creation of the (animate) plant through the creative power of the blood.<sup>33</sup>

The creation of another spring plant other than the onion (which likewise had a less obvious link with the netherworld) is also explained by a mythical tale. While roses and anemones grew from the blood of Adonis, the violet originated from the blood of Attis, the faithless lover of Cybele who castrated himself and bled to death after being driven mad by the goddess.

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<sup>32</sup> BION *Epitaphius Adonis* 75-79. trans. B. H. Fowler

<sup>33</sup> The hyacinth was created when Hyakinthos, a youth from the vicinity of Sparta, had his skull crushed accidentally by the discus of Apollo, and contemporaries believed the expression "ai-ai" (AIAI), a cry of pain, could be read on the blue petals of the bulbous plant. The origin of the narcissus flower is given in the story of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection and committed suicide because it was impossible for the love to be requited. Meanwhile, in one version of the tale, Hermes carelessly kills Crocus, from whose blood saffron is created. Bulbous plants – because of the bulb (giant bud) situated under the ground in constant darkness – inevitably offer the potential for association with the netherworld.

From an analysis of the adjectives for Aphrodite used in the mythology, Kerényi concluded that there must have existed stories in which the goddess of love is identical to the goddess of death. This is indicated by the fact that Aphrodite is sometimes called Persephaessa, in addition to which her name occurs in association with the adjectives "black," "dark," "murderous," "unclean" and "grave-digging."<sup>34</sup> In other words, not only figures of Persephone and Adonis but also that of Aphrodite was suited for the rose to belong to more than one world at the same time, and to appear as both the describer and description of these worlds.

The netherworld link with Adonis justifies a review of the tales of Demeter and Persephone.

In the stories of the realm of the dead the largest roles are played by Hades, his sister the long-haired Demeter, and her daughter Persephone. Hades, the king of the netherworld, kidnapped the young and comely Persephone as she was playing with other girls in a glen of spring flowers in order to make her his wife; the girl must have been picking the flowers to make a garland, as the Greeks considered the rose, saffron, violet, iris and hyacinth listed in the Homeric hymn all to be garland flowers:

*Far away from Demeter and her gold sword her good harvest, to play with those big-breasted daughters of Oceanos, picking flowers, roses and crocus and beautiful violets, in lush meadow, and iris, and hyacinth, narcissus even which Earth, as a trick, grew for this girl, as a favour for Him Who Receives So Many, and with Zeus allowing it. ... And she was astonished too, she stretched out both her hands to pick this delightful thing. But the earth, wide with roads, opened up in the Nysian Plain, and out came He Who Receives So Many, with his immortal horses, that son of Cronos with so many names. And he grabbed her, resisting, and he took her in his gold chariot, weeping. She screamed in a shrill voice calling for Zeus her supreme and powerful father.<sup>35</sup>*

Thus did Persephone come to the netherworld and become its queen, in association with earlier Oriental queens of the underworld (Perse, Perseis, Persaios). Her mother wandered the earth holding two torches to discover who had kidnapped her daughter, seeking the aid of Zeus to no avail, as he would not provide her justice. Thus she withdrew to live among mortals in changed form, returning to her divine form only when given offense by the mortals: then her body again emitted sweet fragrances evoking desire. At Eleusis, the shrine erected to appease her, she continued to lament her vanished daughter, paying no heed to the increasingly terrible barrenness of the desiccated earth. Finally Zeus had had enough of the famine and drought, and summoned Persephone from the netherworld to return to her mother. As she set out Persephone ate a pomegranate seed given her by her husband, for which reason she had to continue to spend one-third of the year in the kingdom of Hades, but for the other two-thirds – after the arrival of spring – she was allowed to be in the company of the other immortals and men.

In addition to the underworld where dead souls are kept in the gloom, Homer also sings of the Islands of Bliss, where those favored by the gods come under the rule of Chronos. The fields of Elysium also promise a happy afterlife, where souls may ride, exercise or play in the fields among red roses and under the shade of frankincense trees.

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<sup>34</sup> KERÉNYI K. (1977) 50.

<sup>35</sup> *Homeric hymns 2, To Demeter* 3-9. 15-20. trans. Ch. Boer

Thus, in the stories of the netherworld lush fields of roses signified tranquil bliss for both the living and the dead, and the color of roses of both this world and the underworld is red.

Kerényi was the one who called attention to the bearded figure at Cyprus and the two-sexed drawings of Asia Minor on the basis of the name Aphroditos – as well as alluding to a search for an Aphrodite-Dionysus link. Probably of Thracian or Phrygian origin, Dionysus worship was based on the vital force of vegetative nature and was linked with the cult of Demeter, who represented grain, and appeared among the Greeks at the end of or subsequent to the Homeric era. From the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries there is no data on the god of wine, while Homer rarely mentioned him and Hesiod merely alluded to him; Homeric hymn VI (*Homeric VI, Hymn to Dionysus*) apparently originates from not earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Known in a vast number of forms, Dionysus was considered by some to be born of a mortal mother, while others held the youth to be the offspring of Persephone and Zeus. He is depicted as a man with a beard, often wearing a mask or with a mask-like face, in a long robe. Zeus, as might be expected from nuptials taking place in the underworld, unites with his daughter in the form of a serpent, siring a god and a two-horned creature. Orphic tradition recounts how Dionysus was torn to pieces and his flesh was boiled, whereupon the grapevine came into being from the ashes of his burned limbs; this obviously is another variant of plant creation myths.

In the upbringing and later life of Dionysus a number of women took part. The cultus of this god, who resembles Zeus the most closely, was maintained by women who wore ivy garlands and long gowns. The young forest-dwelling male god continually maddened women and typically became their victim. The older Dionysus, as shown in the Homeric hymns to him, was accompanied and celebrated by loud procession of female companions, where the celebrants wore garlands of roses.

Images on vases attest to the god of wine's phallic strength and influence, and his erotic power, while elsewhere the god is referred to as "seemingly male," "effeminate," and "half-and-half." Dionysus' bisexuality is akin to the bisexuality of plants, as he ultimately is also a god of trees, as the bay laurel and the fig also belong to him, as well as ivy and grapevines. Likewise, the rose garland is also associated with wine-drinking and love.

Unlike other gods, Demeter and Dionysus suffer for one season of the year. They are far from balanced, experiencing both pain and joy. Dionysus can be merciful and kind, or unbridled and cruel; his figure combines ecstatic joy and brutality – all of which follows from the fact that he is the god of wine (consumed in cults and festivals) as well as the god of wine-induced intoxication. Wine is of a dual nature – and in this capacity is akin to love. This appears to explain how the rose, originally considered the flower of divine fertility and love and an accessory in sacrifices to the gods and other occasions for drinking, came later to be linked to the cultus of Dionysus myths.

There were others in addition to Aphrodite, Demeter, Persephone and Dionysus. Aphrodite – and occasionally Helios/Apollo and Dionysus – was accompanied by the Graces, who were born of a union between Zeus and Eurynome.<sup>36</sup> Soft love radiates from the eyelashes of the three goddesses, Aglaia ('splendor'), Euphrosyne ('joy') and Thaleia ('blossoming').<sup>37</sup> The figures are sometimes merged with the Seasons. The Seasons were

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<sup>36</sup> APOLLODOROS *Mitology* I, 3.1.

<sup>37</sup> HESIOD *Theogonia* 910-911.

originally the daughters of Zeus and Themis, the goddess of laws, and personified the natural order exemplified by nature as well as the harmony between gods and men.<sup>38</sup> In the environment of these garlanded maiden figures roses appeared naturally, and acquired the properties – the capacity to express splendor, joy and blossoming – which were known as the attributes of the goddesses.

Eos, mentioned previously, received a rosy aura, as did his brother, Helios. Helios was the son of the titan Hyperion and Theia, and was brilliant light itself<sup>39</sup> – the male god figure reflected the influence of eastern cultures, and was related to the figures of Egyptian (Ra) and Persian (Mithras) myths. The Colossus of Rhodes, which was destroyed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, was made in his honor. The figure eventually was merged with one of the Olympic gods, Apollo. The rose, whose light-loving qualities were soon noticed, rightfully became the flower of Helios.

Thus, of the twelve Olympic gods, three were associated with roses. The rose was particularly the flower of the figures surrounding Aphrodite, including the god of love, Eros. According to the early sources, Eros was not the son of Aphrodite, but merely a youthful companion. For Hesiod he was the personification of amorous desire, one of the four fundamental principles.<sup>40</sup> Later, however, his person took a place in the Olympic order of gods, and he became her mischievous and often even cruel son, a creator of conflicts (Simonides listed Ares as the father, while others give it as Hermes, and some considered him the son of Iris and Zephyros.) In *The Feast*, Plato summarizes traditions as distinguishing several Aphrodites as expressions of the concept of love. One Aphrodite is Urania, while another Aphrodite is Pandemos. Both inspire love and cause beings to be attracted to beauty, but the first awakens the emotion between men, while the second inspires it between a man and a woman. Accordingly, two Eroases also exist, one leading to true love and promising fulfillment, one pointing in the wrong direction. The speakers in *The Feast* express a number of ideas about Eros, of which those of Socrates are extremely noteworthy. According to Plato, Socrates considers Eros "the desire for the Good and the Beautiful"<sup>41</sup>, who inspires commitment to creation (whether it be procreation, birth, or intellectual creation), and thus is the wish for immortality. In Hellenistic notions Eros already appears as a child with bow and arrow, and is in love with Psyche, who is depicted as a butterfly.

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<sup>38</sup> HESIOD *Theogonia* 901-911.

<sup>39</sup> HESIOD *Theogonia* 371-374.

<sup>40</sup> HESIOD *Theogonia* 116-123.

<sup>41</sup> PLATO *The feast* 207a.



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## The choruses

The Greek chorus, the most uniquely Greek intellectual product of the late archaic period, was a song for dancing: it was sung at every religious, public or private occasion, from the signing of contracts to the drinking of wine, from sports victories to burial dinners. Its function was similar to that of the garland as a sign of consecration and elevation: it attested to the special importance of the community event.

The question-and-answer folk song may well have consisted of only a few lines even in its original version. One person asks where the three plants are – rose, violet and sage – and another offers her answer: they are here. Rich in volatile oil, each of these three plants was used to make garlands; their presence had divine justification.<sup>42</sup>

The action of song, dance and movement supplied exaltation and the promise of harmony to every Greek. The texts of the choruses, which consisted sometimes of clichés known to the entire community and sometimes of composed poetic texts, were secondary supplements to the performance of eurhythmics, yet they give detailed accounts of the knowledge which belonged to everyone in this era. Like everything appearing in them, knowledge relating to the rose was substantial.

*So they overflowed the king's chariot with quinces and with leaves of myrtle and with garlands of roses and with well-wound wreaths of violets – more of them than ever!*<sup>43</sup>

Stesichoros (middle 6<sup>th</sup> century BC) considered such fertility symbols as the myrtle, the apple of the people of Crete, and the rose to be primarily the signs of Aphrodite, but they may also have been given to honored earthly powers, through their resemblances, for the same reasons that they offered were to gods. The southern Italian Stesichoros used epic material from Homer and Hesiod in his lyrics: for example, in the *Helen* fragments he views Helen, the wife of Menelaus, as the cause of the Trojan War. According to this fragment, the rose was already known by the time of the

<sup>42</sup> *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* I. II. *Carmina popularia* 36.

<sup>43</sup> STESICHORUS *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* I. II. 17. (26). in DIEHL, E. trans. G. Theodoridis

Trojan war, and was scattered by the crowd before the carriage of the persons fêted in testimony of their special station and expressive of wealth. The giving and offering of goods also indicated the higher and lower status of the actors.

Ibycos' (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) *The Fair Euryalus*, like all choral songs, was written for a specific purpose, for a patron who wished to heighten the importance of a celebratory occasion. This is an example of commissioned poetry, which, although it utilized mythical allusions freely and served to represent the aristocracy, it is not clear whether it had the descendant of Tyrannos as the subject of the verse. If so, then it was not his actual deeds which were praised, but rather his aesthetic virtues and beauty, and thereby his virtue. Beauty linked to fertility/creation as the personification of some goddess has the effect of over-encouraging the reinforcement of morality: the cloying mass consists of not one rose, but an entire rose garden. The floral site is one of joy and earthly happiness, which is promised to Euryalus by the gods trotted forth by Ibycos.

*Euryalus, offspring of the blue-eyed Graces  
And care of the fair-haired Seasons,  
The Love Goddess and tender-eyed Seduction  
Nurtured you among rosebuds.*<sup>44</sup>

However, in addition to the appearance of roses in reference to the qualities of mortal men, this symbol also retained its mythological/sacred use. Bacchylides (505-430 BC) used mythological allusions in his choral song *Youths, or Theseus* in which the daughters of Nereus place "*all purple roses*"<sup>45</sup>) on the "*muddy hair*" of the hero arriving in the divine underwater chambers, as well as precisely the rose which his father's wife received at her wedding from the "*sly Aphrodite*."

In one of the *Threnos* fragments from Classical-Age Pindaros (522 or 517-18 to 438 BC), there is further information on roses. In a main square of the city there was a garden of reddish purple, light-loving roses – in the place where the heat of the sun beat strongest (it may have been the location of a cultus of Apollo) – which served for communal activities: physical exercise, music, and games of dice. Everything that happened here was for the individual and collective pleasure of the people of the era. This physical and spiritual joy was combined with the location's floral abundance and scent of flowers. And a place providing such grand, perfumed, carefree enjoyment must have been under the power of the gods, if there were altars for sacrifices to the gods there. (Indeed, the place may have been a part or accessory to the altars.)

*There the dark of night  
is banished by the bright light of the sun, and  
our city's square is in a beautiful purple rose garden,  
in the shade of cedars, where  
golden fruit grows in abundance on every tree.  
Some find their pleasure in exercise,  
on horseback, while  
others in playing the lyre or throwing dice... Eternal  
abundance of flowers around them.  
And honey-sweet scents waft over the landscape,  
and long-glowing eternal sacrifices burn*

<sup>44</sup> IBYKOS *Poetae melici graeci* (7). trans. T. K. Hubbard

<sup>45</sup> BACCHYLIDES Post SNELL, B. ed. MAEHLER H. Editio stereotypa editionis 10 (1970) 17.

*on its altars to their gods.*<sup>46</sup>

With its promise of the well-being of Olympus, this Pindaran fragment gives a glimpse of the moral order based on Apollonic harmony, in which a place was reserved for the rose, whose ecological needs include a large amount of light.

The *Heracles* fragment by Bacchylides (505-430 BC), who tended to follow Pindaros in his poetic images, was an introduction before the chorus performed at Delphic celebrations. The oracle of Delphi was particularly careful that Greek mythological tradition should not be reinterpreted or expanded by other elements. The *prooimion* (introduction) makes reference to Apollo, who had an extremely important role in the Delphic cultus, as a result of which it is virtually inevitable that all of the qualities of the rose should appear in some function: the place inhabited by Nessus, the bank of the Lycormas, is rose-colored.<sup>47</sup>

In the choruses – which the leading classes needed not only to know but also to understand the symbolism involved – the rose is encountered as the plant of myths transmitting tradition. The use of rose symbols was certainly broadened, and the genre, used among the ruling classes at festivals, represented a transition between the epics and individual lyrics. The laudatory choral songs, while they maintained their mythic coloring, eventually came also to feature feelings expressive of the emotions and world of the citizens of the polises, which, although subordinate to the benevolent or malevolent intentions of the gods, still present a more everyday picture than before: this process pulled rose symbols with it, and prepared the way for their general use.

## Roses transformed into people: Anacreon and Sappho

By the sixth century some of the primary means of referring to the rose and the use of its symbols were canonized. The expression ‘rose-fingered Dawn,’ appears to have had the strongest tradition, as proven by the number of references to the skin and its color of this sort. Fragments from Mimnermos (7<sup>th</sup> century BC) include an elegy to the god Helios, in which the poetic image faithfully follows this tradition:

*O Helios, what a difficult task you perform every day –  
neither you nor your swift steed  
have any rest, once gentle rose-armed Dawn  
emerges from the sea up to the sky.*<sup>48</sup>

The author of *Cypria* understandably places a rose-colored and rose-scented robe over Aphrodite’s bare body, simultaneously covering and emphasizing the characteristic shade of her body.

The goddess’ attendants, the Graces and the Fates, also came to be designated by the rose. Ibycos (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) also listed here Peito, the god of persuasion; he joins every member of the garland of gods to encourage Euryalos, the woman addressed in the poem, in matters of love.<sup>49</sup> Stories of the goddess’ creation occasionally feature micro-events which

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<sup>46</sup> PINDAROS *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis* Ed. SNELL B.131. b.

<sup>47</sup> BACCHYLIDES Post SNELL B. ed. MAEHLER. H. Editio stereotypa editionis 10 (1970) 16.

<sup>48</sup> MIMNERMOS *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* Fasciculus 1: *Poetae elegiaci* ed. Stereotypa ed. Tertiae (1949) 10.

<sup>49</sup> IBYKOS *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* I-II. D4.

were found usable in rose symbolism (honey alluding to the womb, dawn dew, sun gods).

Nor did the Greeks neglect the rose during cultic events, scattering it along with other plants of fertility and garland plants, sometimes onto people whom the community thought to resemble the gods, such as the victor of a chariot race.

As the rose became increasingly independent of specific god-related cultic procedures and possessed less direct mythic implication or meaning, it was a frequently mentioned flowering plant (although not the most frequent) in the Hellenic world: it initially was associated only with gods, then with demigods and mortals who were connected to the gods (or liked to think of themselves as connected to them), and finally became a symbol usable in everyday life, in public and private occasions, for joy or sadness, in which any ordinary citizen of the city-state could take part. The first example of the roles which could be expressed by the rose come from the song by Anacreon (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) – already thematicized and complex, even in the Dionysian sense. In this work the rose is together with all its Greek symbols: that of divine and mortal connections, of Aphroditean and Dionysian intoxication, of joy of life, of the trappings of youth and beauty, of intellectual and physical pleasure, and of bodily contact. A mixture of divine and earthly signs also appears, such as in the significance of the garland: being "under the sign of Aphrodite" is inseparable from being "garlanded and beautiful."

*BUDS of roses, virgin flowers  
Cull'd from Cupid's balmy bowers,  
In the bowl of Bacchus steep,  
Till with crimson drops they weep.  
Twine the rose, the garland twine,  
Every leaf distilling wine;  
Drink and smile, and learn to think  
That we were born to smile and drink.  
Rose, thou art the sweetest flower  
That ever drank the amber shower;  
Rose, thou art the fondest child  
Of dimpled Spring, the wood-nymph wild,  
Even the Gods, who walk the sky,  
Are amorous of thy scented sigh.  
Cupid, too, in Paphian shades,  
His hair with rosy fillet braids,  
When with the blushing sister Graces,  
The wanton winding dance he traces.  
Then bring me showers of roses, bring,  
And shed them o'er me while I sing.  
Or while, great Bacchus, round thy shrine,  
Wreathing my brow with rose and vine,  
I lead some bright nymph through the dance  
Commingling soul with every glance!<sup>50</sup>*

Anacreon, in accordance with the view prior to the formation of the Olympic order of gods, held the rose to originate from love (or, more precisely, the Loves), and thus its most dominant trait – incorporating beauty, splendor, and decorativeness – was the sign of love. This flower was assigned to Eros, Dionysus, Aphrodite through her son, and the three Graces, as a garland or other adornment of the hair. The splendor signified

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<sup>50</sup> *Anacreontea* 44. trans. Th. Moore

by the rose was of both gods and men: the rose represented the union between mortals and immortals.

In addition to the rose, other plants frequently appear in the same role. The reason for this is that a number of plants and animals were associated with a given mythological person, and that practical purposes often permitted the identical usage of plants and animals with various more or less similar features.

"If Zeus had wanted there to be a king of flowers, the rose would rule over the flowers," reads virtually every book dealing with the rose, although this sentence is not always followed by the following continuation of the quote: "*It is the ornament of the earth, the crown of plants, the marvel of flowers, the flush of gardens. Its scent is of Eros, invoking Aphrodite; it produces fragrant petals and splendid waving leaves, its leaves smiling on the breeze of Zephyr.*"<sup>51</sup> This passage, beginning with the Stephanus edition published in Paris in 1560, was attributed to Sappho, although it is a passage lifted from the book of a fifth-century Greek writer, Achilleus Tattius,<sup>52</sup> as proof of the survival of the Hellenistic influence. Sappho and her contemporaries had not yet listed that many features of the rose.

And, although the fragment summarizes what had become the main contents of the rose concept by the end of the age of antiquity (that is, to whom or to what the use of the flower was addressed, and especially for what reasons), it is nevertheless more indicative of the efforts to seek and invoke the past in the revived rose cult of the latter age than it is of the evolution of rose use in Greek culture.

In the surviving poems and fragments of Sappho, who lived at Lesbos between the seventh and sixth centuries BC, the contemporary rose is mentioned several times, with full symbolism. The color of this rose can be suspected from the phrase "rose-armed," a physical description alluding to Homeric tradition: "*rose-armed, holy Graces*"<sup>53</sup> and

*...the rosy-fingered Moon beside the stars that are about her, when she spreads her light o'er briny sea...*<sup>54</sup>

indicate it must have been a reddish shade.

*Fragment 2* was an invitational verse to Aphrodite, surviving on a second-century BC tile shard, from which we learn that the goddess wore a garland when she arrived at the temple where her worshipers burned incense. Spring grandeur was a characteristic of the Cyprus-born divinity, as well as of her shrine and those gathered to offer sacrifices there: every detail of Nature in its abundance emphasizes fertility.

*Hither, ...the holy temple, where is a pleasant grove of apple trees, and altars fragrant with frank-incense. And there cold water resounds through the apple-branches, and all the place is shadowy with roses, and from the whispering leaves comes slumber down. And there is a lovely meadow blooms with flowers of springtime, and the...breathe the sweet scent... There, Aphrodite takes up wreaths and pours nectar gracefully in golden cups, mingled with the festive joy...*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* 2, 1-4. Ed. Gareth SCHMELLING. Leipzig, Teubner, 1988. ford. Révay J; HEINZ-MOHR, G. – SOMMER, V. (1988) 15. S 45.

<sup>52</sup> NÉMETH Gy. (1990) 191.

<sup>53</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 53.

<sup>54</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 96. trans. J. M. Edmonds

<sup>55</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 2. trans. D. L. Page

The chosen nature of the place dedicated to Aphrodite is marked by rose bushes blossoming among the apple trees in a lush orchard through which a brooklet flowed, and among the cherry trees and anise shrubs in the field. The presence of these plants justifies the perceived nature of the location by the chosen qualities. However, it cannot be determined whether the natural environment contributed to the selection of location of the Cretan temple, or whether the plants and animals symbolizing the wealth of the fertility goddess were planted and raised there in accordance with the needs of the cult site.

The mythic/divine connection is similarly evoked – this time very closely linked to the desires for physical sensation of human happiness – in *Verse 22* (which in the original named the goddess as Cyprogeneia – "born of Cyprus" – and not as Aphrodite), in which the color of milk-white refers to the innocence of the beloved person called a rosebud.

