THE ROMANS AND THE ROSE

THE PLACE OF THE ROSE IN THE

ANCIENT ROMAN WORLD

by

Gael Williams

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy
The Australian National University

April 2006
Unless otherwise acknowledged in the text,
this thesis represents the original research of the author.

[Signature]

G. Williams
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the four years that it has taken to complete this thesis I have received invaluable support from my partner Alison Bloomfield, who has learnt more about roses and ancient Rome than, I'm sure, she ever really wanted to know. I would also like here to thank my work colleagues for their interest and willingness to work around my absences and preoccupations, and Liz Townsend who supplied the rose decoration which enlivens the following pages.

Most of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Elizabeth Minchin, for her enthusiasm and encouragement, and especially for her untiring patience.
THE ROMANS AND THE ROSE

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS i

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ii

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER ONE 7
The Rose in its Roman Environment

CHAPTER TWO 39
The Rose as a Commercial Product

CHAPTER THREE 72
The Rose as Food, Drink and Medicine

CHAPTER FOUR 106
The Rose and the “Good Life”

CHAPTER FIVE 140
The Rose in Religious Ritual and the Commemoration of the Dead

CHAPTER SIX 173
The Rose in Literature

CHAPTER SEVEN 206
The Rose in Art and Ornament

CONCLUSION 236

BIBLIOGRAPHY 249

PLATES 263
## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aen.</td>
<td>Aeneid</td>
<td>N.J.</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am.</td>
<td>Amores</td>
<td>no.</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td>N.Y.</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calif.</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>rep.</td>
<td>reprinted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carm.</td>
<td>Carmina</td>
<td>R.</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat.</td>
<td>Bellum Catilinae</td>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Rerum Rusticarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td>Corpus Inscriptionum</td>
<td>Sat.</td>
<td>Satire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latinarum</td>
<td>Sen.</td>
<td>De Senectute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cos.</td>
<td>consul</td>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>University of California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed.</td>
<td>edition</td>
<td></td>
<td>at Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ed.</td>
<td>editor</td>
<td>vol.</td>
<td>volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eds.</td>
<td>editors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El.</td>
<td>Elegies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ep.</td>
<td>Epigram</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ep.</td>
<td>Epistle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.</td>
<td>figure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Iliad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glos.</td>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass.</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met.</td>
<td>Metamorphoses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm.</td>
<td>millimetres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>Materia Medica</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>manuscript</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>Naturalis historia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IN THE TEXT

Page 232  Diagram of cinerarium in ANU Classics Museum.

PLATES


Plate 7a  Detail of fresco from House of the Golden Bracelet
showing an ornamental statue in a garden.
(P. Bowe, Gardens of the Roman World.

Plate 7b Detail of fresco from House of the Golden Bracelet showing roses growing near a fountain.
(P. Bowe, Gardens of the Roman World.

Plate 8 Detail of a wall painting from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta showing roses growing at the base of a tree.

Plate 9 Wall painting of a banqueting scene from Pompeii.

Plate 10 Marble cinerarium.
ANU Classics Museum
(Photograph courtesy of The Museum).

Plate 11a Portrait of a woman in gilded and painted cartonnage.
From Hawara.
(S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt.

Plate 11b Aphrodite, daughter of Didas. Painted and gilded cartonnage mask. From Hawara.
(S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt.

Plate 12 Youth with Osiris and Anubis painted on a linen shroud. Probably from Saqqara.
(S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt.

Plate 13 Detail of ceiling panel from Pompeii with Venus and two amorini scattering flowers.


INTRODUCTION

The rose is around us everywhere. Many people will challenge that statement; many people do so whenever it is made. They may assert that they don’t have a garden, and therefore don’t grow roses. Others may say that they think roses are too old-fashioned or don’t like their perfume in the house. Yet even they are surrounded by roses. They will find roses in the supermarket, as a scent in air fresheners, shampoos, soaps and cleaners; they will find it as an ingredient in jams and teas and confectionery. If they should wish to send a greeting card to a friend or relative on their birthday or anniversary, they will find images of roses on the greeting cards that they peruse, and may even wrap a present in a paper decorated with roses. On Valentine’s Day, a young woman may hope to receive long-stemmed red roses from her male admirers, or at least a card, which again may carry a picture of a rose. At weddings, a bride may carry white roses in her bouquet or have rose petals strewn in front of her as she walks down the aisle. Roses will be found on wallpaper designs and furnishing fabrics. Its colour will be there in paint colour charts, perhaps even with a name linked to the rose. In magazine articles and news items, its name will appear in phrases employing “rosy” or “rosier” to mean “seems good” or “seems better”. They may even themselves accuse someone else of
seeing the world through “rose-coloured glasses.” They will hear of the rose in popular songs. The rose will be there in front of them in poetry and novels. And, at the last, many cemeteries have splendid rose gardens to ease the grief of those who visit gravesites.

For many of us, the rose is even more immediate as it blooms in our gardens and brightens our houses with its flowers when they are cut and arranged in vases. The rose bowl, of course, was designed to show them to their best advantage. Rose gardeners will doubtless have reference books on the subject in their personal libraries. There seems to have been, indeed, an increase in the number of such titles stocked by newsagents and bookshops in recent years. Gardening programmes from various television stations give prominence to the rose, its care and maintenance, and the choices available. Great events and people are still commemorated with the rose. The Peace Rose earned its name from the end of World War II. The centenary of the Australian Federation in 2001 was marked with the introduction of the Federation Rose. I have a variety by the name of Queen Elizabeth II growing in my own garden. The petals of the rose still mark special events. The late Queen-Mother of England was showered with rose petals while watching the pageant held in honour of her 100th birthday.
It occurred to me that perhaps the rose had a similar presence in the world of the Romans, pervasive and little noticed. Roses certainly had caught my attention when studying the *Odes* of Horace, for example, where the rose and a party mood seemed to belong together. Editors and commentators did not comment on the rose, or indeed other flowers, in these passages as much as would have been expected. Sometimes flower imagery that seemed quite striking was passed over in silence. Before embarking on this thesis, I searched databases and catalogues for studies relating to the rose in ancient Rome. There was very little apart from brief descriptions in a few pages at the beginning of various histories of the rose, and one or two articles concerning the rose in antiquity.¹ Returning to the ancient writers themselves, I found that, while the rose occurred in a great number of contexts, it was not itself the subject of any study, except, perhaps, for passages in Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis* where he discusses roses in some detail (for example, the use of the rose in garland making and medicine).

In the chapters that follow, I will demonstrate that the rose, indeed, did have a presence in the ancient Roman world, similar to the place it holds in our own: that is, pervasive and little noticed. Firstly, in Chapter One, the

---

¹ Articles found were: Edwin de T. Bechtel, "Ancient Cultivated Roses" *American Rose Annual* 35 (1950), 13-23; John Bostock and H. T. Riley, "The Rose: Twelve Varieties of it from Pliny's Natural History, Book XXI" *American Rose Annual* 36 (1951) 9-18; W. L. Carter, "Roses in Antiquity" *Antiquity* 14 (1940) 250-256. In an article in *Journal of Roman Studies*, 90 (2000), J. H. D'Arms mentions a study on the *Rosalia* being undertaken by a C. P. Jones. I have not yet been able to locate any more details of this study.
rose will be placed in its Roman context, by examining the gardens where it would have been grown and the other kinds of flowers that may have been grown with it. Chapter One will also contain some information on the history of the rose itself and the kinds of roses that the Romans would have known. Various aspects of Roman life will then be examined in an attempt to try to demonstrate the uses of the rose in regard to each one. This will include, in Chapter Two, the practical purposes for which it would have been grown as a commercial crop, for its use in garlands and perfumes, both of which could be sold in cities and towns. The use of the rose in medicine and cookery will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, where rose oil could be an ingredient in many herbal medicines, and rose petals as an additive to wine. There will also be an examination of its more frivolous uses in Chapter Four: for example, at banquets, where it could be worn woven into a chaplet or scattered on the floor, or even used as a sign of conspicuous luxury. The use of the rose in religious ritual, decorating altars and at religious festivals, will be examined in Chapter Five and, in the same chapter, its uses in the commemoration of the dead, in funerary gardens and at the festivals honouring the dead. Some uses will be more metaphorical, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Six where the role of the rose in literature will be examined and in Chapter Seven, where the image of the rose as both a pleasing decoration and as a pictorial symbol will be demonstrated.
To achieve this, I have used evidence from many sources. Much has come from the Romans themselves, including evidence from poets such as Virgil and the elegists from Catullus to Ovid, as well as prose writers, from letters such as those of Pliny the Younger to didactic works: for example Cato and Varro. I have also drawn heavily on the encyclopaedic work of Pliny the Elder’s *Historia naturalis*. Evidence has also come from Roman artistic works, from the paintings that once adorned their homes and tombs, to the mosaic floors that have been discovered in ancient houses and public buildings. There is, as well, the evidence from modern archaeological investigations, including those of Wilhelmina Jashemski at Pompeii and other sites in Southern Italy. Thanks to scientific advances, pollen and other remains, including the carbonised roots from the gardens of Pompeii, have been able to tell us what plants grew in Roman gardens and how they were cared for.

There have been difficulties. One of the most noticeable is that the Romans called some flowers roses that we would not, today, class as roses at all. I have decided to include such flowers since this is, after all, more a study of what the Romans did with, and thought about, the rose, rather than a botanical study of the rose itself. The other difficulty was in defining the “ancient Roman world” that was to be examined. Geographically, I have taken the “Roman world” to mean those lands which the Romans ruled as their provinces; the Empire as it was at the end
century A.D. As for time-period, the beginning is easily defined, as the Romans themselves defined it, from the founding of the city of Rome, some time in the eighth century B.C. As we look forward, however, to the empire, we find that the late Roman Empire stands on the cusp of both the Byzantine Empire and the so-called Dark Ages of Europe. The rose continues its long association with mankind long after even these ages. Since that would be too long a scope for a single thesis, a somewhat arbitrary line has been drawn at the end of the fourth century A.D. Much beyond this, we would come into a whole new category of rose metaphor, that of the Christian religion, and the rose as it was seen by Christian emperors and writers. That would be, I suggest, another study in itself.

A question I have often been asked while composing this thesis is: was the rose important to the Romans? This thesis will go some way toward providing the answer to that question.
CHAPTER 1

THE ROSE IN ITS ROMAN ENVIRONMENT

ROMANS AND GARDENS

When the city of Rome was at the peak of its power during the empire and was the centre of the known world (or at least of that part that had any importance to its inhabitants), it boasted many amenities. There were palatial public baths, theatres, circuses, porticoes, temples, palaces, and public parks and gardens. These gardens had varied histories, some of them beginning their lives as private gardens, for example, the Gardens of Lucullus, which became, according to Pliny the Elder, the most famous in Rome.¹ Others began as they were to remain, public gardens: for example, the gardens of the Porticus Pompeii which were to be found next to Pompey’s theatre. Propertius, in one of his elegies (ll.32.11f), has left us descriptions of its shady columns, the avenue of plane trees, water features and statues:

\[ \text{scilicet umbrosis sordet Pompeia columnis} \]
\[ \text{porticus, aulaeis nobilis Attalicis} \]

¹ Pliny the Elder NH XV.30.102. This Lucullus was L. Licinius Lucullus, cos. 74 B.C.
et platanis creber pariter surgentibus ordo,
flumina sopito quaeque Marone cadunt,
et sonitus lymphis toto crepitantibus orbe,
cum subito Triton ore refundit aquam.

Pompey's portico, I take it, is not good enough for you, with its shady columns, resplendent with brocaded awnings, or the dense avenue of plane trees rising evenly, the streams which issue out of the slumbering Maro, or the sound of the water which splashes all round the basin, when the Triton suddenly pours forth a fountain from his lips.²

As Pompey had done, so did Julius Caesar, bequeathing his gardens on the right bank of the Tiber where he had entertained Cleopatra VII in 44 B.C. to the public.³ Augustus also planted the *Nemus Caesarum* by the *Naumachia*, in honour of Gaius and Lucius Caesar (Suetonius. *Aug.* 43). Agrippa laid out a park, with gardens at one end of the *Campus Martius*. These came to be known as the *Campus Agrippae* (Cassius Dio LV.8).

Some of the temples of Rome possibly stood within gardens as well. The *Forma Urbis*, a map engraved on marble, dating to the Severan era and once placed on view at the *Templum Pacis* c. 200 A.D., seems to indicate that at least the Forum of Peace, the Temple of the Deified Claudius and *Adonaea* had their own gardens. These gardens may have formed sacred gardens or groves. The *Forma Urbis* seems to indicate that trees were thickly planted, if the map has been read correctly.\(^4\)

GARDENS ON SMALL FARMS

The garden in Rome had undergone a long evolution before arriving at this point, however. The *hortus*, or garden, appears to have begun its long existence as a kitchen garden, or potager. Family and small farms would have had this space set aside, near the house, where the farmer, or perhaps even his wife, could plant vegetables for the table, like lettuce, cucumbers, leeks, and the herbs needed to add to the taste of food, like garlic and onions, as captured so well in the poem *Moretum* (71-84) from the *Appendix Vergiliana*:

Here flourished cabbage, here beets, their arms far outspread, with sorrel in profusion, mallows, and elecampane; here skirret and leeks, that owe their name to the head, and lettuce that brings pleasing relief to rich meals: here the roots of spiky asparagus which grows into spearpoints, and the heavy gourd that swells into its broad belly. But this crop was not for the owner (for who more frugal than he?) but for the people; and every ninth day over his
neck he would carry his bundles to town for sale. Thence he would return home, with shoulders light but with heavy pockets, and seldom accompanied by purchases from the market. It was red onion that tamed his hunger, and his plot of chives and watercress which with its sharp taste screws up the face, and rocket which revives a man’s flagging potency. ⁵

Here they would also have grown those plants needed for the medicine chest, the herbs and simples which Pliny the Elder preferred so much more than their exotic and expensive replacements in the Roman mind. ⁶ Such a hortus has been identified at Villa Regina at Boscoreale, next to the living quarters of the villa. ⁷ Here flowers, too, might have been grown for use in healing potions, in cooking, and in decoration. On feast days, and certain other days during the year (Cato mentions the Kalends, Ides and Nones of each month), it was the duty of the matrona, the “lady of the house” to garland the household altars and the household lares with garlands and swags of flowers. ⁸ Pliny the Elder also records (NH XXI.8) that garlands and floral crowns should be used in this way to honour household gods and the spirits of the dead.

---

⁶ Pliny the Elder, NH, XXII.7.
⁸ Cato, De agri cultura, IV.1.
GARDENS ON RURAL ESTATES

Gardens evolved beyond this on the larger estates. Comfortable villas became the country houses of the Roman wealthy. Here, away from the more frenetic life that a man of substance led in the city, a Roman could enjoy the tranquillity of his estates. Many of the wealthier Romans owned several, Cicero and Pliny the Younger being among their number. These estates were, in the main, working estates, producing crops and income for their owners. They must have had their kitchen gardens, too. They also had something else - a pleasure garden; a garden whose sole purpose was to provide enjoyment and relaxation for its owner. This move to a garden that was “an aesthetic adjunct” seems to have begun soon after the middle of the second century B.C. Pliny the Younger has left a detailed inscription of part of his Tuscan villa’s landscaped grounds -

Hanc dispositioniem amoenitatemque tectorum longe longeque praecedit hippodromus. Medius patescit statimque intrantium oculis totus offertur, platanis circumitur; illae hedera uestiuntur utque summae suis ita imae alienis frondibus uirent. Hedera truncum et ramos pererrat uicinasque platanos transitu suo copulat. Has buxus

interiacet; exteriores buxos circumuenit laurus, umbraeque
platanorum suam conquest. Rectus hic hippodromi limes in extrema
parte hemicyclo frangitur mutatque faciem: cupressis ambitur et
tegitur, densiore umbra opacior nigriorque; interioribus circulis (sunt
enim plures) purissimum diem recipit ... (Ep. V.6.32)

The design and beauty of the buildings are greatly surpassed by the
riding-ground. The centre is quite open so that the whole extent of
the course can be seen as one enters. It is planted round with ivy-
clad plane trees, green with their own leaves above, and below with
the ivy which climbs over trunk and branch and links tree to tree as
it spreads across them. Box shrubs grow between the plane trees,
and outside there is a ring of laurel bushes which add their shade to
that of the planes. Here the straight part of the course ends, curves
round in a semicircle, and changes its appearance, becoming
darker and more densely shaded by the cypress trees planted round
to shelter it, whereas the inner circuits – for there are several – are
in open sunshine ...

In his description of his Laurentan villa, he also mentions a terrace with
"the scent of violets" (*xystus uilis odoratus*) and "another well-stocked,

---

rustic kitchen garden”, *(hortus alius pinguis et rusticus)* *(Ep. II.17)*

**GARDENS IN TOWN HOUSES**

Even the wealthiest man did well to spend time in the city, whether it be Rome itself or one of the provincial cities, like Pompeii. In the cities, as in the country, the garden was there. The form of town house, the “atrium house”, so well known from Pompeii, as exemplified by the House of the Surgeon (VI.i.10), usually had its garden at the rear, and is known in this form in Pompeii from the second century B.C.\(^{11}\) Later, this garden could be surrounded by a portico and became the peristyle. The word “peristyle” *(περίστυλον)* itself is Greek and the idea may well have been adopted from the Greeks directly, or through the Etruscans.\(^{12}\) Again, these peristyles are very much in evidence at Pompeii and Herculaneum: for example, in the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1) at Pompeii. Where plantings have been able to be reconstructed these gardens have been, for the most part, pleasure gardens, planted with shrubs and flowers and decorated with statues and other garden features, including water features and herb beds. Wilhelmina Jashemski found that, even in ostensibly “pleasure gardens”, more practical plantings existed alongside the ornamental, such as vegetables and herbs amid the shrubs and flowers. In the garden of the House of

---


Polybius (IX.xiii.1-3), for example, she found evidence for fruit trees, including fig trees and, perhaps, olive trees and citron trees.\textsuperscript{13}

It is in the area devastated by Vesuvius in 79 A.D. that archaeological examination of gardens and villa grounds can tell us the most. The garden of the House of the Chaste Lovers is a good example of how much information can be gleaned by a careful examination of this part of a house. Many of the garden elements were recovered, revealing trees in slightly raised beds, perhaps protected by a trellis and flower beds lining a path, pergola and fountain.\textsuperscript{14}

GARDEN WALL PAINTINGS

It also became the fashion to adorn the walls of these enclosed gardens with paintings. In Pompeii such paintings have been found with numerous themes. In the House of Venus in the Shell (II.iii.3), for example, two flower beds appear to lead into the wall painting on the south side. The painting from which the house derives its modern name is located on the back wall of the peristyle.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} A. Ciarallo, "Garden of Casa dei Casti Amanti (Pompeii, Italy)", \textit{Garden History} 21 (1993), 110-116.
Triclinia often opened onto one of the porticoes that lined the peristyle, thereby giving the family's dining guests a pleasant atmosphere while they ate, as they looked out onto the garden, as, for example, in the House of the Tragic Poet (VI.viii.5),\textsuperscript{16} and in the Hospitium of Gabinius (VI.ix.1) in Pompeii.\textsuperscript{17} During the worst days of summer, the garden would also have served to encourage cool breezes through the house.

It was in the towns with gardens like these that the use of water features, especially, came to be something of a status symbol, as indeed did gardens in general. Water in the towns was acquired either from cisterns within the house, such as that connected with the impluvium in the atrium, or from the town's water supply. This supply normally would have been brought into the town by means of one or more aqueducts from a source which could be some miles away. The aqueducts of Rome, for example, brought water from several sources, including the Anio River (the aqueduct ran for over 81 kilometres to Rome), the Alban Hills (approximately 18 kilometres) and from Lake Alsietinus (now known as Lago di Martignano,

\textsuperscript{16} See Nappo, *Pompeii*, 144 for a clear plan showing the location of the triclinium with regard to the peristyle.
\textsuperscript{17} Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii*, Vol. 1, 171.
approximately 33 kilometres).\textsuperscript{18} This source of supply, from the town’s water, had to be paid for. A wealthy man could use flowing water in his garden as a very conspicuous form of consumption.

Statues could also be rare originals, or, at least, high-class copies, and the plants could be exotic and from the ends of the earth; something rare or novel, as the cherry was when introduced by L. Licinius Lucullus from Pontus.\textsuperscript{19} All of these would demonstrate that their owner was a man of wealth and taste. Peristyles continued to grow in size over time (as seen in the House of Obellius Firmus at Pompeii where the peristyle is L-shaped and has an extra garden area even beyond this) and changed their position in the house (as in the Casa de los Pajeros in Itálica in Spain, where it is in the centre of the house). The atrium came to have planter boxes where potted gardens might grow: for example, the House of the Relief of Telephus at Herculaneum.

Nicholas Purcell states that the planting of evergreen shrubs and plants would “fashion cool and refreshing places”, which would, in the heat of

\textsuperscript{19} Plutarch, \textit{Lucullus}, XXXIX.3.
summer, very likely entice people into gardens, and not necessarily just into private gardens. Pleasure gardens could be found in other places than in private houses. Inns sometimes had them. At Ostia, for example, a taberna has been discovered with masonry dining benches built along one wall of a small garden with a fountain. With the addition of cushions and covers, this would be al fresco dining at its finest. Pompeii also had its inns. Jashemski describes an establishment in a converted house, known today as the House of Sallust (VI.11.4). The garden of this hospitium was set a higher level than the rest of the house. At the north end there is an outdoor triclinium, the couches and the base of the small circular table, which would have stood before the couches, still extant. The dining area was shaded by a vine-covered trellis, while a water feature, consisting of a jet of water falling from a wall into a basin stood in front of the dining area. In the heat of summer, this would have been an ideal place in which to dine.

LIFE IN THE GARDEN

Penelope Allison has found that, from assemblage analysis in a variety of houses, the gardens could have been used "simultaneously for formal

---

21 Farrar, Roman Gardens, 176.
entertainment, religious activities, agricultural production, and storage, as well as utilitarian household activities,” and adds that “these areas were probably buzzing with daily household activities.” Jashemski states that “the heart and center of the Pompeian house was the garden.”

During her excavations, she discovered evidence of various household activities in gardens. Masonry triclinia, such as are found in, for example, the House of the Silver Wedding (V.ii.1), once the abode of Albucius Celsus, the House of Menander (I.x.4) where remains of a wooden triclinium were found, and the House of the Ephebe (I.vii.10-12/19), obviously attest to outdoor dining. The discovery of loom weights tells us that the women of the household wove cloth in the portico overlooking the garden. There is also evidence of animals, probably pets, such as dogs, cats, birds, and even a turtle, being buried in gardens. Could we perhaps assume that children played in the garden with these pets? All of the above led Jashemski to the conclusion that “both the garden and the shaded portico were the scene of varied activities during a major part of the

GARDENS OUTSIDE ITALY

At Fishbourne Villa, near Chichester in England, the details of a garden were also recovered. The formal garden lay in front of the main house, instead of at the rear. It was enclosed completely by colonnaded walks on the north, east and south sides. It contained a central path approximately twelve metres wide which ran from the main gate to the main entrance door, with smaller side paths running in front of the colonnades. All the paths ran by garden beds. Next to the path, the beds formed a series of alternating semicircular and rectangular recesses. It is thought that these beds may have contained hedges. The recesses may have been used to display statuary or the like, since no evidence was found for plantings within them. In England, other gardens have been identified at Frocester Court, Gloucestershire and at Silchester.

Gardens of the Roman era have also been identified in Southern France,

---

at Vienne, \(^{28}\) and at an excavation at a Roman villa at Montmaurin.\(^{29}\)

During excavations in a baths complex at the site of ancient Conimbriga in present-day Portugal, remains of a garden were also found.\(^{30}\) Jashemski has also located evidence for gardens in Tunisia, at the site of ancient Thuburbo Maius.\(^{31}\)

**GARDENS OF THE “INNER CITY”**

Others in the towns were not so lucky as this. They lived in the high and shaky tenement blocks known as *insulae*. Unlike the elegant, inner city apartment blocks today, which they might resemble outwardly, they provided cramped accommodation for the poor. There was no room for pleasure gardens there. As inhabitants of high-rise accommodation blocks do today, the occupant could still have some patch of greenery to call his own. Window boxes could be cultivated and pots kept on balconies. The poet Martial tells of his attempts to grow plants in a window box, for example (*Ep. XI.18*). One wonders if, among the falling objects that


Juvenal warns pedestrians to beware of in the streets of Rome (Sat. III.270-271) we might not include falling flower-pots.

Gardens in the Roman world could be more than just a potager or a pleasure garden. Today we have market gardens where the commercial supplies of vegetables, herbs and flowers are grown for sale in the towns and cities. It would not be beyond reason to expect that cities in ancient times would also have such market gardens. Varro (RR I.16) suggests that villa estates near towns should grow flower crops, for example, so that the produce could arrive fresh in the markets in the nearby town for sale to garland makers and householders. Gardens like these, sometimes called hortuli, have been located actually within the walls of the town of Pompeii, in the southeast sector where the housing was less dense. One of these, The House of the Garden of Hercules (II.viii.6), apparently grew flowers for use in making perfume, while another, The House of the Floral Lararium, grew plants for cuttings. Some of these hortuli could be very specialised. In Egypt, where the conditions suit the preservation of papyrus, tax records have been found on papyrus. Commercial gardens were, of course, taxed as a commercial enterprise. From these we learn of a garden specialising in cucumbers and another in flowers.

---

32 Nappo, Pompeii, 35.
33 Farrar, Roman Gardens, 177.
FUNERARY GARDENS

In death, too, there were gardens. Some tombs were constructed within a garden. Some would have land attached for growing produce for sale to provide the deceased with other provisions, such as flowers on anniversaries, and food for festival feasts and meals, as at the Parentalia and the Rosalia.\(^3^4\)

Archaeology has discovered traces of such gardens at Scafali in Italy, where an enclosure 8 metres by more than 20.5 metres was partially excavated. Jashemski, discovered the roots of six large trees and believed that there may have been flower beds planted underneath them.\(^3^5\) Perhaps the most famous of these tomb gardens, was that of Augustus. Strabo in his Geographia (V.3.8) and Suetonius in his Augustus (100) record a grove of evergreen trees above the mausoleum.

Two maps of such gardens remain, engraved on marble, from Perugia and from a mausoleum beside the Via Labicana near Rome. The latter seems to indicate pathways, plant beds and rows of trees or vines.\(^3^6\) There is a garden like this described in the poem in the Appendix Vergiliana, Culex

\(^3^4\) Tomb inscriptions often record this intended use, e.g. CIL xiii, 2465.

\(^3^5\) Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 148.

\(^3^6\) J.M.C. Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 99.
(398-409), in which many flowers are planted around a mound. In all of these types of gardens flowers grew.

THE ROMANS AND FLOWERS

The flowers that bloomed in Roman gardens would seem at once strange and familiar to us today. Many of the species still grow in our own gardens, but centuries of selective breeding have changed their colours, shapes and blooming habits. Some, however, are instantly recognisable to us, as in the case of the oleander (Nerium oleander) depicted in a wall painting from the House of the Wedding of Alexander in Pompeii.37 Most of the flowers in the wall paintings of Pompeii have been identified, however, and have given us a very clear idea of the plants that the Romans knew. Many of them were native to Italy, even to Campania, like the oleander which still grows there today.38 Others were “imports” from other regions of the empire, just as we grow plants from all over the world in our gardens.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The Romans have left us images of their gardens and the flowers that grew in them in wall paintings. These paintings can be found especially in

Pompeii and Herculaneum, where they were fashionable, particularly in what is called the Third Pompeian Style, c. 15 B.C. to A.D. 62,\textsuperscript{39} though plant motifs were found both before and afterwards. Paintings are also found in Rome, in particular in the House of Livia on the Palatine, on the walls of an underground garden room. Flowers also appear in mosaics from Africa, and Gaul (Seviac in ancient Aquitaine) and in Britain and elsewhere.

That the gardens in the paintings depict actual gardens from life we cannot say with certainty. They may be idealised gardens - gardens the owner wanted, perhaps, but could not afford, or did not possess the room or the water to achieve. They could be trompe l’oeil, meant to create the illusion of a larger garden. Yet, the plants in these gardens are real enough, and obviously drawn from life. Archaeology has provided us with evidence to confirm the story the paintings tell. In the regions destroyed by Vesuvius (that area which provides the most abundant evidence), carbonised plant material, such as branches, seeds and nuts survives, enabling experts to

\textsuperscript{39} A. Mau in 1882 devised a system for classifying and dating the wall paintings of Pompeii which is now known as the Four Styles. For a full and detailed discussion of this, see R. Ling, \textit{Roman Painting} (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1991), where Ling has used the Four Styles to arrange the subject matter of his monograph.
identify trees. Jashemski also found that casts of tree roots could be taken by pouring plaster into hollows left when the roots had decomposed. It has been possible in many cases to identify trees by a careful examination of the cast. Pollen, which must have been in the air on that day in August, A.D. 79, also provides evidence of the presence of plants such as southernwood, myrtle, the aster family, the pink family, mallows, campanula, lychnis, and cerastium, also known as “snow in summer”.

Some flowers were, indeed, commercially grown. Perhaps the most famous of these was the crocus, whose stamens provided that expensive commodity saffron, and, indeed, continue to do so now. Others were grown for perfume making and garland making. Some were used in cooking. Gardens with flowers existed also in all parts of the empire, so far as we can tell. Evidence for the flowers in these is harder to collect. Nevertheless, charred seeds of columbine (Aquilegia vulgaris) have been recovered from Alcester in Warwickshire in England, and Jashemski has discovered tree roots on a site at Thurburbo Maius in Africa.

Pliny the Elder devotes a great deal of space to flowering plants. To him, of

---

41 This method is described and illustrated in Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 23.
42 Farrar, Roman Gardens, 151, 154.
course, the plants had other uses than simply being grown in gardens for their beauty. He advocated the use of flowers for practical purposes, for instance, garland making, for bees and for medical uses. Marketable flowers are mentioned by Columella (De re rustica X.259), in particular violets.

FLOWERS GROWN IN ROMAN GARDENS

Linda Farrar has set up a table listing the garden plants mentioned by Pliny the Elder and the uses he recommends for them. The proportion of these which could be valued for their flowers is quite high. Among those on the ornamental listing are included: lily, lychnis, myrtle, oleander, smilax, arbutus, violet and periwinkle; among those recommended for chaplet making: anemone, chrysanthemum, convolvulus, cyclamen, hyacinth, iris, lily, narcissus, southernwood; and those for the use of bees: apiastrum, poppy, rosemary. Annamarie Ciarallo has also set up two tables, one which lists plants known to have been in the area of Pompeii in 79 A.D., and the other listing those still present in the area. Included in the listing for A.D. 79 are: ranunculus, poppy, geranium, violet, myrtle, arbutus, oleander, veronica, chrysanthemum, calendula and smilax, while for the present period are listed: clematis, ranunculus, poppy, geranium, arbutus,

44 Farrar, Roman Gardens, Table ii.
45 Ciarallo, Gardens, 66, 70
veronica, chrysanthemum, smilax convolvulus, and myrtle. If the three
tables are compared, even in a select summary, as here, there are many
plants that appear in more than one, and some in all three.

It would seem that the gardens of the Pompeian region featured flowers
that were known, if not well known, to the rest of the Roman world, for
whatever purpose they were grown.

THE ROSE

The rose had grown in many other places long before the Romans planted
it in their gardens. The rose belongs to, indeed, gives its name to, the
*Genus Rosa*, or *Rosaceae* which actually includes over 100 distinct
species, many of which are not immediately connected by most people
with the rose: the apple, for example, and the cherry. The rose itself, as we
know it, was, originally, a native of the northern hemisphere, or, to be more
exact, the northern temperate zone. Until human beings carried it all over
the world, it bloomed in Europe, Asia and North America.\textsuperscript{46} Asia, however, seems to be home to a greater number of species than the other continents. Today, it is found on every continent except Antarctica.

HISTORY OF THE ROSE

The rose, so far as can be determined, probably began as a small, thorny briar-like plant, growing wild in sunny places, producing a small flower with five evenly sized petals which may have been heavily perfumed. The Sweetbriar rose that blooms today may yet give us an idea of its original appearance.\textsuperscript{47} The rose hips, however, may have been the first element that brought the rose to human attention. The rose hip in modern species is usually not paid much attention by the non-professional growers of the rose, but in older species it was red and berry-like, and yielded a sweet taste if picked at the right time. For many centuries, these fruits of the rose

\textsuperscript{46} The International Organisation of Palaeobotany's Plant Fossil Record lists members of the genus dating to the Oligocene, which ended 23.7 million years ago. For an illustration of a fossil see, for example, R. Phillips and M. Rix, \textit{The Quest for the Rose} (London : BBC Books, 1993), 8.

\textsuperscript{47} There is a good illustration of one of these in bloom in Phillips and Rix, Quest, 90.
were used to make jams, jellies and cordials.\textsuperscript{48} Doubtless, the rose was valued as a food source, long before it was valued for the beauty of its flowers. Evidence has been found, for example, that rose hips were gathered by Peking Man in China over 300,000 years ago.\textsuperscript{49}

The original growing habit of the rose would seem to have been bramble-like,\textsuperscript{50} that is, growing along the ground. It could also have been what is called today a “rambler”, which has a similar, but, usually, trained, habit. This growing habit would easily lend itself to climbing, like the climbing roses with which our gardeners are familiar. The “stick” form of the modern hybrid teas and related varieties, would not have been familiar to the Romans who grew roses in their gardens.

The rose’s long history alongside the human race in Europe and the Middle East has been able to be traced to some extent. The rose has been identified in wall paintings at Knossos;\textsuperscript{51} some dried blooms were found by

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{48} In my childhood, I remember seeing Rose Hip Syrup for sale in chemist stores. It was used by mothers as an easily digestible source of Vitamin C for small children.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Pliny actually describes the rose as growing briar-like in his \textit{Naturalis historia} XXI.14.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} In the House of the Frescoes – in the fresco identified as Fresco with Blue Bird. There has been some controversy as to which species of rose it represents. It was originally identified as \textit{R. richardii}, but has since been identified as an unknown \textit{R. gallica} or \textit{R. canina}. For discussion, see, Phillips and Rix, \textit{Quest}, 12-13, and A. Paterson, \textit{The History of the Rose} (London : Collins, 1983), 28.
\end{itemize}
Flinders Petrie in tombs in Roman period Hawara in Egypt in 1888, and again in his second season there in 1889; rose oil is mentioned in Homer's *Iliad.* Recently, in fact, a kurgan was excavated in Russia, in which a secondary burial, dating from the Bronze Age, proved to be that of a young girl, laid to rest on a pillow of wormwood, carnations and roses.

During its long history, the rose has changed its shape, its perfume, its colours and its growing patterns. Originally five-petalled, it was developed to produce twenty, thirty and even one hundred petals. Its native shape (almost daisy-like with its five petals outspread) has been changed so that it wraps into the characteristic shape by which we now identify it. It no longer blooms once a year, but, since cross breeding with the China roses in the eighteenth century, blooms all summer long, bearing flowers over and over again. It has been bred to produce fewer thorns and longer stems; the perfume has been bred out, and is now being bred back in. Every year new varieties are introduced to a market-place which never seems to tire of them. So mixed is the genetic heritage of the rose, that even the place of origin of some species remains in doubt. Allen Paterson states that the "origins of the historic cultivars ... are particularly difficult to

---

52 These have been identified as *R. richardii,* and are currently kept at Kew Gardens. There is a good illustration of them in Phillips and Rix, *Quest,* 11, reproduced here as plate no. 1. The story of the discovery, and Percy Newberry's examination of the plants discovered, can be found in W.M.F. Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe* (London: Field, 1889), 15-17, 46 and 53.


54 Reported in a short news article: C. Hellier, "Summer Sacrifice", *Archaeology,* 54.6 (2001), 12.
trace."\textsuperscript{55}

Europe, we know, was the home of several rose species, including the \textit{R. canina} or "dog rose". There are two similar species to this, which may have been related - \textit{R. eglanteria}, the "sweet briar" or "eglantine" rose and \textit{R. villosa}, "Apple rose", found until recently in central and northern Europe. The \textit{R. arvensis} or "field rose", still known in hedgerows in the British Isles, is a natural climber and would have been easy to grow against a trellis or a wall. The \textit{R. pimpinellifolia} (also known as \textit{R. spinosissima} from its thorns) is also known as the Scotch rose. It grows in coastal and less fertile regions. Any of these could have come to the attention of Roman gardeners as the empire grew northwards.\textsuperscript{56} In the south of Europe, it is thought that the \textit{R. gallica} grew wild, especially in southern France and \textit{R. moschata} the "moss rose" had its original home there likewise.\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{R. gallica pumila}, which bears single red flowers, is still to be found growing wild in Spain and Italy.\textsuperscript{58}

There is also the possibility that the \textit{R. moschata} originated in the Middle East, as the \textit{R. damascena}, the "damask rose" did.\textsuperscript{59} The "Holy rose",

\textsuperscript{55} Paterson, \textit{The History of the Rose} 14.
\textsuperscript{57} S. Verrier, \textit{Rosa Gallica} (Balmain, N.S.W. : Florilegium, 1995), 5.
\textsuperscript{58} Verrier, \textit{Rosa Gallica}, 5.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{R. damascena} (meaning from Damascus) itself is thought to be a naturally occurring hybrid of \textit{R. phoenicia} and \textit{R. gallica}. See B. C. Dickerson, \textit{The Old Rose Adventurer: The Once-Blooming Old European Roses, and More} (Portland, OR : Timber Press, 1999), 72.
known today as the *R. richardii*, perhaps the rose that Petrie found in Egypt, is very likely another species that the Romans knew.

THE ROSE OF THE ROMANS

There has been much speculation as to which species of rose the Romans actually grew. The obvious choices are those species which were native to Europe, but even which species these were is now unclear. We are not helped by the fact that the Romans classified flowers using different criteria to ours. The term *Genus Rosa* is derived, of course, from the Linnaean system of plant classification, devised by Carl von Linné, known as Linnaeus (1707-1778) in the eighteenth century. Pliny the Elder's monumental work *Naturalis historia* provides us with much information on the rose the Romans knew, or, rather, the flowers they regarded as roses. Pliny, for example, seems to classify them by their colour and the shape of the flower. The rock rose, a single-flowered peony, may have been included by him as a rose. Perhaps the famous rose of Rhodes may have been such a flower. Pliny mentions roses of five, twelve, or one hundred petals (*NH* XXI.10.16). Of these types of roses, Pliny records that the Milesian was a fiery red (*ardentissimus colos*), the Trachinian a less brilliant red (*minus rubentem*) and the Alabandian had whitish petals

---

60 Pliny the Elder, *NH* XXI, passim.
A variety with red and pink petals appears in Roman wall paintings, for example, and could be interpreted as portraying a rose with a darker colour at its centre, lightening to a paler colour on the edge of the petals, a form of colouring known as “versicolor” today. As for the species that we can include in a list of rose species which the Romans might have grown, or, at least, known, Farrar has suggested that such a list could have included the following:


The *R. moschata* (Musk Rose) is also thought by some to have been grown in Roman gardens, especially the variety known today as the “Autumn Flowering Musk”. The centifolia of ancient times, the hundred-petalled rose, could have been an early alba or alba hybrid, according to some writers.

---

62 A painting like this is reproduced in detail in Ciarallo, *Gardens*, 14. However, L. Farrar, *Gardens of Italy and the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996), 47, note 40, feels that the two colours may have been used by the artist to “clarify the double row of petals”.

63 Farrar, *Roman Gardens*, 140.

The Romans themselves seem to have identified roses as they did wine: that is, from the place where they had been grown. Pliny, accordingly, mentions a rose from Praeneste, to which he gives first place among roses, but awards first place to the rose of Cyrene for perfume (*NH* XXI.10.19).

There was another variety referred to as the rose of Paestum. Today this is thought to be a relative of, or the ancestor of, or, perhaps, even the same rose as the *R. damascena X bifera*, commonly known as the Autumn Damask, Four Seasons Damask, or, sometimes, Rose of Pompeii. It is still known today, in fact, and blooms in many gardens. It could have been a very early cross between *R. gallica* and *R. moschata*.

Edward Bunyard has gone further and endeavoured to relate the roses discussed by Pliny to varieties known today. For the Rose of Praeneste, he suggests a form of *R. gallica*, since Pliny says of it (*NH*, XXI.10.20) that it flowers longest of all the roses, and the *R. gallica* does bloom longer than most other old European species. He likewise suggests possible varieties

---

65 As Pliny tells us in some detail (*NH* XIV.4-12).
66 Phillips, *Quest*, 14, where a modern bloom is illustrated. Its twice-blooming habit in its modern form is well attested. A specimen grows in my own garden, and blooms every spring and late summer. See Plate no. 2.
for the Roses of Campania, Miletus, Trachya, Alabanda, Centifolia, Graecula, Cyrene and Carthage. Surprisingly, he makes no mention of the Rose of Paestum.\textsuperscript{67}

THE ROSE OF PAESTUM

The roses of Europe have several things in common. One of the most important is the fact that they bloom only once a year. The \textit{R. damascena X bifera} blooms twice; once in early spring, like its European cousins, and then again in late summer or early autumn, like its Middle Eastern and Asian relatives. Such a rose has long commonly been held to have been mentioned by Vergil in the \textit{Georgics} (4.119) where he describes it as “\textit{biferique rosaria Paesti}”, since the phrase has sometimes been translated (erroneously) as “the twice-blooming rose of Paestum”.

There have many attempts over the years to identify this rose, and many candidates put forward. The one most often put forward is the \textit{R. damascena X bifera}, or Autumn Damask, sometimes known as the Four

Seasons Damask, or Quatre Saisons. The matter is far from settled, however, and there have been arguments in favour of other species and varieties for example, *R. alba vulgaris maior*, suggested by John Bostock of the American Rose Society. N. Young argues against the long-held popular view that it was a form of rose at all. His argument is that the phrase from Vergil in question ("biferique rosaria Paesti") should be translated as "the rose-gardens of twice-bearing Paestum", and refers to gardens in the neighbourhood of that city which produced two crops a year, probably through the practice of forcing blooms by watering with warm water, as mentioned by Pliny the Elder (NH XXI.21). The word *rosarium* (*rosaria* in the plural) is defined by Lewis & Short as: "a place planted with roses, a rose-garden." The famous phrase of Virgil, quoted above, can be seen, indeed, to refer to the rose-beds, rather than the roses that grew near Paestum. The popular misconception still lives on, however, and one of the common names of the *R. damascena X bifera* is still "the Rose of Paestum".

---

68 As in Genders, *The Rose*, 9 who says that "the Autumn Damask must surely have been the Rose of Paestum."
CONCLUSION

All of the above has set the rose in its general Roman context. Gardens were grown by the Romans in many contexts, from simple potagers, or kitchen gardens, to the more elaborate town-house and villa gardens. In these gardens grew various plants, many of which are still garden plants today, such as the oleander and the violet. Many gardens, particularly in Pompeii, from which we have the best information, were also planted with fruit trees. The rose was also grown in these gardens. There is still much debate as to which species and varieties of roses were grown by the Romans in these gardens. The rose, itself, has been grown by many peoples throughout its long history which began as a wild, bramble-like plant growing wild throughout the northern temperate zone. The roses the Romans knew would probably have included those native to Europe, so far as that can be determined, the *R. gallica* family and the *R. alba* among them.

In the following chapter, I will examine the role the rose played in the economic life of Rome as a commercial crop. I will also examine the purposes for which it was grown and the products of which it formed an ingredient.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ROSE AS A COMMERCIAL PRODUCT

In our own world those lucky enough to grow their own flowers in their own gardens can brighten their homes with cut flowers whenever they wish. During those times of year when our own gardens do not produce, or we do not have a garden, we, in the world today, can purchase flowers from a florist, or even from a roadside stall or a supermarket. The supplies for these stores and stalls come from the large commercial gardens which grow flowers just for this trade. There are other gardens that grow flowers for other purposes, such as the lavender farms in Tasmania, producing lavender oil or the large acreage under roses in Turkey that produce the rose oil needed for perfume. In ancient Rome the situation was not very different from this. Citizens of the city of Rome, for example, might need flowers for many reasons, and be unable to produce them from their gardens – if they had gardens at all. Therefore, they would need to be able to purchase flowers or the products manufactured from flowers in the markets of their city. In turn, these markets would need to have been supplied by market gardens in the vicinity of the city, whether the flowers were to be used for garlands or as an ingredient in other products such as
perfume. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that such gardens existed in the Roman world, and that flowers and particularly the rose had an important place in them.

**GARLANDS**

Flower garlands and chaplets certainly had their place in Roman life.\(^1\) Garlands were used during sacrifices to decorate the victim and the altar, for example, and during festivals.\(^2\) They were also used in the home on occasions of religious significance, as they were in the community at large.\(^3\) They were also used at funerals, as Pliny *(NH XXI.8)* tells us:

> Et iam tunc coronae deorum honos erant et larum publicorum priuatorumque ac sepulchrorum ...

Already, by that time, chaplets were used to honour the gods, the Lares, public and private, tombs and spirits of the dead ...\(^4\)

---

\(^1\) During this discussion, I will take chaplets to refer to a wreath of flowers worn on the head. The term garlands, while meaning a swag or festoon of flowers that could be strung on hooks or draped over objects, will also be used for such strings of flowers worn on the body, e.g. around the neck, like an Hawaiian lei today.


\(^3\) Cato instructs the housewife to place garlands over the hearth on the kalends, ides and nones of each month and on holy days. See Cato the Elder, *de agri cultura,* CXLIII.2.

Pliny devotes much of his book XXI to flowers and garlands and *coronae* or chaplets. In Chapter 3 of Book XXI, he gives a quick history of the chaplet, observing that they were at first made of the branches of trees, (*arborum ... ramis, NH XXI.3*), then had flowers of different colours added (*... mixtura versicolori florum, NH XXI.3*). The addition of flowers also enabled them to be perfumed. He then mentions chaplets made of dyed flakes of horn (*... ramento e cornibus tincto, NH XXI.3*), used when flowers were not available. Pliny says that these were called Egyptian chaplets (*NH XXI.3*). After these, he tells of chaplets made of other artificial materials, including silver and gold (*... argento auroque folia imitatus, NH XXI.4*). The chaplets whose history Pliny traces in this chapter are the ones originally issued to winners in sacred contests. Chaplets, however, came to be used for other purposes (at banquets, for example), and, in so doing, to shed some of their sacred character. Garlands and chaplets would seem to have been worn at banquets, if the lyric poets are to be believed. Flower petals, or perhaps flowers themselves, may have been scattered on the floor during a banquet. A wall painting from Pompeii shows such a scene with petals on the floor. Unfortunately, we can’t be sure if they were scattered, or fell from chaplets and garlands as the night’s feasting progressed.

---

5 Pliny credits Crassus with their invention (*NH XXI.4*).
6 For example, Ovid, *Amores*, I.6.38.
7 This painting is illustrated in T. H. Feder, *Great Treasures of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1978), 34. See Plate no. 9. The scene seems to be set at the beginning of the
GARLAND-MAKING

Garlands and chaplets could be made of other materials than flowers, as Pliny says above. Horace, for example, mentions parsley (*Carm. IV.11.3*), ivy (*Carm. IV.11.4*) and myrtle (*Carm. II.7.25*). Sometimes pieces of fruit were included, although Farrar considers that fruit was used to add other meanings: for example, representing offerings in a funerary context.  

Garlands seem to have been made in various lengths. In many wall paintings and relief carvings, they are to be seen strung between pillars in the home and in the market place. Hooks have indeed been found on columns from which such garlands could have been strung.

Garlands could be made in the home. On farms and villa estates material for them could have been grown in the *hortus*. Mosaics from the villa of Piazza Armerina actually depict the harvesting of flowers and the construction of garlands. In urban centres flowers would have been available from the city/town markets for purchase to be made up into garlands in the home. The ready-made garland seems to have been available likewise. There is a wall painting in the House of the Vettii in

evening, since the tables have not yet been brought in and one of the guests is having his outdoor shoes removed. If so, the petals on the floor must have been deliberately scattered.

10 Farrar, *Roman Gardens*, 136. She suggests, however, that the hooks could also have been used to hang curtains. Illustrations of these garlands or swags, are to be found in many places. See Farrar, *Roman Gardens*, 46; Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii*, Vol. 1, figs. 402, 403.
Pompeii in which cupids attend to what seems to be a garland store.\textsuperscript{12}

Here are depicted garlands of different lengths hanging from a rack, which an elegantly clad lady is examining. To one side a goat is bringing flowers to the store, presumably for manufacture into garlands for sale.

Pliny tells us that garlands were called \textit{serta}, deriving the word from the Latin verb \textit{serere}, “to weave together” (\textit{NH} XXI.2). He adds that several kinds of flowers were woven together. Wilhelmina Jashemski considers this a hard passage to interpret, and advances the interpretation that, perhaps, strings of flowers were made into rings and the rings looped together.\textsuperscript{13} The materials of the garland may have been attached to bands, the ends of which may have been left long enough to provide the means whereby they might be hung up on hooks. Jashemski suggests that the interior bark of the linden tree may have been used to provide such a band.\textsuperscript{14} Theophrastus (\textit{Enquiry into Plants} V.6.2) suggests that some may have been made on a framework “hoop” of a flexible wood, such as mulberry or fig. In Egypt, garland makers seem to have used a method much like this, except that papyrus was used instead of ribbons or bark. The flowers were held in place by wrapping thongs around the stem and core before securing them to the backing. Farrar suggests that this may be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Farrar, \textit{Roman Gardens}, 138-139.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Jashemski, \textit{Gardens of Pompeii}. Vol. 1, 273; illustrated in her fig. 399.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Jashemski, \textit{Gardens of Pompeii}. Vol. 1, 275.
\end{itemize}
the garland that Pliny describes as “coiled” (*NH* XXI.1).\(^{15}\) Wreaths constructed in this fashion have been found in Roman-era tombs at Hawara in Egypt by Petrie.\(^{16}\) In the Piazza Armerina mosaics mentioned above, the garland makers have what appear to be the ends of such ribbons, or bands, tied to a tree branch while they work on it. The workers themselves are seated on baskets and are fixing on flower heads, probably by piercing through the centre of the flower.\(^{17}\)

ROSES IN GARLANDS

Roses certainly had their place in these chaplets and garlands. Pliny says that originally the Romans formerly used only roses and violets (*NH* XXI.10). He also tells us (quoting Caepio) that:

\[\text{... negauit centifoliam in coronas addi, praeterquam extremas uelut ad cardines, nec odore nec specie probabilem.} (NH \text{XXI.10})\]

[Caepio] ... said that the hundred-petalled variety is never put into chaplets, except at the ends, where these are, as it were, hinged together, since neither in perfume nor in appearance is it

\[^{14}\] Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii*. Vol. 1, 275; she provides an illustration of this construction in her fig. 318.

\[^{15}\] Farrar, *Roman Gardens*, 140.

The Piazza Armerina mosaics of garland-makers show a large flower used as a terminal for a garland. The dusky colour of the terminal flower and its shape could possibly illustrate a centifolia or cabbage rose. Indeed, all the flowers in the garland seem to be roses by their shape and dusky pink colouring. So far as chaplets are concerned, or any garland meant to be worn around the neck, the rose blooms themselves surely would have been attached through the centre of the flower heads, above the thorns on the stem, as described above, or attached to a backing, since the thorns of the old European roses would have made them difficult to wear otherwise. Jashemski also mentions garlands made by stitching together rose petals.

Farrar also mentions a mosaic from Thuburbo-Maius in Tunisia which is covered in designs incorporating rose garlands, as well as individual flowers, where sprays of roses linked together by horizontal swags of rose garlands form a pattern. She also describes the rose garlands framing the figurative panels, nine in all, each containing a bird, and notes that

---

17 Farrar, *Roman Gardens*, 140. See Plate no. 3.
18 Translation: Jones, *Pliny. Natural History*.
19 Farrar, *Roman Gardens*, 140; she has provided line drawings on 139.
rosebuds filled every other space.  

PERFUME

Perfume among the Romans probably had much the same uses as it does with us today, freshening rooms (perhaps more important for the Romans, as we now have more windows in the home), freshening the body or adding that little more allure to a woman’s neck or wrist. The very word, though, gives some clue as to its origin. According to the Oxford dictionary, the word derives from the Latin (through the Italian) per+fumare, literally meaning “smoking through”. Antonio d’Ambrosio suggests that this originally referred to the aroma produced by burning substances, probably on altars; that is, it was probably similar to incense. Pliny, however, tells us that it was invented by the Persians, whom he credits with dripping with perfume (NH, XIII.1):

unguentum Persarum gentis esse debet; illi madent eo et accersita commendatione inluuie natum uirus extingunt.

---

21 Farrar, Roman Gardens, 138. From the description, this is perhaps the mosaic now located in the the Bardo Museum, whose border is illustrated as fig. no. 216 in M. Blanchard-Lemée and others. Mosaics of Roman Africa: Floor Mosaics from Tunisia (London: British Museum Press, 1996).
Perfume ought by right to be accredited to the Persian race: they soak themselves in it, and quench the odour produced from dirt by its adventitious attraction.²³

Trimalchio mentions an unguentarius, a keeper of perfumes in a private home (Petronius, Sat. 74). This was more than likely not the case in normal households, but does give the modern reader the idea that perfume had a certain value in ancient Rome. Catullus issues an invitation to dinner, offering a perfume to his prospective guest (13.10-14).

Pliny expresses his disapproval of the more expensive perfumes (NH XIII.20), since perfume has such a transitory nature, citing, with some degree of satisfaction it seems, an incident in which a victim of the Triumvirs' proscriptions, Lucius Plotius, was revealed in his hiding place by the scent of his perfume (NH XIII.5).

Jasper Griffin observes that “perfumes ... represented conspicuous and

extravagant luxury.” It also had many uses. Apart from the ones already mentioned, it was used to scent the body by both sexes. Horace describes one man who is, perhaps, overly perfumed, since he is “perfusus” with scented oils (Carm. I.5.1-3):

Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa
perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
grato, Pyrrha, sub antro?

What perfumed debonair youth is it, among
The blossoming roses, urging himself upon you
In the summer grotto?

Ovid likewise, in Amores I.6.38, describes his hair as damp (with, one assumes, perfumed oil):

... et madidis lapsa coma comis.
... chaplet falling from my perfume-laden hair.

---

Propertius too, addressing his mistress Cynthia informs us that she also perfumed her hair (*El. I.2.1-8*):

aut quid Orontea crinis perfundere murra ...

What avails it to drench your locks with Syrian perfume ...\(^\text{27}\)

Martial records that it was added to lanterns, probably to act as an air freshener, especially the perfume that was sold by one Niceros (*Ep. X.38,* for example):

... et lucerna uidit

nimbris ebria Nicerotianis!

... were witnessed by the lamp drunk with Nicerotian showers!\(^\text{28}\)

The perfume industry may, indeed, have been a large one, and quite widespread. Perfume was manufactured in Egypt, especially Alexandria, and throughout the Roman east. It was also produced in Italy, most notably in Campania, where, according to Pliny (*NH XIII.2*), Capua, Neapolis

(modern Naples) and Praeneste in Latium (modern Palestrina) seem to have been centres of production. In fact, Pliny the Elder says of Campania:

unde uolgo dictum plus apud Campanos unguenti quam apud ceteros olei fieri. \((NH\ XVIII.29)\)

... hence there is a common saying that the Campanians produce more scent than other people do oil.\(^{29}\)

Evidence for the industry and trade in perfume has been found, also, in Pompeii, in the form of inscriptions attesting to the presence of a guild of perfumiers there.\(^{30}\) Jashemski suggests that the guild was headquartered on the second storey of a building facing the forum, to the north of the \textit{macellum}, near which one of the inscriptions was found.\(^{31}\) She also suggests that a shop for selling perfume was located a few doors away.