*[Come hither tonight] I pray, my rosebud Gogyla, and with your Lydian lyre; surely a desire of my heart ever hovers about your lovely self; for the sight of your very robe thrills me, and I rejoice that it is so. Once on a day, I too found fault with the Cyprus-born – [ whose favour I pray these words may lose me not, but rather bring me back again the maiden whom of all womankind I desire the most to see.]*<sup>56</sup>

In this example from Sappho, the rose is not a fertility symbol, although its presence is justified by reference to the god – it is solely a manifestation of love, and specifically physical love. The rose refers primarily to the sweet Gongyla, a Colophon-born student of the author. Gongyla was a human being, described in the two untranslated verse fragments as "*fair of face.*" The rose here is a personal value.

In *Fragment 58*<sup>57</sup> Sappho laments her own old age, her graying hair and her wrinkled skin; her so highly prized physical values – presumably – were taken by rose-armed dawn to the far edge of the Earth. The love story of Eos, the goddess of dawn, and the mortal Tithonos – who became immortal but continued to age ceaselessly – appears as a parallel in the poem: the absence of the rose color alludes to loss.

In *Fragment 55* Sappho associated roses with death and love. These flowers in the Greek text are "roses of Pieria", as Pieria in Macedon was considered the birthplace of the Muses. The Pierian rose is a graphic expression, referring to chief qualities of the location, the beautiful goddesses, and her own artistic nature. Here the rose's combined reference to the beauty and culture of the Muses (including their fondness for poetry) marks the flower's dual ability to convey physical and intellectual attributes.

*When you are dead you will lie unremembered for evermore; for you have no part in the roses that come from Pieria; nay, obscure here, you will move obscure in the house of Death, and flit to and fro among such of the dead as have no fame.*<sup>58</sup>

The unlearned woman of the poem possessed neither charm nor knowledge – she was never able to grasp the dual meaning of the rose: her fate in the realm of Hades can be nothing else but aimless, mindless wandering among the shades.

A past emotional celebration is lauded in *Poem 94*, in which the weaving of garlands and the use of ointments and balsams appear, as well as the bed

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<sup>56</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 22. trans. J. M. Edmonds

<sup>57</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 58.

<sup>58</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 55. trans. J. M. Edmonds

of flowers so expressive of the situation – a couch offered by the flowers of love: this is all very similar to *Fragment 2*, in which the worshipers praised Aphrodite herself in her Cretan temple. Here, however, Sappho is referring to someone else, someone who recently departed, and who was certainly mortal, as in her pain she "yearned to die." The sections referring to Aphrodite are identical to the actions of former splendid cohabitation.

*Remember the many garlands of violets  
and roses I placed next to you  
and  
the many flower necklaces I weaved around  
your soft  
skin*

*and spread bountiful myrrh  
[.....] fit for a queen*

*and upon the gentle mattress,  
[.....] the passion you exuded*

*and neither the [.....]  
nor the singly sacred [.....]  
did we weave [.....]  
from which we stayed away.<sup>59</sup>*

The goddess' cultus and the narrator's love correspond with each other – despite the fact that the religious actions allude solely to the sacred holiday, and Sappho does not name Aphrodite. For her the woman of Cyprus belonged in human form; for her she held the promise of harmony (identity with the macrocosm which Greek culture sought to achieve through the dances and rhythmic songs of holy celebrations).

Of the poems of loss *Fragment 96* is also noteworthy, in which Sappho speaks of Atthis, who has departed to join the women of Lydia. Rose-fingered dawn appears again here, along with the other god-siblings connected with light, the Sun, the Moon, and the Dawn: all characterize the enormous environment where the lost maiden Arignota currently lives. Arignota (whom some believe may have been a goddess herself – her name means "easily known, extremely well-known") yearns for Atthis from afar, and thinks of him constantly, pacing restlessly among the natural abundance of plants.

Their enumeration indicates that aromatic and flavorful plants, the rich creations of the earth, may also be invoked in the woes of love: their value makes the absence of the yearned-for figure all the more painful.

*A beautiful dew has poured down,  
Roses bloom, tender parsley  
And blossoming honey clover.<sup>60</sup>*

The poet of Lesbos mentions roses in both senses of love: that linked to the gods, the place occupied by love in the order of the world, and also that linked to humans, expressing statements on the associated physical and spiritual relationships. These roses depict joy, and the absence thereof, sometimes strengthening, sometimes countering the statements.

Sappho's rose symbols, and the symbol system to which the rose symbols belong, are typically dual. References to them are compound expressions of complex emotions and situations, such that the mythical and realistic

<sup>59</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 94. trans. E. Marion Cox

<sup>60</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 96. trans. M. Barnard

meanings are constantly intermixed. She ignores the botanical specifics of the flower, finding no single trait here, but from the traditional meanings weaves new, more complex and more subtle interpretations which faithfully convey the honest individual emotions demanded by the occasion.

In *Fragment 96* she mentions similarly fragrant plants, quoting a folk song from the archaic era:

*A: Where are my roses, where are my violets,  
And where is my fine parsley?*

*B: Here are your roses, here are your violets,  
And here is your fine parsley.<sup>61</sup>*

These valuable plants seem to appear here outside the sphere of the gods, just as the "rosebud" did earlier to invoke the figure of a girl. Still, because these are all known to be garland plants, they receive a sacred role deriving from the function of the garland.

### Roses in everyday life: From the garland to the floral carpet, from the daub to the artificial flower

Boughs of plants, bouquets of one or more flowers, baskets and vases filled with petals, floral carpets, braids, and open or closed, single- or multiple-braided garlands – these ornamentations and the devices and vessels to hold them were not only associated with the gods related to bliss, beauty or culture, but were also used in any form of decoration to recall the figure or deeds of other gods. The lasting moments of human life, whether of high exaltation or deep sadness, were always accompanied by decorations to give honor: at ceremonies of the gods of the community, state, community, sports and family events, and some aspects of private life. And, as the strict rule that only the inhabitants of Olympus were entitled to floral values gradually eased, so did the requirement that only living sprouts or blossoms should be used. In cults, in official and everyday life, in medical and hygienic practice, and of course on occasions pertaining thereto, particularly eating, medical procedures and burials, surrogates for living plants were also accepted. The rose flower was substituted for by rose petals, rose oil, rose ointments and lotions, and rose powder, and the function of the living plant could also be performed by paintings, carvings, or even rose-shaped ornaments composed from sawdust (and treated with daub). Among the imitations we find the painted, engraved or carved rose shapes of various everyday objects, the rosettas – with varying numbers of petals.

In the golden age of Greek culture the use of garlands had a special role four times in the life of the individual, each time marking the identity of the celebrate and his accepted consensus value in the community.<sup>62</sup> These occasions were: birth, the attainment of the age of three, the age of eighteen (when he became an *ephebos*, or member of the electoral *demos* – except for the Spartans, where the age of thirty was the time when one became a fully entitled member of the state), and finally marriage. At births an olive wreath was placed before the door for boys, and wool wreaths for girls. On attainment of the age of three, the child leaving infancy had a floral garland placed on his or her head, so that its effect would promote physical and intellectual development, at the festival of Anthesthesia (blossoming) in honor of Dionysus in February or March, when the plants began to bloom.

<sup>61</sup> *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* I. II. *Carmina popularia* 36. trans. J. M. Edmonds

<sup>62</sup> RITOÓK ZS. – SARKADY J. – SZILÁGYI J. GY. (1984) 361-395.



The festival of Anthestia lasted three days, at the center of which was the holy marriage of the god of wines and the subsequent merry feast. In the course of these festivities, on the third day of the celebration the garland was placed on the child's head to ensure his or her growth. At age eighteen, if both parents were citizens of Attica, the child became a fully authorized potential candidate of the state. Becoming an *ephebos* was an occasion involving an oath and accompanied by garlands, followed by two years of military service, during which the youth was prepared for full state citizenship.

Garlands were known to be worn after sacrifices, parades, and victories (including sports achievements), and at feasts. These garlands were diadems suggesting the power of living plants conveying the strength of Nature, and were usually made of leaves shaped from gold. In 566 BC, when the competitive games following the sacrificial festival of the main celebration of the goddess Athena in the month of Hekatombaion (August, the beginning of the Attic year) were reorganized and the traditional chariot races were replaced by various forms of physical exercise, gold garlands were the awards for the winners in the concurrently held contest in Homeric singing.

Garlands represented the fertility and power of nature, or one type of its power.

In addition to garlands, plant growths also had a function. During the Panathenaia, the celebration of the goddess Athena, the chosen elders held olive branches in their hands in the parade which began at dawn. Choral dancers and singers also carried flowering or leafy branches of the appropriate type during the celebration. In the month of Pyanopsion (October) at the festival of Thesmophoria in honor of Demeter, celebrants dwelt some three days in the leafy tent around the shrine, where they were to dig up the *pinea* branches which had been placed in a hole dug at the Demeter festival at the beginning of summer. Branches also had an important role in the fertility cults. The promotion of fertility also appears to have been involved in the custom where guests at a wedding passed a myrtle branch around, and whoever received it had to improvise a new verse in the common song.

Oil extracts of plants had a mainly hygienic function, but here again the role of fertility and preservation of health also appears. At celebrations people inevitably anointed themselves with fragrant materials considered to be clean, and of course also at contests belonging to these events. Cult-related anointment was known in eastern cultures, but its association to body culture within the cultus was not: this apparently was a Greek innovation. Ointments were always provided to guests at a feast – whether it was a public event, or family occasion, or simple time of merriment. This was part of the series of ritual actions which also included the wearing of garlands, sacrifices of drinks, and prayers to the gods.

These devices and articles were not prohibited for the dead, either. From the earliest times on, corpses were anointed in fragrant oils, and garlands were placed on their heads, or diadems for the more well-off. Beside the body was placed a *lekythos*, a vessel containing oil. This was buried along with the body, or burned with it on the pyre. The items placed on the body were accessories on the journey in the underworld, and functioned as signs of the change in existence, just as they had done earlier in celebrations marking new stages in the life of the living individual.

The rose and articles made from it were especially important: they counted as a special form of splendor. Anacreon's four-line melody *Love Duel* points out a unique occasion, differing from the others, which also happens to remind the reader that Eros, the lush garland associated with him, and love, are inseparable from each other. The center of this linguistic structure is the god of amorous desire himself.

*Boy! Bring water and bring wine  
and bring garlands of flowers  
that I may do a round or two with Eros.*<sup>63</sup>

There are also a large number of texts (for example, in Meleagros) where the rose no longer alludes to the god of love, but to the actual object of desire, the woman.

*(and already) she is in bloom, Zenophila, love's darling, the sweet rose of  
Persuasion, flower of the flowers of spring.*<sup>64</sup>

The rose now refers to a distinctly mortal woman, and requires no reference to either god or myth in order to be present. It stands before them, and covers their forms, and is able to substitute for them.

In texts of Homeric times the rose also occurs joined with other plants, alluding to an identical situation (but still subtly marked by the plants as compound). Yet, through its specification it is enough in itself to stand in for the gods in situations otherwise designated by Aphrodite or Eros. The myrtle was a fundamental plant of Aphrodite, the link being perhaps even stronger than that of the rose, and in any case more specific. As time progressed from the archaic age toward Hellenism, the rose itself showed increasingly polyvalent qualities, for which reason its meaning often required clarification. In Archilochos' (7<sup>th</sup> century BC) iambic *Neobule* the myrtle fills this function.

*She held a sprig of myrtle she'd picked  
and a rose that pleased her most  
of those on the bush and her long hair shaded her shoulders and back.*<sup>65</sup>

Elsewhere in love songs the myrtle and rose are also named to appear together, and were suited for describing the human quality of a gaily smiling lyrical figure (possibly resembling a fertility goddess) confident in harmonic emotions and filled with emotions of divine origin, thus capable of independence.<sup>66</sup> The meaning of the myrtle and rose together is found in the overlap between the two plants. As the above iamb demonstrates, the Greeks used not only the garland, but also leafy branches or even a single flower to express joy, greetings and the offering of sacrifices, or occasionally to decorate themselves.

According to a poem by Ibicos (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) – while in *Daphnis and Chloe* Longos writes the same thing, and even that the graves of animals were so honored – it was also customary to put garlands on animals,<sup>67</sup> while

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<sup>63</sup> ANAKREON Fr. 51, 1-2. trans. G. Davenport

<sup>64</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 144 (143). trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>65</sup> ARCHILOCHOS *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* ed. E. DIEHL – R. BEUTLER. 25. trans. G. Davenport

<sup>66</sup> Romans later garlanded the household gods with myrtle and rosemary. While for rosemary the connection with the netherworld is obvious, for myrtle it is less so. However, myrtle branches, customary in weddings, may have signified the necessary death of maidenhood! In any event OVID was to relate that celebrants typically wore garlands of rosemary, rose, or violet, and that this also demonstrated their self-confidence.

<sup>67</sup> IBYCOS *Poetae melici Graeci* 287 [6].

in another verse he speaks enrapturedly of a rose garden where beautiful children were raised in joy.<sup>68</sup>

It has been seen that plant uses could be separated from each other when the plants substituted for a god, and also that the plants gradually moved further away from divinity and increasingly acquired new meanings fit for independence. This independence in turn made them capable of new associations. This latter appears in the motif of plant ornaments and plant decoration.

The origin of decoration with plants and plant patterns can be found in the belief that mythical figures were identical with the plants attributed to them and were interchangeable. In this standardized link the plants or their characteristic forms signified allusions to the gods as well as orders from the gods – as was seen with the olive tree in the works of Homer: any appearance suggests the spirit of Pallas Athena, and in some cases makes it obvious that the goddess is personally present. The same is observed in the case of Dionysus and the ivy or vine, and in numerous other standard associations. A great deal about the properties of the gods is also revealed by the morphological or growing characteristics of the plants. For example, the plants of Dionysus are conspicuously forest plants, preferring half-light and gloom (the grape itself is a liana of forests and glades, a hardy creeper) – in contrast with the other gods, who are more frequently associated with plants and animals of open grassy areas. Whatever the plant, its meaning is just as ambivalent; it is invested with properties just as dual – sacred and profane – as the god whose attribute it happens to be.

It has been demonstrated here that communication through plants was originally the privilege of the gods: the information came from the immortals to the mortals – in the form of plants of which people also had everyday experience. The plant's name also had meaning: if nothing else then to identify who it belonged to and to give some indication of its intent. Later, parts of plants appeared in the places frequented by the gods, shrines and altars, and still later on people who were in the presence of gods – in their hands or on their heads, possibly in the form of an offering.<sup>69</sup> From religious celebrations they then began to appear – representing and transmitting roughly the same values and forms – at political, public, family and social celebrations<sup>70</sup> or even at respected contests<sup>71</sup> or formal occasions of mourning, such that later these formalities became virtually of exclusive importance. The message quickly became reversed: the symbolic language of plants now originated from mortals, from everyday life interwoven with rituals, rules and customs, and was directed to the immortals.

Parallel to the spread of the religious use of plants to all important areas of everyday life was the process in which the simple parts of plants – whether boughs or flowers, or a mixture or abundance of the two<sup>72</sup> – were

<sup>68</sup> IBYCOS *Poetae melici Graeci* 288 [7].

<sup>69</sup> AISCHYLOS *Prayers of Penitance* 705-707. *And may they worship forever the gods who possess the land with native honors of laurel bough held aloft, and oxen slain, even as their fathers did before their time.* trans. H. W. Smyth

<sup>70</sup> For example, in BACCHYLIDES's poem *Prayer to Dionysus* several occasions related to wine-drinking are named in which the drinkers wear garlands. *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* 19, 49-51. *Holiday feasts, revels, choral dances are the seed of this nectar / see what splendors it teaches, our noble wine. / Hail lord Dionysus, faithful of garlanded / wine-drinkers, you always are present at merry feasts.*

<sup>71</sup> In BACCHYLIDES' *To Hieron of Syracuse, dedicated to his victory in an Olympic race*, a garland of green leaves was the winner's reward. *Bucolici Graeci* 15. 98-99.

<sup>72</sup> In garlands of mixed flowers all of the flowers were aromatic: there is no instance of a flower being used simply because it was "pretty," as an independent decorative value. For example, in the bucolic THEOCRITOS' poem *Harvest Festival*, three plants with intensive volatile oils are listed. This justifies

replaced by bouquets,<sup>73</sup> petals, sophisticated floral carpets, braided ornaments, and finally open and closed garlands. The mixed use of plant decorations also became customary.

A god holding a flower is seen on various ceramics: Athena proffers an unidentifiably stylized plant; elsewhere a female figure carries a lotus, or a figure waves a leafy sprout, an olive branch bends from the rim of a vase, or a bending branch with counter-directed leaves covers a reclining figure. Winding the length of Dionysus' wand is a leafy branch which could easily be a braided string if it were made of flowers. There are vases where the leaves or flowers must be inserted individually into its mouth – but decoration of this type already brings us to the use of plant and flower bouquets.

The oriental form of mass use of plants at celebrations was the carpet made of leaves, branches or flowers, placed on the ground like a carpet beforehand or scattered before the arriving guest. The scattering of altars with plants and the floral carpet was less known in Greek usage.

Floral strings are shown by paintings to have been used to decorate the inside and outside walls of buildings, rooms and altars – these consisted of leaves, or one or more types of flowers, or possibly even harvests or fruits, but always parts of the plant associated with fertility (abundance, wealth) and adorned on strings. Braided strings<sup>74</sup> hang from dancers' hair and hands, and strings, as can be read in Euripides (480-406 BC), are worn by the dying,<sup>75</sup> and on graves and on the dead. For simpler forms of these (flower and branch decorations) Egyptian burials also provided examples.

Garlands open in the front or completely closed were won by the gods, or by persons carrying out divine deeds, or by those who wished to boast that their deed was divine. Garland adornments were made from oak leaves, ivy, vine, olive, cypress, or bay laurel (that is, from green branches) as well as from shrubs, sub-shrubs, and soft-stemmed sprouts: rosemary, myrtle, celery, parsley, or – as seen in the listing in the kidnapping of Demeter's daughter – even from flowers. Garlands decorated the objects used in ceremonies. In Sophocles' (496-406 BC) drama *Oedipus at Colonos* the Chorus tells the protagonist how to appease the gods he has insulted:

CHORUS

*Then make atonement to these divinities, to whom you have come first,  
and on whose ground you have trespassed.*

OEDIPUS

*With what rites? Instruct me, strangers.*

CHORUS

*First, from an ever-flowing  
spring bring sacred drink-offerings, borne in ritually pure hands.*

OEDIPUS

*And when I have gotten this unmixed draught?*

CHORUS

*There are bowls, the work of a skilled craftsman; crown their edges and  
the handles at either side.*

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their combined use, as the dill, although decorative when in flower, is a characterless yellow-green. It was long known for its aroma in medical and dining applications. *Bucolici Graeci* 7. 63-64.

<sup>73</sup>MOSCHOS *Bucolici Graeci* 2. 33-36. *Immediately the girls came: all holding / a basket of flowers, and went to the coastal field / next to the sea, where they often gathered together; / joying in the rose petals and the whisper of the waves.*

<sup>74</sup>In *Youths*, a poem by fourth-century BC choral song poet BACCHYLIDES, the dancer adorns himself with strings of roses. Post B. SNELL ed H. MAEHLER. *Theseus* 17. *placed on his curly hair a perfect wreath, / dark with roses...*

<sup>75</sup>EURIPIDES *Supplementum Euripideum. Médeia* 1065-1066. *The garland is now on my head, do it / – so dies the daughter of Creon...*

OEDIPUS

*With olive branches, or woollen cloths, or in what way?*

CHORUS

*Take the freshly-shorn wool of a ewe-lamb*<sup>76</sup>

Oedipus then places the garland of wool on the neck of the pitcher, and as an offering of appeasement pours the water out of it three times in succession.

Garlands were worn by military victors and by winners in sports,<sup>77</sup> as well as by celebrants, supplicants, oath-makers, and penitents, by those in the presence of a god, or dealing with offerings or sacred things; garlands adorned the heads of lovers, of wedding couples and of the dead, as well as guests and even tombstones. Garlands were hung on houses,<sup>78</sup> on doors,<sup>79</sup> and given to guests at feasts.

Anacreon begins his poem *The Feast*:

*While our rosy fillets shed  
Freshness o'er each fervid head,  
With many a cup and many a smile  
The festal moments we beguile.*<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, in Asclepiades' (ca. 320 - 275 BC) *Preparation for an Evening* this decoration is an important accessory to the potential splendors of a holiday meal.

*Go to the market, Demetrius, and get from Amyntas three small herrings and ten little lemon-soles; and get two dozen fresh prawns (he will count them for you) and come straight back. And from Thauborius get six rose-wreaths – and, as it is on your way, just look in and invite Tryphera.*<sup>81</sup>

Garlands were also worn by people quaffing wine. Even favored animals and plants were given garlands.

Eventually there ceased to be any occasion for which a garland would not be made<sup>82</sup> – for one-time use, from living plants, branches, flowers or petals, strung to a linden stalk, which became customary in rose garlands, for practical reasons. Thus, garlands were also made for any of the Dionysian celebrations, as demonstrated by a segment from a Classic-era scolion.<sup>83</sup>

The shedding rose garland in Callimachos' (ca. 305 - 240 BC) poem *Drinking Wine*<sup>84</sup> builds on one of the favored elements conveyed through the rose: the parallel between the wilting rose and transient love, subtly sensuous and promising higher content. Parallels to the stages of the life cycle of the rose are encountered with increasing frequency, as are the contrasts of the rose's botanical properties (e.g., blossoming and wilting,

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<sup>76</sup> EURIPIDES *Oedipus in Colonus* 466 – 475. trans. R. Jebb

<sup>77</sup> PINDARUS I-II. Post B. SNELL ed H. MAEHLER. 8. 76-77. *now crowned with their sixth garland from the contests flourishing with leaves.*

<sup>78</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucolici Graeci* 2. 148-153.

<sup>79</sup> MELEAGROS' epigram *Entreating Garland* was such a message hung on a door! *Anthologia Graeca* I-IV 5, 191 (190).

<sup>80</sup> ANACREON *Anacreontea* 43, 1-3. trans. Th. Moore

<sup>81</sup> ASCLEPIADES *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 185 (184). trans. Th. Moore

<sup>82</sup> For example, XENOPHANES' (6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) *Table Elegy* for the ceremony of intimate friendly celebration lists cleanliness, chalices for the drinks and vessels for the wine, garlands for the head, aromatics and incense, the foods, and the table altar decorated with flowers to praise the gods. *Poetarum elegiacorum testimonia et fragmenta* I-II. 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Anthologia lyrica Graeca* I-II scolia anonyma 19. és 26.

<sup>84</sup> CALLIMACHUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 134.

flower and thorn). Similarly to the falling of petals, later poets frequently used the image of the thorn to describe sorrows of love.

A verse fragment from Stesichoros clearly proves that celebrations simultaneously used scattered flowers, garlands and strings. The use of the floral carpet was also known in the East.

*So they overflowed the king's chariot  
with quinces  
and with leaves of myrtle  
and with garlands of roses  
and with well-wound wreaths of  
violets -  
more of them than ever!*<sup>85</sup>

Numerous paintings and vase drawings provide evidence of garland use. The garlands were always woven from a plant with a strong smell or fragrance, such as sage, violet, rose, celery, dill (recommended by Sappho), rosemary, myrtle, olive, wild lemon, or pine, cypress, and bay laurel. This all indicates that the Greeks wore garlands not simply because they envied the gods or wanted to feel like gods themselves for a few moments, but also because the volatile oils released by the garland helped cool the hot, sweating head. This cooling effect serves as an explanation why revelers wore rose garlands while drinking wine, to avoid blurting out secrets in a wine-muddled state, or if they did, those who heard it would not pass it on. Thus, the rose garland was also a sobering device, just as the garland was a device of dignity and honor – and consequently of considered deliberation, an important Greek virtue.