D.J. Mattingly suggests that evidence for manufacture has been located in the north peristyle of the House of the Painted Capitols in Pompeii

\(^{29}\) Translation: \textit{Pliny. Natural History}.
(VII.iv.31/51), while Salvatore Nappo suggests that the garden of the House of the Garden of Hercules (II.viii.6), was used to grow the ingredients of perfume, which was manufactured there, and may have been sold from a store at the front of the house.\(^\text{33}\)

PERFUME MANUFACTURE

The manufacture of perfume in the Roman world has been illustrated by the Romans themselves in a wall painting from Pompeii, where cupids perform the work and sell the finished product to customers, similar to the garland paintings mentioned above, from the House of the Vettii (VI.xv.1) in Pompeii.\(^\text{34}\) Here are depicted cupids pressing oils in a wedge press, stirring a cauldron which sits on a fire, bottling the finished product and helping customers in the shop. Perfume making requires all of these processes.

Perfume requires a volatile substance, or, in Latin, according to Pliny (NH XIII.2) *sucus*, and a vehicle, or *corpus*, usually an oil, or animal fat, to lengthen the duration of the perfume’s life, otherwise it would evaporate.

---


\(^{34}\) Mattingley, “Paintings, Presses”, at 72-74, where the paintings are examined in some detail.
too quickly.\textsuperscript{35}

Ratio faciendi duplex, sucus et corpus; illi olei generibus fere constat, hoc odorum: haec stymmata uocant, illa hedysmata. Tertius inter haec est colos multis neglectus: huius causa addantur cinnabaris et anchusa.

The recipe for making unguents contains two ingredients, the juice and the solid part, the former of which usually consists of various sorts of oil and the latter of scented substances, the oils being called ‘astringents’ and the scents ‘sweetenings’. Together with these there is a third factor that many people neglect – that of colour, for the sake of which cinnabar and alkanet should be added.\textsuperscript{36}

Pliny records the use of a number of oils in perfume making (\textit{NH XIII.2}) including olive oil (of which the best for this purpose is said by Pliny to be that from Venafrum),\textsuperscript{37} walnut, and almond, as well as myrtle, laurel and cypress. Oils from flowers were sometimes used. The \textit{corpus} could also be made of \textit{omphacium}, that is, the juice of unripe grapes, or terebinth resin, or the costly \textit{balanos} oil, made from the behen nut and imported from the

\textsuperscript{35} See as well Theophrastus, \textit{de odoribus}, XXVII.
\textsuperscript{36} Translation: Jones, \textit{Pliny. Natural History.}
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{NH XV.3}
east, usually at great expense.\textsuperscript{38}

The \textit{sucus} could be derived from any number of sources, basically from the sweet-smelling part of any plant, usually the flowers, but leaves, roots, bulbs, gum and fruit could also have been used.\textsuperscript{39} A list of plants used for this would be a long one, but would include balm, cassia, fenugreek, iris, lily, narcissus, and quince.\textsuperscript{40} To this mixture gum and/or salt were added, according to Pliny (\textit{NH} XIII.2), to fix the scent into the oil:

resina aut cummis adiciuntur ad continendum odorem in corpore:
celerrime is euanescit atque defluit si non sunt haec addita.

Resin or gum are added to retain the scent in the solid part, as it evaporates and disappears very quickly if these are not added.\textsuperscript{41}

The ingredients, \textit{sucus} plus \textit{corpus}, were then macerated, that is, boiled together until the greasy base was thoroughly saturated with the scent.\textsuperscript{42} Pliny gives several lists of ingredients used in specific perfumes, such as the oil from Egypt containing bitter almonds (in Latin \textit{amygdalis}),

\textsuperscript{38} Farrar, \textit{Roman Gardens}, 135.
\textsuperscript{39} Jashemski, \textit{Gardens of Pompeii}. Vol. 1, 276.
\textsuperscript{40} Farrar, \textit{Roman Gardens}, 135; also, Jashemski, \textit{Gardens of Pompeii},. Vol. 1, 276.
\textsuperscript{41} Translation: Jones, \textit{Pliny. Natural History}.
\textsuperscript{42} Mattingley, “Paintings, Presses”, at 81, where he also comments on the enormous amounts of flower blooms, etc. needed for this process.
omphacium, cardamom (in Latin cardamomum), rush (in Latin iuncum), flag (in Latin calamum), honey, wine, myrrh, seed of balsam and terebinth resin. (NH XIII.2).

A press was needed to obtain both kinds of ingredients for perfume. In the House of the Vettii wall painting, the cupids are using a wedge press, which could be used for extracting both oil for the base and plant juices for the scented additive. Small presses found in Pompeii have been identified previously as being only for olive oil production. There is a possibility that they were used in the perfume industry for extracting oil and/or juices from a wide variety of plants.43

SELLING PERFUME

Roman perfumes were, therefore, probably much oilier than the perfume we know. In fact, we would probably describe them as perfumed oils. It also seems that perfume was manufactured in other forms as well. Antonio d’Ambrosio describes one of them as a “dry substance”, consisting of powdered aromatic plant substances, probably sold as powders or

43 Jashemski. Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 276. She records that the House of the Garden of Hercules was found to have been planted with what appear to be flower beds and olive trees – thus providing both kinds of ingredients for perfume making. See also her Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 287.
tablets, and suggests that it could have been used as a breath freshener, such as the one Martial comments on in his *Epigram*, 1.87:

Ne grauis hesterno fragres, Fescennia, uino,
pastillos Cosmi luxuriosa uoras.
ista linunt dentes iantacula, sed nihil obstant,
extremo ructus cum redit a barathro.
quid quod olet grauius mixtum diapasmate uirus
atque duplex animae longius exit odor?
notas ergo nimis fraudes deprensaque furta
iam tollas et sis ebria simpliciter.

Fescennia, not wishing to reek of yesterday’s wine, you greedily devour Cosmus’ pastilles. Such breakfasts smear the teeth, but they are no obstacle when a belch comes back from the depth of the abyss. Moreover, the evil element smells worse when mixed with scented powder and the doubled odour of the breath carries further. So away now with your too familiar tricks and detected cheats, and

---

44 Pliny mentions such powders at *NH* XIII.3.
be a simple drunk.45

Perfume seems to have been sold in small jars, or bottles, of varying shapes. These small vessels are collectively called unguentaria. Examples have been found made of various materials. Pliny recommends alabaster and lead and storing in the shade (NH XIII.3) Others have been found which have been made from glass.46 Many of these little jars have long necks. Perhaps the perfumed substance was removed with a cosmetic spoon? Such small spoons have been recovered in various archaeological contexts.47 Some of these small jars are quite ornate, some being in the shape of a bird, where the perfume was sealed inside by fusing the wingtip or the tail. It was opened by snapping off the wing tip, or the tip of the tail. There is an unguentarium like this in the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, for example, in the shape of a wingless bird, where the tip of the tail had to be broken off to unseal it.48

In the wall painting from the House of the Vettii, cupids are selling the perfume that they have made. A lady is sitting on a chair, her maidservant

46 The painting, mentioned above, in the House of the Vettii, seems to depict small, glass bottles in the perfume shop. Also, see Nappo, Pompeii, 35.
47 Like the cosmetic spoon now housed in the Museum of London, which hangs from a ring with other implements needed for grooming, including tweezers and nail cleaners. This charming piece is illustrated in Lindsay Allason-Jones, Women in Roman Britain (London : British Museum Publications, 1989) as her fig. 46.
48 David Whitehouse, Glass of the Roman Empire (New York : Corning Museum of Glass, 1988), fig. 9, p. 27.
by her side and a cupid salesman in attendance. She is raising her wrist to her face, presumably to sniff at some perfume which has been applied there. To the right of this scene, the shop’s interior is portrayed. It consists of a counter and a set of shelving, on which are set out row on row of bottles, no doubt containing the shop’s stock. Nappo, as I observed above, is of the opinion that perfume was sold from the House of the Garden of Hercules, perhaps even in a shop similar to the one depicted here, because of the remains of small bottles found there.\(^4^9\) Jashemski, in her excavations of the gardens of this house, reported finding numerous pieces of small glass bottles in the garden, which she thought were *unguentaria*. She also concluded that perfume was probably manufactured there, since, apart from the remains of bottles, the garden grew the appropriate ingredients, that is, flowers and olives for olive oil.\(^5^0\)

Perfumes in ancient Rome, as they are still today, were available in a wide variety of price ranges. Even types of one particular scent could vary. Pliny records at *NH* XIII.2 that cinnamon perfume could vary from between 35 to 300 *denarii* (presumably for a pound). Possibly some of the more exotic perfumes could be dearer even than this.

**ROSES IN PERFUME**

\(^4^9\) Nappo, *Pompeii*, 35.
\(^5^0\) Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii*. Vol. 1, 287.
Farrar suggests that the most commonly used flower in the making of perfume was the rose.\textsuperscript{51} Pliny also tells us that the rose was the most widely used for perfume, especially for providing the scent needed for the \textit{sucus}. (Pliny, \textit{NH} XIII.2):

\begin{quote}
\textit{sed diuulgata maxime unguenta crediderim e rosa, quae plurima ubique gignitur.}
\end{quote}

But I am inclined to believe that the scents most widely used are those made from the rose, which grows in great abundance everywhere.\textsuperscript{52}

Although Pliny mentions Egypt first as being best adapted for producing unguents, and Phaselis, the site of which is now located in modern Turkey, as once producing the best attar of roses, he gives Campania in his own time second place due to its abundance of roses. (\textit{NH} XIII.9). Pliny also tells us that the rose of Cyrene carried the best scent (\textit{NH} XXI.10.19), and so would have been useful to the perfume industry. Rose oil could have been used in either, or both, of the two sets of ingredients from which perfume was made, the \textit{sucus}, where crushed rose petals would have

\textsuperscript{51} Farrar, Roman Gardens, 135.
\textsuperscript{52} Translation: Rackham, \textit{Pliny: Natural History}. 
provided the scent, and the corpus, where rose oil could have been used. Pliny records a perfume recipe, which he says contained, in addition to rose oil, omphacium, rose flowers, saffron blossoms, cinnabar, reed, honey, rush, flower of salt (or alkanet) and wine (NH XIII.2).

COMMERCIAL GARDENS

In hortis seri et coronamenta iussit Cato ... (NH XXI.1.1) With this sentence, Pliny begins his section on garlands and chaplets and the flowers from which they were made. He is referring to the passage in the de agri cultura of Cato the Elder, where Cato advises those with suburban villas to grow produce for sale in the nearby town:

Sub urbe hortum omne genus, coronamenta omne genus ... haec facito uti serantur (Cato the Elder, de agri cultura, VIII.2).

Near a town it is well to have a garden planted with all manner of vegetables, and all manner of flowers for garlands.

Although the richer city and town dwellers possessed gardens, urban centres, then, as now, could not usually supply their own produce, be it

---

fruit, vegetables or flowers. Today, with advances in transport and refrigeration, the sources of supply may be at some distance from the markets they serve. In ancient times, transport was, of course, much slower, making it impossible to send fresh goods to markets too far distant. It would also make them more expensive. The owners of villa estates near urban centres, the "suburban villas", were ideally placed to grow such produce as was needed in the towns and cities, as Cato observed in the passage above.

Varro agrees with this point of Cato's, that is, that growing fresh produce for market on those villa estates near urban centres could be worthwhile. He further adds that growing such produce further from the cities is unprofitable, owing to, we might assume, the transport problem:

Itaque sub urbe colere hortos late expedit, sic uiolaria ac rosaria, item multa quae urbs recipit, cum eadem in longinquo prædio, ubi non sit quo deferri possit venale, non expediat colere. (Varro, RR, I.16.3)

And so it is profitable near a city to have gardens on a large scale; for instance, of violets and roses and many other products for which there is demand in the city; while it would not be profitable to raise the same products on a distant farm where there is no market to
which its products can be carried.\textsuperscript{54}

COMMERCIAL ROSE GARDENS

Varro’s use of \textit{uiolaria} and \textit{rosaria} (above), violet gardens and rose gardens, tells us that he was thinking of flower growing for urban markets. Considering the number of roses that even one city (especially if that city were Rome itself) would need in order to satisfy so many demands (whether the flowers were needed for garlands and chaplets, for religious reasons or secular, or for other purposes, such as perfume production), the horticulture of the rose would necessarily have been on a large scale. Indeed, a letter on papyrus from Oxyrhyncus, in Egypt, can give us some idea of the extent of commercial rose gardens in that province. A woman named Dionysia has asked commercial growers, Apollonius and Sarapias, for 2000 narcissi and perhaps as many roses as well for her son Sarapion’s wedding. The dealer replies that, while he can supply the narcissi, he can only supply 1000 of the roses, owing to the fact that the roses are not yet blooming fully. Those they did procure came from garland weavers and commercial growers.\textsuperscript{55}

Egypt supplies us with other evidence for the commercial production of roses. Tax receipts on papyrus have been discovered, some of them dealing with taxes payable on specialised commercial gardens, some of them rose gardens. It has been suggested that the rose gardens of Egypt may have been able to supply the Roman market when the European roses were out of season. While there may be some merit to this idea, the logistics of transporting these roses to Italy so that they arrived in a fit state for use must have been enormous, although transporting them from Carthage might have been feasible. Sailing times from Alexandria after early summer were slowed by adverse winds, the Etesians, which blew from the north-west from about July to November. Charlesworth is of the opinion that the record figures of voyages from Sicily to Alexandria of seven days were probably made during the season of these winds. Voyage in the other direction was probably slower, and in winter, Charlesworth remarks that navigation “was not actually impossible”, but not lightly undertaken. Perhaps they could have been transported in the bud, or only the petals shipped. The old European roses do hold scent in their petals far longer than the modern rose, even when dead, so this latter

option may have been a possibility.

Whether Egypt supplied Italy or not, there is no doubt that Egypt was well supplied with commercial rose gardens, or *rosaria* as the tax receipts mentioned above attest. Athenaeus (VI.96) says that the soil and climate in Egypt were such that many plants could be grown all year round there that were seasonal elsewhere.

Italy, too, had its *rosaria*. The Rose of Paestum was probably grown in *rosaria* near that town in southern Italy. Vergil’s famous phrase from the *Georgics* (discussed above) seems to be referring to *rosaria* that yielded two crops a year. Commercial gardens have been discovered within the walls of Pompeii. One of these, the house of the Garden of Hercules, seems to have grown flowers (perhaps roses?) in a walled garden. Pliny, as mentioned above, tells us of rose growing on a commercial scale in Phaselis in Turkey (*NH* XIII.2).

**GROWING ROSES**

Pliny gives us the following information on rose growing:

58 M. P. Charlesworth, *Trade Routes ad Commerce of the Roman Empire* 2nd ed. revised (Chicago: Ares, 1974), 23.
It likes to be grown on soils that are neither rich nor clayey nor irrigated, being content with a rubbly soil, and fond in particular of ground on which rubble has been spread. ... The ground is dug deeper for roses than for crops, but shallower than for vines. They are very slow in growing from the seed, which is in the shell itself, right under the flower, and covered with down. For this reason, it is preferred to graft shoots into an incision in the stem. And into the eyelets of the root, as with the reed, there is grafted one kind of rose that is pale, prickly, with very long twigs and five petals, the second among the Greek roses. Every rose, however, improves with pruning and burning; by transplanting also, as with vines, there is...
one kind of rose that is pale, prickly, with very long twigs and five petals, the second among the Greek roses. Every rose, however, improves with pruning and burning; by transplanting also, as with vines, there is the best and quickest success if slips of the length of four fingers or more are planted after the setting of the Pleiades, and then transplanted at intervals of one foot while the west wind is blowing, the earth being frequently turned over around them. Those who try to get their roses early, dig a trench a foot deep about the root, pouring in warm water as the cup is beginning to bud.59

Similar advice to some of this may still be found in modern guides to rose growing.60 Modern roses are still, almost exclusively, propagated by cuttings, as Pliny advises in the paragraph above, and for many of the same reasons, although the roses of his time were perhaps able to be grown from seed more readily than the modern. When grown from seed, for example, they are very slow growing and more vulnerable to disease and pests when left to grow on their own roots, as I have discovered myself when attempting this method of propagation. Most rose fanciers, however, soon become adept at growing roses from cuttings, grafting them onto robust root-stock. Unfortunately, there has not been discovered, to

59 Translation: Jones, Pliny. Natural History.
60 As in gardening manuals, e.g.: A. Sinclair and R. Thodey, Gardening with Old Roses (Melbourne : Cumulus, 1995), 160-169; D.M. Ross, A Manual of Heritage Roses (Adelaide: Ross Roses, 1989), 96-106, where we are told that roses should be planted 600-800 mm apart.
date, any supporting archaeological evidence for this practice, but there
are murals and other depictions of grafted trees and grafting being done.\textsuperscript{61}

Pliny's planting schedules also seem to agree with modern practice. In the
northern hemisphere, the Pleiades set at the beginning of November, that
is, at the end of the northern autumn.\textsuperscript{62} The home gardener today follows a
similar practice in areas with like climate.\textsuperscript{63} There seems no reason why
Pliny's information can not be regarded as being accurate in this passage.
He advocates planting about one Roman foot apart. In the garden of the
House of the Chaste Lovers (l.x.11) in Pompeii, Ciarallo has excavated a
garden with defined flower-beds and has succeeded in identifying the
plantings in them through pollen analysis and microscopic analysis of wood
remaining in the root cavities after the removal of lapilli. The planting
pattern revealed two beds in which roses were interspersed with junipers in
a regular pattern, the roses being about 200 mm. apart. The whole garden
was enclosed inside a trellis of reeds.\textsuperscript{64} If the Roman foot is taken to be
about 296 mm., then this flower bed bears out Pliny's recommendation to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} For example in a mosaic from Mount Nebo in Jordan, reproduced in Farrar, \textit{Roman Gardens},
171.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Pliny gives the time of year that he knew for this astronomical occurrence at \textit{NH} II.125.
\item \textsuperscript{63} It must be remembered in any discussion of this sort, that the rose now grows far from its native
places and climates, and has been bred to adapt to climates quite different from those where it
originally grew. In Australia, for example, roses are planted and pruned at different times in, say,
Sydney and Hobart, or even in Canberra.
\item \textsuperscript{64} A. Ciarallo, "The Garden of 'Casa dei Casti Amanti (Pompeii, Italy)', \textit{Garden History} 21 (1993),
110-116.
\end{itemize}
quite a large degree.\textsuperscript{65} Pliny has more to say on the subject of pruning:

\begin{quote}
rosa et quinquennium perfert non recisa nec adusta. illo enim modo iuuenescit. (\textit{NH} XXI. 40)
\end{quote}

The rose lasts even for five years if it is neither pruned down nor burned; for by these it renews its youth.\textsuperscript{66}

Later types of roses actually have been known to survive longer than Pliny's five years with no attention at all. Certain varieties, indeed, have been found in old gardens and cemeteries and consequently reintroduced onto the commercial scene, for example, the Sissinghurst Castle rose, which was discovered in a long-neglected garden at Sissinghurst Castle in 1947.\textsuperscript{67}

Pruning is, however, a long-established practice with roses, both old and new, and almost indispensable with modern roses. No present day gardener would argue with Pliny on that score. However, his statement that roses should be burnt must make a modern rose grower pause. I have found nothing in modern rose manuals which advocates this practice, and I


\textsuperscript{66} Translation: Jones, \textit{Pliny. Natural History}.

\textsuperscript{67} Ross, \textit{Manual}, 14.
us, severe treatment.^{68}

The ancient European roses, as I have mentioned in the section above, usually bloom once a year, with the exception of the Autumn Damask, which blooms twice. Conceivably, the Romans may well have wanted roses whenever they could be obtained. They could have been supplied from elsewhere in the empire, for example, Egypt or gardens in Carthage. This method, that of procuring the blooms from other places or, at least, out of the way places, is, perhaps, alluded to by Horace (Carm. 1.38.3-4):

mitte sectari rosa quo locorum
sera moretur.

"Cease from searching out those places where the rose tarries late."^{69}

Likewise, Pliny also tells us (NH XXI.40):

alicubi etiam binis mensibus antecedit germinatio omnium.

^{68} Farrar, Roman Gardens, 168. It has been noted, however, that roses burnt, some of them quite badly, in the January 2003 bushfires in the Canberra region, have already begun to produce regrowth (as of August, 2003).

^{69} This could also refer, of course, to hunting out hidden corners of gardens, rather than hidden places further afield. Whichever this refers to, the action described probably has the same purpose, i.e. to locate out-of-season blooms.
Likewise, Pliny also tells us (*NH* XXI.40):

> alicubi etiam binis mensibus antecedit germinatio omnium.

In some places the buds of all form as much as two months before they do elsewhere.\(^7\)

He is again speaking of Egypt here, and including the myrtle as well as the rose. Pliny in the passage with which I opened this chapter refers to another method, namely that of forcing the bushes to an early blooming by watering with warm water. This would have ensured at least two crops a year, even if they came from two different sets of bushes, not one, as might have been the case if the Autumn Damask were cultivated.

Palladius writes that roses should be grown, tied up, using a split reed (VI.32), saying of it that its purpose was to keep the flower fresh, that is, presumably, off the ground. Roses can be seen growing in this fashion in garden murals in Pompeii, for example, in the wall painting in the *diaeta* of the House of the Wedding of Alexander, where a pink rose is depicted growing in a garden, tied to a reed. Farrar, however, questions whether

\(^7\) Translation: Jones, *Pliny Natural History.*
this method would have given much support, and proposes that it might have been used for transporting blooms, rather than growing them. This painting, however, would seem to support the interpretation that reeds were used to provide support to growing roses.

CONCLUSION

Flowers were an important part of Roman life, whether they were used to make garlands for decorating hearths and altars on religious occasions or worn to banquets as chaplets. The supply of these flowers was not always from personal gardens, but could have been supplied by large, commercial gardens, such as those mentioned in tax papyri from Egypt. There could also have been a market for ready-made garlands and chaplets, such as is illustrated by the wall-painting from the House of the Vettii in Pompeii depicting cupids as garland sellers. Another painting from the same house shows us cupids as perfume makers and sellers. This is another industry in the Roman world that would have required flowers in some quantity, to provide both the oil and the scents needed to produce perfume. This perfume could than have been sold in some such shop as the cupids are shown staffing in the painting from the House of the Vettii.

Farrar, Ancient Roman Gardens, 171. See plate no. 5.
The rose is attested by Pliny and others as being among the flowers used for both garland and chaplet making and for perfume manufacture. Pliny even tells us that Campania was particularly known for the quality of its roses and the amount of perfume it produced. Egypt was also known as a rose producer, perhaps supplying roses to Italy when European roses were not in season. The Etesian winds that blow from the opposite direction in the Mediterranean, however, would have made this very difficult, to say the least. Growing roses is described in some detail by Pliny, and his recommendations are very similar to practices still followed today.

From the above, I suggest that roses were important to commercial flower growing in ancient Rome and to the manufacture of products from it, especially in the making of garlands, chaplets and perfumes.

In the next chapter the uses of the rose as food and as an ingredient in herbal medicines will be examined.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ROSE AS FOOD, DRINK AND IN MEDICINE

Roses could be bought at the market in towns and cities for more than just garland- and perfume-making. This chapter will examine the place of the rose in the preparation of food and drink, and also the place of the rose in herbal medicine. These two uses may seem very different at first glance, but they do have much in common. Firstly, in many herbal remedies, the medicine is drunk or eaten. Secondly, in ancient theories of medicine, the food that was consumed by the patient was, in some instances, of great importance in recognising and treating symptoms of disease, as was the food consumed by a person recovering from illness.

Roses were also used in herbal medicine in Roman times, and, indeed, in most eras of history since then. Rose oil was known to be soothing, while the rose hip could be useful in a tonic. Today we know the latter is due to the high Vitamin C content of the rose hip.

---

1 As in Celsus, de medicina, II.18.
2 The rose continued to be used in herbal medicine long after the Roman era. Elizabeth I of England, for example, used it in a recipe she devised for a tonic for the Emperor Rudolf II. Henry VIII is also recorded as using roses in medical recipes, including for a poultice. See B. Griggs, Green Pharmacy: A History of Herbal Medicine (London: Robert Hale, 1981), 54 and 64.
The fruit of the rose is usually known as the rose hip. In modern roses it is little noticed and little used, since most amateur rose gardeners propagate from cuttings. In the older rose breeds, especially the *R. gallica* family, the hip ripens into a bright red berry that covers the bush, bringing colour to it after the flowers have finished for the season. Rose hips were used more in previous generations as ingredients in jams and jellies and in syrups. Rose petals are still sometimes used to decorate food, but not many people today would think of eating them, or using them to flavour their food or wine. The Romans, however, did use them in this way, as this chapter will demonstrate. Before examining roses as food, let me first begin with a brief discussion of what kinds of foods the Romans would have had on their tables and in what manner they might have eaten them.

**ROMAN FOOD AND DRINK**

**SOURCES FOR ROMAN FOOD**

From Pompeii and Herculaneum comes the best evidence, in the form of the carbonized food itself, for the food the Romans would have eaten. Wilhelmina Jashemski, for example, describes the remains of the last meals eaten in the garden of house I.xiv.2, under a vine-covered arbor. In
this garden she recovered clam-shells, snail shells, cow bones and pig bones. Other food was also found, especially in Herculaneum, set out in dishes, for example: figs still in their basket and a round loaf of bread which are still to be seen in the National Museum of Naples.

Information regarding what foods the Romans consumed may be found as well in the *Naturalis historia* of Pliny the Elder and in the recipes recorded in the book *de re coquinaria* by Apicius, who may have lived under Augustus and Tiberius. Columella, Cato and Varro also give us a good idea of the food grown by Roman farmers. Cato and Columella even give us simple recipes for some dishes, such as the *epithyrum* (an olive dish) described by Cato (*RR* CXIX). Food and drink are referred to in various other works, including the letters of Pliny the Younger, and the works of the poets. Martial, for example, has left us many insights in his epigrams. Ovid too describes food as do Horace and the other lyric poets. The exaggerated dinner of Trimalchio in the surviving portions of the *Satyricon* of Petronius has left us with a satirical picture of the kind of food that most Romans might have wished to eat, but possibly seldom did, while other writers have left us with an idea of the food that was perhaps more likely to have been consumed by the ordinary citizens of Rome.

---

Food is also depicted in paintings from Pompeii and Herculaneum, especially in “still-life” wall paintings, some of which depict fruit in bowls or game animals hanging from hooks or seafood, as in the still life with fish from the south wall of the tablinum of the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto (V.iv.a) in Pompeii. Nor was food only depicted on the walls. Pliny the Elder (NH XXXVI.184) describes a type of mosaic first created by a Greek named Sosos in which the remains of a meal form the decorative pattern of the floor. These mosaics are sometimes called “Unswept Floor” (asarotos oikos) mosaics, due to their obvious (and intended) likeness to an unswept floor after dining. The discarded remains of a meal portrayed on these floors can include life-like images of food: fish bones, for example.

ROMAN DINING

Cena, that is dinner, was the main meal of the day, and was usually taken at the end of the day’s business, at about the end of the eighth hour in winter, as Martial tells us at Ep. XI.52 and at the end of the ninth hour in summer. The cena could be eaten with the family, at home with guests, thus becoming a “dinner party”, at someone else’s home, or at a public dining establishment (popina). Of these options, the one that Roman

---

4 Jashemski illustrates one of these floors, now in the Lateran Museum in Rome, as her fig. 151. Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 95.
writers seem to mention the most often is that of dining with guests or as a
guest. Dinners such as these would include more than just the food and
drink. The atmosphere and the entertainment seem to have been important
as well. Pliny the Younger suggests this when he writes to a friend of his
gently chiding *him for not coming to a dinner that Pliny had planned:*

Heus tu! promittis ad cenam, nec uenis? Dicitur ius: ad assem
impendium reddes, nec id modicum. Paratae erant lactucae
singulae, cochleae terna, oua bina, halica cum mulso et niue (nam
hanc quoque computabis, immo hanc in primis quae perit in ferculo)
oliuae betacei cucurbitae bulbi, alia mille non minus lauta. Audisses
comoedos uel lectorem uel lyristen uel (quae mea liberalitas)
omnes. (*Epistles*, I.15).