Meanwhile, in Meleagros' mention of the rose the wilted garland matches the complaints and love woes of the abandoned or cheated lover – another example of how topics associated with the rose change with the passage of time, giving new meanings to the motif.<sup>86</sup>

Ribbons woven through the garlands were seeped in rose scent, volatile oil, or ointment, simultaneously indicating the potential for use as a hygienic and cosmetic aromatic.

In addition to garlands of live plants, which were wearable only once for a very short time, garlands also appeared made of gold, papyrus, wood, or perhaps dried preserved plants. This, however, did not diminish the significance of flower garlands, inasmuch as by the fifth century BC garland plants were grown in gardens as well as picked wild. Aristophanes mentions the flower market in Athens, where flowers and baskets were sold. The garden of Epicureos – one of the first Athenian gardens – served to produce the flower needs of the owner, including of course the rose.

As a result of all this, flower adornments, including garlands, also possessed everyday, direct symbolic value. Like the use of aromatics, although they were originally for health, hygiene and medicinal purposes, at the same time they gave honor to important occasions (and thus naturally could be used in a grandiose way). The use of specific objects containing volatile oils or other odiferous matter as oils, ointments, powders, incenses or even garlands may also have been symbolic. Semonides (late 7<sup>th</sup> century BC) used ointments to make hospitality more friendly:

*I rubbed myself with scented lotion and*

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<sup>85</sup> STESICHOROS *Poetae melici Graeci* 187. trans. G. Theodoridis

<sup>86</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 136.

*fine camphor, because a guest had arrived.*<sup>87</sup>

He also mentioned the foppish woman (Semonides: *Women*<sup>88</sup>) as a negative example. The following lines from Aristophanes' (ca. 450 - 385 BC) *Women for Peace* allude to the customary accessories in preparing for a tryst:

MYRRHINE: *Then you wish – a lotion?*

KINESIAS: *Oh, by Phoebus, no!*

MYRRHINE: *But by Aphrodite you will have it, need it or not. (Runs out)*

KINESIAS: *Would that lord Zeus poured out that lotion!*

MYRRHINE: *(returns with the ointment) Now hold out your hand and rub it in.*

KINESIAS: *Oh my, this lotion isn't fragrant, dear, it has the smell of tardiness, not the aroma of weddings.*

MYRRHINE: *Oh, I brought the lotion from Rhodes, what a fool I am.*<sup>89</sup>

A natural accompaniment for festivals and celebrations was the use of floral garlands and various aromatic creams,<sup>90</sup> cleansing articles and – seemingly in exaggeration – incenses.<sup>91</sup> In the fifth century BC Xenophanes writes of pomades in *The Splendid Colophon*<sup>92</sup> as a sign of the fondness for pomp.

Roses in everyday use were the attributes of certain gods, then after the designation of divinity became the sign of joy of life, physical happiness, natural fertility and the beauty which signaled it,<sup>93</sup> and harmony with the world, or in some cases merely the promise of it. The mythical explanation which linked them to the main gods of Olympus gradually fades, and they are increasingly associated with secondary gods, whereupon they fade further, at the same time that questions previously considered a detail find newer and newer answers, promising systemization. The explanations become genre scenes, and eventually descriptions of mood and set allegories.

Appearing side by side are the rose topics explained by mythical associations, primarily in connection with the cult of Aphrodite,<sup>94</sup> and of course Eros<sup>95</sup> and Dionysus.<sup>96</sup> In the early literature love and marriage did not necessarily go together. Love was provided by the cultured hetaerae, who often were an intellectual match for men, while marriage was an economic alliance falling outside love poetry. The emotions of love –

<sup>87</sup> SEMONIDES *Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati* 1. 16. Fr. trans. J. M. Edmonds

<sup>88</sup> SEMONIDES *Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati* 7. 63-66. *Every day will she wash herself twice, or even thrice, and anointeth her with unguents. She even weareth hair deep-combed and wreathed with flowers.* trans. J. M. Edmonds

<sup>89</sup> ARISTOPHANES *Lüzsizstrate* 932-939.

<sup>90</sup> Lyric work *The Feast* by PHILOXENOS (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BC). At the end of the myrtle-garlanded feast, in which even the dishes were garlanded, the guests washed with a rainbow-colored cream. *Poeta melici Graeci*. 836a-b.

<sup>91</sup> SAPPHO *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* 44.

<sup>92</sup> XENOPHANES *Poetarum elegiacorum testimonia et fragmenta* I-II. 3.

<sup>93</sup> MELEAGROS in his song of spring underemphasized the mythological topics in favour of natural – similarly conventional – images. *Anthologia Graeca* 9, 363, 3-6. *The blue mountains wear garlands of green lawn on their peaks, / the bud blooms on the branch, and every tree sprouts new leaves. / With fine dew the grass-loving Sun gives the field drink, / and the field drinks and laughs, as the roses spring up.*

<sup>94</sup> E.g., NOSSIS (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 170, (16) 3-4. *Whom Aphrodite does not love, / knows not her flowers, what roses they are.* Trans. D. Rayor

<sup>95</sup> An example from the songs of ANACREON is Eros on the Rose Petals (after the imperial age). *Carmina Anacreontea* 35. IULIANOS, *Anthologia Graeca* 16, 388, 1-7. *Cupid once upon a bed / Of roses laid his weary head / Luckless urchin not to see / Within the leaves a slumbering bee / The bee awaked - with anger wild / The bee awoke, and stung the child. / Loud and piteous are his cries.* trans. Th. Moore

<sup>96</sup> CALLIMACHUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 134.

fulfilment and yearning, lust and extravagance, loss and vulnerability – are all evoked by the rose itself and the other symbols of the joys of love – but these are not the qualities of married women.

In the history of garlands and plant parts and extracts the same process can be observed as the one found in the examination of rose symbols. A close initial association with the gods can be seen, with a large role in cults praising the gods, then in the course of time the profane realm also made claims on them in addition to their original use, precisely because they thereby increased and emphasized their value. The rose, as one of the plant accessories, was initially linked to the gods of fertility, and as it became more ordinary it was used increasingly as a symbol of love, loving friendship, and sexuality itself – parallel to the process in which an increasingly important role (as demanded by the community, and in its place) was given to love and personal or family life, including physical pleasure for its own sake, and the emphasis on the individual.

### Rose allusions in the worldview

Symbols tied to the rose appear in the environment of Greek gods associated with light, love, fertility and rapture, and since in their anthropomorphic beliefs the figures of the pantheon resembled men, rose topics described situations which had to do with Nature, human fertility, or the abundance of everyday life. Understandably, sunlight and fertility formed a unity: all early civilizations based on plant nutrition considered plant life to originate from light, based on the observation that plants needed it. And plant fertility was the source of human wealth. The mythological worldview specified the fertility-presence of the rose, but tradition originally did not regulate the means of expressing this presence.

Strikingly, a survey of five centuries of sources fails to produce a single hermetic meaning associated with the rose, beyond affirming the connection of the pantheon and plant life. What was the reason for this prolific range of rose symbols?

One reason lies in Greek cultural tradition: the Greeks not only tolerated but also honored individualism, while also respecting community spirit. Greek culture was never homogenous prior to the Macedonian conquest, never organized politically or theologically into a single unified system. The non-canonizing political, religious and cultural model made it possible for occasionally radically divergent ideas and mentalities to take shape and survive, along with their appropriate symbols; it also permitted the appreciation of personal qualities and a philological examination of their imprints on the language.

A second reason which sustained the usage of rose symbols while never causing them to become unified was the mosaic nature of Greek religion, which never became itemized or unified, and consequently its symbol system, despite its characteristic features, was never a closed one.

As they outlined the Greek worldview, natural philosophy and the principle of homomensura, neither the sophists nor the founders of other written traditions were unassailable in their knowledge of the gods, Nature, society or people. Cults and rituals never became uniform, nor did the mythology or everyday community behavior patterns based on the mythology.

A recurring notion in the sophist movement up to Protagoras is the idea that for every individual, Truth is that which seems true to him; this



permitted the expression of individual opinions, and obviously did not limit a person from selecting traditional elements of the mythological worldview and shaping them as he or she saw fit, or even questioning the existence of the gods.

The pre-Socratic disorganization came to an end in the fourth century when Aristotle and his followers outlined a worldview which not only incorporated the varied heritage but also offered an overall framework, including regulation of the forms of prose evocations. Aristotelian students created a multifunctional principle of causality for all which was hitherto unprovided by myths, religion, or the complexly interwoven cultural heritage. This principle used the same logic to explain the metaphysical and physical worlds, and stressed their unity.

The first two volumes of Aristotle's (384 – 322 BC) *De Caelo* deal with the motions of celestial bodies, and the other two with that of earthly bodies. Building on his earlier works, Aristotle outlined a geocentric view of the universe in this work. The Earth was situated at the center of a spherical cosmos, while the exterior consisted of the *primum mobile*, the spherical surface (first sky) containing the stationary stars. The Celestial World was situated between the Earth, which contained the Elemental world, and the *primum mobile*.<sup>97</sup>

The Elemental world consisted of the four classical elements of earth, water, wind and fire; the Celestial world, of ether, the fifth element made up of the purest parts; and the *primum mobile* – as stated in *Physics* Volume VIII – was matterless, unexpanding and motionless, the eternal spirit which created forms. In the Elemental world the four elements were constantly combining into shapes, where things were created and destroyed, while in the Celestial world these things were absent. The Earth was characterized by linear motion, and the objects in the concentric spheres of the astronomical system by circular motion.

Aristotle held the universe to consist of 59 spheres along with the four elements. Located on its circumference, the *primum mobile* was the source of the Perfect (that is, circular motion), which was imparted primarily on the sphere of stationary stars. Each subsequent sphere acquired its (increasingly less ideal) motion from the sphere before it, but circular motion remained the norm for the entire Celestial world. The eternal nature of the *primum mobile* was also the source of the revolving spherical shape of celestial bodies.

The center of the universe was the Elemental world, whose center in turn was comprised of the four elements. These elements, entities not divisible into smaller parts, formed a system defined by their direction of movement depending on their weight and density. Heavy earth tended to sink toward the center, while light fire rose to the edges of the cosmos. Air and water occupied the middle ground. Each element contained two qualities, the relative proportion being quite similar, yet different in the extent of their composition for each element. Fire – like the plethora of things most characterized by fire – was hot and dry in form, while earth was cold and dry. Fire and earth were attracted to each other by their dryness and repelled by their hotness/coldness, inasmuch as likes attract and opposites repel. Heat causes similar things to combine, while cold causes them to separate.

In each of the four simple elements one quality is dominant, suppressing the qualities of the other three elements mixed in it. The elements are able to transform each into another, thereby being created and then destroyed. This

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<sup>97</sup> Sir David ROSS (1996) 127-133.

is a ceaseless process caused by the approach and departure of the Sun – the motion of the Sun being the reason that the four elements of the Elemental world (which is located beneath the sphere of the Moon) remain in equilibrium while constantly transforming into one another. The elements create mixed forms, and the relative proportions of the various elements result in the generation of the things of the Elemental world: metals, rocks, minerals, plants, animals, and even Man himself. All things in the sublunar world consist predominantly of earth – the other three elements or combinations thereof are merely joined to it in varying amounts to create each different thing.

Thus all things and living creatures consist of the four elements on the level of composition, and the tendencies and qualities of each are present in them. The material nature of things is observable in them. The characteristics of things – their qualities, color, scent and so on – reveal their simple or complex origin: this explains the nature of the rose plant, as well as its various organs.

The Aristotelian explanation transcends the origin of earthly objects. For example, fire-related properties of things of the Elemental world can be linked or compared to similar fiery qualities of the more intellectual spheres. In addition, a given quality suggests which property of a specific element is present in a thing, and how it indicates its similarity to other objects. Similar properties between objects of the Celestial world and animate or inanimate objects refer to their kinship.

One of the disputed Aristotelian works is the *Book of Colors (De Coloribus)*. Some scholars consider it to have been written by Aristotle, while others hold it to be the work of Theophrastus, Aristotle's successor as leader of the Lyceion honored as the father of botany, while still others attribute it to Strato, Theophrastus' successor. For purposes of this work the identity of the author is inconsequential; it is sufficient to state that it was an Aristotelian who elaborated and followed a philosophical explanation which made it possible to examine specific objects in terms of their relationship to the four elements in both the Celestial and Spiritual worlds.

Sections 791a 1-11 of the *Book of Colors* discuss how plants obtain their color from the four elements. Air and water are white by nature, while fire and the Sun are yellow. The multitude of colors results from the mixture of elements to which the plant is most susceptible. In early stages of their development plant organs do not display the qualities typical of them, including color: to acquire these properties, they must undergo a process of maturation. In the maturation of leaves in the autumn, the opening of buds and the ripening of the fruit, factors promoting development are subordinated, and the characteristics revealing the elemental origin of the organs appear at the end of the process. Thus the various flowers change from white to yellow, red or purple, and the green fruit to a color indicating the presence of the element of fire.

*The change of color in fruit is explained by the appearance of a vivid color which replaces the previous color of the plant. This is proven by the following examples: the fruit of the pomegranate and the petals of the rose are initially white, yet in the final stages of development they change to shades of purple and red.*<sup>98</sup>

Accordingly, the white petals enclosed inside an immature rosebud indicate the predominance of water. This is confirmed in Chapter 5 of the

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<sup>98</sup> ARISTOTLE *De Coloribus* 796a 18-25.

*Book of Colors*, where it is stated that the presence of moisture is most important in early development. Buds open and change color as a result of sunlight, and the increased ratio of fire is marked by yellowish red. (This red comes about by the yellow of fire being darkened by mixture with the black of earth.) The sign of the element of fire and its attendant attributes is (whitish or yellowish) red – as shown by the Sun of the Celestial world, the blood of warm-blooded animals, the rose, or red stone.

The unique nature of the rose, however, is not a function of its red petals alone: one passage in Aristotle's *Problemata* asserts that this character is possessed not only by the rose flower but also by the other parts of the rose, even thorn and its scent. It is their combination which defines the rose. The red derives not from the rose itself but from fire. The rose is a special mixture of the four elements, the components of which are mixed in varying ratios in the different organs:

*What is the explanation for the fact that roses with shaggy centers have sweeter scents than those with smooth centers? Are they more fragrant because they have more of the rose's unique nature? The nature of the rose is to be thorny – thus this may be the reason that the sweeter scent is possessed by the rose which possesses more of this special nature of the rose.*<sup>99</sup>

According to Chapter 5 of the *Book of Colors*, red is the dominant color in the branches, stem, vines and leaves of all plants.

The specifications of the rose result from its combined features – its scent, its thorns, and the color it obtains while ripening. A rose cannot exist without thorns, any more than it can exist without its aroma. If the center of a rose flower is shaggy – perhaps because it has many stamina – and the flower repeats this on the thorns of the stem, then its qualities make it quintessentially rose-like.

In the sweet fragrance of the rose some early Greek sources (such as the Homeric passage referring to rose oil) attach great importance to this explanation. It also explains what religious or cultic considerations led the people of the Mediterranean to use certain aromatic oils, ointments and potions in their everyday actions, as well as on special, spiritually charged occasions. A pleasant aroma suggested the element of fire – or a spirit resembling fire most closely.

Consequently Aristotle did not consider it immoderate for someone to indulge in the aroma of the rose in order to attain more exalted enjoyment of physical pleasures:

*In contrast, one may speak of moderation with regard to physical pleasures, although not in every case: one who takes pleasure in the objects in his field of vision – colors, shapes, drawings – can be called neither moderate nor immoderate, although it is obvious that one may take pleasure in such objects, not only in the proper amount but also to a greater degree, or a lesser degree. The situation is similar with things that he hears: if someone takes more than average pleasure in songs or theatrical performances, no one can call him immoderate, nor moderate if he takes moderate pleasure in all things. Nor can these expressions be used, for example, for those who enjoy pleasures of smell, unless there is an extenuating circumstance: one who enjoys the aroma of an apple, a rose or incense cannot be called immoderate.*<sup>100</sup>

The everyday experience of exterminating unpleasant pests is also explained through the four elements in *Mirabilium auscultationes*. In this

<sup>99</sup> ARISTOTLE *Problemata* b 907a 20-23.

<sup>100</sup> ARISTOTLE *Ethica Nocomachea* 1118a 3-19.

philosophy the divergent signs of qualities borne by some objects make it impossible for others to manifest theirs, and their existing effects are extinguished. The eagle dies from unpleasant smells because the bird and the odor cancel each other's existence. This explains why the fire-related rose scent results in the death of highly earth-related insects.

*Some claim that eagles will die from the smell of ointments, which may also occur if someone anoints it with some oily matter or feeds it something oily. Similar arguments are used when it is claimed that insects will die from the scent of a rose.*<sup>101</sup>

The scent of the rose is permanent, and this feature appears to have been enough to make it the most honored of aromatics. And the reason for the unflagging intensity of the scent is that the fundamental elemental characteristic is manifested more readily in its flower, its essence and its oil than in other plants. The answer to some questions raised in Aristotle's *Problemata* lies precisely here:

*Why is it that many ointments acquire an unpleasant odor if mixed with sweat, while others become more fragrant, and still others are unchanged? Is it a result of motion or rubbing that certain ointments become rose-scented, while others change to precisely the opposite? There exist some aromas, such as that of flowers, which emit a pleasant scent, but the scent weakens if their leaves are rubbed, heated or dried, as with the violet, while other aromas remain unchanged, as with the rose. If ointments are made from flowers of the former category, these will also typically change their scent, while this is not true of those made from the latter category – rose-water changes its scent less. The unpleasant odor is stronger in those for which body odor is part of their special characteristics, and if opposing scents are mixed (for example, honey with salt), a worse smell is generated.*<sup>102</sup>

The pleasant sensation caused by the scent of the rose was not what made it enjoyable. The rose scent was popular not because it aroused desire, but because it evoked non-physical, non-material sources of joy. The scent not only provided those smelling it with a transient sensation of comfort, but also expressed a positive spiritual constant.

*There are five senses; some animals find pleasure in only two, and some in none at all, or perhaps only rarely. A lion obtains pleasure when it spots its prey or smells its scent, but once it has sated its hunger, similar objects no longer arouse pleasure; nor does the smell of dried fish cause a pleasant sensation if a person has eaten his fill, yet when he but yearned for it, it caused pleasure. Contrarywise, the scent of the rose always causes pleasure.*<sup>103</sup>

This line of reasoning also makes it obvious that in the choice of possible metaphors the likeliest to be chosen was the one which best evoked the spirit of perfection, using a version of the thing in which the sign of fire was most present.

*The materials of metaphor must be beautiful to the ear, to the understanding, to the eye or some other physical sense. It is better, for instance, to say 'rosy-fingered morn', than 'crimson-fingered' or, worse still, 'red-fingered morn'.*<sup>104</sup>

The cosmology of the Aristotelians, albeit to varying degrees, influenced Moslem and Christian thinking in a number of eras up to the Enlightenment,

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<sup>101</sup> ARISTOTLE *Mirabilium auscultationes* 845 b1-3.

<sup>102</sup> ARISTOTLE *Problemata* 909b 34 - 909a 7.

<sup>103</sup> ARISTOTLE *Problemata* 950a 9-17.

<sup>104</sup> ARISTOTLE *Rhetorica* 1405b 17-20. trans. J. H. Freese

not only among the cultured elite but in a vast segment of the population, and it was also present in their view of Nature and the resultant procedures in plant and animal domestication, agriculture, nutrition, medicine, and hygiene. And also in cultic/sacred practice, of course. This philosophical system extended to the cosmos as well as to tiny considerations. This view of the universe held rose symbolism within its confines, as can be observed both in the life sciences and in knowledge of a philosophical or theological nature. In the moment Greek philosophy was formulated, the majority of possible patterns of later rose references became established, regardless whether later mention dealt with the issue of part versus whole raised by the question of thorn-flower-plant, or with its color as a symbol of the element of fire, or with its sweet, spiritual fragrance.

### Rose symbols of Greek poets of the Hellenistic era

Although Alexander the Great's empire collapsed after his death, unity was maintained in its parts by the similar relationships linked to Hellenistic culture. Among the bilingual successor city-states the Greek language and the culture it transmitted meant not only a contact but also a promise of community, at the same time that this separation represented a continuation of the traditions of the Greek and Aegean islands. In the Hellenic-oriented polises – in the Egypt of the Ptolemaids just as in the Pergamon of the Atalids, along the Oxus River, in Kandahar, Afghanistan, or even in India – culture and literature advanced primarily along the lines of Greek traditions, and the loyal ruling citizens of the city states were considered members of the common Greek culture. The use of Attic (common Greek) koine prose ensured linguistic unity, and familiarity with the language promised the natives that they would remain present in collective cultural life.

Of the intellectual pursuits the support of the kings was enjoyed primarily by accumulation of book collections, by the work of chroniclers and classifiers in the collections, and by education, but on occasion some also went to literature, drama and poetry. The evolution of literature, and prose in particular – except for historical chronicles – was not influenced by dynastic expectations. Those few who knew how to read, or had someone read contemporary literature to them, received information not only on the acts of the gods but also on rumors relating to the lives of kings or popular figures; they had access to texts which were witty, ironic and elegantly entertaining, but always sophisticated. Although the scenes of everyday life promised steadily decreasing philosophical or scientific depth, in its place they revealed the values of day-to-day living which were assured for everyone: people were similar to each other. Poetry, however, was not as easily accessible to everyone: Hellenic poets wrote in the classical language rather than the Attic common language, considering the former the model on which they developed new meters and selected the objects depicted. Homeric and other classic plays on words, vague allusions, and a fondness for conformity to the greats of the past did little to facilitate the widespread popularization of new compositions, favoring instead the few who appreciated the unchanged inheritance of traditions.

Among the genres of classic literature there was nevertheless – in view of the outstanding achievements – a rediscovery of lyric poetry free of politics and even independent of the burdens of the polis: depictions of the traits and events characteristic of all people in finely wrought verse became favored, just as they had with the ancient lyricists, with an ever-increasing

number of more modern themes of important events of personal life, love, feasts, wine-drinking and contests, fitted into an urban environment. Asclepiades of Samos elaborated sharp clever tales and courtesans' histories, recited at symposia and honed to their refined form. He sang of the florally abundant environment and failure in love of Dioscorides' concubine, Doris, while the royal tutor Callimachus wrote of sweeping authentic passion in his longer poems and epigrams, including his eulogies and epitaphs. Nossis observed women's life, while Meleagros or Anyte of Syria focused on bucolic traditions. The poetic topics favored by them and their audience without exception proved suitable for the inclusion of the roses of tradition, whether linked to gods (Eros, Adonis, Europe, Aphrodite), as evocations of mythological situations, or as subtle signs merely alluding to them. Through these distant or subtle allegories, ideas quite far from the original meaning of the word "rose" could be formed.

Theocritus and his imitators refined the cruder, more rustic form of expression dating back to low Doric prose into something more ethereal. Although the rustic scenes are filled with scholastic remarks, and the hexameters also contrast the lightness of content, the emotional wealth of the bucolic poetry they created was naturally joined by the rose.

These low forms of literature, the epigram and bucolic verse, related to scholastic language, meter and urban taste in an identical fashion: the identical nature of the method retained the ubiquitously identical manner of using rose images – especially in erotic themes. This remained true even when the flower appeared to be the subject of individual observation. Apollonius Rhodius in his epic *Argonauts* – created at a time when the epic had lost its function of creating world-views – along with some meticulously placed Homeric similes also uses an occasional few which are independent of this heritage. For example, Medea is described as follows:

*her heart within grew warm, melting away as the dew melts away round roses...*<sup>105</sup>

This perfection of compositional form was coupled with a sensitivity to nature which was not, in fact, the hallmark of the rustic perception. It was in miniaturization that the dual definition of Hellenistic poetry acquired its greatest opportunity. There is no question, however, that the mythologically grounded notion (noted earlier with Sappho) survived in this image: dew appears together with dawn, and with the light of dawn, the sign of love fulfilled. (Theocritus, as if to explain this, in his bucolic poem *Enchanting Men* described rose-armed Aios as rising from the ocean.)<sup>106</sup>

From here on the function of the rose is used not merely to indicate a given god or godly environment – although this flower motif does continue to appear occasionally in the proximity of Aphrodite, Eros, or local or lesser gods. In Callimachus' *Fifth Hymn* it is used to describe a sacred context or divine body. Anointed with pure oil instead of ointment, the body of Pallas Athena

*and the blush, my dear maidens, that ran up her body was like dawn-rose and pomegranate.*<sup>107</sup>

The rose of Bion's *Lament of Adonis* also possesses a mythic explication. But it is increasingly frequent that an emotion, feeling or action is not solely

<sup>105</sup> APOLLONIUS RHODIUS *Argonauts* 3, 1019. trans. R. C. Seaton

<sup>106</sup> THEOKRITOS *Buccolici Graeci*. Recensuit A. S. F. Gow. Oxonii, 1985. 2.

<sup>107</sup> CALLIMACHUS *Callimachea* 5. trans. S. Lombardo – D. Rayor

the "jurisdiction" of a given god. Thus for example the rose appears without the named presence of Aphrodite, merely as a flower associated with love, but here its (traditional, descriptive) meaning is certainly shown.

While the rose was previously found to be a plant identifying the gods or describing their character, or a symbolic element, later a means of associating or identifying certain gods, now examples occur which indicate a loosening of this link. Basic situations of rapture continue to provide the context for the possible evocation of the rose, but in addition to the mythic explications based purely on principle and utilizing logically interconnected elements – as a sign of emphasis shift – its repertoire of ethical and practical images expanded without theoretical rigidity. Evocation of the rose took place in accordance with the needs of the specific situation: in addition to the standard physical descriptions (roses of the cheeks, rosy arms, rose-colored hands, rosy lips, or hindquarters), the traditional environment (fields of flowers, the season of flowering), and descriptions of condition (garlands on the head, picking petals, the opening of the rose), it also aided the deeper psychological interpretation of individual situations.

Epics and scholastic poetry, albeit with their own incidental references, used the rose to direct attention to godly contexts whose exalted and sacred nature was an accustomed matter for contemporary readers. Apollonius Rhodius (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), a student of Callimachus who worked on explications of Homer in the Library of Alexandria, unlike his master, strove as a practitioner of the great epics to continue the epic traditions of heroism. Through the adventures of Jason and the other Argonauts he tied together a number of loosely inter-related myths. In the chapter "The Three Goddesses" in the work tied to Homeric traditions, the rose is a formal decoration:

*And already greedy Eros was holding the palm of his left hand quite full of them under his breast, standing upright; and on the bloom of his cheeks a sweet blush was glowing.*<sup>108</sup>

The flower appears in a somewhat more Hellenistic manner as a symbol in *Medea Meets Jason*. By the presentation of the dawn flower losing its dew the author conveys the passionate love beginning to flame between Medea and Jason. The author attempts to describe what has become a process through this rose image: the image itself is dynamic, as is the heroine's emotional state.

*So wonderfully did love flash forth a sweet flame from the golden head of Aeson's son; and he captivated her gleaming eyes; and her heart within grew warm, melting away as the dew melts away round roses when warmed by the morning's light.*<sup>109</sup>

As the first-mentioned section of the *Argonauts* used the rose as a static description, authors of the era – attentive to the linguistic material of its predecessors – did not refer to it in a different manner in their epigrams, which served as scholastic poems. The small form was unsuited for the description of the entire process of an event in any case; instead, it set down the abstract experience gained from the event. In the epigrams of Rhianus (late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), both of the references relevant to this topic in *On Empedocles of Troesen*<sup>110</sup> and *To Cleonicus* are old, over-used and empty

<sup>108</sup> APOLLONIUS RHODIUS *Argonauts* 3, 120-123. trans. R. C. Seaton

<sup>109</sup> APOLLONIUS RHODIUS *Argonauts* 3, 947-1023. trans. R. C. Seaton

<sup>110</sup> RHIANUS *Collectanea Alexandinorum* 70. *Troesen, you raise good warriors, if you praise your / last child, you speak not unjustly. / Yet Empedocles stands out like a thriving / Rose shining fair among*

poetic devices. The rose is given the most important role and value of the spring flowers, in the same way that the flower in the lines

... then came the splendid fair Graces  
and with their rose-colored arms hugged the child to their breasts<sup>111</sup>

is a familiar one in terms of both form and content, a common hackneyed element in artists' epigrams. Poetry's heritage of the rose symbol is also featured in unchanged form in the "rose-armed" male god figure in Theocritus' bucolic idyll, *The Women of Syracuse at the Festival of Adonis*,<sup>112</sup> the "rose-colored hand" of the demigod in the poetess Anyte's (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) *Goat and Nyad*,<sup>113</sup> or in the "rosy lips" of the female lover in Dioscorides' poem *Madnesses*...<sup>114</sup>; in this genre it received no new poetic role.

Callimachus (ca. 305-240 BC) employs unique rose symbols both in his capricious hymn and also in his elegy *The bay and the olive tree*.<sup>115</sup> The debate between the two trees is interrupted by a briar rose, which lives "high on the craggy stone wall / not far from the two trees..."; its shabbiness inevitably causes it to be spurned by the bay tree. This rose is not the esteemed garden plant whose flowers attract such an abundance of symbols. Only one property is noted – its quality as a creeping plant: "You suffocate me merely by being my neighbor," states the angry bay tree. In the maquis of the Mediterranean, the habitat including the bay and olive tree, there is only one rose species that sends creeper vines up trees, bearing its flowers and fruit on the forest brush, *R. sempervirens*. Callimachus' description is backed by sharply outlined personal experience, characteristic of the perspective of scientists of the era.

Callimachus was not the only one to consider the wild rose inferior to the garden rose. In Theocritus a toad hides among its roots.<sup>116</sup> *Idyll 5* also compares and differentiates the rose and wild rose in terms of beauty, obviously to the detriment of the latter.<sup>117</sup> Dioscorides, a second-century BC epigrammist of Alexandria, similarly considered the briar rose, which loses the beauty of its flower, to be unworthy of comparison with the rose.<sup>118</sup> Yet, there is no difference in the appearance of the flowers of the two rose species.

Even Moschus in his *Rape of Europe*<sup>119</sup> and Meleagros in his poem *Spring*<sup>120</sup> speak of roses of the open ground – plains and fields. Their statements can only be justified by the fact that either they did not observe closely the area which they called the habitat of the rose, or else they were inclined to view anything – except the closed forest – as an open plant

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the other flowers.

<sup>111</sup> RHIANUS *Collectanea Alexandinorum* 72.

<sup>112</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucoliici Graeci* 15. 126-131. *So Miletus will say, and who so feeds sheep in Samos. Another bed is strewn for beautiful Adonis, one bed Cypris keeps, and one the rosy-armed Adonis. A bridegroom of eighteen or nineteen years is he, his kisses are not rough, the golden down being yet upon his lips!* trans. A. Lang

<sup>113</sup> ANYTE *Anthologia Graeca* 9, 745. *See the goat of Bromius, the graceful ram, how proudly / it looks, how its eyes shine above its short beard! / So proud, because up on the hill the rose-handed nyad / Often smooths its tangled coat.* trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>114</sup> DIOSKURIDES *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 56. *Maddening are little lips speaking magic spells, / nectar of the mouth, rose-colored gates.* trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>115</sup> CALLIMACHUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 194, 6-8, 13, 21-84, 93-106.

<sup>116</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucolici Graeci* Recensuit A. S. F. Gow. Oxonii, 1985. Theocritus 7.

<sup>117</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucolici Graeci* Recensuit A. S. F. Gow. Oxonii, 1985. Theocritus 5.

<sup>118</sup> DIOSKURIDES *Anthologia Graeca* 5.

<sup>119</sup> MOSCHUS *Bucoliici Graeci* 2. 2.

<sup>120</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 9, 363.



environment. Callimachus' rose – alone of the Hellenistic and earlier poets – was a justifiably forest<sup>121</sup> plant. In Theocritus the briar rose lived near a spring,<sup>122</sup> and a frog hid among its thorns.

Callimachus' elegy *Drinking wine* presents the unchanged role of the rose garland. While previously the elegy had functioned as a song of lament, here with a subtle shift it finds a new role in the subject of love. The emotional situation accorded the rose provides the means for a marvelous solution: the regret of a man drinking in company is symbolized by the petals falling from the flower. In the course of recognition of the lament the hero described and the Ego of the poet become emotionally identical.

*Our friend was wounded, and we knew it not; how bitter a sigh, mark you? he drew all up his breast. Lo, he was drinking the third time, and shedding their petals from the fellow's garlands the roses all poured to the ground. He is well in the fire, surely; no, by the gods, I guess not at random; a thief myself, I know a thief's footprints.*<sup>123</sup>

In the bucolic work composed by Theocritus (*Harvest Festival*<sup>124</sup>), the rose also appears as a different sort of garland plant, in addition to appearances among other symbols of sacrificial offerings defined by sacredness (*Harvest workers*,<sup>125</sup> *The remedy of love*<sup>126</sup>).

Thus, of the situations defined by the rose, love (both profane and mythological) is the most common – regardless of whether it is featured in an epic, a hymn, a pastoral or even an epigram. The varied content of love and its evaluation, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous, provided the means for Hellenistic poets – depending on their poetic skills – to make refined use of individual rose symbols. Increasingly subtle imagery of the flower was used with ever-greater frequency in revealing the background of the poetic theme.

In the poem *Lovers' dialog* by one of the imitators of Theocritus,

*Boast not, for swiftly thy youth flits by thee, like a dream.*

says the shepherd. The girl's answer:

*The grape hasn't ripened yet, the rose hasn't opened.*<sup>127</sup>

The fruit of the vine, the grape, has not yet ripened, and the rose has not begun to bloom. The statement is figurative in meaning, not intending to evoke plants that grow in two different seasons, but presenting them as images, each reinforcing the other: neither the grape nor the rose has appeared yet, in her valuation the time for love has not come yet.

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<sup>121</sup> One reading of the poem suggests that this is a debate between trees used by men, cared for horticulturally. However, the wild-growing plant known as the briar rose is not justified in a garden. Still, the presence of a creeper-type rose is beyond doubt. As is the fact that in the Hellenic period the olive tree was so widespread in the Mediterranean that, growing wild, it became part of the maquis.

<sup>122</sup> THEOCRITUS In *Bucoliici Graeci* 11<sup>th</sup> idyll, 138-143. *On shadowy boughs the burnt cicadas kept their chattering toil. far off the little owl cried in the thick thorn brake, the larks and finches were singing, the ring-dove moaned, the yellow bees were flitting about the springs. All breathed the scent of the opulent summer...* trans. A. Lang

<sup>123</sup> CALLIMACHUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 134. trans. A. Lang

<sup>124</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucoliici Graeci* 7<sup>th</sup> idyll 63-66.

<sup>125</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucoliici Graeci* 10<sup>th</sup> idyll, 32-35. *Would it were mine, all the wealth whereof once Croesus was lord, as men tell! Then images of us twain, all in gold, should be dedicated to Aphrodite, thou with thy flute, and a rose, yea, or an apple, and I in fair attire, and new shoon of Amyclae on both my feet.* Trans. A. Lang

<sup>126</sup> *Bucoliici Graeci* 11<sup>th</sup> idyll 32-35. *He loved, not with apples, not roses, nor locks of hair, but with fatal frenzy, and all things else he held but trifles by the way.* Trans. A. Lang

<sup>127</sup> *Bucoliici Graeci* 27<sup>th</sup> idyll 9-10. Trans. A. Lang

In the poetry of Bion (1<sup>st</sup> century BC), a Smyrnan-born bucolic poet living in Sicily, the central theme was passionate love, but the protagonists were not shepherds; *Epitaphios Adonidos (Lament of Adonis)* describes the death of Aphrodite's young lover, in which the origin of the rose is given a new explanation, although one akin to tradition. The flower grew from the young man's blood, and its color is a reminder of the fact.

*The Paphian sheds as many tears as Adonis shed blood and every drop becomes a bud; the blood bears roses; the tears, anemones.*<sup>128</sup>

The metamorphosis of blood is particularly striking: both in life and after death, Adonis remains linked to Aphrodite, and as such his blood is the source of the symbol of eternal love. In this perspective the color of the rose-petal, red, is the most important symbol of fertility and harvest, and the rosy blush of Aphrodite herself indicates her power over fertility. The color red is the basis of the association between Aphrodite and the rose, and everything which possesses this color or one of its shades as an essential characteristic is by definition linked to Aphrodite (and of course to the rose).

The rose was a sign of Aphrodite's presence from the time of her birth; it existed even before her relationship with Adonis. By Adonis' death and rebirth as a rose, the flower returns to its rightful owner: the plant is at the same time the fiancée of death and of life, of corporal and non-corporal love, pointing to the destruction of love and also to the possibility of love's surviving beyond life. In addition to the creation myth of the rose, plant life is also suited for the expression of return and recurrence. Through Adonis, who shares the fate of gods who die and are reborn, the rose is presented as a sign of both love and death, a flower of greeting and departure; in the definition of the mythological world-view it may have characterized the vitally important cyclical processes, and the changes in the botanical properties of the plant enabled it to be fitted into the various stages of this cyclical process.

The epigrammist Nossis (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) utilized the overlap in the semantic field of the rose and the Cypriot goddess in his poem *In praise of love*.

*"Nothing is sweeter than love; all delightful things are second to it, and even the money I spat from my mouth." Thus saith Nossis, but if there be one whom Cypris hath not kissed, she at least knows not what flowers roses are.*<sup>129</sup>

The meaning of values designated by the rose can only be grasped by those capable of falling in love, claims the poetess. Here (woman's) love can be conveyed by the rose. As desire originates from Aphrodite, it is understandable why the rose will be the designator of sensual pleasure; and its absence is at the same time the absence of love. It can also be seen that the evaluation of this emotion has changed: relegated to the background in the archaic era, Nossis now places it above all else.

If a woman can be party to the desire of Cypris, then she can also be party to her flower. Love and the flower enter a tautological relationship – the nouns in the poem can be treated as interchangeable, as meaning is not changed.

Asclepiades (ca. 320-275 BC) was recognized as the master of erotic epigrams: he created a unique individual symbol in using rose-petals to characterize his black lover.

<sup>128</sup> BION *Bucoliici Graeci* 1<sup>st</sup> idyll. 63-67. trans. B. H. Fowler

<sup>129</sup> NOSSIS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 170 (169). trans. W. R. Paton

*Didyme by the branch she waved at me has carried me clean away, alas! and looking on her beauty, I melt like wax before the fire. And if she is dusky, what is that to me? So are the coals, but when we light them, they shine as bright as roses.*<sup>130</sup>

The identical color of a coal ember and a rose-petal created a poetic image: behind it was the fact that love and the glowing coal both cause heat, a useful comparison. Dioscorides of Alexandria (end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) also made daring and effective use of the rose image in his poem *Doris in bed*. Both figures evoking the flower point to the individual ingenuity which, although it maintains – albeit distantly – the link with tradition, it separates tradition from the symbol-forming potential of the medium which made it work, creating an unrepeatable context through his new originality.

*Rose-bottomed little Doris spread wide on the bed  
And made me a god among her fresh flowers.*<sup>131</sup>

At this point the rose and its divine origin – as a result of poetic ingenuity – exchange places. The role of the woman described by the flower is emphasized primarily, and from there the inference continues to divine qualification. Originating from dawn, the color of the rose was an attribute of the hands, arms, neck and skin of Aios, and eventually of body parts of other goddesses and divine figures,<sup>132</sup> later becoming also an attribute of mortal women – and, still later, men – and, in addition to its allusion to celestial kinship by analogy, it continued to preserve its sacred aura. Rose-colored loins, however, were rather profane. The case was similar when the sexual organs earned the topic.

Meleagros (1<sup>st</sup> century BC) treats its sacred origin similarly:

*Already the white violet is in flower and narcissus that loves the rain, and the lilies that haunt the hillside, and already she is in bloom, Zenophila, love's darling, the sweet rose of Persuasion, flower of the flowers of spring.*<sup>133</sup>

The girl becomes more beautiful than the rose – but the flower describes the human being, not some divine attribute. A subtle refinement also appears in another epigram by the author, in which yet another modification of the symbolic flower is observed. Formerly the rose, a love-associated emblem, evaluated the situation in terms of love. Here, however, it becomes a marker of love, ultimately feeling a disliking for the would-be lover. As stated in Aristotelian philosophy based on the four elements, objects with similar properties attract.

*I will plait in white violets and tender narcissus mid myrtle berries, I will plait laughing lilies too and sweet crocus and purple hyacinths and the roses that take joy in love, so that the wreath set on Heliodora's brow, Heliodora with the scented curls, may scatter flowers on her lovely hair.*<sup>134</sup>

The same rose provided ample opportunity to express joy and regret. Abounding in petals, a rose garland could speak in praise of love; wilting, it spoke of the memory of love. The poet's relationship to the object was personal, despite the fact that the expressions describing the object were not individual. The dynamics of the micro-scenes offered a comparison of deep emotion with the falling of the petals.

<sup>130</sup> ASCLEPIADES *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 210. trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>131</sup> DIOSKURIDES *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 55 (54). trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>132</sup> *Poetae melici Graeci* Ed. D. L. Page. Oxford, 1962. 1008 (fragmenta adespota 100a-b)

<sup>133</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 144, 1-4. trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>134</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 147. trans. W. R. Paton

The rose garland lent added value to the vanished lover and attached emotions. Its influence was sacred/magical: it enabled evocation of the happiness of yesterday. Meanwhile, wine served to evoke the notion of rapture. The interchangeable usage of the rose and wine suggests that they caused similar intoxication.

*Fill up the cup and say again, again, again, "Heliodoras. 'Speak the sweet name, temper the wine with but that alone. And give me, though it be yesternight's, the garland dripping with scent to wear in memory of her. Look how the rose that favours Love is weeping, because it sees her elsewhere and not in my bosom.*<sup>135</sup>

A widening of rose symbolism can be seen in its change to a designator of the flower, or in the expansion of concepts associated with it in situations expressing rapture.

It was in the highly popular epigram poetry that the traditional idea of the rose as the flower of love expanded in concept. Especially in the versions with love as the topic, which gave new, hitherto unknown scope and freedom for individual imagery. This tendency appears to be independent of what area of the Hellenic world the author lived in – North Africa, Syria, the Balkans or Southern Italy – and also independent of the depth of cultural influence.

The rose also installed itself in the new genre of bucolic poetry; but, in spite of its thematic novelty, its significance in creating mood, style and imagery in pastoral games still appeared more traditional. The idyll maintained the old interpretations of the rose, while the natural environment of the idyll did not raise the need for the rose grown in gardens and possessing special botanical properties to be distinguished from the types growing in the wild. Although occasionally mention was made of roses of the fields and plains, beyond this it was nevertheless unspecified. Callimachus and Theocritus were the only ones who linked it to a new plant type, calling their plant the briar rose (rhodon) and separating it from the garden roses, indicating that some change had occurred in scholastic demeanor and the view of nature in poetic practice.

The roses of poetic figures underwent a kind of profanization. They became the characteristic of mortal beings, giving rise to previously unknown sources of topics which were now quite distant allusions to their mythological origins. These evoked the human body, animal-like proliferation, and the pleasures and joys of the body. The Greeks of this period, despite their aloofness, still considered intoxication to be under divine jurisdiction in the forms of both Aphrodite and Dionysus. What is new, however, are the references to the rose to express not only pleasant emotions, feelings and desires, but also to signify painful emotions and lack.

### The roses of pederasty – trend toward desanctification

Was sensual pleasure glorified, or amorous passion? This question has long preoccupied researchers of Greek cultures, prompting divergent answers. The answer is determined by which fundamentals of philosophy, ethics, erotology, mentality, literature or fine art are chosen as starting points by the given research. The rose, with its dual character, served to supplement Aphroditic luxuries just as it did Apollonic splendor, as well as providing the same as a symbol of pederasty. The complex symbolism of Greek rose

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<sup>135</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 136. trans. W. R. Paton

tradition continued to be an expression of both the physical and the transcendental. The main reason for this symbolism was that the pleasures of sustaining individual life and the joys of maintaining the species involved similar sensory pleasures, and the means of expressing physical and spiritual happiness were often inseparable, even at the etymological level. The wide variety of meanings of the word 'love' produced a variety of forms of amorous conduct, in which case it is only natural that the associated symbols should have a similar variety of meanings, even if the collective of these meanings seemed vague or irreconcilable.

Even in the Classic Era Clement of Alexandria (2nd-3rd century) collected and listed mythological tales which contained allusions to homosexual relations. Zeus and Ganymede, Apollo and Cyniras, Zacynthus, Hyacinthos, Phorbas, Hylas, Admetos, Amyclas, Troilus, Banchus, Tymnius, Paros, Portuieus, Orpheus, Dionysus and Laonis, Ampelus, Hymenaeus, Hermaphoritus, Achilles, Asclepius and Hyppolyte, Hephaestus and Peleus, Pan and Daphnis, Hermes and Perseus, Chryses, Therses, Odryses, Heracles and Abderus, Dryops, Iocastus, Philoctetes, Polyphemus, Haemon, Chonus, Eurystheus – all had affairs which were recorded.<sup>136</sup> The traditions of these stories thematicized the homosexual form of sexual conduct, and set down the symbols associated with it on the basis of the concepts of love and affection.

Homoerotic relationships are mentioned in Homer and Hesiod (7<sup>th</sup> century BC), and in a no longer surviving tragedy by Aeschylus (525–456 BC) on the loves of King Laeus. According to a poem by Solon (6<sup>th</sup> century BC), pederastic relations were a natural attendant of youthful age:

*Whilst you live among the charming roses of youth,  
frolic with boys: thigh and honey-sweet lips await.*<sup>137</sup>

In the 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, that which was considered the most intimate form of teacher-student relationship permitted sexual contact between man and boy, provided that it was on a spiritual basis, promoted the development of masculine virtues, was pure and free of vested interests, and physicality was limited to the leader's hugging of the child and ejaculation between the thighs of the latter. This was considered a higher form of love, promising harmony and beauty, and was an accepted pedagogical procedure. The man in the relationship – as guardian and advisor – had to be over the age of twenty, while the partners in the instruction were strictly between the ages of twelve and eighteen.