Who are you, to accept my invitation to dinner and never come?
Here’s your sentence, and you shall pay my costs in full, no small
sum either. It was all laid out, one lettuce each, three snails, two
eggs, wheat-cake, and wine, with honey chilled with snow (you will
reckon this too please, and as an expensive item, seeing that it
disappears in the dish) besides olives, beetroots, gherkins, onions,
and any number of similar delicacies. You would have heard a

---

5 In this chapter I will be dealing more with food and drink at dinners than atmosphere. For a fuller
treatment of this, see Chapter Four, The Rose and the “Good Life”.

comic play, a reader or singer, or all three if I felt generous. 6

Instead, Pliny tells us that the dinner guest, Septicius Clarus, was lured elsewhere by the promise of oysters (ostrea), sow's wombs (uuluas) and sea urchins (echinos), as well as dancing girls from Gades (the modern Cadiz in Spain). These dancing girls would seem to have been an attraction at dinner parties, as Martial also speaks of them in the extract quoted below:

sed finges nihil audiesue fictum
et uultu placidus tuo recumbes;
nec crassum dominus leget uolumen,
nec de Gadibus improbis puellae
uibrabunt sine fine prurientes
lasciuos docili tremore lumbos;
sed quod non graue sit nec infacetum,
parua tibia Condyli sonabit.
(Ep. V.78.23-30)

... but you will speak no falsehoods nor hear any and recline benignly wearing your own face. Nor yet shall the host read a thick

volume or girls from wanton Gades, endlessly prurient, vibrate
lascivious loins with practiced tremor. But the flute of little Condylus
will play something light and witty.\textsuperscript{7}

Martial's dinner party will have, he tells us, the following menu as well as
the entertainment he has outlined above. The dinner will consist of such
foods as lettuces (cheap Cappadocian ones, \textit{uiles Cappadocae}), leeks
(porti), tunny in egg (\textit{diuiis cybium latebit ouis}), cabbage (\textit{coliculus}),
sausage on porridge (\textit{botellus, pulterm}), beans (\textit{faba}) and bacon (\textit{lardo}).
Dessert was to be grapes (dried, \textit{marcentes uuae}), pears (Syrian \textit{pira quae firunt Syorum}) and chestnuts (\textit{castaneae}). He also offers for afterward
olives (\textit{oliuae}), chickpeas (\textit{cicer}) and lupins (\textit{lupinus}).

Some hosts were not as hospitable as Pliny and Martial, it seems. There
are complaints in some authors against hosts who serve their guests
according to their rank. Pliny the Younger has something to say concerning
this latter practice:

\textit{Nam sibi et paucis opima quaedam, ceteris uilia et minuta ponebat.}
\textit{Vinum etiam paruolis lagunculis in tria genera discipserat, non ut}
potestas eligendi, sed ne ius esset recusandi, aliud sibi et nobis,

\textsuperscript{7} Translation: D. R. Shackleton Bailey, \textit{Martial. Epigrams} (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University
aliud minoribus amicis (nam gradatim amicos habet), aliud suis nostrisque libertis. (Ep. II.6)

The best dishes were set in front of himself and a select few, and cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company. He had even put the wine into tiny little flasks, divided into three categories, not with the idea of giving his guests the opportunity of choosing, but to make it impossible for them to refuse what they were given. One lot was intended for himself and for us, another for his lesser friends (all his friends are graded) and the third for his and our freedmen. 8

Dinners could be much more extravagant than this. In the reign of Nero, Gaius Petronius, called “Arbiter”, since he served as Nero’s “arbiter of fashion”, wrote a satirical novel known as the Satyricon. Much of it has been lost. Dominating what remains is the very exaggerated description of an extremely extravagant dinner hosted by a freedman named Trimalchio. 9 Trimalchio does not so much display his wealth as flaunt it. His guests are freedmen like himself, wealthy perhaps, but still regarded as belonging to a lower stratum of society. P. G. Walsh describes this dinner as a “monumental exhibition of the prodigal gluttony which is the mark of the

8 Translation: Radice, Pliny. Letters.
9 Trimalchio and his household are described in some detail in the Satyricon, e.g., XXVI, where he is first encountered at the baths by the protagonists of the novel, and XXXII, where he makes an entrance to his dinner party. The Cena Trimalchionis forms books 26-78 of the Satyricon.
vulgar host". Outlandish though this dinner is, it does give us some idea of the variety of foodstuffs and dishes that were known to Roman cuisine. Among the dishes served were roast dormice, olives, poultry, sow’s udder, bread, pork and fruit, all served in strange and imaginative ways.

Roman food shops, called *popinae* or *cauponae* also served a selection of food. A list of foodstuffs was found in a house at Pompeii (IX.vii.24-5), the atrium of which was connected via a door to a serving counter. The list includes cheese, bread, oil, wine, leeks, porridge, dates and sausage. This could have been the menu of the food the shop served. If so, it could have provided simple meals for reasonable prices, for example: the cheese seems to be selling for one or two asses.

ROMAN FOOD

The food served at these dinners could be as simple as Martial and Pliny describe above or it could be much more luxurious and drawn from the entire empire, such as that described by Petronius as being served at Trimalchio’s dinner, or the delicacies served at Nasidienus’ dinner, as described by Horace in *Satires* II.8. Obviously, the more exotic these foods

---

11 A. E. Cooley and M. G. L. Cooley, *Pompeii: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2004), 163. The translated inscription (CIL IV 5380) is quoted in full in this work. The prices could be either for the purchase of these foods or for the sale of them.
were, the more expensive they became. Indeed, the taste for expensive delicacies became so widespread, that, at times, steps were taken by the state to control them. Suetonius records how Julius Caesar even sent guards into private dining rooms to remove illegal foodstuffs from tables in private houses in an attempt to enforce his Sumptuary Law (*Julius Caesar*, 43). Frances Muecke states that, by the time of Horace, “the old Roman diet was under pressure from the fads of fashion and the authority of gastronomical experts.”¹² Only the wealthier members of society could afford many of these exotic delicacies, however. The poorer classes would probably have eaten quite frugally, their meals probably consisting of little more than porridge, bread, cheese, vegetables and fruit. In the *Moretum*, a poem in the *Appendix Vergiliana*, for example, the poet actually gives us the recipe for the frugal dish which gives its name to the poem (*Moretum* 94-116):

... seruatum gramine bulbum
inguit aqua lapidisque cauum demittit in orbem.
his salis inspergit micas, sale durus adeso
caseus adicitur, lectas super ingerit herbas,
et laeua testam saetosa sub inguina fulcit
dextera pistillo primum fragrantia mollit
alia, tum pariter mixto terit omnia suco.

"The bulb saved with the leaves he dips in water, and drops into the mortar’s hollow circle. Thereon he sprinkles grains of salt, adds cheese hardenened with consuming salt, and heaps on top the herbs he has collected; with his left hand he wedges the mortar between his shaggy thighs, while his right fist crushes with a pestle the fragrant garlic, then grinds all evenly in a juicy mixture."  

The garlic and herbs are, of course, pulled up freshly from his own garden. More mixing follows and olive oil and strong vinegar are added to complete the recipe. The herbs in the dish are: parsley, rue, coriander and garlic.

Ovid gives a description of a simple meal that Baucis serves to the disguised gods Jupiter and Mercury (Met. VIII.664-668):

ponitur hic bicolor sincerae baca Mineruae
conditaque in liquida corna autumnalia faece
intibaque et radix et lactis massa coacti
ouaque non acri leuiter uersata fauilla,
onnia ficitibus.

Next she placed on the board some olives, green and ripe, truthful Minerva’s berries, and some autumnal cornel-cherries pickled in the lees of wine; endives and radishes, cream cheese and eggs, lightly roasted in the warm ashes, all served in earthen dishes.\textsuperscript{14}

The poor couple also serves up a second course consisting of nuts, figs, dried dates, plums, apples, grapes and honey in the comb. All of the foods served at this meal could be provided by a well-stocked farm, which may be the point that Ovid is trying to make; that the old couple, as well as being hospitable to guests, is also frugal and hard-working, winning their living from their own farm. Nicholas Purcell states, indeed, that the “Romans felt that their forebears had subsisted to a large extent on vegetables.”\textsuperscript{15}

To the wealthy, as mentioned above, the resources of the entire empire were available. Italy itself could provide the ingredients of the moretum and many of the menu items at the dinners of Martial and Pliny the Younger described above. It could also provide seafood, such as the oysters, mussels and sea urchins used in Apicius’ Baian Casserole (Apicius IX.11), and olives, such as those from Picenum, mentioned by Martial (Ep.)

V.78.19-20). Some crops and animals may have been transplanted to Italy, such as Martial’s “cheap Cappadocian lettuces”. It doesn’t seem possible that they could be described as cheap if they had come all the way from Cappadocia to Martial’s table. Pliny the Elder (NH XV.15) gives the name of several species of fruit trees which have been introduced into Italy in his own time, namely new varieties of quince and apple. Many products, however, must have been imported from their native lands, for example: the Theban dates that Trimalchio serves at his dinner (Sat. 40). These would have originated in Thebes, in Upper Egypt, the modern Luxor, as Pliny the Elder tells us (NH XIII.47). Besides plants, the Romans ate animals, perhaps a greater variety than we would contemplate consuming, although snails, which Pliny the Younger mentions in his dinner menu, are still eaten. Sow’s womb, and dormice would probably not be found on menus today in the western world. Rare and exotic delicacies could be sought after items. Juvenal (Sat. IV.) records the story of the find of an enormous fish and the aftermath. The giant fish, a rhombus fish is given to Domitian by Crispinus. The poet enjoys telling of the problems caused by finding out that the fish is too big for any dish the palace possesses and the resulting search for some way of cooking it, even to the point of calling a council of senators to consider the issue. In this Satire, (line 15) Juvenal has already attacked Crispinus for spending 6000 sesterces for one mullet.
Perhaps the most expensive foodstuffs, however, were the spices, some of which came to Rome from distant lands. Among the most popular of these was pepper (piper in Latin). Pliny the Elder records that it sold for as much as fifteen denarii a pound in his day (NH XII.14). Pepper came to Rome from India via the Red Sea trading ports and thence by way of the Nile to the Mediterranean coast. From here it was shipped to Italy. The ultimate origin of black pepper was even further away, being a product of South-East Asia, as we know today. Pliny says of pepper and ginger that they are "bought by weight like gold or silver" (pondere emitur ut aurum uel argentum NH XII.14).\(^{16}\)

Fruit seems to have been popular as a dessert at a cena, but probably was also eaten at other times of the day. The variety of fruit known to the Romans would have been smaller than we know today, since we have access to fruits from places that the Romans didn't know, the Western Hemisphere, for example. They certainly knew about the apple. Dates and plums are mentioned in the Satyricon as being served at Trimalchio's banquet. Other fruits that may have been served by them include pears, cherries, quinces, pomegranates, figs\(^{17}\) and, of course, grapes and olives. The fruit of the rose, the rose hip, would not be out of place in such a list.


\(^{17}\) Figs, for example, are depicted in wall paintings from Pompeii, while some carbonised examples have also been found there. See W. F. Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 259.
THE ROSE AS FOOD AND DRINK

Pliny the Elder says of the rose that:

... mensarum etiam deliciis perunguendis minime noxia.

(NH XXI.10).

"... even being used as a coating for the delicacies of our tables, being quite harmless."18

Elsewhere he tells us that rose petals could be preserved for food, in the same way as sorrel (cibo quoque lapathi modo condiuntur NH XXI.73) and that the rose was used to make cordials and wines (NH XIV.19). Pliny concerns himself more with the healing properties of the rose, so tells us little of its uses as food. It would be surprising, however, if the Romans did not make use of the rose hip. As has been observed above, the rose in its older forms bears a brightly coloured berry-like hip which is sweet to the taste. It is still used for making jams and cordials today, but not as much as in previous decades.19

ROSES IN APICIUS

Some of the recipes mentioned by Apicius may have had the hip in mind more than the petals, as in recipe 171, for example, “Red apple minutal”, which appears in the Latin as: *minutal ex rosis*. Vehling points out that past translators of Apicius have rendered the *rosis* as standing for *malis rosis* or rosy apples. Even Vehling, however, in his comments to his translation points out that the hip of the dog-briar (which he equates with *R. eglantina*) could possibly be meant. As mentioned above, it is quite likely that the Romans were acquainted with *R. gallica*, any variety of which bears sweet hips which would suit this recipe. His recipe 171 is a variant on recipe 170, which is for a *minutal* dish containing hare’s livers, with diced pork shoulder, vegetables, herbs (including mint), honey, raisin wine, vinegar, and fruits (seeded). Apples would have complemented this dish, but rose hips would have served equally well. Recipe 171 advises adding more raisin wine, the sweetness of which would go well with either.

The same argument surfaces when we read recipe 136, although here the petals are clearly meant. In Latin, it is headed *patina de rosis*:

---

19 The *R. gallica* variety, for example, has red, berry-like hips which can be made into a jelly which is quite sweet to the taste. The hips of the *R. gallica officinalis* (or Apothecary Rose) is useful for jam making. I have tasted the result myself.


21 In the Introductory section entitled The Rose. See also my footnote 10 above.
The same argument surfaces when we read recipe 136, although here the petals are clearly meant. In Latin, it is headed *patina de rosis*:


Take roses fresh from the flower bed, strip off the leaves, remove the white. Put them in the mortar; pour over some broth [and] rub fine. Add a glass of broth and strain the juice through the colander. Take 4 brains, skin them and remove the nerves; crush 8 scruples of pepper moistened with the juice and rub; thereupon break 8 eggs, add 1 glass of wine, 1 glass of raisin wine and a little oil. Meanwhile grease a pan, place it on the hot ashes in which pour the above described material; when the mixture is cooked in the *bain marie* sprinkle it with pulverized pepper and serve.  

---

23 Translation: Vehling, *Apicius*.  

*liquamen* (a fish sauce). Again, apples have been suggested for this recipe, but rose petals seem more likely. An instruction has been translated above as "remove the white" (*album tolles*), which would apply to rose petals, as most rose petals have a portion of lighter colour at the tip closest to the stem, which is of a harder, drier texture than the rest of the petal. It can be seen again in the passage below (*albo sublato*). It does not seem likely that such an instruction could apply to an apple. Having never tasted a dish like this, I can’t comment on whether the rose or the apple would have tasted better to a modern palate, but the petals, I think, might have provided a more subtle flavour.

Apicius also includes two recipes for rose wine. The first is as follows:


*(Apicius 4)*

Rose wine is made like this: lace rose petals, with the white part
removed, on a thread, and immerse in wine for seven days. Then remove the petals from the wine and put new rose petals in, laced in the same manner. Do the same thing for a third time and remove the petals. Sieve the wine, and when you want to drink it add honey, to get rose wine. Be sure to use only the best roses, and ensure that they are free from dew. You can make violet wine in a similar way. Again, flavour with honey.24

Vehling adds in his comments to this recipe that it was used as a laxative medicine, as well as a sweet tasting wine. Pliny records a similar recipe:

\[ \text{... inter flores ex rosae foliis tusis in linteolo in mustum collatis cum pondusculo ut sidat, [denarii] L pondere in sextarios musti uicenos – uetant ante tres menses uas aperiri ...} \ (NH \ XIV.19) \]

\[ \text{... among flowers, from pounded rose-leaves wrapped in a linen napkin and thrown into must with a small weight attached to make it sink, in the proportion of 50 drams of rose-leaves to 2 1/2 gallons of must – they say the jar must not be opened for three months ...} \]

---

25 Translations from Pliny in this section: H. Rackham, *Pliny. Natural History, Books 12-16.* Rackham records that another MS reads *uase aperto,* "with the jar open", which would agree better with Apicius’ instruction to renew the petals regularly.
Foliis here has been translated as rose leaves, but it is more likely that Pliny intends the petals to be meant. I doubt that the leaves of the rose would provide as much flavour as the petals. Rose wine without roses (rosatum sine rosis), Recipe 6,\textsuperscript{26} seeks to replace the taste of roses by using citron leaves in the place of rose petals. As well as being an item of food, the rose was also consumed as medicine, as the following section will show.

ROMAN MEDICINE

SOURCES FOR ROMAN MEDICINE

Aulus Cornelius Celsus, who lived in the early first century A.D., composed an encyclopaedia on medicine, agriculture, rhetoric, warfare, philosophy and jurisprudence. Unfortunately, only the section on medicine survives. Ralph Jackson calls it a “fine survey”.\textsuperscript{27} It covers several branches of medicine, including pharmacology and surgery, including the removal of cataracts, in eight books. Soranus of Ephesus was also writing about 100

\textsuperscript{26} Vehling, Apicius, 47.
A.D. His surviving works include the *Gynaecia*, which, as the name suggests, deals with the health and illnesses of women. Also surviving, from the second century A.D., are the twenty-one books of Galen of Pergamum. It has been estimated that this may only be about one third of everything that he actually wrote.\(^{28}\) His surviving treatises include works on the anatomy of the womb, the composition of drugs, epidemics and the formation of the foetus. His works influenced European thought for centuries, even after the fall of the western empire. He was a believer in the “four humours” theory of physiology, even though he was best known for his knowledge of anatomy.

In the area of herbal medicine, the most notable sources include Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis historia*, where about 900 substances are listed and Galen’s writings which include about 600. Theophrastus was a pupil of Aristotle and describes about 550 plants in his works. Pedanius Dioscorides of Anazarbus in Cilicia lived in the first century A.D. and composed a herbal, *De materia medica*, in five books which lists about 600 plants.\(^{29}\) An amphora marked with the recipe for cough mixture made to one of his recipes and labeled in Greek is “attested at Carpow, 150 miles

\(^{28}\) Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases*, 61.
north of the Wall.\textsuperscript{30} Pliny seems to have used all of these other authors mentioned above as sources for his own work, except Dioscorides, perhaps because they were contemporaries and writing at approximately the same time. Pliny also quotes from the \textit{Rhizotomika} of Diocles of Carystos in Euboea, as does Galen.

Archaeology has contributed to our knowledge of Roman medicine as well. Surgical instruments (some bearing a marked resemblance to their modern counterparts) were discovered in the House of the Surgeon (VI.i.10) on the Via Consolare in Pompeii.\textsuperscript{31} An even larger collection of such instruments was found on the floor of a house in ancient Ariminium, modern Rimini, in Italy. The collection dates from the mid-third century. Jackson considers this collection to be superior to that found in the House of the Surgeons in Pompeii.\textsuperscript{32}

Plants used in herbal medicine do not usually survive as well as this. While excavating the legionary fortress at Neuss (ancient Nouaesium) near Dusseldorf, however, seeds were recovered from a building identified as the legionary hospital. When analysed, the seeds were from species used in the preparation of herbal medicines, for example, centaury, fenugreek,\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{30} L. Allason-Jones, “Health Care in the Roman North”, \textit{Britannia} 30 (1999), 133-146.
\textsuperscript{31} They were found on the \textit{triclinium} floor. See M. della Corte, \textit{Case ed Habitanti di Pompei} 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Rome: Bretschneider, 1954), 191-2.
\end{flushleft}
henbane, plantain and St. John's wort.\textsuperscript{33} Oculists' stamps have also proven useful for understanding Roman medicine. These were stamps used to impress cakes of eye ointment. They usually bore the maker's name and directions for their use.

**ROMAN DOCTORS**

According to Pliny the Elder, the first doctor in Rome was named Archagathus, and he arrived in the same year as that in which Saguntum was captured by the Carthaginians, that is 219 B.C. (\textit{NH XXIX.12}). After that date, doctors could be found in Rome if they were ever needed, but their status in Rome seems not to have been very high in most cases. Varro (\textit{RR I.16}) includes them in a list of artisans upon whom it is useful to call if there is need, if one doesn't have trained doctors of one's own:

\begin{quote}
Itaque in hoc genus coloni potius annuersarios habent uicinos, quibus imperent, medicos, fullones, fabros, quam in uilla suos habent ...
\end{quote}

For this reason, farmers in such circumstances prefer to have in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{33} R.W. Davies, "Some Roman Medicine", \textit{Medical History}, 14 (1970), 101-106. The Roman Army may have been responsible for the spread of many species of plants throughout the empire. Army doctors may have carried their pharmacopeia with them and planted some of the most useful plants within the forts on the frontiers. See B. Griggs, \textit{Green Pharmacy}, 13, for further examples.
\end{footnotesize}
their neighbourhood men whose services they can call upon under a yearly contract - physicians, fullers, and other artisans - rather than to have such men of their own on the farm ...” 34

Many doctors, indeed, were slaves, freed slaves, or descendants of freed slaves, many of them Greek in origin. It was not until 46 B.C., when Julius Caesar granted citizenship to foreign doctors in Rome, that they gained any advancement in status (Suetonius, Julius Caesar, 42). Although some would become the personal physicians of the emperors, like Antonius Musa, who treated Augustus (Suetonius, Augustus, 59 and 81), doctors for the most part remained objects of distrust.

Martial has left us a vivid record of this distrust and even derision, in his Epigrams. In V.9, for example, he complains of the doctors' habit of bringing students:

Languebam: sed tu comitatus protinus ad me
uenisti centum, Symmache, discipulis.
centum me tetigere manus Aquilone gelatae:
non habui febrem, Symmache, nunc habeo.

I was unwell. You hurried round, surrounded
By ninety students, Doctor. Ninety chill,
North-wind-chapped hands then pawed and probed and pounded.
I was unwell: now I'm extremely ill.

His distrust is evident also in the following (Ep. 1.30):

Chirurgus fuerat, nunc est uispillo Diaulus.
coepit quo poterat clinicus esse modo.

Diaulus was once a surgeon, now he's an undertaker. He's started
to practice medicine the only way he knew how.

Doctors could even be accomplices to murder, as in the story Tacitus
relates, where Claudius was despatched with the connivance, perhaps
even the aid, of his physician, C. Stertinius Xenophon (Tacitus, Annals, XII.
67.2). There is perhaps little wonder then, that Pliny the Elder praised the
example of Cato who acted as his own, and his familia's physician (NH
XXIX.14).

Many families, however, would have had little choice but to perform this
function. There were no hospitals or clinics to care for the injured or
severely ill, although there seem to have been hospitals (uioletudinaria) in
permanent forts for military personnel.\textsuperscript{35} The families of the sick would have had to nurse them within their own homes. The wealthier families could possibly have afforded to pay doctors to come to their homes to treat them, as Pliny the Younger tells us he did when he was ill (\textit{Ep. VII}.1). The letters of Pliny the Younger make many references to people with illnesses being treated within the home. One of these (\textit{Ep. VII}.19) concerns a \textit{matrona} who took in hand the task of nursing a Vestal Virgin in the \textit{matrona}'s home.

ROMAN HERBAL MEDICINE

Nancy Duin and Jenny Sutcliffe describe Rome's earliest approaches to medicine as "little more than propitiating the gods and reliance on traditional folk remedies."\textsuperscript{36} These folk remedies would have included the use of medicines made from herbs and other substances, including some that we would no longer consider helpful: arsenic for example. Pliny favours the use of plants long known to Italian gardeners, rather than the rare and expensive ones imported from elsewhere in the Empire, both for food and medicine (\textit{NH} XIX.19; XXIV.1). He includes references to about 900 substances in his \textit{Naturalis historia}, some of them everyday plants like

\textsuperscript{35} The evidence for this is well summarised in A. Cruse, \textit{Roman Medicine} (Stroud, Glos.: Tempus, 2004), 93-105
cucumbers (*NH XX.2-4*) and turnips (*NHXX.9-10*). Cato, likewise, seems to favour ordinary plants. His insistence on the healing properties of cabbage is well known (*De agricul
tura* CLVI-CLVII). According to him, cabbage can cure colic, ulcers, headache and eye-ache, to name just a few. Some of these old remedies may have been quite effective. Jackson records that, for example, a remedy listed by Celsus and called by him *Thymum*, recommended for the cleaning of wounds, would have been a weaker form of phenol (carbolic acid), which does have antiseptic properties.37

THE ROSE IN MEDICINE

Among the numerous plants described by the herbalists were many common herbs and flowers, including garlic, violets and roses. The rose, apparently, had many uses. Pliny sums up the medicinal uses of the rose in the following words (*NH XXI.10*):

praeterea in unguenta transit, ut diximus. medicas per se artes praebet. emplastris atque collyris inseritur mordaci subtilitate ... 

"Furthermore, it has made its way, as we have said, into ointments.

37 Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases*, 80.
By itself it possesses medicinal properties. It is an ingredient of plasters and of eye-salves by reason of its subtle pungency ..."

Pliny ascribes many uses to the rose beyond the two mentioned here. On its own, it was considered an astringent (rosa adstringit NH XXI.73) with cooling properties (refrigerat NH XXI.73). Dioscorides agrees with this, saying also that the rose cools and cleans (MM I.130). It was good for complaints of the uterus or dysentery if prepared properly:

per se, cum unguies non detrahuntur - ibi enim umoris plurimum - aut cum detractis unguibus reliqua pars aut oleo aut uino maceratur in sole uasis uitreis. quidam et salem admirant, nonnulli et anchusam aut aspalathum aut iuncum odoratum, quia talis maxime prodest uuluae ac dysintericis. (NH XXI.73)

“They may be treated by themselves, when the nails,\(^{38}\) in which there is most moisture, are not removed; or when what is left after removing the nails is steeped with oil or wine in glass vessels in the sunshine. Some add salt also, and a few alkanet or aspalathus or fragrant rush, because, so prepared, the essence is very beneficial for complaints of the uterus and for dysentery.

\(^{38}\) The nails are the lighter-coloured portion of the petal nearest to the stem. They are sometimes called "whites", as explained in the Food section above.
Not much of the rose was wasted. There seems to have been some use for most parts of it. Rose juice was acquired, according to Pliny, by removing the nails from the petals, then pounding the petals and straining them through a thick linen cloth. Once this was done, the juice of the rose had its uses:

usus suci ad aures, oris ulcer, gingiuas, tonsillas gargarizati, stomachum, uuluas, sedis uitia, capitis dolores - in febri per se uel cum aceto - somnos, nausias \((NH \ XXI.73)\).

Rose juice is used for the ears, sores in the mouth, the gums, as a gargle for the tonsils, for the stomach, uterus, rectal trouble, headache - when due to fever either by itself, or with vinegar - to induce sleep or to dispel nausea.

Its dried leaves\(^{39}\) (possibly in solution?) soothed fluxes of the eyes:

epiphoras quoque arida leniunt \((NH \ XXI.73)\).

Fluxes of the eyes also are soothed by the dried leaves.

---

\(^{39}\) Again, as in the Food and Drink section, foliis may mean petals here. Pliny seems to use the word for both. The petals surely would be more effective in these instances.
Rose leaves could also be used as food for those with stomach complaints, when they were beaten up with boiled quinces which had been preserved in honey (NH XXIII.54). Rose seeds also had their uses:

seminis optimum crocinum, nec anonicul uetustius, et in umbra siccatum; nigrum inutile. dentium dolori inlinitur, urinam ciet, stomacho inponitur, item igni sacro non ueteri. naribus subductum caput purgat (NH XXI.73)

As to the seed, the finest is of a saffron colour, not more than a year old, and should be dried in the shade; the dark seed is harmful. It is used as a linament for toothache, is diuretic, and may be applied to the stomach or in cases of erysipelas that is not of long standing.

The petals could be dried and powdered in order to be used as an anti-perspirant, while even the galls on the wild rose, if mixed with bears' grease could provide a remedy for mange (NH XXI.73).

**ROSE OIL PREPARATIONS**

The most useful part of the rose seems to have been the oil (rosaceum). Pliny lists it as a secondary ingredient in many preparations. With heliotropes, it relieves headache (NH XXII.29); mixed with honey, it can be
used for killing nits and other head parasites (NH XXII.30); if applied with bread it can soften abscesses (NH XXII.68) and combined with figwood ash as a paste it can be used for treating burns (NHXXIII.63). He also gives more complicated recipes as in:

\[\text{cum rosaceo uero et fico sicca myxisque decoctis furfures tonsillis faucibusque gargarizatone prosunt (NH XXII.57).}\]

... bran ... and rose oil, dried figs and sebesten plums, all boiled down, make a good gargle for tonsils and throat.

Besides being useful in the controlling of nits, it could be used for killing worms in the ears if combined with almond oil:

\[\text{Prodest et auribus cum rosaceo aut melle et mali punici tegmine decoctum, uermiculosque in his necat et grauitatem auditus discutit, sonos incertos et tinnitus, obiter capitis dolores et oculorum (NH XXIII.42).}\]

A decoction also with rose oil or honey and pomegranate rind is good for the ears, kills the little worms in them and clears away hardness of hearing, vague noises and singing, incidentally relieving headache and pains in the eyes.
Again, if combined with almond oil, vinegar and water, it would soothe a headache, we are told, especially if the headache is ab ebrietate - from too much wine (NH XXIII.75). Other forms of headache could be treated with bay leaves and rose oil (NH XXIII.80), or with wild myrtle berries pounded in vinegar and rose oil (NH XXIII.80).

Pliny also records the use of rose oil in decoctions for treating sprains, with vine ash and grape skins, (NH XXIII.3); complaints of the anus, with the juice of boiled down lentils, (NH XXII.70); sore places on babies (nappy rash, perhaps?), with maiden hair and wine, (NH XXII.30) and carcinoma, boiled down with melilot, water and raisin wine, (NH XXI.87). All of these were to be applied as ointments to the affected areas. Audrey Cruse mentions an ointment made from rose oil mixed with pounded pomegranate and gum which Soranus recommended applying to the vagina as a contraceptive. The cooling properties of the rose, commented on above by Pliny and Dioscurides, are perhaps the reason why rose oil is used so extensively in these recipes.

Rose oil apparently was useful in surgery as well. Celsus (de medicina VIII.4) advocates the use of rose oil or milk to lubricate the skull during a trephining procedure, that is, the process of sawing out and removing a
small circle of bone from the skull.

CONCLUSION

The poorer classes of the Roman populace would probably have eaten quite frugally. The *Moretum* from the *Vergilian Appendix* gives us a good idea of the preparation of a simple dish of this frugal kind. The wealthier classes would have had a greater variety of food available to them, including many that would have been imported at great expense, such as spices. Food served at dinner parties could likewise be simple or could be complicated dishes involving expensive ingredients. Among the recipes collected by Apicius are some recipes including rose petals, and perhaps rose hips, although the latter are not specifically mentioned. Pliny the Elder also mentions the rose as food.

Doctors in the Roman world were initially of low status and were distrusted by some, Martial among them. Much of the medicine practised in Roman times would have been herbal. Herbal preparations were used to treat a wide variety of ailments and were taken from a variety of plants, including commonly grown ones such as turnips and cabbage. Among the plants used in these preparations was the rose. Both Pliny the Elder and

---

Dioscorides tell us of its cleaning and cooling qualities. Many of the parts of the rose were used, especially rose oil and the petals.

Roses could be used in less practical ways. In the next chapter its use as an adjunct of what I have called the "good life" will be examined.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROSE AND THE “GOOD LIFE”

The previous chapters have examined the practical uses of the rose, from those in garland making and perfume manufacture, to its uses in cookery and herbal medicine. This chapter will deal with the more frivolous side of the rose in ancient Rome. Firstly, the rose’s role in pleasure will be dealt with, from its inclusion in pleasure gardens to its appearance at dinner parties and celebrations. Following this, the place of the rose as part of the trappings of “luxurious excess” will be examined, as in, for example, banquets which some Romans regarded as being more “scandalous” in nature.

THE ROMAN “GOOD LIFE”

Firstly, what was the “good life” to the Romans? Just as is true in the world of today, the phrase “the good life” probably meant different things to different people, and, moreover, to different levels of society. Pliny the Younger gives us some idea of his concept of the “good life” in a letter to Fuscus Salinator, telling of his daily routine in his Tuscan villa in the
notarium uoco et die admisso quae formaueram dicto; abit
rursusque reuocatur rursusque dimittitur. ubi hora quarta uel quinta
(neque enim certum dimensumque tempus), ut dies suasit, in
xystum me uel cryptoporticum confero, reliqua meditor et dicto.
uehiculum ascendo. ibi quoque idem quod ambulans aut iacens;
durat intentio mutatione ipsa refecta. paulum redormio, dein ambulo,
mox orationem Graecam Latinamue clare et intente non tam uocis
causa quam stomachi lego; pariter tamen et illa firmatur. iterum
ambulo ungor exerceor lauor. Cenanti mihi, si cum uxore uel paucis,
liber legitur; post cenam comoedia aut lyristes; mox cum meis
ambulo, quorum in numero sunt eruditi. (Ep. IX.36)

Then I call my secretary, the shutters are opened, and I dictate what
I have put into shape;\(^2\) he goes out, is recalled, and again
dismissed. Three or four hours after I first wake (but I don’t keep to
fixed times) I betake myself according to the weather either to the
terrace or the covered arcade, work out the rest of my subject, and
dictate it. I go for a drive, and spend the time in the same way as
when walking or lying down; my powers of concentration do not flag

---
1 The inclusion of the rose in religious festivals, however, will be examined in the next chapter.
2 That is, earlier, while lying in the dark.
and are in fact refreshed by the change. After a short sleep and another walk I read a Greek or Latin speech aloud and with emphasis, not so much for the sake of my voice, as my digestion, though of course both are strengthened by this. Then I have another walk, am oiled, take exercise, and have a bath. If I am dining alone with my wife or with a few friends, a book is read aloud during the meal and afterwards we listen to a comedy or some music; then I walk again with the members of my household, some of whom are well educated.³

This quick description of an upper class Roman’s routine (admittedly his “holiday” routine) gives us the ideal of the “good life” from the point of view of a Roman citizen of the upper classes.⁴ His day is taken up with contemplation, writing and gentle exercise; his evening with friends and genteel entertainment. This is, in fact, a good description of otium, a term defined by Lewis & Short as “leisure”, or “time for . . .”, for example, literary occupations. It must have been appealing to escape the noise and hubbub of Rome, or the other large towns and cities of the empire with all the demands on one’s time from clients and fellow citizens and retreat to one’s villa in the country or beside the sea, and follow such a regime as Pliny

---

⁴ Bearing in mind, of course, that Pliny perhaps was more inclined to literary pursuits in his private life than many of his peers.
describes above. Many of the wealthier Romans, indeed, had a number of villas from which to choose. Pliny the Younger, for example, has left us detailed descriptions of two of his villas and their gardens in his letters (V.vi; II.17). To the less conservative or those lower down the social scale perhaps the “good life” might be found in Rome and the towns, rather than in the country, as Horace tells his steward:

rure ego uiuentem, tu dicis in urbe beatum.

cui placet alterius, sua nimirum est odio sors. ...

tu mediastinus tacita prece rura petebas,
nunc urbem et ludos et balnea uillicus optas...


I love the life of the country; you call the city heaven.

Each man admires the other’s fortune, loathes his own. ...

Once, a labourer, you prayed heaven for the country,

And now, a foreman, you long for the city, the baths, the circus.
Horace’s steward apparently has developed a marked preference for city life, especially for the “recreation” it provides as further lines in this *Epistle* show:

... Nam quae deserta et inhospita tesqua
credis, amoena uocat mecum qui sentit, et odit
quae tu pulchra putas. fornix tibi et uncta popina
incutiunt urbis desiderium, uideo, et quod
angulus iste feret piper et tus ocius uua,
nec uicina subest uinum praebere taberna
quae possit tibi, nec meretrix tibicina, cuuis

What you think are lonely, cheerless wastes
everyone like me would call delightful, and hate
what you judge beautiful. Brothels and steaming taverns
make you long for the city – I see it: also the fact that
your patch would grow exotic spices sooner than grapes,
and there’s no neighbouring inn which can supply you with wine,
and no accessible girl to play the pipe for dancing
while you lollipop clumsily around.

---

While brothels, taverns and courtesans with pipes might not be everything that would make up the "good life" of the city dweller, Horace seems to put these forward as representing the chief attractions of city life to someone of a lower status, like his steward. Even Horace, however, finds some aspects of the "good life" in Rome, as he records in *Satires* I.6 (111-128), where he describes a day in the city as consisting of strolling about the markets, the Circus and the Forum, returning home to a frugal dinner. He looks forward, he says, to a morning of reading and writing on the next day after a peaceful night. Banquets, love affairs and festivals are all to be found in the lines of the works of the lyric poets, though, some, like Horace in the lines above, still thought highly of their country retreats.

Some members of the wealthier sections of society may have followed their idea of the "good life" perhaps too far. Petronius' Trimalchio, although a fictional character, provides a picture of such a man who enjoys his wealth and doesn't care what others may think of it. Such a figure, if he had actually existed, would probably have attracted the same criticism that was leveled at historical figures who reveled too much in the pursuit of enjoyment, for example: the emperor Nero.\(^6\)

\(^6\) The Section entitled Luxury and the Law, below, will discuss this further.
PLEASURE GARDENS

In Chapter One, I touched upon pleasure gardens, under the headings of Gardens on Rural Estates, and, Gardens in Town Houses. These gardens, as the name implies, were for enjoyment, rather than profit or utility (although many of those excavated in Pompeii by Wilhelmina Jashemski also contained elements of a kitchen garden among their plantings). For someone like Pliny the Younger, who found his country villa useful for quiet contemplation, the garden was an important adjunct of the villa. Pliny, indeed, in a letter to Domitius Apollinaris (Ep. V.6), describes the garden at his Tuscan villa in some detail:

Ante porticum xystus in plurimas species distinctus concisusque buxo; demissus inde pronusque puluinus, cui bestiarum effigies inuicem aduersas buxus inscripsit; acanthus in plano, mollis et paene dixerim liquidus. Ambit hunc ambulatio pressis uarieque tonsis uiridibus inclusa; ab his gestatio in modum circi, quae buxum multiformem humilesque et etentas manu arbusculas circumit. Omnia maceria muniuntur: hanc gradata buxus operit et subtrahit.

In front of the colonnade is a terrace laid out with box hedges clipped into different shapes, from which a bank slopes down, also with figures of animals cut out of box facing each other on either side. On the level below there is a bed of acanthus so soft one could say it looks like water. All round is a path hedged by bushes which are trained and cut into different shapes, and then a drive, oval like a racecourse, inside which are various box figures and clipped dwarf shrubs. The whole garden is enclosed by a dry-stone wall which is hidden from sight by a box hedge planted in tiers ...

This garden seems to have been a formal walled garden, the box hedges and the topiary implying a symmetrical layout, giving it an almost "Elizabethan" look. He also painted the villa’s surroundings for the reader, set on a height above agricultural country, with views over vineyards and meadows.

Except perhaps for its setting, this garden seems similar to the garden courtyard revealed by archaeology at the Fishbourne villa, or palace, near Chichester in England. This garden, too, was contained between walls, providing a monumental entrance to the villa proper. It had colonnades on all four sides, as Pliny had on at least one side of the garden he has
described above. The garden area and what seem to be pathways were defined by planting trenches which Barry Cunliffe interpreted as garden beds for a hedge of some kind. He describes the shape of the trenches as being “arranged in a regular ornate fashion to create a series of large semicircular and rectangular recesses alternating with each other.” 8 Excavation revealed no signs of garden beds within the recesses. If they contained anything, one must assume that there were statues or other garden ornaments. If these were indeed hedges, they could easily have been of box, as Cunliffe himself suggests. If so, this garden would have looked something like Pliny’s description of his walled garden in the letter quoted above.

Many country villas may have had gardens like these, to provide their owners with relaxation and, perhaps, the contemplation that Pliny describes himself pursuing on his estate in the letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The majority of those reconstructed with any detail by archaeology are in Pompeii and its surrounding area. Investigations into villas in other parts of the empire have revealed gardens there as well. 9

9 References to some of these excavations can be found in Chapter One under the heading Gardens Outside Italy.
ROSES IN PLEASURE GARDENS

Roses had their place in these pleasure gardens. In Pliny's garden, whose description is discussed above, roses grow in a sunny area by one of the inner circuits of the hippodrome:

interioribus circulis (sunt enim plures) purissimum diem recepit. inde etiam rosas effert ... (Ep. V.6.33)

... whereas the inner circuits - for there are several - are in open sunshine; roses grow there.¹⁰

Roses also are depicted in the painted garden scenes on the walls of houses and gardens in Pompeii. The House of the Marine Venus (I1.iii.3), for example, has roses depicted in a wall painting,¹¹ as does also the House of the Wedding of Alexander, on a wall of the garden diaeta, where the rose is supported by a reed.¹² This is the method recommended by

¹² Farrar, Roman Gardens, 171. See Plate 5 for another example of a rose growing on a reed.
Palladius, in order to keep the blooms off the ground and fresh (VI.3.2).\textsuperscript{13}

The painting in the House of the Marine Venus (II.iii.3) depicts a garden with many flowers, including myrtle, oleander and southernwood, as well as roses. In these paintings, it is usually the lower growing plants that are placed in the foreground, as they would have been in an actual garden. Roses can usually be found there, or slightly behind, depending on the size of the plant depicted. It is usually joined in the foreground by such flowers as the lily and the poppy. Jashemski also records another painting in House VII.vi.28, in which a painting was discovered during its excavation in 1905. Roses were depicted, both in full bloom and in the bud in this painting along with oleander and a date palm.\textsuperscript{14}

Another painting was found in House I.ix.5 during excavations in 1951. It was found in a room off the east side of the atrium and depicts a garden behind a lattice fence, with Egyptian statues. The rose is depicted in the foreground, in the company of poppies, Madonna lilies, viburnum and other flowers.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Some older forms of the rose have a bramble-like tendency to trail along the ground. Farrar, however, suggests that Palladius may have been referring to reeds being used in this way in the shipping of roses, rather that in growing them. See Farrar, Roman Gardens, 171. The wall painting mentioned here seems to bear Palladius out. See also my Plate 5.

\textsuperscript{14} W.F. Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 57. She also records that the painting is no longer extant, having been destroyed in WWII.

\textsuperscript{15} Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 2, 74.
In Rome, itself, roses have been found in wall paintings of a subterranean room of the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta. It depicts an ornamental garden which one seems to see as if from a thatched walkway or pergola which the garden surrounds. The garden is set behind a narrow strip of grass and a low fence which appears to be of masonry, rather than of reeds like the fences which are depicted in some Pompeian paintings of gardens. These delightful paintings depict a garden in which all seasons are mingled, with some trees and bushes flowering, while others are fruiting. Birds perch in various places throughout the garden and, Mabel Gabriel records, the feathers are carefully drawn thus giving the birds their realistic appearance.\(^\text{16}\) In front of the wall, low-growing plants are depicted, such as white daisies, periwinkle and poppies. Also here are red and pink rose bushes, many of the flowers in full bloom, some of them in bud.\(^\text{17}\)

Their portrayal is so realistic that Gabriel is of the opinion that some variety of \textit{R. damascena} is represented.\(^\text{18}\)

The so-called “Auditorium of Maecenas”, actually a \textit{nymphaeum} which was once within the Gardens of Maecenas, has garden paintings. Some of

\(^{17}\) Farrar, \textit{Roman Gardens}, 145.
\(^{18}\) The painted roses do bear a close similarity to the \textit{R. damascena bifera} which grows in my own garden. See plate 2 for a modern example. One of the popular names for this variety is, incidentally, the Rose of Paestum. See Chapter One under the section The Rose of Paestum.
the flowers there have been tentatively identified as roses.\textsuperscript{19}

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR ROSES IN PLEASURE GARDENS

Excavations in the garden of the House of the Chaste Lovers (l.x.11) at Pompeii by Anne-Marie Ciarallo revealed the presence there of roses and juniper in straight beds. The roses were identified by microscopic analysis of carbonised wood in six of the excavator's sectors of the garden, and by pollen analysis in two others. It appears that the roses and juniper were alternated in rectangular beds, delineated by trellises of reeds. This pattern of planting would have emphasized the geometry of the beds, while the colour of the roses would have enhanced that of the juniper foliage.\textsuperscript{20} Lindsay Allason-Jones mentions that signs of the rose, in this case its pollen, were found in excavations in Roman Silchester, as well as other flowers, including violet, ox-eye daisy and white campion.\textsuperscript{21} Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine the type of rose. Allason-Jones points out that Britain had several kinds of native rose, but the rose is a hardy traveller, and cuttings could easily have been transported from other parts of the empire and sold in Britain.\textsuperscript{22} Likewise, rose pollen has been discovered at Farmoor in England, but, again, it has not been possible to

\textsuperscript{19} Jashemski, Gardens of Pompeii. Vol. 1, 80.
\textsuperscript{20} A. M. Ciarallo, "Garden of Casa dei Casti Amanti (Pompeii, Italy)", Garden History 21 (1993), 110-116.
DINNER PARTIES, BANQUETS AND CELEBRATIONS

In the previous chapter, the sources for determining the food that the Romans consumed were outlined. Although the atmosphere of the cena was touched upon in that chapter, it will be the focus of this next section.

SOURCES

At a Roman cena, one ate and drank, of course, and was entertained, whether by readings or by dancing girls from Gades. Archaeology and literary sources both give clues to food, drink and entertainment. When we turn, instead, to consider the more intangible elements of such a dinner party, the sources are much fewer. The lyric poets perhaps supply us with the best word pictures of dinner parties and the atmosphere that could be found there. Some of the prose and letter writers also leave us some idea, as Pliny does, for example, in his descriptions of dinner parties he has held or attended. The stories of the more "outrageous" affairs are recorded by various writers, for example in the historians, such as the biographies of

22 Allason-Jones, Women in Roman Britain, 183.
Suetonius. Banquets are sometimes recorded in wall paintings, such as those found in Pompeii, which will be mentioned in more detail below, and are pictured sometimes in mosaics.

THE ROMAN BANQUET

Cicero tells us that dining with friends was known as *conuuiium* (Sen. 13.45). John Donahoe says of a *conuuiium* that it had a “primary emphasis on fellowship and enjoyment”.\(^{24}\) Katherine Dunbabin is of the opinion that “convivial eating and drinking formed one of the most significant social rituals in the Roman world.”\(^{25}\) Pliny’s invitation to his friend at *Epistles* I.15 is, perhaps, closer to what Cicero meant than Nero’s reported gatherings:

> Audisses comoedos uel lectorem uel lyristen uel (quae mea liberalitas) omnes. (*Epistles*, I.15)

You would have heard a comic play, a reader or a singer, or all three if I felt generous.


Nero’s banquets (as Suetonius tells us, see below) probably became, as the night wore on, what the Romans called a comissatio, a drinking party, similar to the Greek symposion. Something like this may be depicted in a wall painting in Pompeii from the triclinium wall of the House of the Chaste Lovers (IX.xii.6). The banqueters seem to be enjoying an outdoor setting, even though the men are portrayed as naked to the waist and the women lightly draped. All of them are holding drinking cups in their hands.

Suetonius tell us in his life of Nero that:

```
paulatim uero inualescentibus uitiis iocularia et latebras omisit
nullaque dissimulandi cura ad maiora palam erupit. epulas a medio
die ad medium noctem protrahebat, refotus saepius calidis piscinis
ac tempore aestiuo niuatis; cenitbatque nonnumquam et in publico,
naumachia praecelsea uel Martio campo uel circo maximo, inter
scortorum totius urbis et ambubaiaurum ministeria. (Nero 27)
```

Gradually, Nero’s vices gained the upper hand: he no longer tried to laugh them off, or hide, or deny them, but turned quite brazen. His feasts now lasted from noon till midnight, with an occasional break for diving into a warm bath or, if it were summer, into snow-cooled water. Sometimes he would drain the artificial lake in the Campus
Marti us, or the other in the Circus, and hold public dinner parties there, including prostitutes and dancing girls from all over the city among his guests.\textsuperscript{26}

Suetonius lists long banquets first among Nero’s more flagrant vices. To the modern reader this may seem a trifling complaint. The Romans, however, especially those of a more conservative nature, would have found such a vice quite indefensible. The cena, the main meal of the day, as I have observed above,\textsuperscript{27} was taken at the conclusion of the day’s business, that is, at about the eighth hour in winter and at the ninth hour in summer. Martial, for example, invites a friend to dinner and tells him to arrive at the eighth hour (Ep. XI.52). It must have seemed ludicrous to his fellow Romans for Nero to begin a banquet, essentially an evening meal, at noon. It would, among other things, prevent the attendees from carrying on any state or personal business in the hour or two immediately following noon, and seriously curtail any business that could be conducted in the morning, since the attendees would need to bathe and dress before attending. Likewise, rising from dinner at midnight was probably not considered respectable by the more staid members of society. Juvenal touches on this habit in Satire 8.11-12, where he condemns playing at dice all night and sleeping as the morning star is rising, that is, when one should

\textsuperscript{27} In the section on Food in Chapter 2.
be rising to commence the day's business. Petronius, likewise, in his satirical novel, has Trimalchio reviving his guests as his banquet continues, by leading them to his bath house, so that they may refresh themselves in order to continue the feasting far into the night (Sat. 72-73). Suetonius in the above passage is also at pains to point out that some of the "guests" at these dinners were not respectable, prostitutes and dancing girls among them. This would again make such banquets notorious to more conservative upper class Romans who would more likely have dined with members of their own class, or with their clients. ²⁸

Banquets could also be an opportunity for a host to show to his guests his wealth and prestige. It is perhaps no accident that many of the finest mosaics come from rooms that have been recognized as *triclinia* by their excavators. ²⁹ It seems to have been the habit also to display one's best silver or other precious material tableware on a sideboard so that guests to the house might see them and admire them. The sideboard for such a display was known as an *abacus* or *mensa uasaria*. One of these, with its display of silver drinking ware, rather than tableware, is depicted in a wall painting from the Tomb of Vestorius Priscus. ³⁰

²⁸ Pliny mentions dining with freedmen in *Ep. II.6*. Presumably these were his clients, and the clients of Pliny's host. They would seem to be the guests provided with the cheaper dinner.
²⁹ It must be remembered, however, that the discovery of fine mosaics may also lead to a room being recognized as a *triclinium*. Patricia Witts discusses this in a Romano-British context in "Mosaics and Room Function: The Evidence From Some Fourth-Century Roman-British Villas", *Britannia* 31 (2000), 291-324.
³⁰ This painting is reproduced in Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet* as her figure 44.
ROSES AT CONVIVIA

Horace, in his *Carmina* (III.19.22) gives an order to his slave: *sparge rosas!* He is urging his companions to enjoy themselves, to keep the wine flowing and the music playing - and to “scatter roses”. I have previously mentioned (in the section on The Rose as a Commercial Crop, above), a wall painting from Pompeii, now in the Museo Nazionale, Naples, depicting a banquet scene. The tables have not yet been brought in, as one guest is having his outdoor shoes removed. One guest is already drinking, while another is being aided to stand, perhaps by a slave, and looks as if he has been drinking for some time. There are rose petals scattered on the floor, reminiscent of Horace’s “sparge rosas”.\(^\text{31}\) In the line before this, he has stated:

\[
\text{parcentis ego dexteras odi:}
\]

“I hate the sparing right hand,” as if the drinking, music and scattering of the roses are extravagant acts. Here is the rose in, I consider, its most

joyful setting, among drinking and music, and, in a small way, involved with luxury. Horace seems to think, here, that the wine and the music and the roses are a happy combination. Among the lyric poets he is not alone. The rose appears often in their works in this environment. Ovid observes in the *Fasti* that:

\[
\text{donec eras mixtus nullis, Acheloe, racemis,} \\
\text{gratia sumendae non erat ulla rosae.} \\
\text{(*Fasti* V.343-344)}
\]

So long as the grape wasn't mixed with branch water there was no charm in picking roses.\(^\text{32}\)

Horace, perhaps, more than the other lyric poets, seems to see the rose in this fashion. Here, again, in *Carmina* I.36.15, says:

\[
\text{neu desint epulis rosae}
\]

"Let not roses be lacking at the feast." This feast is a celebration in honour of two friends returning from the east. He calls for roses again in *Carmina* II.3.13-14, in a "live, drink, be merry, for tomorrow you die" theme:

huc uina et unguenta et nimium breuis
flores amoenae ferre iube roae

"Order them to bring here wine and perfumed oils and the too short-lived, beautiful flowers of the rose."

The short-lived bloom of the rose "nimium breuis ... flores ... roae", may also allude to the shortness of life. D. West sees Horace's use of the rose here as saying that death is not welcome at the feast.33 Again, as a celebration, this time for Maecenas, Horace promises to provide:

Tyrrhena regum progenies, tibi
non ante uerso lene merum cado
cum flore, Maecenas, rosarum et
pressa tuis balanus capillis ... (Carm. III.29.1-4)

Maecenas, descendant of many Tuscan kings,
There's a jar of excellent country wine at my house,
Unopened, pure, saved specially for you,
And garlands of roses, and oil of balsam, too, ...34

---

Gordon Williams comments that Horace has “everything” ready for a drinking party, that is, “wine, roses and balsam for the hair.”

Propertius, as well, looks for roses at his feasting in *Elegiae* IV.6.71-74:

>candida nunc molli subeant conuiuia luco:
>blanditiaque fluant per mea colla rosae,
uinaque fundantur prelis elisa Falernis,
>perluat et nostras spica Cilissa comas.

Now let the white-clothed banqueters enter the leafy grove, and the charm of roses stream around my neck; let wine crushed in Falernian presses be poured, and let Cilician saffron drench my locks.

When Propertius throws a party (believing his girlfriend to be out of town), he arranges for everything needed for an enjoyable evening, a “wine, women and song” affair:

---

unus erat tribus in secreta lectulus herba.
quaeris discubitus? inter utramque fui.
Lygdamus ad cyathos, uitrique aestiua supellex
et Methymnaei grata saliua meri.
Miletus tibicen erat, crotalistria Byblis
(haec facilis spargi munda sine arte rosa),
Magnus et ipse suos breuiter concretus in artus
iactabat truncas ad caua buxa manus. (El. IV.8.35-42)

A couch for three was set out in a garden screened from view. You ask how we were placed? I was between the two. Lygdamus was in charge of the cups; there was a summer glassware service, and a Lesbian wine of choice vintage. Miletus our piper, Byblis played the castanets (she in her artless elegance happy to be pelted with roses); and Lofty himself, his limbs shrunken into his knotted frame, clapped stunted hands in time to the boxwood flute.

It is little wonder that Cynthia, returning unexpectedly, flies into a rage at the sight of this gathering. Propertius with a girl on either side surrounded by wine, music and a dancing girl "pelted with roses" would have told her exactly what was going on in her absence!

The rose did not appear only at private parties. The Syrian hostess in her
song in the *Copa* 7 promises the traveller:

sunt topia et calybae, cyathi, rosa, tibia, chordae ...

Here are panelled booths and cabins and goblets, roses, flutes ... \(^{37}\)

Even more is promised as the poem continues:

sertaque purpurea lutea mixta rosa ... (*Copa* 14)

and saffron chaplets blended with scarlet roses ...

et grauidum roseo necte caput strophio, (*Copa* 32)

and entwine your drooping head in a coronet of roses.