Plato's *Feast* distinguishes two types of love. Aphrodite Urania came into being from the severed member of Uranus, and by virtue of her celestial creation, worship of her was manifested only in love between men. The other Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus and Dione, and, as the product of a male-female union, ruled over heterosexual love. This love was characterized by the desire and drive to proliferate, which was a trait not only of humans but also of animals. Of the two forms of love, that between identical sexes was deemed to be the more exalted, as its manifestation could not be animal – for the purpose of producing offspring. Pederasty was widely viewed as promoting the development and maturation of the human intellectual spirit and the initiation into the intellectual sciences. It became a task suited to praise the initiation of adolescent youth, and was not categorized as a negative – at the same time, however, sexual contact

<sup>136</sup> MARCOVIC, M. *Clementis Alexandrii Protrepticus*. Leiden – New York – Köln, 1995.

<sup>137</sup> SOLON in Cseh Z. (2002) 282.

between two adult men was condemned. The passive partner in such a relationship was particularly looked down upon, for his sensual/sexual subordination had made him a prostitute, a figure who humiliated not only his own body but also the corpus of the state allegorized by his physical body. In the two types of manifestation of love a metaphysical separation of physicality and intellectuality, the physical and the transcendental, took place: rose symbols were similarly grouped, oscillating between these two poles.

The Platonic notion was canonized in homoerotic literature after the fourth century, simplifying its nature while enriching its variations. Milagros, a Syrian Hellenic philosopher representative of the minimalism of Alexandrian epigrammatism, considered desire between men to be awakened solely by Eros, outwitting Aphrodite, while the desire for women was entrusted to Aphrodite. Milagros' *Garland*, with verses composed under the enchantment of a Cypriot child, attempted to legitimize homosexuality between adults in addition to pederasty.

Although homoerotic literature appeared quite early, concurrent with the arrangement of the Greek mythological worldview into written texts, its collections were followed later solely by philosophical interpretations of the concept of love. The authors of these works, with or without reason, were considered advocates of this form of pleasure, and their lifestyles were viewed as a manifestation of Platonic teachings of love. The best-known collection was Book XII of *Anthologia Palatina*, following in the footsteps of Meleagros' *Garland* – however, the former failed to include a number of works praising love between men. These omissions included Plato, though presumably not because of disputed authorship. Book XII does contain a number of epigrams by anonymous authors.

One epigram attributed to Plato described the body of Eros by two love-plants which underwent mythological canonization, the rose and the apple. And also by honey collected by bees named by Solon.

*In the middle of the shady forest we spotted the boy,  
son of Aphrodite, his cheeks like an apple.  
He was not carrying his bow or quiver of arrows;  
these were hung dangling from leafy trees.  
He lay sleeping amid budding roses,  
smiling; the buzz of bees descended from above,  
to collect honey from his honey-filled mouth.*<sup>138</sup>

The honey from Eros' mouth was sweet, just like that gathered from flowers. And it could cause wounds as painful as the arrows hanging in the branches. As could a kiss – causing amorous death, annihilation through ecstasy. An unusual symbol of the consummation of rapture also occurs in this poem: the forest as an evocation of Dionysus. Of the Greek mythological figures Dionysus is the only forest-dwelling god, concealing rapture even on the scenic level. (The collection of kiss, honey, apple and rose was later considered again worthy of reference by neo-Platonic poets of the Renaissance.) The secretive forest – unlike the other plant and animal symbols – for the Greeks was a fearful, mysterious medium hinting of unaudited actions. Its effect extended to its inhabitants and even to people wandering through.

Hellenic poetry, in which homoerotic poetry thrived and was collected into anthologies, was not heroic, and the presence of gods or other mythological figures were nothing more than scholarly allusions; instead

<sup>138</sup> PLATO *Antologia Graeca* 16, 210.

these texts placed and characterized the protagonist in an evaluated system of conditions.

Strobaeus records that Phanocles was the first to publish homoerotic poems in the course of his series of epic-like collected verses. Similar collections resulted in the creation of the first summarizing anthologies. These were compiled by Strato (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century [?]) or an anonymous Byzantine author supplementing his work, containing thematically arranged short poetry from Alcaeus to Antiparos, from Callimachus to Meleagros and Rhianos, and from anonymous authors to Strato, and added to *Anthologia Palatina* as Book XII.

A survey of the anthology's rose references reveals a long line extending (overtly or covertly) from Homer through the Hellenic poets all the way to the neo-Sophist Philostratos (2nd-3rd century). Their level of culture is striking: the repertoire of available rose references is precise in terms of cultural history and well-grounded mythologically. Meanwhile, their poetic devices were fully suited to exploit all this.

The rose occupied a high station in the expression of love. The basic meanings of rose symbols in Greek homo-erotic poetry are the same as in descriptions of heterosexual relations. Investing the object of affection with divine origin and beauty, the flower's redness, fragrance, splendor, beauty, youthfulness, buds and appearance are presented with virtually no difference in characterizing the attraction of persons of opposite or identical sexes. The one novelty in this rose theme is that it was associated with masculine traits.

The mature or immature male organ became associated through its abundance of blood, receiving designations such as "rose-fingered weenie," "rosy torch," or "rose spike," and for similar reasons the loins and the anus also became roses. Meanwhile, if facial or body hair was described as a young rose, it alluded to the thorns surrounding the rose, suggesting injury, hazard or risk, occasionally comically.

Thus the rose referred equally to the two major organs in homosexual love-making, the penis and the anus. It was also an innocent expression of skin complexion. The rose offered the opportunity for all schools of poetic rhetoric to collect and identify emotions felt by or for a boy. A statement made about a rose applied to the object of allusion; features held in common were shared. Through the register of divine and man-boy poles the authors emphasized the numerous varieties of spiritual and physical love, amorous passion and corporal pleasure.

Strato describes a fourteen-year-old boy as a rose flowering and pickable, a value to be esteemed for its beauty and short life.

*I like the callow flower of the twelve-year-old,  
while if he's thirteen, this desire is hotter.  
And if he's fourteen: a sweet rose for desire.  
And fifteen? He may be even more enchanting.  
Sixteen is a divine age, but if he's a year older than that:  
I leave him alone, let Zeus take him!  
And anyone excited by even older is no longer playing,  
he's waiting for a guy who "responds in kind."<sup>139</sup>*

A boy, like a woman, was viewed and evaluated as a rose, if the man found physical and spiritual harmony in his love. And it was as sweet as honey.

Each rose/boy is described as a passive actor. Both are innocent and unaware of their attractive quality, but both emit signs arousing the attention

<sup>139</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 4.

of those capable of love. They are sources of colors, fragrances and tastes; their plant-like features attract men, who are more mobile, able to recognize beauty, and richer in intellect.

In the Argolean town of Troisen there were a number of praiseworthy youths, but none so fair as the one whom Rhianus exalted as the most beautiful of spring flowers. Spring was the season of flowers and love, and just as the rose was the foremost of flowers, Empedocles, the object of affection, was the loveliest of boys. Rhianus' identification of the boy as a rose indicates that the flower had the same argumentational role as in heterosexual love. The rose represented not the man, but the object of his affection and the depth of attraction.

*Lovely boys grow in Troisen. The last  
child is also worthy of praise.  
Yet Empedocles is much lovelier: like a flowering  
rose among the other flowers, when spring arrives.*<sup>140</sup>

Book 12 of *Anthologia Graeca* enumerates the known Greek gods and figures of love by their names, attributes and deeds (Aphrodite, Eros, Eos, the Graces), as well as others noted for their amorous affairs (particularly Zeus and Apollo) – but especially those who in a moment of captivation had homo-erotic contact with a male of some outstanding quality. In rose-related poems, these included Zeus and Ganymede as well as Achilles and Patroclus.

In verse 121 of his pederastic collection Rhianus calls on the Graces to properly exalt Cleonicus.

The Graces – daughters of Eurynome and Zeus, while others state their mother was a nyad and their father was the sun god Helios – were the ones who bathed Aphrodite upon her return to her temple in Cyprus, and anointed her divinely beautiful body in oil of a fragrance fit for a goddess. The Graces, Happiness (Euphrosyne), Thriving (Thalia) and Light (Aglaia), constantly accompanied the love goddess and represented everything that amorous emotions should provide a person in love. Rhianus' poem collectively evokes the Sun, the pink of the sky and the three Graceful qualities through them. By meeting and embracing the Graces, states Rhianus, the lovely youth becomes truly chosen for divine beauty. The only variation in the theme is that the Graces endow these qualities on a man, rather than a woman.

*Surely, O Cleonicus, the lovely Graces met thee going along the narrow field-  
path, and clasped thee close with their rose-like hands, O boy, and thou wert  
made all grace. Hail to thee from afar; but it is not safe, O my dear, for the dry  
asphodel stalk to move too near the fire.*<sup>141</sup>

Cretan-born Rhianus was a slave in Alexandria who became famous for his poetic talent and philological knowledge. He published an edition of Homeric epics, the source of his knowledge of mythology. In Homer's *Iliad* one of the Graces was the wife of Hephaestus, blacksmith of the gods, as the Greek word *kharis* ('grace') also meant the magic power of art.

This tradition was expanded by a series of allusions by Strato, whose poem is colored with indisputable signs of the Rhianusian heritage:

*You will not see as many flowers, Dionysius, in a field caressed  
by soft Zephyr when spring scatters her treasures,*

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<sup>140</sup> RHIANUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 58.

<sup>141</sup> RHIANUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 121. trans. J. W. Mackail



*as the number of noble youths here! Their bodies  
are the works of Graces and Cyprus: sculptures all!  
Behold, Milesios is the one who is fairest of them all,  
a fragrant rose in flower.  
He does not yet know: The petals are wilted by heat,  
and my now glowing face will be ugly when whiskers cover it.*<sup>142</sup>

The rose images in the love letters of Philostratos can be linked to the symbolism of both Rhianos and Strato. With magnificent poetic imagery he held the rose to be the "torch of love" (Letter 3), fit to be worn by everyone. This image alludes to the original meaning of the flower, to fire, and to guiding enlightenment, and, in addition to the color comparison, drew a formal parallel between the shapes of the torch and the rose. The conclusion of Philostratos' Love Letter 17 echoes Strato's poetry:

*Do not delay, O rose who speaks in a boy's voice, but while you are able and in flower, share with me what you have.*<sup>143</sup>

The two linked identifiers (boy and rose) suggest that the service of love should be viewed as a floral gift. The lover is the boy/rose who gives himself and his floral beauty to the person addressing him, thereby accepting and applying to himself the high value of the plant itself. In the more figurative sense of the rose, the boy/rose is a conveyor of the love of Aphrodite Urania.

Another example of the rose's becoming a homo-erotic symbol is a second poem by Strato. The ambivalent situation of the boy making and selling festive rose garlands is immediately detected by the narrator loitering on the city square: both the decoration and the boy are obtainable. Nor is the vendor surprised that one would want to possess him, that he himself would be the customer's desired adornment. But while the narrator in Philostratos' letter did not offer remuneration to the anthropomorphized rose speaking in a boy's voice (he calls on the boy only to enjoy his own value), the narrator of Strato's poem promises payment. Ostensibly the garland is the desired object of the exchange, but since the garland-maker responds in the figurative meaning of the rose, he considers himself also to be for sale, identifying with the rose.

*I saw a boy weaving a garland on the square:  
ivy and rose fabric growing in his hand.  
My heart was captivated. I stood and asked quietly:  
"Tell me, boy, how much shall I pay for your lovely garland?"  
He turned redder than the roses, glanced at the ground,  
and said: "Hush! Go home now! My father is watching, but later ..."  
I bought some garlands to allay suspicion. At home I placed  
them on the altar, while my prayer yearned for him!*<sup>144</sup>

In its passive role, unaware of its own value, merely transmitting spiritual values while radiating the benefits of the spirit, the seduction of the boy/rose obtains a deeper meaning. Its attraction categorizes the recipient as one sensitive to attractive power, a divine quality. The single moment of their meeting is made sacred.

The wearing of a garland as the subordination of the wearer to the gods is obvious. If it is a rose garland one is wearing, one is under the protection of the meanings of the rose. Thus the rose garland obtains the meaning of

<sup>142</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 195.

<sup>143</sup> PHILOSTRATOS *Epistolae* 17. 5-7.

<sup>144</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 8.

protecting secrets; a person who wears it need not fear that what he wishes to conceal will be made public, as it is protected by the gods. A garland woven of roses came to have the same protective and concealing function that previously had been assigned to the Dionysian forest, or lovely honey-lipped Eros fast asleep in its depths.

Strato's protagonist, by placing garlands on the altar, hides his relationship with the garland vendor under the veil of secrecy, permanently concealing the consummation of the yearned-for tryst.

In Letter 4, distinguishing boys by age, Strato suggested that not every age could be described by the rose. The moment of sexual maturation, the transformation from child to adolescent, marked the end of that designation (8, 195).

A further interpretation is suggested by the fact that it is at this time that the rosy face becomes thorny, with prickly body hair appearing on the arms, thighs and derriere (40, 97, 195). Strato expresses the passing of beauty with a sensitive simile: the rose loses its beauty as its petals wither from heat, and the magnificently beautiful youth as whiskers appear on his face's skin (195). The appearance of whiskers warn of this change of condition: the boy will soon lose his capacity to transmit celestial love. (And through the teachings of his adult instructor he himself will become one who recognizes love conveyed by a boy child.)

While verse 195 features the loss of petals and the appearance of whiskers together, Strato's verse 234 communicates this inevitable change sheerly by the natural life of the plant. He warns of the loss of rose petals, the passing of the sign of beauty.

*If thou boast in thy beauty, know that the rose too blooms, but quickly being withered, is cast on the dunghill; for blossom and beauty have the same time allotted to them, and both together envious time withers away.*<sup>145</sup>

The role of the flower as seen thus far is made relative: obviously, if it were identical to the meaning it refers to, then even after wilting it would not belong on the compost heap. However, if the moment of flowering is compared with the condition of love, then when the flowering is ended, in the absence of meaning it may indeed be discarded, having lost its value.

Numerous variants on this theme are known, although not all are homosexual in content: the short life and rapid demise of the decorative rose flower promised a similar fate for those designated by the dual-meaning rose. This was a warning sign for those who equated beauty with love, as well as for those who, albeit passively, were identified with the rose. Theocritus' Idyll 23 equates youth with the flowering of the rose:

*Yea, the rose is beautiful, and Time he withers it; and fair is the violet in spring, and swiftly it waxes old; white is the lily, it fadeth when it falleth; and snow is white, and melteth after it hath been frozen. And the beauty of youth is fair; but lives only for a little season.*<sup>146</sup>

The sacred content of these lines is undisputable, as both flowers were known to be among the most traditional garland plants. However, this meaning is not stressed.

Alcaeus regarded the flowering time to be brief, and the fate that came after boded ill.

*The rose blooms for a fleeting while: its petals fall, and*

<sup>145</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 234. trans. J. W. Mackail

<sup>146</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucolici Graeci Recensuit* A. S. F. Gow. Oxonii, 1985. Theocritus 23. trans. A. Lang

*On its stub only a few briar roses gloat.*<sup>147</sup>

An epigram by Strato uses a Homeric example of the wasting of virtue (*Iliad*, VI, 236-238) to imply the squandering of the rose's value: the good Greek Tydeides gives the Trojan Glaucos a shield of ore and receives a valuable gold weapon in exchange. This was because Cronides had clouded Glaucos' mind, so he was not in possession of his sense of judgment.

*"Give gold for copper!" Immersed in a swapping game were  
Sosiadas and Diocles: the one callow, the other all whiskers.  
Is a rose worth a brambleberry, or a fig a toadstool?  
Is a newborn lamb the equal of a steer?  
What do you offer, silly boy, and what do you receive in return?  
Thus did Glaucos reward Tydeides.*<sup>148</sup>

The boy in the poem – as was observed with similar characters elsewhere – is unaware of his own value. Body hair and the adult man imply danger and improper love. In this epigram, the 204th entry in the Anthology, things with hair or fuzz – brambleberry, toadstool, steer – were used to express the adult nature of the seducer Diocles.

Thus, whisker/thorn renders the rose ugly. The emergence of whiskers marks the end of allegiance to Aphrodite Urania and the beginning of association with Aphrodite. Spiritual love and physical love warn against mixing.

The values expressed by the rose were also a part of Strato's poetic image which gave an example of a treasure kept in the wrong place. For a sexless castrated man, no lovely boy could offer a source of pleasure.

The potential of the rose to be desanctified is demonstrated in Poem 234 in the Anthology. Here this results in the disruption of the rose's moments of transmitting beauty. This withdrawal of sacred character also occurs when the rose designates Eros rather than Aphrodite; that is, it speaks of physical love or love-making.

As shown elsewhere in the Anthology, the rose obtained a new desanctified meaning: it covertly symbolized the anus, and the dog the penis.

It was also desanctified by the fact that the epigrammatist calls it wrong for the flower to obtain what it is incapable of using properly.

*A eunuch keeps beautiful boys. But for what purpose?  
What a crime this is! Utter stupidity!  
A dog guarding a rose! Stupidly he growls if you approach.  
You cannot even see the petals. He can, but for what?*<sup>149</sup>

This poem again has a dual reading. It may be read as the unwarranted greed of a man incapable of love, and also as an allegory applying to higher spiritual content.

In a different epigram desanctification itself is thematicized through the appearance of body hair. This work, which attempts to interpret body hair as marking the maturation of a boy into a man, was probably written by Strato. Homer had used the combination of wheat and chaff to present the attainment of manhood.<sup>150</sup> Asclepiades Adramyttenos (*ca.* 130) in Poem 36 of the Anthology, and Statyllios Flaccos in Poem 26, also use images of thorny plants. The emergence of thorns was used to signify allusion to the

<sup>147</sup> ALCAEUS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 29.

<sup>148</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 204.

<sup>149</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 236.

<sup>150</sup> HOMER *Odyssey* 14, 211-214.

age after which the judgment of a homo-erotic relationship was changed. The growing of facial and body hair indicated the passage of time and acceptance of subordination in the partnership.

*Do not take off my robe, lord; look upon me as a statue,  
for fate has carved my limbs of stone.  
You wish to see Antiphilos' charms unclothed?  
You seek a fairy rose among many rude thorns.*<sup>151</sup>

Number 40 in the Anthology contrasts the statuesque beauty of the robe-covered body with the horror of the body underneath it. The robe hides the boy's changed body, which thus still seems beautiful although it has already been made ugly by the appearance of body hair. And the rose surrounded by hair, the anus, is of dubious value despite its rosiness. The young narrator, pointing to this duality, reveals the difference between the two types of love.

The rose became an allegory for the anus, and in pederasty was a symbol of the Aphrodisian version.

Inspired by the Homeric formula, rose-fingered dawn, a number of body parts (which were in fact rose-colored) came to receive this description, alluding simultaneously to celestial origin, the time of day, and the color and flower. Later the flower offered a starting point for new symbols. Alcimos compared it to the developing sex organ, after which the phallus was described not only as a rose, but also, based on the similarity in shape, as a spike. The high status of the rose is indicated by the fact that it is featured as a pedestal.

*Not long ago, Alcimos, you had a finger-sized rose weenie,  
Now behold, it has grown to become a rose spike!*<sup>152</sup>

Likewise fully in the Homeric tradition was the erotic epigram by Antiparos (ca. 130 BC), who presumably was in love with a boy growing up under his tutelage. The name of Meriones alludes to the thigh, and that of Podaleirios to lily-weak feet; the bearers of these names both limp, but both had added value by association with the rose. For Meriones the flower is concealed in his loins, while Podaleirios is unable to catch up to the goddess of dawn, possibly because he failed to finish his nightly duties. Homer was similarly the first to associate the rose with Eos; and Achilles, child of Aphrodite, was also one of the poet's heroes. This poem refers to a vast array of male legs – but each is injured in some way. The phallus may also be likened to the leg, whereby the euphemistic reference may suggest the absence of sexual performance. Or it may indicate that sexual performance counterbalances the physical flaw. In addition to Antiparos' poem the Anthology contains various passages which emphasize the amorous value of persons with flawed bodies.

*Marble Eupalamos blushed, the very likeness of Eros, while  
Cretan Meriones has lush rose loins,  
yet his legs are white lilies, like Podaleirios',  
and limping he cannot overtake rose Eos.  
O mother of the world, fate is cruel: for he would  
defeat Achilles if he were as splendid red underneath.*<sup>153</sup>

Of the attendants of Aphrodite, Eros was given a particularly important interpretational nexus in pederastic poetry.

<sup>151</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 40.

<sup>152</sup> STRATO *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 242.

<sup>153</sup> ANTIPAROS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 97.

In one of the erotic epigrams by the Syrian-born cynical philosopher Meleagros (2nd century BC – early 1st century), the Cypriot goddess and her attendant Eros together weave a marvelous floral garland. Garland-weaving earlier appeared as a human activity – now it has become a task of the gods. The flowers used correspond to boys; the decoration made from them is a kind of offering, attracting the soul.

Eros was the god of mixtures: at the time of the creation of the world, Earth and Sky were still separate until they were forced together by Eros; then after their union he gave light to both.<sup>154</sup> At this time his figure was still merged with Phanes (Protogonos Phaeton). In Hesiodic tradition Eros accompanied Aphrodite from the time she was born, joining her as she emerged from the sea on the shores of Cyprus. Descriptions elsewhere relate that while Aphrodite was still in the sea, because she could not take her first lover, Nerites, with her to Olympus because of his dawdling, she took Eros instead.<sup>155</sup> According to Ibycus the parents of Eros were Hermes and Artemus.<sup>156</sup> Cicero, however, has him the child of Hermes and Aphrodite.<sup>157</sup>

Some sources link Eros with the other child of Hermes and Aphrodite, Hermaphroditus, the female boy. This justified Meleagros having Eros as the origin of a garland woven of plants which symbolized boys and praised pederastic love.

The narrator of Meleagros' poem uses a number of flowers to make his garland. Each plant is associated with a single figure, but also raises the possibility for these figures to be seen in the moment prior to their crucial initial:

*Cypris, Eros weaves a mottled floral garland of boys,  
seductive of souls, his self-woven wonder:  
for into it he weaves lily-Diodoros, the legendary,  
and Asclepiades, fragrant violet,  
Heracleitos is woven in, a rose growing amidst  
thorns, and wild grape petals, heavenly Dion,  
then he takes golden-haired saffron-Theron,  
followed by thyme branch Uliades,  
next comes evergreen olive branch Myiscos, of the silky  
locks, and finally Aretas, the wood branch.  
Holy Tyre, fairest of our islands! A flood of boy scents  
inundates the garden, all for the lust of Cypris.*<sup>158</sup>

The liaison of Zeus and Ganymede is virtually unique in Greek mythology and heroic legend in that an animal is at the center of the seduction scene. It was Zeus' eagle, or Zeus himself in the form of an eagle, who made the fairest boy of the age his own. In the majority of Greek homoerotic tales it was more usual to refer to plants. All men who were transformed into plants were subjects of higher divine will and damned to a passive role. They suffer the event, as well as the attainment of eternal existence as a plant, while simultaneously becoming a memento of their own transformation.

All of Greek pederast practice (and all texts presenting it) may be regarded as the inverse of myths with plant-creation homosexual aspects. The transformation of a human into a plant, or the emergence of a man from

<sup>154</sup> *Orphicorum Fragmenta* 16, 112.

<sup>155</sup> HESIOD *Theogony* 188. AELIANUS *De Natura Animalium* 14, 28.

<sup>156</sup> IBYCUS fr. 2.

<sup>157</sup> CICERO *De Natura Deorum* 3. 60.