**ROSE CHAPELTS**

The rose at the *conuiuium* had many uses. It was used in chaplets, as Pliny tells us,\(^ {38}\) even if he seems to have had a more staid use of chaplets in mind, that is, in religious rites. In this less sober atmosphere, chaplets may have been used as a form of decoration. Their scent, also, would have added another element to an already full sensory experience. The

---


\(^{38}\) Garlands and chaplets are treated more fully in Chapter One above entitled: The Rose as a Commercial Crop, I will continue to use the word chaplet to mean a wreath worn on the head.
rose chaplet, indeed, came to symbolize for many this flippant and luxurious use to such an extent, that, as Pliny the Elder records:

L. Fuluius argentarius bello Punico secundo cum corona rosacea interdiu e pergula sua in forum prospexisse dictus ex auctoritate senatus in carcerem abductus non ante finem belli emissus est. (NH XXI.6).

In the second Punic war, L. Fuluius, a banker, who was said to have looked out into the Forum from his verandah wearing, in the daytime, a chaplet of roses, was, on the authority of the Senate, led away to prison, not being released before the end of the war.\(^{39}\)

Not only had this unfortunate banker been seen wearing a chaplet from a dinner the night before which had obviously gone on until an indecent hour, but, to make matters worse, it happened to be a rose chaplet, a sign, perhaps, that the dinner had been of a luxurious nature. In the course of a difficult war, this must have seen as an affront to the war effort, if not to decency.

LUXURY AND THE LAW

Pliny’s sensible dinner invitation (part of which is quoted above) seems to be an affair that offers fine dining in a comfortable and dignified atmosphere, while that of Nero, or that devised by Petronius for his rich freedman to host, seems, by contrast, a rowdier and more luxurious banquet. The Romans themselves saw this conflict between the simple ways of their ancestors and the luxury loving customs that they were now encountering in everyday life. Sallust blames it all on Sulla, who allowed his troops to be corrupted by the luxury of Asia (Cat. XI.4). Among the vices which the troops were exposed to, he includes the admiration of statues and paintings. According to him, “luxury and greed, united with insolence, took possession of our young manhood”\(^4^0\) (iuuentutem luxuria atque auaritia cum superbia inuasere).

Livy, on the other hand, blames Marcellus’ success over Syracuse (211 B.C.) and Vulso’s over Asia (187 B.C.) for introducing Greek art (in the form of booty displayed at triumphs).\(^4^1\) Of course, luxury was more than just art and artworks. The conquest of empire brought other luxury-loving tendencies to Rome, including the wearing of expensive perfumes and clothes as well as gourmet cooking. Jasper Griffin states that “cookery was


\(^4^1\) Livy XXXVII.54 and XLV.27.
another art despised, so their descendants believed, by the good old Romans of the past.\textsuperscript{42}

The authorities reacted to this growth of the love of luxury by passing various laws at different times in an effort to curb these, to them, dangerous practices. The importation of luxury perfumes was forbidden in 189 B.C. (Pliny \textit{NH} XIII.24). Plutarch tells us that Sulla passed a sumptuary law (\textit{Sulla} 35), while Julius Caesar tried to restrict the wearing of Tyrian cloth and pearls according to Suetonius (\textit{Div. Jul.} 43). More were to follow but with little success. Griffin sums up the reasons for their failure as being the lack of an adequate police force to enforce these laws and that "it must also have been true that public opinion, whatever moralists might say, did not really want them enforced."\textsuperscript{43}

THE ROSE AND "LUXURIOUS EXCESS"

Among the dinner parties that Suetonius uses as an example of Nero's vices, was a kind of \textit{conuiuium} which Suetonius calls a rose party, \textit{rosaria} (\textit{Nero} 27.3). Suetonius records that Nero spent more than 40,000 sesterces on this banquet alone. B. H. Warmington in his commentary on


\textsuperscript{43} Griffin, "Augustan Poetry and the Life of Luxury,"
the *Nero* calls this a "lavish expenditure on roses".\[^{44}\] It is unfortunate that Suetonius does not give us more detail concerning this party. Perhaps it was a kind of themed banquet, with roses scattered around and worn on clothing as well as on the head, or some kind of rose theme to the food that was served. This kind of extravagance with the rose has led Allen Paterson to state that "roses became the hallmark of extravagance and licentiousness in the Roman world."\[^{45}\] Perhaps it was this attitude which made Fulius' blunder so grievous during the Punic Wars. In later ages than Fulius' the rose would be poured onto guests, as was taken to an extreme by Elagabalus, who is recorded as actually suffocating his guests with them (Cassius Dio 79). They could also be spread underfoot as a carpet, as done by none other than Cleopatra VII of Egypt at Tarsos, when she entertained Marcus Antonius to a banquet on board her barge. Socrates of Rhodes (*Athenaeos* IV, 147 ff) records that she spent a talent on roses and had the floors of the dining rooms strewn with them to a cubit deep as well as having them hung over everything like nets.

Verres, when

Cicero condemns a governor of Bithynia, for his extravagance with roses:

\[
\text{nam, ut mos fuit Bithyniae regibus, lectica octaphoro ferebatur, in qua puluinus erat perlucidas Melitensis rosa fartus; ipse autem}
\]

coronam habebat unam in capite, alteram in collo. reticulumque ad
naris sibi ad mouebat tenuissimo lino, minutis maculis, plenum
rosae. (*In Verrem*, V.11)

For, as was the custom in Bithynian regions, he was carried by eight
men in a litter, in which was mattress stuffed with the bright roses of
Miletus; he himself, also, wore garlands, one on his head, and
another at his neck. And he would move a net of the finest linen,
with tiny specks, full of roses, to his nose.

THE ROSE AND SEDUCTION

As befitting a flower that was held to be associated with Venus, the rose
had its place in seduction and love-making.\(^{46}\) To be seduced, a woman
should first be seductive. Part of the process of acquiring the seductive
beauty necessary for this was to use cosmetics. Ovid has left us a recipe
of a cosmetic that he recommends in *Medicamina faciei feminineae* (91),
which includes myrrh, oil and dried roses (perhaps rose petals?). This
would scent the skin and perhaps soften it.

\(^{46}\) This theme with regard to the poets will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Six, The Rose in
Literature.
Roses, however, could be used in other ways in the art of seduction.

Apuleius, in *Metamorphoses* describes a scene of intended love-making:

```
commodum cubueram et ecce Photis mea, iam domina cubitum
reddita, laeta proximat, rosa serta et rosa soluta in sinu tuberante
(Met. II.16)
```

I had just reclined when suddenly Photis, who had already put her mistress to bed, entered gaily with rose wreaths and loose roses swelling in the fold of her gown.\(^{47}\)

Lucius describes how these garlands and flowers were used:

```
Ac me pressim deosculato et corollis reuincto ac flare
```

She kissed me close and bound me with garlands and showered me with blossoms.

Catullus (Carm. VI.7-8) also mentions a flower garland *sertis ... fragrans* draped about a couch on which love-making has taken place. Flowers and

---

nights of passion would seem to have had an association in the minds of several of the poets, so it should not be surprising if the rose was singled out in Apuleius' scene.

Horace equates the rose with love and love-making in Carmina III.15.13-16, where he tells Chloris, a poor man's wife (uxor pauperis), that she is too old to compete with her daughter in the "game of love":

\[
\begin{align*}
te \ lanae \ prope \ nobilem \\
tonsae \ Luceriam, \ non \ citharae \ decent \\
nec \ flos \ purpureus \ rosae \\
nec \ poti \ uetulam \ faece \ tenus \ cadici.
\end{align*}
\]

Knitting wool from Luceria is what's right; What isn't right is the music of the lyre In an atmosphere of dark red blooming roses, And the wine-jar emptied in the evening revel.\textsuperscript{48}

Williams in his commentary to this ode states "the last three lines of the poem linger over the details of a luxurious drinking party ..." \textsuperscript{49}, where,

\textsuperscript{48} Translation: Ferry, The Odes of Horace.
perhaps, "the game of love" was played out, among the wine and roses.50

CONCLUSION

The Roman ideal of the "good life" could vary between individuals and social classes. To someone like Pliny the Younger, it could mean a quiet, ordered life at his country villa. Horace seems to think that his steward’s idea of a "good life" is to be in the city with its many diversions. Pleasure gardens were an adjunct of the "good life" to some. Pliny the Younger describes such a garden at his villa, for example, where roses grew. Wall paintings depict such pleasure gardens in Pompeii especially, and in the garden room of Livia’s villa at Prima Porta. In many of these, roses are depicted in flower and in bud.

Dinner parties were social occasions on which food was eaten, wine drunk and guests were entertained. Roses were present at these affairs, as chaplets worn by the guests or as petals strewn on the floor, as is portrayed in a wall painting from Pompeii. Horace, particularly, equates celebration with roses.

50 Ovid gives us a good idea of how this could be discreetly done in Amores 1.4.20-50, with the help of a cloak draped strategically.
Roses were present, also, when celebration was taken to excess, as in the feasts of Nero mentioned by Suetonius. Indeed, the rose became to some a sign of such luxurious excess, for example: when Lucius Fuluius was accused of appearing at an indecent hour wearing a rose chaplet during one of the Punic Wars. Cicero uses the habit of lying on a mattress of rose petals to attack Gaius Cornelius for luxurious excess. Dinner parties could also be a venue for seduction, and then the rose was present as well. It was also present in scenes of love making, as in the scene from Apuleius. In the facets of the "good life" discussed above, the rose can be seen to be an important part of the ideal, perhaps even a necessary part.

In the following chapter, the role of the rose in religious ritual and in the commemoration of the dead will be examined.
Roses were grown in gardens and sold in markets. They were used to manufacture perfume and to flavour wine. The rose was used to contribute to the atmosphere of banquets and as an aid in the art of seduction. Roman citizens would have also used roses within their homes to honour their household gods, or may have taken them to temples as offerings to the greater gods. They also would have used them as offerings to the spirits of the departed and to adorn tombs of departed family members. Indeed, in this last function, the rose had its own festival, the Rosalia, which will be discussed below. This chapter will examine these, the more solemn, uses of the rose.
RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

TRADITIONAL ROMAN RELIGION

The Romans in the era we are discussing were polytheists, that is, they worshipped a pantheon of gods. Many of these gods, at first glance, may seem to be simply Greek gods under other names. Apollo, indeed, didn't even change his name but was worshipped by Greeks and Romans under the same one, Apollo. The Capitoline Triad, that is the three deities who were worshipped in the great temple on the Capitol, said to have been built in the first year of the Republic, were Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno and Minerva. They may well have been known in the Greek-speaking provinces of the Empire as Zeus, Here and Athene. Roman deities took on many of the characteristics of these Greek gods and goddesses after the Romans came into contact with the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Southern Italy. Those gods who were seen as having similar functions to those of a Greek deity became identified closely with that god or goddess, eventually absorbing the myths that surrounded him/her.¹ The myths told about these gods in later eras, as, for example, Ovid sets them down in the *Metamorphoses*, were the Greek myths. There were Roman myths, as
J. A. North points out,\(^2\) concerned more with the founders and early heroes of the city of Rome than with the gods. Many of the deities of early Rome were agricultural deities, for example: Ceres, Terminus, and even Mars, who, before his identification with Ares, was possibly a god of vegetation.\(^3\)

There were also the lesser gods, that is, not those worshipped by the state in the great temples. Some of these were gods of the home. Perhaps the most commonly met with of these were the *Lares* and the *Penates*. There are several theories concerning the exact origin and function of these two groups of gods.\(^4\) Jashemski states that the *Penates* are the spirits that guard the family's supply cupboard and that the *Lares* were connected with the spirits of the family dead.\(^5\) They were worshipped in the home and often had a small shrine somewhere in the house, called a *lararium*, which would be decorated with flowers and have offerings placed before them on certain festivals, as Cato tells us (*de agri cultura*, CXLIII.2). Such shrines have been found in the

---

\(^1\) Only the barest outline can be attempted here. J. A. North, *Roman Religion* (New Surveys in the Classics; no. 30) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for the Classical Association, 2000) is a good summary.

\(^2\) North, *Roman Religion* 4-5.

\(^3\) The vegetation may have been wild vegetation, rather than domesticated. See the entry Mars in *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 335.


houses of Pompeii, for example: in IX.ix.11, where the shrine was in the garden.  

The act of worship, which in this chapter will be referred to as religious observance, usually involved animal sacrifice and the sacrifice of food and liquid. The food offerings were often in the form of specially prepared sacrificial cakes, made of flour from spelt wheat and salt. Cato gives a recipe for two types of sacrificial cakes, which he calls *libum* and *placenta* (*de agri cultura* LXXV, LXXVI). Animals sacrificed included cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and various birds, one at a time, as in the kid of Horace's promised sacrifice to the Bandusia fountain (*Carm. III.13. 3-5*), or several at a time. One of these multiple sacrifices was known as the *suovetaurilia*, and consisted of the sacrifice of a pig, a sheep and a bull. This form of sacrifice in a country setting is described by Cato (*de agri cultura* CXLII).  

Roman ritual was laid down by tradition and was very strictly observed. This has led to it being seen as North points out “as a dry and highly ritualized religion with few if any concessions either to religious self-

---

7 Incidentally, Cato's instructions are to dedicate these sacrifices to Mars in his guise as an agricultural deity.
expression or imagination about the role of gods in the life of men.\textsuperscript{8}
Household observance was usually led by the paterfamilias in his role as head of the family, although certain ritual functions were ascribed to the women of the house, for example: the decorating of the lararium on certain special days, as Cato prescribes for the uilia on a farm (de agri cultura CXLIII.2).

**SOURCES FOR ROMAN RELIGION**

Religion to the Romans was so inextricably entwined into their normal lives that it permeates most of the sources already cited in earlier chapters. Religious observance in the life of an estate is recorded by Cato and by Varro, among others, as well as being described by poets: Propertius, for example. Horace mentions sacrifice and festivals in several of his Odes. Elements of the cult of Isis surface in the lyric poets, and to quite a large degree in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* give us an insight into Greek myths in a Roman context, while his *Fasti*, only half of which survive, unfortunately, attempt to give a verse rendition of the sacred calendar of the Roman year. Cicero has left us with two books directly concerned with religion, *De divinatione* and *De natura deorum*.

\textsuperscript{8} North, *Roman Religion*, 4.
Religion is depicted in Roman art in many contexts. Scenes from myths are found in wall paintings and mosaics: for example, in Pompeii and Herculaneum. The *Ara Pacis Augustae* depicts a state sacrifice as part of the frieze that decorates the sides of the altar's enclosure. It seems to depict a procession of the imperial family to a *suovetaurilia* sacrifice. Other altars also survive and some of the temples themselves to give us an idea of the setting in which the rituals would have taken place. *Lararia* can still be seen in the houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum, some of them with painted garlands to show us how they would have looked when they were decorated for festivals.

FLOWERS IN RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

As we have already seen, Cato suggests that the *uilica* on an estate should hang garlands in the house on feast days and certain days of each month,\(^9\) while Pliny the Elder examines, at some length, the history of chaplets, reminding us that they were originally worn during religious observance (*NH* XXI). Mention has also been made of various wall paintings in Pompeii, one of which shows cupids leading a cow

---

\(^9\) In the section on Garlands, Chapter 1, The Rose as a Commercial Product.
whose horns have been adorned with flowers for the Vestalia. The practice of decorating working animals with flower garlands is attested to by Ovid, *Fasti*, VI.311-312 (from Ovid's description of the Vestalia):

Ecce coronatis panis dependet asellis,

et uelant scabras florida serta molas.

Look at the bread hanging down from garlanded asses, and wreaths of flowers festooning rough millstones.

Even from these few examples, we can see that flowers certainly had their place in religious observance in Roman religion. Jashemski says that "garlands played an important part in religious worship". Many lararia in the houses of Pompeii, for example, have garlands of flowers painted upon them, some even being found with hooks from which such garlands could have been hung. Tibullus also mentions this practice (*El*. II.1.59-60):

rure puer uerno primum de flore coronam

fecit et antiquis imposuit Laribus;

---

It was a country child first fashioned of spring flowers

a diadem to crown the ancient Lares.\textsuperscript{14}

Tibullus also tells us of other times and places for adorning religious objects with flowers. In the following, it is a stone at a crossroads (\textit{El.} I.1.11-12):

\begin{quote}
\textit{nam ueneror seu stipes habet desertus in agris}
\textit{seu uetus in triuio florida serta lapis.}
\end{quote}

For I pray at every solitary tree-stump in the fields
or old stone at the cross-roads that is garlanded with flowers.\textsuperscript{15}

In \textit{Elegies} II.1.7-9, Tibullus introduces us to a country festival: \textsuperscript{16}

\begin{quote}
\textit{soluite uinclia iugis: nunc ad praeseepia debent}
\textit{plena coronato stare boues capite.}
\end{quote}

Unstrap the yokes. Today the oxen are to stand
at laden mangers, garlanded with flowers.

\textsuperscript{14} Translations from Tibullus in this section are from: G. Lee, \textit{Tibullus. Elegies}. 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (Leeds : Francis Cairns, 1990).
\textsuperscript{15} Lee comments that this probably refers to Terminus, god of boundaries. See Lee, \textit{Tibullus}, 114.
\textsuperscript{16} Probably the \textit{Ambarvalia}, See Lee, \textit{Tibullus}, 146.
Some festivals, especially that of Flora, had a greater emphasis on flowers and garlands than others. Ovid, for example, devotes much of Book 5 of his *Fasti* to Flora and her festival (*Fasti*, V.183-378). In the *Fasti*, as well, Ovid tells us that Bacchus loves flowers (*Bacchus amat flores, Fasti* V.345) and that flowering plants are a delight to Lucina (*Fasti* III.253):

```
ferte deae flores: gaudet florentibus herbis
    haec dea; de tenero cingite flore caput.
```

Bring flowers to the goddess: in flowering plants this goddess delights. Garland your heads with delicate flowers.

**ROSES IN RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

There is a little poem in the *Appendix Vergiliana*, which begins the *Priapea* (*Priapea* I):

```
Vere rosa, autumno pomis, aestate frequentor
    spicis: una mihi est horrida pestis hiems;
    nam frigus metuo et uereor, ne ligneus ignem
    hic deus ignauis praebet agricolis.
```
In spring I am covered with roses, in autumn with fruits, in summer with ears of corn: winter alone is to me a horrid time. For I dread the cold, and fear that your god of wood may be used for fuel by rude yokels.\textsuperscript{17}

These four lines tell us what sort of offerings a country god would likely be given during the course of a year. The rose here is given first place as a spring offering. The older European roses are, indeed, spring flowers, unlike the roses of today which, if they bloom in spring, do so towards the end of the season.\textsuperscript{18} The rose became associated for this reason with various other deities and their festivals. Lucretius, for example, picturing a progress of Cybele, the \textit{Magna Mater}, or Great Mother of Asia includes brass and silver being strewn before her and:

\[\ldots\text{ninguntque rosarum floribus umbrantes matrem comitumque cateruam.}\]

\textit{(De rerum natura II.627-628)}

\[\ldots\text{and scatter over her a snow-shower of roses, o'er shadowing the mother and her troops of attendants.}\textsuperscript{19}\]

\textsuperscript{17} Translations of \textit{Appendix Vergiliana} in this section: H.R. Fairclough, \textit{Virgil. Aeneid} 7-12; \textit{Appendix Vergiliana}. Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{18} That is, in their homelands. As I have observed above (Chapter One) the rose has acquired different growing and blooming habits in other parts of the world.

Ovid’s *Fasti* mentions roses being connected with the festivals of Flora, Venus, and Lucina. For the festival of Flora, Ovid (*Fasti* V.335-336) tells us that:

```latex
\text{tempora sutilibus cinguntur tota coronis,}
\text{et latet iniecta splendida mensa rosa}
```

At parties every brow is wreathed with chains of flowers and the polished table is piled with roses.

At the *Vinalia*, as well, when prostitutes made offerings to Venus Erycina, Ovid advises them to (*Fasti* IV.869-870):

```latex
\text{cumque sua dominae date grata sisymbria myrto}
\text{tectaque composita iuncea uincla rosa.}
```

Give our lady pleasing mint along with her myrtle And a basket covered with an arrangement of roses.
THE CULT OF ISIS

Isis was a goddess whose origins lay in Egypt. She was a very ancient goddess in that country, being known and represented for almost the entire span of Pharaonic history. In the myth as handed down by Plutarch, in the *De Iside et Osiride*, Isis was the sister/wife of Osiris, King of the West, that is, the land of the dead. Following the murder of her brother/husband, Isis was instrumental in his resurrection and the nurture and upbringing of their son Horus. In Pharaonic art, Isis is often to be seen in the company of her sister Nephthys mourning for, and protecting, the deceased. Isis became, therefore, a goddess who was associated with resurrection, nurturing and protection.

During the Ptolemaic era of Egyptian history, Isis became the consort of the god Serapis (or Sarapis), who embodied many of the aspects of her Pharaonic consort Osiris, and a mystery cult was developed around her. This cult then spread beyond Egypt, even to the city of Rome itself. At times it was a fashionable cult, particularly with women; at others, it was expelled from the city. Whatever its official status, however, it
remained a popular religion until the end of paganism in the late Empire.\textsuperscript{20}

ROSES AND ISIS

Isis is associated with the rose most strongly in the pages of Apuleius' novel, \textit{Metamorphoses}, sometimes known as the \textit{Golden Ass}. The hero of the novel, a young man by the name of Lucius, has been transformed, mistakenly, into a donkey. The cure, he is told, is to eat roses. For the remainder of the novel, he vainly attempts to do so, while passing into, and out of, the hands of various owners. One of these attempts is in a stable, where there is an altar dedicated to Epona, the Celtic goddess.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{quote}
\textit{... in ipso fere meditullio Eponae deae simulacrum residens aediculae, quod accurate corollis roseis equidem recentibus fuerat ornatum. (Met III.27)}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{... a statue of the goddess Epona seated in a little shrine at almost the exact midpoint of the central pillar supporting the}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{20} See R. E. Wiitt, \textit{Isis in the Ancient World} (Baltimore, MD : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
\textsuperscript{21} Epona's name has been translated as the "Great Mare." She is known from a number of dedications in the Celtic areas of the Empire. According to Thomas Powell in his article in the \textit{Oxford Classical Dictionary}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 402, she was most often depicted as mounted on a horse.
stable's roof beams. The statue had been carefully decorated with garlands of roses, fresh roses.\textsuperscript{22}

Lucius is eventually visited by a vision of the goddess Isis herself, who offers him salvation in the following way:

\begin{quote}
Nam meo monitu in ipso procinctu pompae roseam manu dextera sistro cohaerentem gestabit coronam. Incunctanter ergo dimotis turbulis alacer continuare pompam mea volentia fretus, et de proximo clementer uelut manum sacerdotis osculabundus rosis decerptis, pessimae mihique iam dudum detestabilis beluae istius corio te protinus exue. (Met. XI.6)
\end{quote}

At my command, my priest, as part of his equipment for the procession, will carry in his right hand a garland of roses attached to the sistrum. So, do not hesitate, but eagerly push through the crowd and join the procession, relying on my good will; go right up to the priest and gently, as if you were going to kiss his hand, pluck the roses and cast off at once the hide of that wretched beast which I have long detested.

\textsuperscript{22} Translations from Apuleius' \textit{Metamorphoses} in this section from: J. Arthur Hanson, \textit{Apuleius, Metamorphoses} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).
Lucius follows the goddess’ instructions and is transformed back into human form. He then dedicates himself to the worship of Isis. Roses have other connections with the goddess Isis apart from the pages of Apuleius’ novel. For example: there is an altar dedicated to Isis, which was discovered in Rome and bears different scenes from the rituals of Isis on each of its four faces. On one side is a relief of a worshipper crowning himself with roses. R. E. Witt calls the rose the flower of Isis. Isis would then seem to have appropriated the rose at some time after her adoption by the Ptolemaic Greeks in Egypt, since the rose is not attested there in pre-Ptolemaic times. Isis became identified “with all the purely anthropomorphomorphic goddesses of the Graeco-Roman pantheon” a development reflected by Apuleius who has Isis proclaim her many names to Lucius in *Metamorphoses*, among them Pessinunctia (among the Phrygians), Artemis, Aphrodite, Dictynna (on Crete), Proserpina, Demeter, Juno, Bellona and Hecate (*Met. XI.5*).

When she assumed the attributes of so many other goddesses, did she assume identification with the rose as well? The rose was, as shown above, connected with other deities in religious observance, such as at the festival of Venus Erycina. Indeed, the association of the rose and

---

25 The rose is one of a list of plants given by Renate Germer as being introduced into Egypt during Roman times. R. Germer, “Flowers” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, editor-in-chief, Donald Redford (Oxford : Oxford University press, 2001), 541-544. Cleopatra VII, however, was well enough acquainted with them to purchase thousands of them in Tarsus. It would perhaps be surprising if the rose had not been grown in Egypt during the Ptolemaic era.
the goddess of love has a long history. Anacreon, in his *Ode* 51 actually associates the birth of the rose with the birth of Aphrodite.

THE ROSING OF THE STANDARDS

The Roman army marched behind its standards. Apart from being a rallying point in the heat of battle, or aiding in maintaining a line of march, the standards were treated with a veneration bordering on the religious. Indeed, Tertullian, a Christian writer of a later era says:

religio Romanorum tota castrensis signa ueneratur,

signa iurat, signa omnibus deis proponit. (*Apologia* 16)

The entire camp religion of the Romans venerates the standards, worships the standards, places the standard before all the gods.

The standards had parts to play in religious ceremonies, being anointed with oil or wreaths. The battle honours of the legion were commemorated on its standards. In a fortress, the standards occupied a prominent place in the *praetorium*, or headquarters building. They were installed in the *sacellum*, a shrine, behind stone screens. Webster
referring to the sacellum, says that "like the altar in a church, this was the focus of religious attention."27

Our knowledge of the festival of the Rosing of the Standards, rosaliae signorum, derives from an entry in the calendar of the garrison stationed at Dura-Europos, known as the Feriale Duranum,28 in which the day before the kalends of June was reserved for the festival of supplicatio for the standards with roses. Herbert Rose, in his article in the Oxford Classical Dictionary, suggests that, during this festival, the standards were probably garlanded with roses.29

Webster agrees but adds that they may have been paraded while garlanded, and that the "carnival element" of the festival may have survived longer than its religious origins. He is also of the opinion that auxiliary uexilla were included as well as the legionary signa.30

28 The Feriale Duranum was edited by R. O. Fink, A. S. Hoey and W. F. Snyder as Yale Classical Studies, 7 (1940).
COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD

SOURCES FOR ROMAN FUNERARY CUSTOMS

The sources for Roman funerals and funerary customs are much the same as for religion. There are references in the poets, for example, as can be seen below. Perhaps the greatest body of evidence which has not been mentioned in detail so far are the gravestones and epitaph inscriptions from graves and tombs. These inscriptions often give a considerable amount of detail concerning the deceased, including name, titles and age at death. Many times the name of the person setting up the stone is also included. Details of the provisions which the tomb owner or builder has made for future use of the tomb and the acquisition of offerings are sometimes also recorded in the tomb.

ROMAN FUNERALS

Funerals among the Roman upper class could be lavish and magnificent affairs, especially if the deceased were of high standing in the affairs of the city or came from a particularly famous and rich family. The deceased was first laid out in the atrium of his house in a kind of "lying-in-state". The atrium would probably have been hung with garlands as pictured in the Tomb of the Haterii. When the time came, the funeral procession would then form and take the deceased to the

30 Webster, The Roman Imperial Army, 135.
site of his funeral pyre, sometimes with a stop in some public space, often the Forum, so that the funeral oration could be given. Among the procession could be men wearing as masks images of the ancestors of the deceased, or carrying busts of them so that onlookers would know of what stock the deceased had come. Professional mourners and funeral directors were also available for those who could afford them.31

The poorer members of society could, however, provide for their funerals and burials, by belonging to a funerary “club”. The members of these provided money at regular intervals, and in return would be provided with a funeral when the time came and a place in the club’s tomb or other burial plot.32

Funeral pyres and cemeteries were often to be found along the roads that led from the gates of cities and towns since such things were not allowed within the town limits. Tombs were often placed here so that they could be noticed by passers-by and so perpetuate the memory of the deceased and his family. Some of them could be grand affairs with their own gardens and enclosures. Tombs for multiple burials are also known. These were probably occupied by families or by the members of the funeral clubs.