<sup>158</sup> MELEAGROS *Anthologia Graeca* 12, 256.

a plant-symbolized boy, is the story of a rise to a higher sphere, the tale of liberation from femininity. In place of physical love, this is a spiritual undertaking, an absolution from the body, a potential manifestation, so to speak, of the death of the body. Although the splendor of youth and the youthful body are killed (and the rose of mourning above it may allude to the value lost, or to the metamorphosis itself or the benefits there from), the object of the action and the action itself are nevertheless sanctified. And for the emergent new quality (the plant, the adult male body) the rule of inviolability now applies.

In the Classic Greek era a sexually subordinated male was considered unmanly because of his passivity and was punished. Similarly punished were the figures subordinated in love in tales of gods and heroes – by the loss of their human form and transformation into a plant. The namesake flowers of Hyacinth and Narcissus as well as the cyprus from Cyparissus were known not only as garland plants but also through tales of the homo-erotic relations of Apollo and Hyacinth, Apollo and Cyparissus, and Narcissus' self-love.

A shared feature in these tales of youths transformed into plants and other myths of plant creation is that an amorous relation resulted – as reward or punishment – in a change of form. The existence obtained as a result of initiation rendered them more spiritual and valued in form: it lifted them to membership in vegetable life, the most esteemed in the Mediterranean world for its fundamental role in the sustenance of life.

For all of these reasons the weaving of garlands from plants must be regarded as symbolic in meaning. The garland marks the fact of transformation, the completion of maturation.

The collection of poems into anthologies is also symbolic: the word 'anthology' literally means flower-picking. Boys, youths transformed into plants, the plants created from them, and the collection of their tales into bouquets appear clearly to be homo-erotic in meaning – at least in the case of *Anthologia Palatina* Book XII. Also, the development of homo-eroticism is evidence of the formation of spirituality of adult male existence.

The rose symbol in pederastic poetics took shape along the lines of the Platonic dual interpretation of love, and gained new meanings primarily by association with the figure of Eros. Also, through the two types of love the associated symbols also received differing degrees of emphasis, contributing to the desanctification of the rose of Aphrodisian love. In consequence the anus and the phallus came to be held to have the attributes of the rose, and body hair the thorn, part of the rose plant.

In the rose metaphors in homo-erotic poems it is striking that the senses most frequently described, in addition to vision and smell, also included taste. The degree of citation of sweet taste indicates the great importance of the connection between functions which sustained individual life-like nutrition and events which sustained the species, and its poeticization and sanctification took place using identical poetic symbols. And pederastic love offered new potential for numerous interpretations: death was increasingly considered a passage between two worlds, and this moment changed the interpretation of the rose.

## Rose symbols in Greek poetry in the first through third centuries

As a result of the high level of cultural exchange between the Hellenized East and the Romanized West, many authors worked in a number of languages. With the homogenization of pagan culture its deeper intellectualism was resolved, and at the same time that interest grew in each other on the one hand, on the other the efforts for linguistic renewal in contemporary literature indicates that the old subjects did not offer sufficient novelty for the less community-tied citizens. Although the archaic style linked the creator of the text to the past, the demand for short poetry largely banished the heroic from this past. The emphasis on personal emotion and the values present in the life of the individual seems to have become expressible through the Hellenic heritage; in any event the scope of human life was less overshadowed by the ominous presence of gods and their demand for worship.

While surveying the evolution of Greek poetry from Augustus to Diocletian (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century) and the rose motifs in the first phase of the Roman Imperial Era, the question arises whether the tendency found in novels can also be discovered here. Is it still true that rose images designate properties of the gods or of things considered divine, or feelings of rapture, expressing different variations on the more or less inter-related conceptual trinity of beauty/fondness/love?

The rose's potential to express color continued to exist. The color of the flower – red or purple – could be linked to anything relating to man, the body, nature or the mind that had some shade of red or purple. This included dawn in the poem *Hymn to the Sun* by Mesomedes (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD).

*O gold-eyed father of dawn,  
you ride out onto the rose-colored sky  
with your winged charging steeds<sup>159</sup>*

Mesomedes' sun god – as dawn is describable as a shade of the rose – is in an analogous relationship with the color of only one flower. Although direct association of the rose itself with Helios – through Eos – would not be unexpected, the author gives no regard to sacred dominions, rejecting fuller reference of this sort. This would have been alien to the depth of devotion which motivates the poem. The ecstasy with which the poet views the celestial body and god calls for individual feeling and the experience of the sensory organs; there is no need for him to mobilize a richer mythological apparatus.

The belief invested in Greek gods was wavering, as can be seen in the works of Lucian, which made myths the object of ridicule. Nor did other authors of the imperial era refer to these figures, formerly held in such great respect, as subjects of unconditional religious worship. The characters of the myths often occur in everyday – or even roguish, instructive or humorous – manners in works of the various genres; and not only their epic-length stories but also episodes from their lives – formerly not even considered worth mention – provided motifs for newer and newer variations. The *Songs of Anacreon*, a collection of works by anonymous authors living from the beginning of the imperial era to the Byzantine period, contains a humorous Eros tale which was a popular rendition of a known (and loved) topic. Eros, who shoots everyone, is himself stung by an "arrow" of a bee. This

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<sup>159</sup> MESOMEDES in. E. HEITSCH (1961-1965) II. 2

charming idyll is an instructive and entertaining parable of how the attacker can be attacked with the same weapon.

*Cupid once upon a bed  
Of roses laid his weary head;  
Luckless urchin not to see  
Within the leaves a slumbering bee;  
The bee awaked – with anger wild  
The bee awaked, and stung the child.  
Loud and piteous are his cries;  
To Venus quick he runs, he flies;  
"O mother – I am wounded through –  
I die with pain – in sooth I do!  
Stung by some little angry thing,  
Some serpent on a tiny wing –  
A bee it was – for once I know,  
I heard a rustic call it so."  
Thus he spoke, and she the while  
Heard him with a soothing smile;  
Then said, "My infant, if so much  
Thou feel the little wild-bee's touch,  
How must the heart, ah, Cupid! be,  
The hapless heart that's stung by thee?"<sup>m60</sup>*

Eros, who could make anyone fall in love, did not live on the heights of Olympus, but was himself a being capable of suffering, having the human aspect of being at the mercy of someone or something else. The covertly erotic theme is saturated with light, fresh content in this perfect work involving a single rose, not at all complicated and suggesting no greater depth. The attack against the child-god around the rose and his parabolically exaggerated suffering was to provide a model for later rococo and romantic artists, including the unification of thorn-arrow-bee sting. The poem is an example of the much-loved minimization in which a tiny event, formerly considered incidental and episodic, unfolds with refined sophistication – and the source of humor is that behind this banal story lurks the formerly revered quality of godliness replete in its full mythological armor.

In this selection from the Anacreon anthology the themes of the rose which express suffering are expanded. The stabs of the rose cause pain in a person under the enchantment of love. Loss is also alluded to in sources where flowers are used to bid farewell to the dead.

Strato, in his homoerotic epigram *After us the deluge*, does not identify the flower by name; yet, as it appears in association with love, celebration, wine, garlands and burial offerings, there is not much doubt that the contemporary reader was likeliest to select, imagine and name the rose out of the possible plants.

*Drink now and love, Damocrates, since not for ever shall we drink nor for ever  
hold fast our delight; let us crown our heads with garlands and perfume  
ourselves, before others bring these offerings to our graves. Now rather let my  
bones drink wine inside me; when they are dead, let Deucalion's deluge sweep  
them away.*<sup>161</sup>

The ceremonious combination of wine and the rose (the flower) made rapture easier to express. However, in the combined use of the two symbols Meleagros, Theocritus and Callimachus also treated wine as a surrogate for

<sup>160</sup> ANACREON *Anacreonta* 35. trans. Th. Moore

<sup>161</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 11, 19. trans. J. W. Mackail



the rose. In the poems quoted from these writers wine became the drink to replace lost rapture. At the same time, the use of flowers and the sacrificial nature of wine-drinking leave no doubt that these items were a survival of originally cultic usage.

Finally, the scattering of flower petals on the grave signified the value of the deceased as well as a sacrificial offering. Stato, however, may not have believed in life after death, as he calls his friend to share in the enjoyment of life.

A second example of the trivialization of the sacred rose is the lewdly erotic *Contestants*. The setting, situation and props are familiar – but the three magnificent goddesses are three promiscuous women, and the narrator of the poem describes their beauty on the basis of their sexual organs. The rose is used to describe the loins of one of the women:

*Rodope, Melita, and Rhodoclea strove with each other, quaenam habeat potioem Merionem, and chose me as judge, and like those goddesses famous for their beauty, stood naked, dipped in nectar. Et Rodopes quidem inter femora fulgebat Polyphemus velut rosarium cano scissum amne....Rhodocleae vero feminal vitro simile erat, udaeque ejus superficies velut in templo statuae recens sculptae. But and as I knew well what Paris suffered owing to his judgement, I at once gave the prize to all the three goddesses.*<sup>162</sup>

Both the male and female sexual organ could be symbolized by the rose. This euphemistic form of expression was justified by the similarity in color and by allusion to sexuality through the sex organ.

The content and formal solutions of *Contestants* are similar to that of *Odd judgment*, which builds on an allusion to a widely known mythological story, reworking it into a ribald tale viewed from below.

*I judged the hinder charms of three; for they themselves chose me, showing me the naked splendour of their limbs. Et prima quidem signata sulculis rotundis candido florebat et molli decore; alterius vero divaricatae nivea caro rubescebat purpurea rosa rubicun dior; terbia velut mare tranquillum sulcabatur fluctibus mutis, delicata eius cute sponte palpitante. I Paris who judged the goddesses had seen three such, he would not have wished to look again on the former ones.*<sup>163</sup>

In order to understand the poem it is vitally necessary for the cultured reader to be familiar with the contest of the dignified, beautiful goddesses. However, there is no allusion to them at all; the reader must make the association with the mythological story automatically. The gods evaporated out of the poem, and the ribald nature may make it doubtful whether they can be identified by name. The metaphoric function of the rose, the lines indicate, is needed primarily for the opening female sexual organs, but the reader's familiarity with tradition allows everything associated with it (the female body, beauty, love, the Graces, Aphrodite) likewise to appear in the color of roses.

There are also examples of the rose's becoming independent as a symbol. Numerous texts prove that it was not always necessary to justify the selection of the rose. There was no longer a need to refer to the origin of its use, and standing alone, without modifiers, it reliably indicated the matter to be described.

Rhuphinus' epigram *Too late!* presents the rose in this kind of demythified position. Authentication by tradition was no longer necessary,

<sup>162</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 36. trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>163</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 35. trans. W. R. Paton

having lost its value. At the same time, the plant's internal duality, the contrast between flower and thorn, had grown in value.

*Now, you so chary of your favours, you bid me good-day, when the more than marble smoothness of your cheeks is gone; now you dally with me, when you have done away with the ringlets that tossed on your haughty neck. Come not near me, meet me not, scorner! I don't accept a bramble for a rose!*<sup>164</sup>

The rose could point to love, but also to its absence. The thorn was extremely well-suited for this, telling its own negative story, as it were, in contrast to the arrows of Eros. Further, since the word "rose" itself had a dual meaning in any common language, referring to both the plant and the flower, it provided the potential to develop dualities based on closer botanical observation. The chronology of the life of the plant, its stages in bloom and after flowering, results in divergent descriptions of quality. In contrast to the flower, the absence of flowers, particularly if joined by the hitherto concealed thorns (or in other cases by the absence of foliage), is an indicator of the process of value loss, and the sad results thereof.

The epigram *Rose and thorn* by an anonymous imperial-era Greek author typifies this process. Discovery of the flower's secrets involves confronting the thorns, as exemplified by the regularly recurring life of the plant. Further, the phenomenon also has a higher moral meaning, claims the author, for which the reader should seek examples in his own life.

*The rose is at her prime a little while; which once past, thou wilt find when thou seekest no rose, but a thorn.*<sup>165</sup>

In imperial-era poetry the independent value of the rose and its function in describing value appear more emphatically than in earlier periods, where it more frequently functioned as an accessory of the mythological environment. Contributing to its independence as an element was the brevity of popular epigram poetry, whereby the avoidance of wordiness stripped it of its incidentals and removed its mythological baggage. As a result of its independence, in place of its former function of suggesting several meanings it was now capable of expressing a more narrowly defined concept, depending on the occasion. This is not to suggest that the number of meanings for rose symbols had decreased; rather, these meanings were less intermixed, more separated in usage.

The anonymous author of *Oh, would I were...* has the rose refer to itself, with no explicit mythological background behind it. The reader is forced to rely on his or her own cultural knowledge of the rose. Of the rose's botanical properties emphasis is given to its color, and implicitly (given that only a flower appears, not the rose plant) its condition of flowering. Its association with man is not in doubt – and it marks a positive emotional condition, the expressive, definable object of a desired relationship. The rose could be the flower of either sex (although the snow-white color makes a woman's breast likelier than a man's), nor is it impossible that it alludes to intellectual value (however, offering the breast to the flower nevertheless suggests the desired relationship may be physical). The multiple meaning of the flower appears elsewhere: in a human relationship remote from the medium of religion. The purple rose in the following verse may also be a euphemistic designation of the sexual organ as a symbol of love.

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<sup>164</sup> RHUPINOS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 28. trans. W. R. Paton

<sup>165</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 11, 53. trans. J. W. Mackail

*Oh, would I were a pink rose, that thy hand might pluck me to give to thy snowy breast.*<sup>166</sup>

## Forest, park, garden?

The rose became a symbol early on for the Greeks, and not just in literature and the arts. The laws of Solon (640-560 BC) recommended that girls who had lost their virginity be prohibited from wearing of rose garlands; thus it may be assumed that this adornment was reserved for unsullied maidens. The rose in this case was declared as a sign of virginal purity which could be offered to a goddess. If one considers that in Solon's time and afterwards free women were excluded from the public life of the community, and that their living space was largely limited to family forums hidden inside buildings, then the question arises: who among them could have worn garlands of flowers in their hair, and when, if this had to be regulated?

The sources indicate that at community occasions for free men, only the *hetaerae* were available at the guests' intellectual and physical service. They certainly were not virgins; sexual service was part of their jobs. Further, the meeting of *hetaerae* and free women was limited to religious celebrations, some of which were the exclusive practice of non-virgin women. Weddings were the one occasion where men and women were found together and the women included both virgins and those who had lost their virginity. Thus, differentiation by the wearing of rose garlands at such occasions had a reason.

The occasionally massive and regulated use of the rose and the production of rose-scented oil, presumably had to be supported by widespread rose-growing. The known sources, however, give hardly any indication of how this was accomplished or what horticultural methods, if any, were used to raise the plants.

A few exceptions notwithstanding, the wild rose is mentioned as a plant of the plains and fields, and even then only incidentally, but the properties described do not enable clear identification of the botanical species: fragrance and the combination of red or reddish color are not enough to go on in this regard. In the absence of drawings of the plant the task is impossible.

Where were the roses grown, then? And what new botanical, environmental, ecological, morphological or pharmacological knowledge was collected about them?

Greek historiography developed during the war against the Persians and in describing the victory over them. Herodotus of Halikarnassus (ca. 484 - after 430 BC) continued the tradition designated by the geographical/ethnographic/historical work written by Hecataeus of Miletus around 500 BC, *Circumnavigation (Periegesis)/ A trip around the world (Ges periodos)*: to collect and systematize all information relating to the known world. Although Hecataeus did report on the plants of the areas and peoples known to him, roses do not appear in the surviving fragments. Herodotus, following the methods of his predecessor, relied on personal experience, written sources and hearsay to describe the crisis between the peoples of Europe and Asia. The first half of the historian's work provides a multi-sided description of the known world, in keeping with the accepted Hecataean perspective, and only in the second half does he deal with the extensive precedents to the Greco-Persian wars, the cause of the conflict and

<sup>166</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 84. trans. W. R. Paton

its history, and even then only to Xerxes' campaign against Greece in 480 BC and not to the end of the war. Remarkably, Herodotus traced the differences in the mentality and history of Europeans and Asians, and in their plant and animal use, to climatic causes – and ultimately to their relationship with the four elements – also using this to explain the characteristic traits of the plants and animals.

Herodotus reported on the rose in one place:

*So the brothers came to another part of Macedonia and settled near the place called the garden of Midas son of Gordias, where roses grow of themselves, each bearing sixty blossoms and of surpassing fragrance. In this garden, according to the Macedonian story, Silenus was taken captive. Above it rises the mountain called Bermius, which none can ascend for the wintry cold.<sup>167</sup>*

The era which Herodotus recounts in this excerpt was that of Alexander, son of Amyntas and King of Macedonia (495-450 BC). Alexander, according to the historian, had an especially important role, as he had ties to the Persians through the marriage of his sister, and at the same time was an honored guest of the Athenians. Herodotus dated the story referring to the rose to the time of Alexander's seventh ancestor, and since the Greeks considered three generations to constitute a century, he placed it two hundred to two hundred fifty years earlier, around 700 BC. He claimed that at that time a rose noted for its fragrance and many petals grew "by itself" in Macedonia.

Other data yield a similar chronology. The Phrygians, who had a number of kings named Midas (the first was the one whose touch turned everything to gold), were indigenous to the northwest region of Asia Minor and were often referred to as Trojans. The kings of Phrygia, Gordias and his son Midas – according to the historian – probably ruled in the later half of the eighth century and afterwards. Herodotus indicated the lands of this Midas as being in Macedonia, the region north of Hellas, whose inhabitants, the Macedonians, were related to the Greeks. Thus, Herodotus' remembrance stretched back to the very beginning of Greek history, 776 BC, which reference to the ancient past he himself emphasized.

Historians believe the Phrygians, who were related to the Macedonians, had lived in Asia Minor for centuries by that time.

Herodotus stated that at the feet of the snow-covered Macedonian mountain of Bermion, in the eighth century BC, there existed gardens which formerly had belonged to Midas, King of Phrygia, and which later came into the hands of the new Macedonian dynasty. In this garden (which probably was a kind of orchard), where tradition said Silenus, the god of the forest, was captured, the rose grows "by itself" without planting or care, having two special properties worth mentioning (for the Greeks, at least): it has sixty petals and is the most fragrant of the aromatic flowers of its type.

The text permits the assumption that the rose originated from the gardens of King Midas and survived without care after the time of the monarch.

The story also has an allegorical reading, which bears the customary marks for the foundings of dynasties, and this fact should not be ignored as the combined message of the rose and the allegory is inspected more closely. The rose for whatever reason was a valuable plant: its characteristic feature was not its color (which the Greeks used to describe times of day, celestial bodies, and gods), but rather its large number of petals and its fragrance. The large number of petals – to which the Romans later would also attribute

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<sup>167</sup> HERODOTOS *Historiae* VIII. 138. trans. A. D. Godley

significance – was thus far unknown due to the lack of sources, but the same was not true for the fragrance, which had been and would continue to be mentioned many times in connection with the oil or the flower.

Herodotus' rose-growing location also suggests special qualities for the region. The botanic-historic veracity of Herodotus' rose information is inconsistent, and it cannot be stated firmly that this plant did indeed inhabit the area of Macedonia – nor can it be refuted, as the mountain environment described is comparable to the conditions of the Caucasian slopes, which are considered the genetic center of the rose.

In a different respect, however, the data are important as a source, as it stresses the rose's already-known origin from Asia Minor. There are several elements in the quoted passage worth examining: the fragrance, and the remains of the so-called gardens where the rose "grew by itself." A fondness for fragrances was a characteristic of the Persians, and offerings of fragrances were part of their religious activities; the Greeks learned and adopted the potential use of the rose in cults of fragrance from the peoples of Asia Minor, one form of this use being the use of garlands. The fragrance was considered to be a function of the petals – or at least the parts of the flower were not provably distinguished until the work of Theophrastus; the large number of petals mentioned by Herodotus may indeed have created and warranted a truly glorious and unmatched rose scent.

Also, through natural hybridization of the roses a flower with considerably more petals than the customary five may have come about as a descendant of wild species, and this variety was able to survive and populate the area without human intervention.

The appearance of the concept of the garden in the text, however, is a more unexpected phenomenon than the rose. They are said to have remained uncared-for after the death of Midas, and roses grew wild or semi-wild in them. This and the brokenness of the mountain environment surface suggest that this "garden" was nothing more than a region of trees, shrubs and occasional open ground where man made occasional inputs into the formation of the natural vegetation – essentially it can be thought of as a largely unformed area utilizing the landscape. This type of utilization of nature is also a characteristic feature of Persian garden culture.

For researchers in the botanical history of the rose it is not clear whether the garden of King Midas was found in Macedonia, or perhaps in Aegea or Edessa.<sup>168</sup> This topographical uncertainty suggests that the Greek historian's most important claim was merely to establish a link at the beginning of the history with the Phrygians, a people related to the Greeks who since then had maintained relationships with the Persians. Thus knowledge of the rose is related to this Asia Minor culture under the influence of the Persians, though of Macedonian origin.

Surveys of the gardening culture of the Greeks began only in the last century, not that long ago. Although a number of written sources indicate that Greek gardens existed, there are few archeological confirmations of this fact, either because no attention was paid to the easily destroyed remains of gardens in early digs, or because identifiable sites were rarely found.

Homer made mention of the garden of Alcinoos, where fruit trees grew, and texts from the Homeric and subsequent periods describe orchards and orchard-like surroundings for the sanctuaries of gods connected with life (Aphrodite, Dionysus, Eros, Asclepius, Heracles, Adonis), and we have

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<sup>168</sup> According to A. D. GODLEY Aegea or Edessa (now Vodena) may have been the city of Midas. In. PHILLIPS, R. – RIX, M. (1993) 16-17.

knowledge of the grounds of the Platonic academy where plantains were planted, of the plants of Aristotle's Lyceion, of Theophrastus' garden purchases, and of private gardens, including that of Epicurus, where the philosopher grew medicinal plants for himself and his friends.

Two rose species appear in Theocritus' competitive song *The shepherd and the goatherd* (presented as a dialog). The briar rose is worth less than the rose growing in a designated place in the garden, beside the hedge. The garden containing the rose, according to the competitive verse, is found near the city of Sybaris: the pastoral setting makes it clear that the hedge delineates a non-urban garden belonging to agricultural workers.

*Nay, ye may not liken dog-roses to the rose, or wind-flowers to the roses of the garden; by the garden walls their beds are blossoming.*<sup>169</sup>

Bion's *Lament of Adonis* was sung on the second day of the festival of Adonis. It gives one of the creation myths of the rose and was sung on many occasions in addition to the annual floral Adonis anniversary; moreover, it is virtually unmatched in naming both possible places where the rose may occur:

*Let Adonis, now dead, share your bed, Cythereia. He is a lovely corpse, a lovely corpse, just as though he slept. Lay him in soft coverlets in which he spent the night in sacred sleep with you. On the golden couch lay the disheveled Adonis. Cover him with garlands and flowers. As he died, so also all the blossoms withered.*<sup>170</sup>

The rose – which also appeared among the flowers in an earlier segment of the poem – originated from two places: the field and the garden. But where was this garden located: at the homes inside the community, or in the areas next to the community where other agricultural work was also carried out?

References to gardens are generally not confirmed by archeological data. The evolution, function and spatial structure of the Greek garden were surveyed by B. S. Ridgway,<sup>171</sup> who summarized the Greek contribution to Roman gardens. He determined that an intense garden culture did not exist, but for the most part evolved along the lines of Persian ideas of the garden, and it was this influence that it transmitted to the Romans.

The greatest contribution of Greek culture to the Roman gardens was in the works of sculpture and stone-carving, and in the acceptance of the role they played in the spatial arrangement.