32 Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 54-55.
ROMAN FUNERALS AND FLOWERS

In the tomb of the Haterii, south of Rome on the ancient Via Labicana, there is a relief of a lying-in-state of a woman, dating to the late Flavian or early Trajanic period. She is depicted lying on a couch. Hanging up behind her, are two garlands of fruit and flowers. A man stands behind her, holding a heavy flower garland, which he may be about to place on the body. The deceased is also wearing a wreath of flowers on her head. The scene seems to take place in the atrium of a house. Polybius describes such a scene taking place during a Roman funeral, in which the deceased lies in state in the atrium of his or her house. The garlands of flowers and fruit are prominent in the relief and seem to be quite large. Toynbee suggests that the garlands, especially that made of fruit and flowers, may be symbols of “afterlife fertility.” If so, their presence at funerals is easily understood.

Propertius, in regard to his own death, tells us that his girl will adorn his tomb with flower garlands (sertisque sepulcrum ornabit: El. III.16.23-24), perhaps with the same implied symbolism of life beyond the grave.

---

33 This relief is illustrated in Toynbee, Death and Burial, plate 9.
34 Polybius vi.53.
35 Toynbee, Death and burial, 44.
Juvenal (Sat. VII.207) pictures a funeral with "flowers round your urn" (croces ... in urna). The flowers here may have a similar meaning to the garlands in the Tomb of the Haterii. Flowers could also be used during the funeral procession. Pliny records (NH XXI.7) that flowers were scattered all along the processional route of the funeral for a member of the Scipio family.

ROSES AT FUNERALS

Flowers used at funerals were probably of whatever variety was available at the time according to the season. Roses surely would have been used in spring and early summer. The poet Propertius certainly sees roses as being used at funerals, as can be seen from the following:

Illa mea caros donasset funere crines,
molliter et tenera poneret ossa rosa (El. I.17.22)

... she would at my funeral have made offering of her precious hair and gently laid my bones in a soft bed of roses ... 37

ROSES IN TOMBS IN EGYPT

Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie records that he found wreaths of flowers, roses among them, in the Roman period tombs in Egypt.\(^{38}\) Percy Newberry notes that the roses were mostly rose buds. He suggests that the buds were used to prevent the petals from falling as would happen if the fully opened flower had been used.\(^{39}\) He identifies the variety as being the *R. sancta*, which is known today as the *R. richardii*. Petrie also mentions staves of flowers bound together and that the flowers in these flower staves were mainly red roses or immortelles (*Helichrysum stoechas*).\(^{40}\) Germer describes these staves as being offerings to the gods, and sees them as peculiar to the Roman era in Egypt.\(^{41}\)

As well as these physical examples, the Roman period tombs have provided representations of roses on portrait masks, shrouds and cartonnage cases.\(^{42}\) Many of the so-called “Faiyum mummy portraits”\(^{43}\) hold bouquets and garland of roses and rosebuds, sometimes myrtle as

---


\(^{40}\) Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe*, 15.

\(^{41}\) Germer, “Flowers”. See Plate 1, where a flower staff is laid to the left of the box.

\(^{42}\) Cartonnage is a combination of linen and plaster which can be used to form a hard outer shell for a mummified body. It can be moulded much like papier-maché.

\(^{43}\) Not all the mummy portraits are from the Faiyum. The portraits found there by Petrie, though, continue to be the best known. See Susan Walker and Morris Bierbrier (eds) *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1997), 17-20.
well, in their hands, as well as, at times, wreaths of roses or rosebuds in their hair. In one image, on a shroud, now housed in the Louvre, a young man is portrayed as standing between the gods Osiris, ruler of the land of the dead, and Anubis, god of embalming. He is holding in his left hand a sheaf of wheat and rosebuds. Toynbee suggests that "roses were regarded as pledges of eternal spring in the life beyond the grave". Such a meaning, I feel, could be ascribed to their appearance in this shroud. The wheat, likewise, could be carrying a similar meaning, perhaps a continuation of ancient Egyptian symbolism, which saw in the annual growth of wheat the resurrection of Osiris. In Pharaonic times, there was often included among the objects in the tomb, small containers of soil in which wheat seed had been germinated. Many of these were in the shape of the god Osiris. Lisa Manniche in her article on Fertility in the Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, says of them:

"The relation of the fertile soil to the promise of eternal life was

---

44 Walker, Ancient Faces, is the catalogue of the exhibition of these portraits held by the British Museum in 1997, drawing together examples from museums in various countries. The catalogue numbers of the portraits with roses and rosebuds are as follows: 57,58,105,110,119,140,141,142,143,164. The roses/rosebuds appear with both sexes, but, at least in the portraits selected for the British Museum exhibition, seem more common with female subjects.
46 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 63.
visualized in the motif combining the familiar shape of Osiris with a seed tray, a part of the burial equipment.\textsuperscript{47}

Perhaps in this shroud we can see a blending of two traditions, the older Egyptian, and the newer Graeco-Roman, exemplified by the wheat and the roses, both symbolising life beyond the grave.

**ROSES IN FUNERARY GARDENS**

In Chapter One, above, funerary gardens were described. In summary, these gardens mainly were planted around tombs. One of the most famous was that which surrounded the mausoleum of Augustus in Rome. They could be any size, however, depending on the wealth and status of the deceased. In the *Culex*, for example, a poem I have mentioned above, a shepherd builds a tomb for a gnat, which he then surrounds with a garden. The plants in this garden are described by the poet:

\[
... \text{hic et acanthus} \\
\text{et rosa purpureum crescent pudibunda ruborem} \\
\text{et uiolae omne genus; hic est et Spartica myrtus} \\
\text{atque hyacinthus et hic Cilici crocus editus aruo,}
\]

\textsuperscript{47} L. Manniche, “Fertility”, in *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt*, editor-in-chief, Donald B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 518. Perhaps the best known of these “Osiris Gardens” is that discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun, now in the Cairo Museum (Howard Carter’s list no. 488a).
Here are to grow acanthus and the blushing rose with crimson bloom and violets of every kind. Here are Spartan myrtle and hyacinth, and here saffron, sprung from Cilician fields, and laurel, the great glory of Phoebus; here are oleander, and lilies, and rosemary, tended in familiar haunts, and the Sabine plant, which for men of old feigned rich frankincense; and marigold, and glistening ivy with pale clusters, and bocchus, commemorative of Libya's king. Here are amaranth, blooming bumastus, and ever-flowering laurestine.

The description continues with even more flowering plants listed. The selection above includes many flowers known for their scent, not least the rose, which comes second only to the acanthus. The lily is also scented, as are many of the others, for example, the oleander and the rosemary. Such a garden would have been fragrant and brightly coloured. Admittedly, this garden is purely an imaginative one, planted for the grave of a gnat, yet, I believe, it may reflect the sort of flowers
grown in funerary gardens of the time, the inspiration behind the poet’s vision, if you will.

Were roses grown in “real” funerary gardens? An inscription from Nîmes (ancient Nemausus), records one garden where they grew:

mausoleum excoluit et ut esse fru[giferum feci]t positis arboribus uitibus rosariis (CIL xii, 3637)

[He] made his mausoleum fruitful by planting trees, vines and roses”.48

These gardens didn’t always serve only a decorative purpose. The inscription quoted above says that the founder of the garden “made it fruitful”, in Toynbee’s translation, (translating excoluit, meaning to cultivate). The roses in this garden may have been planted with a purpose other than decoration in mind. Funerary gardens could be planted for a practical purpose, such as providing offerings for the deceased, either directly, or in the production of saleable produce, the sale of which could provide funds for acquiring offerings. For example, in the following inscription from northern Italy we see an instruction for the direct provision of offerings:

---

ex horum hortorum reditu natale meo per (=fer(ant)?) rosam in perpetuo ... (CIL, V.7454)

... from whose yield my survivors may offer roses to me on my birthday forever. 49

The owner of the mausoleum in Nîmes may well have had a similar intention for his garden. Again, from northern Italy, from ancient Altinum comes the following inscription in the name of Lucius Ogius:

Hortos cum aedificio huic sepult[ur]a[e] iunctos uiuos donabit ut ex reditu eor(um) largius rosae et esc(a)e patrono suo et quandoque sibi ponerentur. (CIL V. 2176)

... he will give, during his lifetime, gardens, with a building, adjoining his tomb, so that, from their yield, a greater abundance of roses and eatables may be offered to his patron, and, eventually to himself. 50

49 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 98.
50 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 97. Toynbee also remarks (p. 301) that the aedificio possibly refers to another, subsidiary building in the tomb complex, perhaps a dining room for the celebration of the Parentalia and Rosalia.
ROSES AS OFFERINGS

Roses are sometimes listed as offerings for the dead. Toynbee says of roses that they were "regarded as pledges of eternal spring in the life beyond the grave." H. D'Arms states that roses and violets were the flowers most mentioned in the contexts of offerings and adornments for commemorative meals. Toynbee saw the depictions of the rose in tombs, indeed, as perpetuating offerings of roses all year long. Roses could likewise appear on gravestones and cineraria or containers for the ashes of the dead, along with other flowers with similar symbolic meaning, the acanthus, for example. In the inscriptions cited above, the owners of tombs established gardens to ensure a supply of roses. Other arrangements were also made. Funeral clubs, for example, might be responsible for supplying them, as in an inscription, where a husband makes arrangements with the collegium fabrorum on behalf of his wife and son that income from a legacy of 60,000 sesterces should be used to buy roses and place the flowers, presumably, on their tomb (et rosas ponant).

51 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 63.
53 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 63.
54 A fine example of such a cinerarium is held by the ANU Classics Museum and will be examined in more detail in Chapter Seven. See plate 10.
55 CIL V. 4448, cited in Toynbee, Death and Burial, 295.
In Misenum, a man named Cominius left instructions that the *Augustales* should clean, oil and adorn with roses and violets two statues which Cominius had given to the town, allocating sixteen sesterces for this purpose.\(^56\) This was, perhaps, meant to be a "collective ritual act" by the *Augustales*.\(^57\) Iunia Libertas of Ostia left similar instructions for offerings of roses and violets to herself on the occasion of the *Parentalia*.\(^58\) Junia Libertas was not alone in making such preparations. *CIL* V. 02072 also records a similar arrangement to make provision for supplies needed for the *Parentalia*, including roses, while *CIL* V.07906 from the Maritime Alps directs that roses be purchased for the customary dinner in the temple (*in templo*). This could well be another reference to the *Parentalia*. There are also other grave and tomb inscriptions recording similar arrangements for the purchase of roses and the instruction that they be brought to the tomb, for example: *CIL* V.02315, V.04017 and V.07906.

**ROSALIA**

The Roman ceremonies for the dead did not end with the funeral. There were other times when it was expected that families would congregate at the tombs to commemorate the dead. One of these was the

\(^{56}\) D'Arms, *Memory, Money and Status*, 127-128. The statues represented the "twin faces" of Misenum – the Imperial Navy and the town's "civic aspect", *genius municipii*.

\(^{57}\) D'Arms, *Memory, Money and Status*, 128. He also stipulated other commemorative activities, including wrestling contests and a commemorative meal, leaving a legacy to provide the funds. The meal here was to be on the occasion of the *Parentalia*.

Parentalia. This festival usually took place 13-21 February, and involved a commemorative meal at the family tomb or burial place. Public ceremonies, the Feralia, were held on the last day, while the others were taken up by private family observance. Tombs could also be visited on birthdays and other special days, much as is done today.\(^{59}\)

The Rosalia, or dies rostationis, was a festival in which, possibly, the tombs of the dead were garlanded with roses.\(^{60}\) It took place sometime during that part of the year in which roses were at their best. In Europe that would probably have been from late spring to early autumn, that is, May to around August or September, depending on the climate. This festival seems to have been a private affair, never becoming one of the great public festivals. H. Rose records inscriptions from Capua and Rome concerning this festival, taking place on dates ranging from 5 to 26 May in Italy, with later dates, from June to July from Northern Italy and Asia Minor.\(^{61}\)

The Rosalia probably resembled the Parentalia in some ways. After decking the tombs with roses, it is likely that the family ate a commemorative meal among the tombs, sometimes in buildings

\(^{59}\) Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 64.


\(^{61}\) Rose, "Rosalia".
provided for that purpose. Toynbee suggests that portrait statues in the cemeteries may also have been decorated with roses during the Rosalia. The rose here, I think, may not represent a religious usage, so much as a symbolic one. If, indeed, a commemorative meal was part of the Rosalia, the custom of decking the tombs in roses may simply have begun as a means of preparing the “dining room” for a banquet, as would have been done for any other dinner at which an honoured guest was expected. Herbert Rose in his article on the Rosalia, has a similar opinion, stating that “… the honours done in this manner to the dead were a particular case of inviting them to a feast, …”.  

CONCLUSION

Traditional Roman religion was basically polytheistic, the Romans worshipping a pantheon of gods. Ritual was strictly adhered to and led, in a private context, by the paterfamilias in his capacity as head of the household. Part of this private worship involved making offerings to the household gods, including the Lares and Penates, who often had small shrines dedicated to them in Roman house. Flowers were used in this worship: for example, as garlands to decorate shrines in the household and working animals during agricultural festivals. The rose was an

---

62 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 95.
63 Toynbee, Death and Burial, 63.
accepted offering to several deities, including Venus Erycina and Flora. The rose was particularly associated with the goddess Isis. The rose appears prominently in the novel *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius, where the central character is rescued by the goddess by means of eating roses.

Roman funerals involved a lying-in-state in the family home, usually the atrium, which could be hung with garlands for the occasion, and, for the wealthy at least, a grand procession to the place where the body would be burnt or buried. The poorer classes sometimes joined funeral clubs, whereby, for a regular payment, the members could be assured of a funeral and a place in the club’s burial place. Flowers were used at these funerals. The lyric poets often mention the use of flowers at funerals, while Propertius imagines himself lying upon a bed of roses at his own funeral.

Roses were placed in tombs in Egypt, where they have been found, most notably, by Flinders Petrie at Hawara. They were also depicted in many of the so-called mummy portraits from Roman era tombs from the Faiyum in Egypt, where they may have represented a hope for life beyond the grave. Roses were also grown in funerary gardens in order to provide offerings for the deceased, either directly, or indirectly, by providing saleable produce for the purchase of offerings. The Rosalia

---

64 Rose, "Rosalia". 938.
was a funerary festival, in which families gathered at tombs and graves to eat a commemorative meal, after they had decked the tombs with roses. The rose had its uses in the more solemn aspects of Roman society, just as it did in the more frivolous.

To this point the practical uses of the rose have been examined. In the next chapters, the role the rose played in literature and art will be examined, beginning with literature.
CHAPTER SIX

THE ROSE IN LITERATURE

In the previous chapters, I have drawn heavily on the evidence in the literature of Rome to demonstrate the rose's place in the life of Rome. In this chapter, the rose as a literary device will be examined, leaving its more practical uses behind. My aim is to demonstrate the many uses the rose has in Latin literature, both the flower itself and its colouring. Particularly, I will try to draw from these examples the meanings the rose may have been intended to have by the writers of ancient Rome for the readers of this literature, whether they were to see it there for its colour, or its passionate associations, or its call to rejoice. To this end I have scanned a variety of texts, including lyric poetry, epic poetry and epigrams. I have also included some small passages from Plautus and some from prose writers, including the novelist Apuleius.
THE ROSE AND THE DAWN

The Roman poets appreciated the beauty of the colours associated with the morning sky and used the colour of the rose to describe some of them, following on in the tradition of the "rosy fingers" of Homer's famous lines.\(^1\)

The colour of the rose can be seen in these passages to be purely descriptive, evoking the sky as the sun rises. Robert Edgeworth sees the colour description "rosy" in passages dealing with the dawn in the *Aeneid* as being simply that, descriptive.\(^2\) It may also evoke, however, a positive attitude to the coming day, that is, using the term "rosy" much as English does in the figure of speech "seems rosy". Vergil uses *roseus* in a similar manner to Homer to describe the dawn, or, rather the personification of the dawn, in the *Aeneid*. Dawn has a rosy chariot (*roseis ... bigis*), for example, at *Aeneid* VII.26 and VI.535 (*roseis ... quadrigis*). To the poet who wrote the *Lydia*, Aurora has a rosy mantle (*roseo ... amictu*; line 73-74). It is her hair which is rosy to the poet of the *Culex* (*crinibus ... roseis*; line 44). Tibullus uses it in the following fashion (*El.* 1.3.93-94):

... hunc illum nobis Aurora nitentem

Luciferum roseis candida portet equis

---

\(^1\) For example: *Iliad* 1.477, 8.508, 24.788 and *Odyssey* 3.404, among others.

... let Aurora bring me
on her rose-red steeds that shining Morning Star.³

Ovid, likewise, uses similar imagery in Amores I.8.4:

... nigri non illa parentem
Memnonis in roseis sobria uidit equis

... she has never looked with sober eye upon black Memnon’s
mother, her of the rosy steeds.⁴

Lucretius even uses the adjective “rosy” directly with the dawn itself, calling it roseam ... auroram, the “rosy dawn” (De rerum natura V.656). Elsewhere he phrases it as “rosy light” (rosea lumina: De rerum natura V.973).

In the Metamorphoses (II.13-14), the courtyards of Aurora are full of roses (plena rosarum atria). Ovid in this passage is describing the break of day, so the image here is probably not so much of a courtyard with roses, but a courtyard near the front of a house, like an atrium in a Roman house, from which a rosy light has spilled out into the world beyond – in this case the

eastern sky. It is a most apt and, I find, appealing image to invoke the sight of the sky at dawn.

THE ROSE AND SPRING

As I have previously stated, in Chapter One (above), although it is difficult for us to understand, surrounded as we are by roses that bloom late in spring, and early in summer, continuing to bloom into winter in the Australian climate, the old roses of Europe were spring bloomers. They therefore became a symbol of spring in Roman literature and art. From this association may derive their use on sarcophagi and other items of funerary equipment, as has been explored above. The rose is the spring offering, for example, to Priapus in Priapea I of the Appendix Vergiliana, and, according to Ovid’s Fasti, played a part in the Flora, the festival of Flora, goddess of flowers (Fasti V.335-336). Vergil also associates spring and roses in the Georgics (IV.134), when describing a successful farmer:

\[
\text{primus uere rosa ...}
\]

\[
\text{His the first rose of spring.}
\]

---

5 See Chapter Seven, The Rose in Art and Ornament
6 Chapter Five, The Rose in Religious Observance and Commemoration of the Dead.
7 Priapea I.1
Martial (Ep. IX.11.1) uses violets and roses to convey a name that Shackleton Bailey comments "... will not fit into any of M.'s meters", namely εαρ, meaning spring. By using flowers which the Romans equate with spring, the name is made obvious to anyone who knew the connotation:

Nomen cum uiolis rosisque natum
Name born together with violets and roses, ...

He uses the same device in Ep. IX.12, using other symbols of spring, in this case Cecropian bees, Acidalian reeds and cranes. Martial makes this association even more obvious at Ep. XIII.127:

Dat festinatas, Caesar, tibi bruma coronas:
quondam ueris erst, nunc tua facta rosa est.

Winter gives you forced garlands, Caesar. The rose used
To be spring's, now it has become yours.  

---

9 Shackleton Bailey, Martial. Epigrams, vol. II
10 Shackleton Bailey, Martial. Epigrams, vol. II
Propertius, when summing up his life as a poet, actually equates the flower and the season quite firmly, calling the rose “verna ... rosa” (El. III.5.22). Cicero, indeed, equates the rose even more fully with spring in the following sentence:

\[
\text{sed cum rosam uiderat tum incipere uer arbitratur}
\]

\[\text{(In Verrem V.10)}\]

but when he had seen a rose, then he thought that spring had begun.

THE ROSE AS A TERM OF ENDEARMENT

In the plays of Plautus the rose is used in still another fashion, as a term of endearment, as in the following lines from the *Asinaria* (line 664-665):

\[
\text{Da, meus ocellus, mea rosa, mi anime, mea voluptas,}
\]

Leonida, argentum mihi ...

Give the silver to me, Leonida, my eye, my rose, my soul, my desire ...
The wheedling tone of this passage is clear. Leonida is being lavished with the terms of endearment that she has demanded of Philenium for the return of the money in her possession. The other terms relate, indeed, to the speaker himself, "my eye, my soul, my desire". The fourth, the rose, at first sight looks incongruous in such company, unless its associations with love and beauty have given it a meaning something like "my ideal of beauty", or, more likely, "my love". Plautus uses the rose as a term of endearment as well in the *Bacchides* (*ubi tu lepide uoles esse tibi, mea rosa ...: line 49*) and the *Menaechmi* (line 193: *induuiae tuae atque uxoris exuuiiae, rosa*).

**THE ROSE AND BEAUTY**

The Roman elegiac poets were appreciative of human beauty, especially when it belonged to the objects of their writing, their girlfriends and favoured boys. Ovid, for example, in the following extract, shows us his appreciation of Corinna's beauty (*Am. I.5.17-23*):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ut stetit ante oculos posito uelamine nostros,} \\
\text{in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.} \\
\text{quos umeros, quales uidi tetigique lacertos!} \\
\text{forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!} \\
\text{quam castigato planus sub pectore uenter!}
\end{align*}
\]
quantum et quale latus! quam iuuenale femur!

Singula quid referam? nil non laudabile uidi ...

As she stood before my eyes with drapery laid all aside, nowhere on all her body was sign of fault. What shoulders, what arms did I see – and touch! How suited for caress the form of her breasts! How smooth her body beneath the faultless bosom! What a long and beautiful side! How youthfully fair the thigh! Why recount each charm? Naught did I see not worthy of praise ...

Clearly, Ovid believes his Corinna to be beautiful, and in the above passage, gives us some idea of what he considers beautiful in a woman, from the form of her breasts to the fairness of her thighs and the length of her side. Fairness of skin was a characteristic expected of a Roman beauty of this era. Vergil, when describing a blush on the face of Lavinia, says that her natural complexion is the colour of lilies (Aen. XII.68-69). This fairness could be taken to excess by the use of white lead (cerussa) on the face as a form of cosmetic. Martial (Ep. VII.25.2) refers to this custom, referring to skin as cerussata, “white-leaded”. Hair of a golden or light colour could also be considered beautiful,¹² so much so, in fact, that wealthy Roman ladies bleached their hair, using various substances, one of which was

¹² For example, Tibullus I.5.43-44: non fecit hoc uerbis; facie tenerisque lacertis/deuouet et flauis nostra puella comis. “flauis ... comis” “yellow hair”
known as *spuma Bataua*, “Batavian foam”. Pliny the Elder (*NH* XXVIII.191) records ingredients for a product of this kind, which he says was invented in Gaul, consisting of fat and beechwood ashes. Martial also mentions such a foam (*Ep* VIII.33.20):

\[ \text{... et mutat Latias spuma Bataua comas} \]
\[ \text{... and the Batavian foam that dyes Latin tresses.} \]

Ovid, likewise, mentions “German herbs” (*Germanis ... herbis*) in the *Ars amatoria* (III.243-246), in connection with older women dyeing their hair to look better than its original colour.

Sometimes Roman women had recourse to wigs of blonde hair made from the tresses of Germanic women. Balsdon comments that captive German women may have had their hair cut off for sale to the wig makers of Rome to fulfil the demand. Ovid, lamenting that his mistress has lost her hair, tells her, in regard to such a wig of German hair (*Am.* I.14.45-50):

\[ \text{Nunc tibi captiuos mittet Germania crines;} \]

---

13 Balsdon comments that the recipe given by Pliny, when tried in modern times, seems to be a better shampoo than a dye. He speculates that when a German washed their hair, the lighter colour of the clean hair might have made the Romans think that it was a dye. J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 259.


15 Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 258.
tuta triumphatae munere gentis eris.
o quam saepe comas aliquo mirante rubebis,
et dices: "empta nunc ego merce probor,
nescio quam pro me laudat nunc iste Sygambram.
fama tamen memini cum fuit ista mea."

Now Germany will send you tresses from captive women; you will
be saved by the bounty of the race we lead in triumph. O how oft,
when someone looks at your hair, will you redden and say: "The
ware I have bought is what brings me favour now. 'Tis some
Sygambrian woman that yonder one is praising now, instead of me.
Yet I remember when that glory was my own."16

Yet, paleness of skin was not everything that beauty required. Against the
pale face, the beautiful woman would have had colour in her cheeks and
on her lips. It is here, in describing this colour that the rose is used
extensively by the poets. The "rosy" colour (roseus17) that enlivens the
pallor of the fair face and of the lips is to be found in most of the poets.

16 Translation: Barsby, Ovid. Amores I.
17 The colours of the roses that the Romans knew vary considerably from the colours of the roses
we are used to. Thanks to extensive cross-breeding, the modern rose exhibits colour traits of roses
which naturally occur in many different parts of the globe. We are accustomed to see, and, indeed,
expect them to bloom in shades of yellow, bright scarlet reds, mauves and golds. The old European
roses tend to be more restricted in the range of colours. It seems that Roman literary allusion would
have had to make do with white, pale pink and a deep crimson, although the "fiery" red colour of
roses is mentioned by Pliny (NH XXI.10) Poetic descriptions, therefore, of blushing, lips and cheeks,
I believe, are more than realistic if one bears this colour palette in mind.
Edgeworth comments that the use of the adjectives derived from the rose to describe beauty or "sexual attractiveness" should come as no surprise, considering the rose's association with Venus. In the *Aeneid* (XII.606), for example, Virgil describes Lavinia as having "rosy cheeks" (*rosaeas ... genus*). Earlier, to describe Lavinia blushing, the poet likens her blush to the effect of dye on Indian ivory, or:

\[
... aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa
\]
\[
alba rosa, ... (Aen. XII.68-69)
\]

... or white lilies blush when mingled with many a rose ...¹⁹

Turnus is then described by the poet as "being thrown into turmoil" by love at this sight "*turbat amor*" (line 70). Evidently, the blush has heightened Lavinia's attractiveness in his eyes. Ovid, in similar language, describes a blush on the face of a girlfriend, after he has upbraided her for infidelity (*Am. II.5.37*):

---

¹⁸ Edgeworth, "Uses of Color Terms", 68.
... quale rosae fulgent inter sua lilia mixtae, ...
... like roses gleaming among the lilies where they mingle, ...

Virgil goes so far as to equate the colour of the rose with divine beauty. Venus, disguised as a mortal woman, is disclosed as a goddess to the eyes of her son Aeneas thus (Aen. 1.402):

Dixit et auertens rosea ceruice refulsit ...

She spake, and, as she turned away, her roseate neck flashed bright.21

Even when appearing as a goddess to Aeneas, this time during the sack of Troy, her divine beauty is described with the aid of the rose (Aen. II.593):

... roseoque haec insuper addidit ore ...
... speaking with roseate lips.22

However, it is not only Venus with whom Virgil associates the rose in this way. Iris, too, is described as speaking “roseo ... ore”, (Aen. IX.5).

---

20 Translation: Showerman, *Ovid in Six Volumes.*
Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* uses the rose's colour to add the image of divinity of Aurora, Goddess of the Dawn (*Met.* VII.705-706):

... quod sit roseo spectabilis ore,
quod teneat lucis, teneat confinia noctis, ...

... but as truly as she shines with the blush of roses on her face, as truly as she holds the portals of the day and night, ... ²³

This use of *roseo* marks her out as divinely beautiful, but the colour of the rose is often associated with her, since it is one of the colours seen in the sky at dawn, as I noted above.

For the elegiac poets, the rose is used to describe the beauty of mortal women of the here and now, just as Virgil used it to describe that of goddesses and women of legend. Ovid, in one of the few examples from the *Amores*, uses it thus:

• candida candorem roseo suffusa rubore
  ante fuit – niueo lucet in ire rubor (*Am.* III.3.5-6)

Before, she was dazzling fair, and her fairness was mingled with rosy red-the rosy red still glows in her snowy cheeks.\textsuperscript{24}

Propertius, too, uses the imagery of the rose to sing the praises of his girl’s beauty. The following passage, indeed, is similar to Virgil’s description of the lovely blush on Lavinia’s cheek:

\begin{quote}
\textit{ut Maeotica nix minio si certet Hiber}
\textit{utque rosae puro lacte natant folia ... (E./I. II.3.11-12)}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
... as if snows of Scythia were to vie with Spanish vermilion, and like rose-petals floating in pure milk ...\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

Here, instead of roses blooming with lilies, the rose petals are floating in milk. Both images convey quite forcefully the contrast between the colours on a woman’s face that the poets seem to find so attractive.