The courtyard of Greek houses in the classical era – in the excavation of which some gardening remains were also found, such as at Himrea in Sicily and at Olynthos in Khalkidiki, built in the fifth century BC and destroyed 348 BC – were paved with clay or stone. There was no opportunity or sign of plant use in them, as is also indirectly indicated by the documented fascination of the wealthier citizens of the era for the palatial gardens of Persia.

Everyday people developed their own gardening culture on the principles of personal utility on the outskirts of the community. A few of the rulers in Sicily and Southern Italy, similar to the Oriental nobility, had palace gardens – parks that looked like gardens – such as Gelon (486-476 BC) in Syracuse, and Dionysus the Elder (405-367 BC) in Rhegion.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>169</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucoliqueques Grecs I. Theocritus V. 93-94.* trans. A. Lang

<sup>170</sup> BION *Bucoliqueques Grecs II. Bion I., Epitaphius Adonis 70-77.* trans. B. H. Fowler

<sup>171</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) in MACDOUGALL, E. B. – JASHEMSKI, W. I. ed. (1981) 7-28.

<sup>172</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) 11.

In the Hellenistic period the columned courtyards were covered with mosaics or stones, and a cistern was built to store the water draining from the roofs: in principle, they provided the water to raise plants. In this airy, alternately shaded and sunlit space stood statues – which no doubt had meanings not just for the inhabitant but also as defined by the consensus of the community.

In the statutory arrangement of public grounds the fulfillment of the community function was the most important: the positioning of the statues around the buildings and amid the trees was not random. Government and holy areas were the ones which were known to be abundantly endowed with statues, and the location of these statues was meticulously thought out in landscaping terms. Springs, pools, parks and caves were called on by various traditions to provide locations for carvings, and the environment also warranted validation of their official or holy qualities. The plant component of the landscape contributed to the expression of the symbolic meaning of the statue, but at the same time it made it impossible for the individual plant to be independently appreciated. It is unlikely that they would have placed plants in these areas that were alien to the environment, originating from elsewhere, perhaps popular or appreciated on an individual basis or for certain properties, but not conforming to the regulated spectacle; rather, they made do with the careful arrangement of the local vegetation. Nevertheless, the value of certain plants could not be ignored, as some had sacred meanings – Cimon's program from the fifth century BC gives evidence that the vegetation of the Athenian Agora was consciously shaped, and in arranging the grounds attention was given to the combined effect of the trees and the statues.<sup>173</sup>

Compared to the multi-functional public areas, sacred parks exhibited less and stricter definition. In addition to spontaneously created temples and altars around a natural area, some sanctuary gardens were built by specific intent. After the death of his master, Theophrastus purchased a private garden with the help of Demetrius of Phaleron, and devoted it to the Muses.<sup>174</sup> The garden is known to have had a shrine, statues of goddesses, two lines of columns, an altar and walkways, and it is also known that gardening work was done to maintain the area – the will reports of this – but no tangible archeological material remains on either the plants or the garden stretching along what is now Syntagma Square.

The park connected to the Academy is more religious in nature than public. Best known through the teachings of Plato, the school's environment was made into a park by the same Cimon who donated the plantain trees to the Agora.

The sacred building occupying the landscape and the squares where philosophers taught usually evolved in a natural manner, and less often were established, the local trees serving to lessen climate conditions. However, a few sacred gardens existed where the plant use was demonstrably different from the others. Along side the Hephaeston built in the third century BC at the Agora in Athens trees of uncertain species and origin were placed in pots; at the Heracles shrine from the same period in Thasos, the inscription says that the residents of the building must water and care for the fig trees, myrtles and hazelnut bushes planted in the garden. Sacred palm trees line the Leto shrine in Delos. Thus, in the Hellenistic period, according to the

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<sup>173</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) 16.

<sup>174</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) 17. citing: *The Museum and Garden of the Peripatetics* Archaiologikē Ephēmeris, 1953-54 B, 126-128.

scattered data, it became more common to put a few non-indigenous plants into gardens and care for them in containers, which practice made similar customs possible in private gardens as well.

There were many private gardens built to house plants, according to literary sources, such as the one Epicurus (341-270 BC) purchased for 8000 drachmas in 306 BC. According to Pliny, the garden originally belonged to Demosthenes' nephew.<sup>175</sup> Epicurus' garden, where he lived in seclusion with the students with whom he was friendly and discussed moral philosophy, and which lent its name to the Epicurean school, was located somewhere between Athens and Piraeus.

Based on analysis of the archeological evidence, claims Ridgway, several types can be distinguished on the basis of function: courtyard-like private gardens quite distant from the modern concept of garden, gardens created for religious purposes, and gardens of public places. Ridgway also emphasizes the role of cemeteries, where trees and ornamental plants undoubtedly had to be planted, and where gatherings were held on a regular basis to commemorate the dead. Each area was characterized by the fact that the statues and sculptures (to varying degrees) conveyed the sacred definition and were given the characteristically leading role in the area. The natural vegetation of the area merely added to the sculpture's invocation of the gods, or determined what plants designated by specific divine association were kept in the natural or artificial environment. The character of some sacred figures permitted rose bushes to be planted around their shrine, altar or statue.

The floral strings depicted on reliefs and the evidence of the literature indicate that the Greeks often used flowers as a decoration. The plants necessary for this, including the rose, were not grown in home courtyards or in public or sacred parks. For the most part they were purchased at market, and the commercial supply of plants was provided either by open gardening lots in the area near the residences or else from the wild. As to whether the postulated plant pool supplied sufficient raw material for the local production of rose-scented oil and rose-based cosmetic and hygienic items, that is, uncertain. The fact that local residents also had access to roses and rose-based articles through commerce with more remote regions does not exclude the possibility of local production and processing.

It was due less to gardening culture and more to Adonis-related myths that the Adonis gardens planted by women were seasonally cared for. In ornamental ceramic or metal vessels – the predecessors of the pots and containers used today – fast-blooming early spring plants were raised, including onions, tubers, and small roses, which to the Greeks symbolized the renewal of the gods and nature, while their rapid withering symbolized the death of Adonis and the eternal cycle of nature. In any event, in such uses of the rose the plant grown and the flower of the myth were one and the same – the blood of Adonis was represented not by a verbal rose symbol, but by the rose itself.

According to tradition Rhodes was the center of rose production. From the smell of roses sailors sensed their proximity to the island even before they saw it.<sup>176</sup> The new city of Rhodes – which, like the island, got its name from rose, and the people may have had commercial reasons for flower

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<sup>175</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) 17. citing: PAULY-WISSOWA *Real-Encyclopädie* VII. cols. 761-841, PLINIUS *Historia Naturalis* 19. 51.

<sup>176</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) 12.



growing<sup>177</sup> – was founded in 411; however, archeologists have not found remains which indicate rose production in the gardens of the sanctuaries and houses. In the public and sacred areas on the island the natural landscape was again given a major role, such as the park in the capital which existed as early as the third century BC, with a brook running through it, an abundance of stone carvings, and also several shrines; however, here again there are no data regarding roses.

Many coins with rose images were minted on this island next to Asia; the gods depicted adjacent to or behind the roses on these monetary finds suggest an Asia Minor origin. Helios/Apollo appears on one side of a Rhodian coin<sup>178</sup> – which is just as likely to prove who the main god of the Rhodians was as it is to confirm the rose cult and rose production – along with the trade in rose products based thereon.

Beginning in the sixth century BC the electrum coins used until then were replaced by coins of silver and gold, and by the fifth century BC these metals (as they had been for some time in the Near East) became the exclusive raw materials for coins here as well. The coins of the Greek world included an image and inscription identifying the community issuing it: the picture was generally of a god especially honored by the city state, or a visual representation of its name. The island of Rhodes was one of the most thriving states in the fourth and third centuries BC, and minted large quantities of silver coins. On the back of the hemi- and tetradrachmas was a characteristic, half-open rose relief under the inscription ΡΟΔΙΟΝ.<sup>179</sup> The petal leaves were always unicircular, and on the basis of the picture of the calyx leaves there is no question that some variety of *R. gallica* was depicted.

## Botany

Theophrastus (ca. 370-282 BC), a botanical student of Aristotle, made a survey and classification of plants based on his master's classification of animals. He was the first to distinguish the organs of the plant, identifying the "flower" as a part, or organ, of the plant. Although recognition of the flower as the reproductive organ of the plant was a fairly late Greek achievement, Greek natural philosophers had previously known of a relationship between plant reproduction and Aphrodite or Demeter. In his texts Theophrastus distinguished between the rose as a plant and the rose as a flower or organ.

Theophrastus not only made a serious attempt to create a classification system of plants based on their attributes and use, he also presented on the basis of pre-established criteria a large number of plants which had become important in human culture and had been given names. The botanical philosopher used a dichotomous system, distinguishing four groups: trees, bushes, shrubs and grasses, and in each group he studied the plants cultivated or growing wild, including roses. Plants used in decoration were further divided according to whether the leaves or the flowers were used.

*Historia plantarum* distinguished three species of rose, which, according to the definitions of the botanists supporting the publication<sup>180</sup>, were *Rosa*

<sup>177</sup> RIDGWAY, B. S. (1981) 12. quoting: PAULY-WISSOWA *Real-Encyclopädie* VII. cols. 767-841.

<sup>178</sup> SURÁNYI D. (1985) 339. and HEINZ-MOHR, G. – SOMMER, V. (1988) 11.

<sup>179</sup> WILLIAMS, J. (1997) 33. BALIS, J. (1966) 3-5.

<sup>180</sup> SPRENGEL (1842) Halacsy *Conspectus Florae Graecae*. In: THEOPHRASTUS *Enquiry into plants I-III*. ed. GOOLD, G. P. (1980) Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts – William

*canina*, *Rosa sempervirens* and the simple rose, *Rosa centifolia*. Unquestionably, a strict definition of a plant without knowledge or a picture of the plant can never be unambiguous, thus in this case identification must have been based on predominant characteristics, and one may speak of a greater or lesser probability of the occurrence of the rose species.

*R. sempervirens*, which occurred naturally in the region and was called a wild rose, was described by Theophrastus as having the characteristic features of living in the forest as a "transition" between tree and bush, with thorny leaves.

*Of the bramble again there are several kinds, shewing very great variation; one is erect and tall, another runs along the ground and from the first bends downwards, and, when it touches the earth, it roots again; this some call the "ground-bramble". The "dog's bramble" (wild rose) has a reddish fruit, like that of the pomegranate; and, like the pomegranate, it is intermediate between a shrub and a tree; but the leaf is spinous.*<sup>181</sup>

As a liane, with pictures showing it climbing high, this rose is indeed reliably identified, and some of the literary sources mentioned earlier may be assumed to have been referring to it. The botanist noted the peculiar method of picking the complex pseudofruit of this rose.<sup>182</sup> He had heard that the fruit must be picked while standing against the wind, as doing otherwise could mean danger to the eye. Although he did not justify this opinion, elsewhere he mentioned that the fruit of the plant had fine hairs between its seeds, and these could cause an inflammation if they got in the eye.

Theophrastus' best knowledge was of the *R. centifolia* used in human everyday life.<sup>183</sup> He reported on the evergreen leaves of the plant, which do fall off in time, however,<sup>184</sup> and on its limish color caused by proximity to the sea<sup>185</sup>; he also noted its ability to replicate the normally five-petalled

Heinemann LTD, London. 436.

<sup>181</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 3. 18. 4.

<sup>182</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 9. 8. 5. We have spoken already of trees and shrubs, and next we must speak of under-shrubs and herbaceous plants and of any other natural classes which are included with these, for instance, cereals come under herbaceous plants. But first let us tell of under-shrubs, for this class comes near those mentioned above because of its woody character. Now it may be said that with all cultivated, and this is certainly true of the under-shrubs. For the cultivated kinds of this class are not numerous, and consist almost entirely of coronary plants, as rose, gilliflower, carnation, sweet majoram, martagon lily, to which may be added tufted thyme, bergamot-mint, calamint, southernwood. For all these are woody and have small leaves, wherefore they are classed as under-shrubs.

<sup>183</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 2.2.1. Of under-shrubs and herbaceous plants the greater part grow from a seed or a root, and some in both ways, some of them also grow from cuttings, as has been said, while roses and lilies grow from pieces of the stems, as also said dog's-tooth grass. Lilies and roses also grow when the whole stem is set. Most peculiar is the method of growth from an exudation for it appears that the lily grows in this way too, when the exudation that has been produced has dried up. They say the same of alexanders, for this too produces an exudation. There is a certain reed also which grows if one cuts it in lengths from joint to joint and sets them sideways, burying it in dung and soil. Again they say that plants which have a bulbous root are peculiar in their way of growing from the root.

<sup>184</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 1.9.4. *Of shrubby plants these are evergreen: - ivy bramble buckthorn reed kedris (juniper) - for there is a small kind of kendros so called which does not grow into a tree. Among under-shrubs and herbaceous plants there are rue cabbage, rose, gilliflower, southernwood, sweet majoram, tufted thyme, majoram, celery, alexander's poppy, and a good many more kinds of wild plants. However some of these too, while evergreen as to their top growth, shed their other leaves, as majoram and celery ... for rue too is injuriously affected and changes its character.*

<sup>185</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 1. 13. 1. *For the present let so much be clear, that in all the parts of plants there are numerous differences shown in a variety of ways. Thus of flowers: some are downy, as that of the vine mulberry and ivy, some are "leafy", as in almond, apple, pear, plumb. Again some of these flowers are conspicuous, while that of the olive, though it is "leafy", is inconspicuous. Again it is in annual and herbaceous plant alike that we find some leafy, some downy. All plants again have flowers either of two colours or of one, most of the flowers of trees are of one colour and white, that of the pomegranate being almost the only one which is red, while that of some almonds is reddish. The flower of no other cultivated trees is gay nor of two colours, though it may be so with some uncultivated trees, as with the flower of silver-fir, for its flower is of saffron colour, and so with the flowers of those trees by the ocean which have, they say, the colour of roses.*

covering leaf (he imagined there to be a second similar flower growing in the middle of the flower, whereby the two sets of petals were produced<sup>186</sup>), on lower (pseudo)fruit groups created from a thickening of the stem, and on its varieties, habitat characteristics, blossoming season, cultivation requirements, and other features of interest.

*But there are also differences in the way of growth and the position of the flower. Some plants have it close above the fruit, as vine and olive. In the latter, when the flowers drop off, they are seen to have a hole through them, and this men take for a sign whether the tree has blossomed well, for if the flower is burnt up or sodden, it sheds the fruit along with itself, and so there is no hole through it. The majority of flowers have the fruit-case in the middle of them, or, it may be, the flower is on the top of the fruit-case, as in pomegranate, apple, pear, plum and myrtle, and among under-shrubs, in the rose in many of the coronary plants. For these have their seeds below, beneath the flower, and this is most obvious in the rose because of the size of the seed-vessel. In some cases again the flower is on top of the actual seeds, as in pine-thistle, safflower and all thistle-like plants, for these have a flower attached to each seed. So too with some herbaceous plants, as anthe-mon, and among pot-herbs, with cucumber gourd and bottle-gourd, all these have their flowers attached on top of the fruits, and the flowers persist for a long time while the fruits are developing.*<sup>187</sup>

With regard to this rose Theophrastus wrote that its flowers normally had five petals, but some had 12 or 20, and in very rare cases may have even more, for which reason it was customarily called hundred-petalled. He stated that this shrub with its valuable flower had spread from the vicinity of Philippi, where it was gathered from a mountain, the Pangeus, and the plant itself was transplanted from there. A characteristic of the rose flower was that the petal leaves on the inner row(s) of petals were smaller than those on the outside, and the flowers of some bushes had neither the customary size nor the scent, being smaller and scentless. In the large-flowered variety the inside of the flower is more fragrant than the outer part. However, the quality of the rose flower depends in part on the habitat, and there can be a large difference in fragrance even between two specimens living in an identical area. The quality of the flower's fragrance is strongly influenced by the amount of rain, drought, wind, and general climate. The "Cyrene" rose had the most intense fragrance and was used for the production of aromatics – this description implies that environmental conditions were the most balanced in Cyrene.

These roses grew from a seed, but their growth was slow and precarious. Theophrastus compared the complex shriveled seed and its rose-hip shape to the capitulum of safflower and to pinecones. (The morphological classification of plants was itself a characteristic Theophrastan method in botany; elsewhere the colors of other flowers were classified together with the red color of the rose, such as for the oleander<sup>188</sup> or even the pomegranate.) Classification by this method sometimes occurred inversely: for example, in Theocritus' idyll *The shepherd and the goatherd*:

<sup>186</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 1. 13. 2. However, among annuals, most are of this character – their flowers are two-coloured and twofold. I mean by "twofold" that the plant has another flower inside the flower, in the middle, as with rose, lily, violet. Some flowers again consist of a single "leaf", having merely an indication of more, as that of bindweed. For in the flower of this the separate "leaves" are not distinct, nor is it so in the lower part of the narcissus, but there are angular projections from the edges. And the flower of the olive is nearly of the same character.

<sup>187</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 1. 13.3., 2.2.1.

<sup>188</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 9. 19.1.

*luxuriant creepers flower around, as fair as roses (like a rose, the shrub was red.)*<sup>189</sup>

He also gave an apt description of the hairs on the shriveled seed found in the fruit: shaggy.

An important observation was that the rose grew and blossomed more strongly if cut or burned. Without this the woody parts might grow abundantly, but the flower was less reliable. He also noted that these roses could be grafted, usually resulting in an improvement, and without grafting, the flowers remained small and the leaves unremarkable. He incidentally put the lifespan of the rose at five years.

The blossoming season for this rose followed that of the hyacinth. Theophrastus observed that although it was the first of the spring plants to open, its blossoming time was remarkably short – at least in the habitats he described. Oddly, he did not mention any form of garden as a possible habitat, nor allude to the existence of artificially created plantations.

Theophrastus' mentions of the rose include the most important rose properties mentioned in literary sources: the red color, the aroma, and the characteristic beautiful flower. Also, he confirmed Herodotus' claim that there existed a rose with many – "sixty" – petals, adding that the many-petalled variety arose naturally in the wild. Theophrastus also described the occurrence of the rose later identified as *R. centifolia* in a mountain environment – in exactly the same North Hellenic areas as his predecessor the historian. However, he went on to speculate that the roses growing in Egypt, for climatic reasons, blossomed two months earlier, but the end of the blossoming season was the same as for those occurring in Greek areas<sup>190</sup> (and further that identical species of plants in the two geographical areas had different intensities of aroma).

According to some, in addition to the rose Theophrastus (the organizer of the peripatetic school in Athens after Aristotle) grew a number of flowers and plants in his garden by the Lyceion for his botanical investigations, including violets, gladiolas, peonies, anemones, mint, poppies and marjoram.<sup>191</sup> Aristotle's teachings are attributed to be the source of the author's botanical knowledge, considered unusually precise for the era: the seasonal changes in the properties of the plants could only be observed and described by a person living in their environment and studying them systematically.

Quoting Theophrastus, Pliny the Elder mentioned a hundred-leaf rose, which is now known as *Rosa centifolia* (but it is not known whether it was identical to the modern species, or whether it was a near relative of the Gallic rose depicted on Rhodian coins, which did have a genetic relationship with it). This rose got its name from its very large number of petals – which name it still bears to day, although the modern version is known to have come from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is of Dutch origin in Europe, and cannot possibly be a descendant of the plant known from Theophrastus.

After Theophrastus we know of a few Aristotelian botanists, including the anonymous author whose manuscript was considered for a long time to be the work of Aristotle, while others attributed it to Theophrastus.<sup>192</sup> This brief study gave a survey of chromatistics from the beginnings through to Galenos, and the statements were supplemented with quotations from

<sup>189</sup> THEOCRITUS *Bucolikeques Grecs. I. Theocritus* 5.

<sup>190</sup> THEOPHRASTUS *Historia plantarum* 6.8.5.

<sup>191</sup> HEINZ-MOHR, G. – SOMMER, V. (1988) 11.

<sup>192</sup> MEYER, E. H. F. (1854) 3. 25. 195-201.

Aristotle's explanations, which may be the reason why it was published as a botanical work of Aristotle in Venice in 1496, although it presented at most an abstract of Aristotle's botanical knowledge.

Chapter 5 of the *Book of Colors* investigated the cause of the colors of plant organs. Citing personal experience, the unknown author established that all plant parts are initially green, which therefore is the first color that any plant possesses. The reason – according to the theory of elements – is that water is the first of the four classic elements, given its property of taking on one of the various shades of green when exposed to light. In the course of evolution, moist things which are fundamentally related to this classic element will turn green on exposure to light, while the underground plant parts, not receiving the luminary effect of the element of fire, remain white. When the heat of fire-based light causes the water-based nutrients of the green plant parts to dissipate, the organ begins to cook and the color changes, arriving at the set of colors characteristic of the given plant and appropriate to its nature. This process – the author claimed – took place faster in plant parts exposed to sunlight than it did in those shut off from the heat. Thus it was in this manner that the shades of white, black, brown, yellow, gray, wine and saffron arose during maturation: According to this theory, every plant contained the potential for all colors, and its final condition was determined by the proportions in which the four elements were mixed in the plant and its various parts.

The author claimed that this could be confirmed by an experiment: by cooking a murex, it was possible to go through similar phases of color through to the most mature color most in accordance with the element of fire: red, or purple. The same happens with fruit, including grapes. The process also applies to the maturation of the pomegranate, and to the colors of the rose. The interior of the moist bud is initially white, but through cooking it ultimately changes color and becomes a bright red.

The author continues that there are some plants whose flowers, upon reaching their main color, do not produce red fruit, while in others, the fruit may turn red when cooked. That is, the components of the plant parts not only contain the four elements in non-identical proportions, but may also undergo internal reorganization in the process of time.

This chromatic study provides some explanation, in this line of philosophical reasoning, as to why the plants with red, reddish or purple petals were chosen for use among all the various flowering plants. Based on their color, they were considered to bear the mark of the element of fire, and it was with fire that the intellect and the soul itself were associated. The shades of red were an expression of pure intellect, and the fact that the proper manner of relating to this intellect is love, explains why this emotional state became marked by this color. Everything that is red – be it blood, or the rose – bears the mark of higher intellectuality, and red things have a right to be viewed as expressions of the relationship between man and the intellectual world.

## The rose in medicine

Natural philosophers also provided deep explanations for the care of roses in their carefully kept gardens. The planting and care of private gardens of this sort, because of the lack of space, could not be undertaken by the citizens of the cities; few had the opportunity to grow or prepare their own aromatics,

medicines, ornaments and gifts. These precious articles were usually purchased.

The fact that the few known gardens grew not only plants for garlands – or decorations of any form or use – but also herbs for aromatics, incense, powders and spices indicates that they all had a mutually explainable origin. This use suggested a hygienic/medicinal function supported by religious belief, to which the period's theory of the "four elements" was linked as interpretation.

The *Hippocratic Collection*, attributed to Hippocrates (480-377 BC) but actually compiled by Alexandrian authors, contains no recommendation of roses or rose derivatives in any medicine or other article, at the same time that medicines and potions of Egyptian or Indian origin include several; and elsewhere use of the rose occurs in combination with other plants, such as hyssop, cypress, bay, oregano, anise and ivy.<sup>193</sup>

The use of roses in health care and cosmetics, obviously as an accumulation of centuries of knowledge, is found ultimately in the richest ancient work of descriptive botany and pharmaceutical botany, *De materia medica* (On Medical Materials) by Dioscorides (1<sup>st</sup> century), which presents the pharmacological knowledge of the Mediterranean Greeks in the Roman Imperial era, with approximately six hundred plant species.

Dioscorides reports of roses grown wild and in gardens, this in itself being an indication of the Theophrastan heritage. Theophrastus was indeed the source of Dioscorides' botanical systematics and morphology. His recipes, however, were not, although his explanations of their effects allude to the views of his predecessor. These recipes originated from contemporary practices – which in turn were based on Theophrastan principles. One such example was a wild white flower, whose dark yellow dried fruit, properly prepared and drunk in wine, was recommended as a medicine for diarrhea – that is, it had dessicative properties.

*Cynosbatus [dog's bush] (also called oxycantha) is a shrub much bigger than a common bush – almost the size of a tree. It bears leaves a great deal broader than myrtle, and has strong hairs around the sprigs, white flowers, and somewhat long fruit like the kernel of the olive. When this is ripe it grows red and the stuff within is downy. The dried fruit stops discharges from the intestines (the downy stuff of it is taken out for this is worth less for the arteries). It is made hot in wine and taken as a drink.*<sup>194</sup>

Chapter CXXX indicates that roses growing in the field are more effective for certain medicinal purposes than the garden-grown varieties. However, roses grown in gardens were preferable for certain matters. As they had a larger number of petals – possibly as a result of selection – they were used for the preparation of rose water, powder, and dried petals (which in turn were the raw material for both extracts and powders).

*Rodon [roses] cool and are astringent, and dried roses are more astringent. The juice must be pressed out of them whilst they are still young, first cutting off that which is called the nail (which is the white that is in the petal), and the rest must be pounded and pounded in the shade in a mortar until it becomes thick, and then put in jars for eye salves or suppositories. The leaves are also dried in the shade. They must be turned over now and then lest otherwise they putrefy or grow mouldy. Dried roses (boiled in wine and strained) are good for headaches, as well as the eyes, ears and gums, and pain of the perineum, intestine, rectum and vulva, applied with a feather or washed with the liquid.*

<sup>193</sup> MAYER F. K. (1927) 79.

<sup>194</sup> DIOSCORIDES *De materia medica* CXXIII. trans. A. Lang

*The same (without straining) bruised, boiled and applied, are good for inflammation erysipela [streptococcal skin infection]. Roses (dried and pounded into small pieces) are sprinkled on the thighs. They are put in compositions called antherae [medicines extracted from flowers] and in wound antidotes. They are burnt for medicines to make the eyelid look pleasing. The part of the flower that is found in the middle of the roses (dried and sprinkled on) is good for gum discharges. The heads [hips] (taken in a drink) stop loose intestines and blood-spitting.<sup>195</sup>*

Dioscorides attributed great significance to rose pastilles in the treatment of certain diseases:

*Pomanders of roses (which they call rhodids) are made in the following way. Take forty teaspoons of fresh roses (which are beginning to fade) before they have absorbed any moisture, ten teaspoons of Indian nard and six teaspoons of myrrh. These are pounded into small pieces and made into little balls the size of half a teaspoon, dried in the shade and stored in a jar made without pitch, tightly corked all around. Some also add two teaspoons of costus and as much Illyrian iris, also mixing in Chian [from Scios in the Aegean sea] wine with honey. This is used around women's necks instead of necklaces, dulling the unsavoury smell of sweat. They use the same (pounded into small pieces) in medicines made to repress sweat, and in ointments to rub on after bathing; and with cold water.<sup>196</sup>*

The theory of elements gave unified form to the basic knowledge of contemporary natural philosophy. It provided an explanation for all properties of things, as was seen in the case of the color red, but also gave an interpretation to the use of spices and nutritional plants. This theory also assisted the production of plant-based medicines. The four elements were joined by the four qualities, the properties of hot, cold, wet and dry. It may have been based on observation, for example, that diseases of a cold nature could be cured by articles with a heating effect, dry diseases by moistening, and diseases of a mixed character by combining various curative ingredients in the proper amounts.

With the compilation by Galenos (129-199) medicine arrived at the pseudo-pathology of humors, where the qualities were associated with body fluids and characteristics, thus creating a medical practice supported by philosophy, which treated diseases by simple or compound curatives possessing the opposite quality. The rose received its medical botanical interpretation according to its scent and color, and was used in healing accordingly. In his *Opera omnia* Galenos also listed earlier recipes, including that of Mithridates Eupatore (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), in which the author prescribed an ointment of wild poppy root, fern, comfrey, sumac, iris, licorice, pomegranate and dried rose leaves for tonsillitis and sore throats for singers in a concert – these were the basic ingredients, but other additives were also necessary.<sup>197</sup>

Rose-scented oil was also considered a therapeutic product. It was prepared by mixing crushed petals with fine olive oil, and more flowers were added to the strained fluid. The result of seven such extractions of the volatile oil was rose oil – which was used in medicine. The cooling effect of the rose (from the health viewpoint) was cited by both Theophrastus and Dioscorides – but the same function was served by the rose garlands worn while drinking wine.

<sup>195</sup> DIOSCORIDES *De materia medica* CXXX. (De Rosis). trans. A. Lang

<sup>196</sup> DIOSCORIDES *De materia medica* 123. (De Cynobato). 130. (De Rosis) and CXXXI. (De roseis pastillis). trans. A. Lang

<sup>197</sup> GALENOS 13, 55-56.

## Later sources: Summary of the Greek rose thematic

Although Roman mentality was influenced by Greek culture from early on, it was only in the Hellenic period that this came to its peak. The Romans were likewise quick to discover and modify Greek-style rose symbols. The Greek (feminine) rose thematic was inseparably interwoven in the Roman version by the first century and developed synchronically from there, shaped and maintained by both Greek and Latin writers. In the meantime, the rose – while never giving up its original association and allusion to the pagan gods – eventually appeared in a Christianized, increasingly masculine version. Greek and Roman paganism was also influenced by the religious ideas of Oriental cultures, which again had a role in the shaping of the rose image.

Greek writings from the first five or six centuries AD exemplify the homogenization of the rose symbol, in which the earliest Hellenic traditions survived at the same time that newer interpretations also proved of value.

The hymn to the sun by Mesomedes (late 2nd century) continued the tradition in which the color of the rose was used to describe an atmospheric condition, time of day, or god thereof. A rose-designated color frequently marked the environment of Apollo, Helios, Sol, Aios, and figures closely linked to them such as the Muses or the Heliades, the daughters of Helios. Mesomedes describes the dawn sky as rose-colored.<sup>198</sup>

The color continued to serve to describe and qualify the gods and mortals under the protection of the gods, thus emphasizing fertility. Although allusions to Aphrodite remained throughout, to the greatest extent the rose came to refer to Eros, in parallel with a decline in the other figures of the Greco-Roman pantheon and allusions to them in practice. References to Eros by Nonnos (5th century) and Iulianos (6th century) virtually ignore the other gods.

*Cupid once upon a bed  
Of roses laid his weary head;  
Luckless urchin not to see  
Within the leaves a slumbering bee;  
The bee awaked - with anger wild  
The bee awaked, and stung the child.  
Loud and piteous are his cries;*<sup>199</sup>

Musaïos (late 5th century) used rose symbols to describe the Graces, but Rhupinos used them for mortal women,<sup>200</sup> and in Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*, the tale of the life of Dionysus, they are used for both men and women. Nonnos depicts the round face of a maiden in love as rose-colored, but the same color describes her male lover – his skin, limbs, chest, cheeks, and even his fingers clutching the string of a bow.<sup>201</sup> Musaïos also offered this plant to describe the skin and breast of a girl enflamed by love.<sup>202</sup>

Open fields and meadows continued to be considered the place for growing roses. Nonnos and Colluthos (5th century) shared this notion.

*Trees whispered in the gentle season, colorful roses*

<sup>198</sup> MESOMEDES in. E. HEITSCH (1961-1965) II. 2.

<sup>199</sup> NONNOS *Anthologia Graeca* 16, 388, 1-7. trans. Th. Moore

<sup>200</sup> RHUPINOS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 36.

<sup>201</sup> NONNOS *Dionysiaca* 15, 169-369. *Nonni Panopolitani Dionysiaca* I-II. Ed. R. Keyfoll. Berlin, 1959.

<sup>202</sup> MUSAEUS *Hero und Leander*. Ed. A. FÄRBER, München, 1961.



*grew in the meadow, their petals open, ...*<sup>203</sup>

*She knows the hill, she hath skill of the rivers' flow,  
She knows the paths to the roses, to the meadow.*<sup>204</sup>

Direct references to the rose remain richer than indirect references through the rose. In Musaios' populous epic *Hero and Leander* the two lovers become united in death. Hero's emotions are charged with the spirit of Aphrodite, in whose shrine she awaits her lover as he fearlessly crosses the sea. Understandably, the fiery flower of the impassioned goddess of love is observable on the youth's body.

*Here in the sanctuary of the goddess, Hero  
paces to and fro, virginal priestess, her face glowing in the light  
like the color of snow on the rising Moon,  
her face flushed red, but white on the edges,  
like a rosebud in two colors in a rose chalice  
- over Hero's breast a virtual field of roses blooms,  
a gentle red on her skin and like a paired rose, when she walked  
her ankle glimmered white from under her khiton.*<sup>205</sup>

A religiously defined medicinal/hygienic usage is also present in the lovers' meeting: the physically exhausted youth (like the custom for a bride before the wedding) is anointed in rose oil by the maiden.

*Then – like a bride being prepared for a wedding –  
in the intimacy of her room she anointed him in rose oil,  
over his entire body, ...*<sup>206</sup>

The reasons for rose use are merged, according to the testimony of this source. Anointment signifies honor to Aphrodite and preparation for love or love-making, as well as refreshing the body frozen and exhausted from the sea. Of course, the aroma also suppressed and deodorized the stench of seawater on the skin.

In addition to these, a set of symbols based on the botanical characteristics of the rose also evolved, such as references to the contrast of white and red, or flowering and openness, or the contrasting values of the flower and thorn.

*shall I pick rude thorns without adorning petals,  
harvesting only troubles and never beauty?*<sup>207</sup>

St. Gregory of Nazianus (329 – 389), one of the Cappadocian Church Fathers, referred to this duality in exactly the same way as his pagan contemporaries. At the end of one of his epigrams Rhuphinos sighs:

*I don't accept a bramble for a rose.*<sup>208</sup>

An unknown author similarly:

<sup>203</sup> NONNOS *Dionysiaca* 47, 177-178. *Nonni Panopolitani Dionysiaca* I-II. Ed. R. Keyfell. Berlin, 1959.

<sup>204</sup> COLLUTHOS *Harpaga Helenész* 328-388. In. *Oppian – Colluthus – Tryphiodorus*. With an English translation by A. W. Mair. Loeb Classical Library 219. Cambridge, Massachusetts – London, 1963. trans. A. W. Mair

<sup>205</sup> MUSAEUS *Hero und Leander* Ed. A. FÄRBER München, 1961. trans. J. A. Symonds

<sup>206</sup> MUSAEUS *Hero und Leander* Ed. A. FÄRBER München, 1961. trans. J. A. Symonds

<sup>207</sup> J. P. MIGNE *Patrologiae cursus completus* Series Graeca. GREGORIOS NAZIANZENOS 37, II/1, 11, 439-485.

<sup>208</sup> RHUPINOS *Anthologia Graeca* 5, 28. trans. W. R. Paton

*The rose is at her prime a little while; which, once past, thou wilt find when thou  
seekest no rose, but a thorn.*<sup>209</sup>

Lamenting his dead brother, St. Gregory of Nazianzus combined the symbols of dew and falling rose-petals. However, in light of the precedents of the symbols the rose shed its petals on the now-lifeless body while fertilizing dew signified the new beginning of life. Traditionally the rose was used to honor the beautiful things in life and existence as well as symbolize their passing. Its association with death and the grave was mythologically justified, and its thematization was not unknown (e. g., in Strato).

*Tell us, was there an equal to Caesarius' beauty?  
Was there ever a pair to the light of his wit?  
No one anywhere on earth. And he has gone. Thus fall dewdrops  
onto the earth when the rose-petal fades.*<sup>210</sup>

Bion's eulogy was composed by an imitator of Theocritus. In this poem the rose appears as a plant of Adonis, as this was the most proper way to mourn Bion, who had written a lament on the death of Adonis. Here the rose appears clearly as a flower of mourning.

*"Alas for Cypris," all the mountains say, and the oak. For Adonis woe and the  
rivers weep for Aphrodite's grief, and the springs in the hills shed tears for  
Adonis, and the blossoms blush red from grief. Cythera through all its vales,  
through every glen, sings, "Alas for Cythereia. The lovely Adonis is dead."*<sup>211</sup>

Sorrow is expressed not by the wilting of the rose, but by reference to one of its properties: its red color. This occurs similarly with references to its fading or change of scent.

At the same time the rose remained the symbol of rapture and its evocation. Palladas (turn of the 4th - 5th centuries) produced it to cheer an old woman (Renaissance emblematics referred to this often), emphasizing its role in association with wine, fragrances and floral garlands.

*Bring me wine, aromatics and garlands, leafy with purple petals,  
Let troublesome worries end; help, Bromios!*<sup>212</sup>

## The Greek rose

The rose of Greek culture and the culture's fondness for the rose scent was of Oriental origin – the earliest data list it among the spoils of the Caucasian campaign by the Semitic god-king of Akkad, Sargon I (Sarrukin I) (2684-2630 BC), and then spread in many directions by Akkadian-Sumerian-Babylonian-Assyrian-New Babylonian-Persian transmission. One of the early traits appearing in Mediterranean civilizations was poly-culturalism (an outstanding example of which is the Persian eclecticism which originated from various ethnic styles), which strongly determined the spread of nutritional and medical knowledge. Greek flower culture was also borrowed by the Romans, as a result of which this gardening culture was also part of a living process.

<sup>209</sup> *Anthologia Graeca* 11, 53. J. W. Mackail

<sup>210</sup> GREGORIOS NAZIANZENOS 38., epigr. 19; J. P. MIGNÉ *Patrologiae cursus completus Series Graeca*.

<sup>211</sup> *Bucoliques Grecs* Texte établi et traduit par Ph. E. Legrand, Paris Coll. Univ. Ass. Guillaume Budé, Tome II. *Pseudo-Théocrite, Moschos, Bion, Divers*, 1927. trans. B. Hughes Fowler

<sup>212</sup> PALLADAS *Anthologia Graeca* 11, 55.

With its extremely important role in mythology and related sacred activities, and in literature and art, the rose was present in numerous areas of everyday life: it expressed fertility and honor, worship, inspiration, emotional wealth and the many contradictions included therein; thus passionate physical and spiritual love; and it was the flower of rapturous situations. Also, it marked the borders of life stations, like a frontier plant between the heavens and netherworld: thus it had a function in significant life events as well as in the cults of life and death.

The living plant was mainly a flower for garlands. Clement of Alexandria<sup>213</sup> claimed that the use of garlands was not customary among the ancient Greeks. In his opinion the Greeks first used garlands as awards in contests; later they were also worn by the leaders of public assemblies. The throwing of flowers was known, followed – as a form of boasting taken from the Medeans – by the wearing of garlands. Clement knew of narcissus, myrtle and rose in Greek garlands – for example, he mentioned the rose in connection with Sappho. He believed the Greeks took the practice of wearing garlands from the Persians.

Written sources from the ancient era utilized a wealth of rose metaphors derived from the plant's characteristics; these appeared both in the elegies and iambic poems as well as in the choral songs. The Sicilian composer of choral songs Stesichoros (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) and his contemporaries used the rose as a symbol of feasts and merrymaking. The gods responsible for maintaining the natural order of plants served as the reason for its symbolic use, as the rose emphasized certain properties of these gods. The relevant rose passages in texts used in cults described its fertility, utility, beauty, and periodicity, and in time gave guidance for rose use in everyday life as well.

The rose belonged at the same time to the Olympic world, the netherworld, and the human world – thus it simultaneously characterized the three worlds the Greeks believed could be experienced. And as there was no characteristic of the rose which did not have thousands and thousands of ties – albeit not of uniform strength – to the practical side of the human world, and which the Greeks did not imbue with a strong glaze of sacredness in their own mythifying manner, it had a role in hygienic and medical practice, in eating habits, and in decorations. Commerce and government life not only maintained the rose cult for centuries but also strengthened it. The works of Greek sophists and philosophers relating to nature noted that one of the criteria for life and living matter was reproduction and the ability to reproduce; eventually they also gave a philosophical explanation for fertility and investigated the nature of love – and the rose from the very beginnings of Greek culture was the symbol of the power of nature, of renewal, love, and human sexuality. In addition to everyday and literary thinking, knowledge relating to the rose also became part of philosophy and garden culture.

An accounting of the many symbols linked to the rose can be made in one of the *Songs of Anacreon*:

*BEHOLD, the young, the rosy Spring,  
Gives to the breeze her scented wing;  
While virgin Graces, warm with May,  
Fling roses o'er her dewy way.  
The murmuring billows of the deep  
Have languish'd into silent sleep;  
And mark! the flitting sea-birds lave*

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<sup>213</sup> CLEMENS of ALEXANDRIA *Paedagogus* II, 72,1. - 74,4.

*Their plumes in the reflecting wave;  
 While cranes from hoary winter fly  
 To flutter in a kinder sky.  
 Now the genial star of day  
 Dissolves the murky clouds away;  
 And cultured field, and winding stream,  
 Are freshly glittering in his beam.*

*Now the earth prolific swells,  
 With leafy buds and flowery bells;  
 Gemming shoots the olive twine,  
 Clusters ripe festoon the vine;  
 All along the branches creeping,  
 Through the velvet foliage peeping,  
 Little infant fruits we see,  
 Nursing into luxury.*

On the rose<sup>214</sup>

With garland-bringing Spring

I sing of the summer rose:

you should do the same, my

fellows:

it may be of the gods,

splendor of mortals,

adornment of the Graces, sweet

Love in flower,

Cypris also takes joy in it.

The sagas sing of it,

the Muses sing of it gladly.

How sweet, even if you pick it

on the thorn-strewn path,

how sweet, even if you keep it

in your soft hand warming

the fragrant flower of Eros.

And it lends beauty to the singer

at feasts and tables,

at the festival of Dionysus.

What could be without the rose?

The fingers of Dawn are rosy,

the arms of the nymphs are rosy,

and body of Cythera is rosy,

as they say in song.

Sweet scent for the sick,

it even protects the dead;

it conquers speeding time:

as the rose even in old age,

may have a sweet young scent.

Yea, we say how it came about:

that from blue-rayed foam

all-dew Aphrodite

was born of Pontus

and battle-victorious Athena

Born from the head of Zeus,

time of blossoming

divine link

human link

Graces

plant of love, adornment stressing

emotion, beauty

belonging to Aphrodite

has an important tradition

sacred justification for the tradition

symbolic of opposites, Muses

thorn

Charm

flower of Eros

function in feasts

plant of Dionysus

Eos

Nymphs, indication of color

Description of the body

medicinal function

balsam agent (cf. *Iliad*, XXIII)

symbol of timelessness

Scent

explication of origin myth

<sup>214</sup> *Anacreonta* 54.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| and all Olympus trembled:<br>this wondrous flower the rose<br>it gave ne'ertheless to Earth,<br>the much-adorned lovely<br>creation. | multiple uses appear                           |
| And that a friend of the gods  | maintains liaison and contact with the<br>gods |
| It should be, onto it nectar   | divine drink                                   |
| It is poured – and it stimulates<br>amidst the thorns Bacchus’<br>marvelous eternal flower.  | associated with wine (?)<br>Dionysus           |

The data of Herodotus and Theophrastus as well as the Rhodian coins themselves prove that by the Hellenistic age in many places in the eastern half of the Mediterranean Basin, from Philippi to Athens, from Egypt to Rhodes, in Aegea or Edessa and even Sicily, bloomed fragrant, many-petalled red roses, growing both wild and in gardens, which attracted man's attention. Also, according to data from Dioscorides, a white rose was also known, which had a smaller flower than the red and grew wild. Dioscorides implies that many types of field roses were known, but gives no further information on them. The fragrant flower and picked petals of the garden rose were used as a living ornament with a sacred explanation, often as a garland, and the flower and petals also served as basic ingredients for scented fluids.

The ornamental gardens of the region – in which plants growing and flowering in various seasons were placed in separate beds and had no function other than decoration – have not been discussed here: this presumably post-dated Hellenism and for the time being it cannot be proven whether the fragrant plant had an independent value for its beauty or whether this was merely an incidental characteristic of a flower which supplied fragrance.

One characteristic of Hellenic scientists, especially the Alexandrians, was the passion for collecting plants and animals, their classification on a Theophrastic basis – which may nevertheless be called scientific – and the maintenance of botanical garden-like collections. The large number of petals and the fragrance may signify the involvement of three rose species in culture: earlier literature believed five species to exist (*R. gallica*, *R. canina* and *R. centifolia* as well as *R. alba* and *R. damascena*),<sup>215</sup> while later<sup>216</sup> literature considers forms of three species to have graced their presence in the life of the Greeks and of course the Romans: *R. gallica*, *R. canina* and *R. centifolia*. Of course, other, rarer species may also have appeared, such as *R. sempervirens* in Theophrastus' *Historia plantarum*, but in the absence of adequate botanical description these may have been the result of uncertain or mistaken identification.<sup>217</sup> R. E. Shepherd notes that the origin of *R. centifolia* is uncertain, and possible ancestors include *R. gallica*, *R. alba*, *R. canina* and *R. damascena*, from which it may have come about by mutation – but there is no reliable evidence on the evolution of the compact flower head.<sup>218</sup> It was likewise

<sup>215</sup> SHEPHERD, R. E. (1954) 7.

<sup>216</sup> STIRLING J. (1998).

<sup>217</sup> Corrected identification of the plants of THEOPHRASTUS was done by Sir WILLIAM THISELTON-DYER. In: THEOPHRASTUS *Enquiry into plants* I-II. ed. GOOLD, G. P. (1980) Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts – William Heinemann LTD, London. 436.

<sup>218</sup> SHEPHERD, R. E. (1954) 104-110.

Shepherd who noted that the existence of the Theophrastic *R. canina* is doubtful.<sup>219</sup>

The production of rose oil required large numbers of flower gardens growing some early form of *R. damascena*, which produces numerous petals – and the growth in the use of this commodity increased the demand for the plant. Two procedures for the production were known at this time: either the petals were soaked in a fine oil – such as almond or sesame seed – until the oil took on the scent and color, or else crushed flower petals were seeped in water and the drops of oil collecting on the surface of the water were eventually spooned or siphoned off. Although distillation was a process known and practiced as early as the Sumerians and Egyptians,<sup>220</sup> the production of rose oil by this water-cooled method was a technology of the end of the Early Renaissance, coming from the Arabs.

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<sup>219</sup> SHEPHERD, R. E. (1954) 97-104.

<sup>220</sup> It is certain that Babylonian perfume-makers were women, and that water-and-oil extraction was known as early as the second millennium BC in perfume making. Among the Egyptians this work was done by priests, who were men. For example, cedar oil was produced by boiling chopped cedar wood in water and placing soft wool over the vessel. The wool absorbed the volatile oil vapor and then was wrung out. In. BALÁZS L. – HRONSZKY I.– SAIN M. (1981) PEDANIUS DIOSCURIDES in *De materia medica* describes the preparation of tar similarly.

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