Martial, describing how a beautiful young bride could still be found when hiding in a pool, explains it in the following way (\textit{Ep. IV.22.5-6}):

\begin{quote}
\textit{condita sic puro numerantur lilia uitro},
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Translation: Showerman, \textit{Ovid in Six Volumes}.
\textsuperscript{25} Translation: Goold, \textit{Propertius. Elegies}.
sic prohibit tenuis gemma latere rosas.

So lilies enclosed in clear glass are counted, so thin crystal does not let roses hide.\textsuperscript{26}

The roses and the lilies here represent the beauty of the bride, shining through the water (\textit{lucebat, totis cum tegetetur aquis}), just as beautiful flowers can be seen through glass. The image of the glass is possibly suggested by the clearness of the water. Perhaps he implies that the glass or crystal or water might even increase the viewer’s perception of beauty. The image is an interesting one. Had the poet actually seen flowers behind glass or thin walls of some carved gemstone vessel? \textit{Gemma} could indicate glass, as in the line above, thereby carrying on the image, or could also indicate gemstone. Vessels of carved gemstone are certainly known from the Roman Empire. Were any of these used to hold flowers, much as a modern vase might be? Or is this image actually describing flower petals floating on water so that they might look as if they have been seen through clear glass? Either of these could be the source of such an image.

Catullus uses \textit{roseis} in another reference to beauty, although this example is perhaps a little more “tongue in cheek”. The poet has asked some

\textsuperscript{26} Translation: Bailey, \textit{Martial. Epigrams}. This image may lead us to wonder if the Romans were in the habit of keeping roses, and flowers in general, in vases in the house as decorations, as we do today.
“pessimae puellae”, the “worst of girls” where his friend Camerius might be. One replies by suggesting that he is hiding in roseis ... papillis “between her rosy breasts.” These women, one suspects, are a long way from the goddesses and heroines of Vergil. One translator has rendered pessimae puellae, indeed, as “low-down whores”. 27 Whoever they are, their humour does seem earthy, but “rosy breasts” may still be referring to a beauty that the poet’s friend Camerius obviously appreciates, since the girls know him by name.

To the author of the Lydia (line 12), explaining his envy of the fields his girl wanders in, describes her using “rosy fingers” (roseis ... digitis), to pluck green grapes. Was colour in the hands considered beautiful then? Or should we think that they are rosy from the juice of the grapes? As if to answer just such a question, the poet adds (line 13):

(dulci namque tumet nondum uitecula Baccho)
(for the little vine swells not yet with nectarous juice) 28

Perhaps rosy fingers are beautiful, after all.

28 Translation: H. R. Fairclough, Virgil. Aeneid VII-XII; Appendix Vergiliana; revised by G.P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2000). The poet also may be likening the girl to the beauty of Aurora, goddess of the dawn, whose fingers were said to be “rosy” by several poets, including Homer.
THE ROSE AND MALE BEAUTY

A similar ideal of beauty would seem to have been looked for in boys, as well. The colour of the rose can also be used with boys to bring out the colour in their faces and bodies that made them attractive to their lovers. Horace in one of his Odes, for example, uses the rose to describe the colour of his complexion (Carm. IV.10.4):

O crudelis adhuc et Veneris munere potens,
insperata tuae cum ueniet pluma superbiae
et quae nunc umeris inuolitant deciderint comae,
nunc et qui color est puniceae flore prior rosae
mutatus, Ligurine, in faciem uerterit hispidam:
dices "Heu," quotiens te speculo uideris alterum,
"quae mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fuit,
uel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genae?"

Still cruel and still endowed with power to be so,
Gifted as you are with the gifts of Venus,
That moment is coming, when, suddenly, in the glass,
You see beginning the little signs of change,
Downy foreshadowing of the beard to come,
The locks that curl and wanton to the shoulders
All of a sudden looking a little different,
The cream-and-rose complexion beyond the beauty
Of freshest roses now not quite exactly
The way it had been just yesterday morning.
Then you will say, Alas for what I was
When I was younger than I am, Alas
That then I did not know what I know now;
Alas, that now I know what I did not know. 29

He uses it again to describe male beauty in Carmina l.13.1-3:

Cum tu, Lydia, Telephi
tericum roseam, cerea Telephi
laudas brachia, ...

Lydia, when you praise your Telephus,
"His beautiful rosy neck," "his beautiful arms," ... 30

Ovid (Met. III.483), describes the colour of Narcissus’ chest where he has beaten it in anguish after losing sight of himself in the pool in the following way:

---

29 Translation: Ferry, The Odes of Horace.  
30 Translation: Ferry, The Odes of Horace.
Pectora traxerunt roseum percussa ruborem
His beaten breast took on a rosy flush.

Martial, also, uses it to comment on male beauty (Ep. VII.80), when he asks that his book of poems be sent to a third party by a rosy youth (roseus ...ephebus, line 9), since the intended recipient now has time for reading and, perhaps, other pursuits, hinted at by iocis. He describes his ideal boy, indeed, as follows (Ep. IV.42.10):

Paestanis rubeant aemula labra rosis.
... let his red lips vie with the roses of Paestum.\(^{31}\)

Likewise in Ep. VIII.55, Martial having earlier described Alexis as "very beautiful" (pulcherrimus, line 13), tells us that Martial had been given a wine cup tasted by "rosy lips" (roseis ... labris, line 15), and again (Ep. XI.56.12) roseo ... ore, while describing a boy who "had tormented the guests"\(^ {32}\) (torserat) at dinner, that is, with his beauty. To Martial, at least, a good-looking boy had rose red lips.\(^ {33}\)

---

\(^{31}\) Translation: Shackleton Bailey, Martial. Epigrams.

\(^{32}\) Shackleton Bailey, Martial. Epigrams, vol. II

\(^{33}\) Attractive boys are again described as "rosy" at Ep. XII.1.
Catullus also ascribes rose-red lips to the mythical Attis, in his retelling of the story of Attis and Cybele (*roseis ut huic labellis sonitus <citius> abiiit: Carm. 63.74*). This line occurs just after Attis has castrated himself. Jacqueline Clarke sees *roseis* as emphasising Attis’ youth and powerlessness at the moment of his speech, pointing to the position of *roseis* at the beginning of the line as the poet’s way of placing emphasis on this point.  

Kenneth Quinn, however, is of the opinion that the “rosy lips” (*roseis ... labellis*) simply indicate the type of male beauty that he once was, that is, a *puer delicatus*, of the kind represented by the lyric poets in their work. He states that the descriptions of Attis which could be seen as describing a change in Attis’ appearance after his castration, such as white hands and rosy lips, might just as easily describe Attis as he had always been. “But isn’t it more likely they point to the sort of young man Attis was?”

---


ROSE SCENT AND BEAUTY

Martial uses a similar metaphor, however, in another poem, describing female beauty, although here the scent of the rose, rather than the colour, is providing the metaphor (Ep. V.37.9):

Fragrauit ore quod rosarium Paesti,
... whose breath was fragrant as a Paestan rose bed.\(^{36}\)

This equation of the scent of the rose with beauty of another kind is made by Plautus, when one of his characters (Curculio, 96-98), sings the praises of her beloved wine vintage by likening its scent to that of various fragrant plants, including the rose, cinnamon, myrrh, crocus and cassia bark:

nam omnium unguentum odor prae tu nautea est,
tu mihi stacta, tu cinnamon, tu rosa,
tu crocinum et cassia es ...

For, compared to you, the odour of all perfumes is as bilgewater, you are my oil of myrrh, my cinnamon, my rose, my crocus, my cassia.

\(^{36}\) Translation: Shackleton Bailey, *Martial. Epigrams*
THE ROSE AND BREVITY OF LIFE/BEAUTY

The rose, too, can be used to speak of beauty gone, as in Propertius' elegy (El. IV.5.61-62):

uidi ego odorati uictura rosaria Paesti
sub matutino cocta iacere Noto.

I have seen rose-beds of fragrant Paestum that promised enduring bloom lying withered by the scirocco’s morning blast.\(^{37}\)

Ovid uses the rose to convey a similar meaning, although his imagery is different from that of Propertius. To him, when the flower of the rose has died, there is still something left behind, presumably, on the bush, something hard and painful (Ars II116):

Et riget amissa spina relicta rosa.

When the rose is perished, the hard thorn is left behind.\(^{38}\)

As well as beauty, the rose can also be a symbol of the brevity of life.

Horace (Carm. II.3.13-14), calls for roses for a feast, with the words

\(^{37}\) Translation: Goold, Propertius. Elegies.
“nimium breuis/flores amoenae … rosae” (the too brief flowers of the delightful rose). The short-lived blooms of the rose may here refer as much to the brevity of human life and beauty as it does simply to the brevity of the beauty and life of the rose itself. The banquet and its festivity will be short as well, adding to the feeling of time slipping away. D. West likens this allusion to the shortness of the life of the rose bloom and the party to which they will be brought, to an awareness of the shortness of life itself. The rose may represent beauty, but it may also represent the inevitable end of beauty in death. 39

THE ROSE AND PASSION / SEDUCTION

The rose, seduction and passion, especially in the works of the lyric poets, are closely linked. As an example, Ovid in the Amores (1.2.39-40), has placed himself among the train of captives that was usually a feature of the Roman triumph, thus accepting his defeat by Cupid:

Ducentur capti iuuenes captaeque puellae;
haec tibi magnificus pompa triumphus erit.
ipse ego, praeda recens, factum modo uulnus habebo
et noua captiua uincula mente feram. (Am. 1.2.27-30)

Captive youths and captive maidens will be led in procession: this retinue will make a splendid triumph for you. I, myself, your latest victim, will display my newly inflicted wound and will bear my fresh chains with submissive mind.\textsuperscript{40}

This triumphal vision includes also that of his mother, the goddess Venus, applauding the conquests and power of her son:

\begin{quote}
Laeta triumphanti de summo mater Olympo
plaudet et adpositas in ora rosas
\end{quote}

from highest Olympus your happy mother will applaud you in your triumph and scatter on your head the roses which lie beside her.\textsuperscript{41}

Barsby, in his commentary on this poem, describes Venus as Cupid’s “proud mother”, throwing “roses in his path”.\textsuperscript{42} The roses here can be seen, at the same time, to signify love and passion, coming as they do from the hands of Venus in front of the triumphant Cupid. They are also an image of celebration, reminding us of their appearance in the works of Horace,

\textsuperscript{40} Translation: Barsby, Ovid. \textit{Amores I}.
\textsuperscript{41} Translation: Barsby, Ovid. \textit{Amores I}. Showerman, in the Loeb edition, translates “adpositas” as “offered at her altars”, an allusion to the rose’s connection to the goddess of love. Showerman, \textit{Ovid in Six Volumes}, 325.
\textsuperscript{42} Barsby, Ovid. \textit{Amores}, 49.
among others, where, likewise, they appear at celebratory banquets. The triumph of Cupid seems a very fitting place for them to be thrown, and beside Venus an appropriate place for them to be.

Ovid also advises the young lover (Ars II.527-528) when trying to coax an unyielding woman to:

Et capiti demptas in fore pone rosas.

Take the roses from your head and hang them on her doorpost.

Finding her threshold strewn with roses was something that a beautiful young girl would expect to discover in the morning, according to this poet, if she were being sought after by a lover who knew what he was about. The same image occurs in Ovid again, to warn a woman about what will be in store for her when she has grown older (Ars III.972):

Sparsa nec inuenies limina mane rosa.

Nor will you find your threshold strewn with roses in the morning. 44

---

43 Carmina III.19.22, for example, with the phrase “sparge rosas”, and again at Carm. III.29.1-4, “cum fore, Maecenas, rosarum et pressa tuis balanus capillis …”, where the celebration is for Maecenas
Horace, also, uses the rose to create the atmosphere for seduction, as in the following example (Carm. 1.5.1-3):

Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa
perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
grato, Pyrrha, sub antro?

What perfumed debonair youth is it, among
The blossoming roses, urging himself upon you
In the summer grotto? ... ⁴⁵

This little sketch has set the scene for a lovers' tryst, among roses in a (one may assume), secluded grotto. The roses and the perfume would add to the atmosphere that the poet, if not Pyrrha herself, is attempting to create here, an atmosphere of love and seduction. Horace does give us the impression that the girl, Pyrrha, is the seductress, luring her latest perfumed youth among roses to “urge himself” upon her. The roses are very much part of her setting the appropriate mood here. The poem itself lets us know that Horace is speaking from experience, as he tells us that he himself has been one of her past conquests (line 13-16):

⁴⁴ Translation: Mozley, The Art of Love.
... Me tabula sacer
uotiu paries indicat uuida
suspendisse potenti
uestimenta maris deo.

... And as for me?
The votive tablet on the temple wall
Is witness that in tribute to the god
I have hung up my sea-soaked garment there.46

Other men have been lured, as Horace puts it, before the unpredictable or deceiving winds (aurae/fallacis: lines 11-12) that are Pyrrha’s passion. We may well ask how much the roses contribute to these affairs. The ode seems to answer us that they contribute quite highly. The position of the word rosa at the end of line 1 highlights its importance to the scene the poet is trying to set. Our attention is pulled to it as soon as we begin to read. The association of the rose and passion in Horace’s mind, at least, is very clear in this poem.

Tibullus, indeed, sees the rose as so essential to love that, when imagining a lovers’ Elysian Fields, it has its place there (El. I.3.61-62):

46 Translation: Ferry, The Odes of Horace.
fert casiam non culta seges totoque per agros
floret odoratis terra benigna rosis

Untilled the land bears cassia and over whole acres
heavy-scented roses bloom from the rich loam. ⁴⁷

Lee comments that this idea of a lovers’ Elysium “is perhaps Tibullus’ own”. ⁴⁸ If this is the case, then, perhaps, the scene he paints as the fitting surroundings for the souls of lovers is also his own. He would seem, then, to consider the rose as an essential part of this scenery. In this vision, he is joined by Propertius (E/. IV.7.60):

mulcet ubi Elysias aura beata rosas ... where a happy breeze gently fans the roses of Elysium ... ⁴⁹

Among prose writers, also, the rose and love, or at least, love making, appear together. Apuleius (Met. II.16), as I have already mentioned, ⁵⁰ has

---

⁴⁸ Lee, Tibullus, 121.
⁵⁰ In Chapter Five, The Good Life, in the section entitled: The Rose and Seduction.
Photis approach Lucius for an assignation, bearing roses and rose wreaths, which she uses in the following fashion:

Ac me pressim deosculato et corollis reuincto ac flore

She kissed me close and bound me with garlands and showered me with blossoms.\(^{51}\)

Here, Apuleius is using the rose to set the mood for Apuleius’ readers, while Photis sets the mood for her soon-to-be lover. Realising what Photis has in mind is easy enough, since she is visiting Lucius in his bedchamber at night, alone, after her mistress has retired, but the roses provide the reader, and Lucius, with a clear vision of her intent and willingness to create the ambience needed for a night of lovemaking. The reader would be in as little doubt over the matter as Lucius himself.

In contrast, Martial, in a more tender mood, sees the rose, or rather a wreath of them for wearing on the head, as a fitting gift to send to his male lover, Apollinaris (Ep. VII.89):

---

I, felix rosa, mollibusque sertis
nostri cinge comas Apollinaris;
quas tu nectere candidas, sed olim,
sic te semper amet Venus, memento.

Go, lucky rose, and with soft garland circle the locks of my
Apollinaris. And do not fail to bind them when they are white –
but long hereafter. So may Venus love you always.\footnote{52}

The poet here not only thinks them a gift, but an adornment that Apollinaris
should always wear, even when he is old. This little poem, indeed, brings a
note of sentimentality to the connotations of the rose which is, perhaps,
lacking in some of the other pieces quoted above. He repeats the
sentiment at \textit{Epigrams} VIII.77, 1-2:

\begin{quotation}
Liber, amicorum dulcissima cura tuorum,
Liber, in Aeterna uiuere digne rosa ...
\end{quotation}

\begin{quotation}
Liber, your friends' sweetest care, Liber worthy to live wreathed
in everlasting roses\footnote{53}
\end{quotation}

\footnote{53}{Translation: Shackleton Bailey, \textit{Martial. Epigrams}, vol. II.}
He also wishes the gesture given to himself, with one difference at *Ep.* XI.89, which again equates the rose with physical love:

Intactas quare mittis mihi, Polla, coronas?
   a te uexatas malo tenere rosas.

Why do you send me untouched garlands, Polla? I would rather hold roses that you have tumbled.\(^54\)

Ovid, as well, uses the imagery of the rose in a sort of *double entendre*, when describing lovemaking that did not quite end as planned (*Am.* III.7.65-66):

\[\text{nostra tamen iacuere uelut praemortua membra} \]
\[\text{turpiter hesterna languidiora rosa—} \]

But my body lay in disgrace as though already dead, more jaded than the rose of yesterday.\(^55\)

If the rose as an image conveys a meaning of love and seduction, then how sad, indeed, is the image of a wilted rose? The image provided in this

\(^{54}\) Shackleton Bailey, *Martial. Epigrams*, vol. II.

\(^{55}\) Translation: Showerman, *Ovid in Six Volumes.*
little piece conveys a limp flower, of course, to which the poet's "membra" (politely translated here by Showerman as "body") can be cleverly compared. Can we, however, see in this image the connotation of a love (physical or otherwise) wilting or dying? Showerman seems to have done, since he has used the word "jaded" to translate "languidiora".

THE ROSE AND POETS

Propertius (El. III.3.33-36) tells of a dream, in which, eventually, he finds himself in a cave with Muses. He describes what the maidens are doing:

diversaeque nouem sortitae iura Puellae
  exercent teneras in sua dona manus:
  haec hederas legit in thyrsos, haec carmina neruis
  aptat, at illa manu texit utraque rosam.

... while the nine Maidens, each allotted her own realm, busy their tender hands on their separate gifts: one gathers ivy for the thyrsus wand, one tunes her song to the strings of the lyre, another with both hands plaits wreaths of roses.\footnote{Translation: Goold, \textit{Propertius. Elegies}. Goold aptly entitles this: "The Poet's Vision".}

\footnote{The next few lines leave us in little doubt as to which part of the body he means: quae nunc, ecce, uigent intermepstiuia ualentque,/nunc opus exposcunt militiamque suam./quin istic pudibunda iaces, pars pessima nostri? (Am. III.4. 67-69).}
Likewise, Propertius tells us in Book III.5.19-22:

Me iuuat in prima coluisse Heliconia iuuenta
musarumque choris implicuisse manus;
me iuuat et multo mentem uincire Lyaeo,
et caput in uerna semper habere rosa.

‘Tis my delight to have worshipped Helicon in my early youth and
joined hands in the Muses’ dance; ‘tis my delight also to tie up my
mind with deep draughts of wine and ever to have my head
garlanded with the roses of spring.58

Propertius in these lines, in effect, sums up this chapter for us. Looking
back on his life and poetic career, the poet has bound the rose firmly into
his memories. The spring rose, the flower of the beginning of the year, has
adorned his head, he says. We can see the rose as a hint to a more
youthful head which once may have worn it rather than to the poet’s head
as it is now. As a symbol of the renewing of the year, the rose has taken on
also an image of youth and beginning. Yet, the roses are adorning the
head of a poet who wrote of love and beauty, and he says that he wore it
“semper”, “always”. He has delighted, he tells us, in joining hands with the

58 Translation: Goold, Propertius. Elegies.
Muses. Was he wearing the rose wreath even then? There is the rose, at
the end of a line which begins by telling us that the poet had his mind
bound “with deep draughts of wine”. This may suggest that he has passed
from divine inspiration to that of a more mundane kind. Perhaps the rose
wreath could even be the chaplet worn at a banquet.

CONCLUSION

Have I answered the question I posed at the beginning of this chapter?
How did the writers of Latin literature in ancient Rome intend their readers
to see the rose? I suggest that the answer could be formulated along the
following lines.

The colour of the rose flushed the sky at sunrise, the beginning of the day,
and is found emanating from the goddess of the dawn, described in many
different ways, from items of clothing to light spilling from open doorways. It
even touches her horses. The rose itself flowered at the beginning of the
year when all nature seemed to wake from winter sleep, promising
renewal. It sprouted new growth which could be seen as symbolic of youth
and youthful urges. It bloomed with a beauty that many then, as now, may
have seen as greater than that of other flowers, and was compared to
beauty in women and boys that seemed greater than that of other people.
The rose possessed a natural fragrance which could complement even the beauty already perceived. As such it was an important aid to passion and lovemaking. It was important also in celebrating all of this, youth and beauty and passion. When the year was dying, the rose seemed to die, too, becoming dormant for the winter, after only a season or two or life. The brevity of its life and beauty could also symbolise the brevity of human beauty and the inevitability of human decline. Yet, even then, Propertius and Tibullus assure us, the rose blooms in the fields of Elysium, or at least that part of it where lovers dwell, and in the following spring it will bloom again, promising renewal.

In the next chapter, the role of the rose in art and ornament will be discussed.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ROSE IN ART AND ORNAMENT

In previous chapters, I have drawn upon the evidence offered by depictions of the rose in art and ornament to consider the rose’s place in the commercial sphere, the religious life of Rome and in Rome’s concept of the “good life”.

In this chapter, I will consider the visual depictions of the rose as an end in themselves. To this end, I will examine the rose’s appearance in various forms of Roman art, including painting, sculpture and mosaics. The rose is, at times, depicted merely as one element among many and has no focus of its own, as in, for example, the garden paintings of Pompeii. Although not the focus, these paintings would be lessened, I believe, if the rose did not have its place there. Sometimes, it is the uses of the rose which are seen in the work of art, as in some of the mosaics I will discuss below. There are times in Roman art and decoration when the rose is depicted simply as an ornament pleasing to the eye. This can be seen in some of
those works which I shall present in this chapter. But I will examine the rose when it is depicted not just for itself, but for the meaning it brings, as in religious and funerary art.

The general appearance of the rose is sometimes so faithfully caught by artists, especially in Pompeii and in the garden room of Livia at the Prima Porta, that, in some cases, experts have been able to offer identifications of the species and variety with some confidence.¹ Roger Ling has the view that the representation of the individual species of plants and birds is remarkable for its accuracy.² The uses that the rose found in other spheres of Roman life are also depicted; for example, perfume making and garland making. Many of the images that I will discuss in this chapter I have already mentioned elsewhere. The visual depictions of the rose, however, may have meaning of their own, as well as being a pleasing element in visual design. In this chapter, I will endeavour to pursue both of these ideas.

¹ For example, in the case of the garden painting in the Garden Room of Livia at Prima Porta, where Gabriel states that there is depicted a "rosa Damascena bush". M. Gabriel, Livia's Garden Room at Prima Porta (New York : New York University Press, 1955), 34. W.F. Jashemski, on the other hand, states that, from the depictions of the rose in Pompeian wall-paintings, the species/variety can't "be identified with any degree of accuracy." See W. F. Jashemski, F. G. Meyer and M. Ricciardi "Plants : Evidence From Wall Paintings, Mosaics, Sculpture, Plant Remains, Graffiti, Inscriptions and Ancient Authors", in W. F. Jashemski and F. G. Meyer, The Natural History of Pompeii (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160.

DEPICTIONS OF THE ROSE

GARDEN PAINTINGS

Roman paintings of gardens still exist in several places. Perhaps the most famous of these are those found on the walls of the houses of Pompeii, where, Ling states, they "enjoyed a great vogue during the Third and Fourth Styles". Yet, the garden paintings are but one of several kinds of wall paintings that adorned various rooms in Pompeiian houses and probably in houses elsewhere. Ling reminds us, however, that wall paintings are part of the decorative scheme of a house, and cannot be viewed in isolation, however much they may appeal to the visual sense. He advises that they must be considered in relation to the following criteria: architectural settings in which they were intended to be seen; their adaptation to the size, shape and function of the room; light sources; other forms of decoration on the room, for example, mosaic floors; furniture and other room fittings. As well, he asks us to remember that any house decoration then, as now, reflects "the tastes and aspirations of the householder who commissioned" the decoration.

3 Ling, Roman Painting, 151.
4 Ling, Roman Painting, 2.
Allison, likewise, comments that "some scholars view the iconographical details of wall paintings ... as indicators of room use".\textsuperscript{5} Ellis, likewise, records that there is a view that décor can be used "to distinguish room functions."\textsuperscript{6} But both of these authors question this approach. Ellis expresses the view that many rooms may have had "several different functions"\textsuperscript{7} and therefore they are not able to convey "specific messages" by means of their décor. Ellis goes even further by saying that sometimes indications taken from décor may even be misleading. He does concede, however, that the décor in some cases did mark out the status and function of a room by creating the "atmosphere for what might be appropriate behaviour in that room."\textsuperscript{8} Wallace-Hadrill sees in the variation of "richness of colour" a key for understanding the social flow of activity in a house, which he sees as more important than room function.\textsuperscript{9}

Garden paintings tend to be found in, or near, the peristyle or other garden spaces,\textsuperscript{10} although some are found in interior rooms, such as the painting in the bedroom in the House of the Orchard. Yet, as Farrar observes, it is

\textsuperscript{5} P. Allison, \textit{Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture}. (Monograph / Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles; 42 (Los Angeles: The University of California at Los Angeles, 2004), 12.  
\textsuperscript{6} S.P. Ellis, \textit{Roman Housing} (London: Duckworth, 2002), 140.  
\textsuperscript{7} This is borne out by Pliny the Younger, who, in his letter. (II.17), describing one of his villas, mentions a few rooms that may serve more than one function.  
\textsuperscript{8} Ellis, \textit{Roman Housing}, 140.  
\textsuperscript{10} Jashemski and Meyer, \textit{Plants}, 80.
not always easy to distinguish whether these painted gardens are a
“window whereby we can look into an actual Roman garden”,¹¹ or are
some sort of ideal or fantastic garden. Jashemski saw them as an illusion,
a way of extending the garden when it was not physically possible to do
so¹² and as reproducing the gardens of the Campanian countryside.¹³
Since so many of these paintings are found on walls in, or near, peristyle
gardens, they may have been intended to do precisely this.¹⁴ Ling
observes that flowers and fruit of all seasons appear together in some of
these paintings.¹⁵ The plants growing in these painted gardens, in Pompeii
at least, are plants which seem to have been grown in Campania during
Roman times. Jashemski, speaking of a project in which she set out to
identify these very plants, concludes that the plants in the paintings were
those growing in the area before the eruption of Vesuvius.¹⁶ The fact that
the plants are all blooming and fruiting at once makes the gardens more
idealised, what Gabriel calls a “fairy garden”, when discussing this
tendency in the paintings in the Garden Room of Livia.¹⁷

¹¹ L. Farrar, Ancient Roman Gardens (Stroud : Sutton, 1998), 144.
¹² W.F. Jashemski (Gardens of Pompeii, Herculaneum and the villas destroyed by Vesuvius. Vol. 1
(New Rochelle, N. Y. : Caratzas, 1979), 55.
¹⁴ In the House of Orpheus, and in the House of Venus, in Pompeii, for example.
¹⁵ Ling, Roman painting, 150.
¹⁶ Jashemski and Meyer, Plants, 82.
Farrar also observes that, in the majority of paintings, the gardens show small plants in the foreground, with shrubs and trees behind. If by “small” she means low growing, the paintings reveal a type of garden bed structure which is still recommended by landscapers today. The fresco of a garden in the House of the Wedding of Alexander, for example, has just such a tiered structure, with the rose in the intermediate level with strawberry trees and marigolds. Behind on the tall level are laurel and oriental plane trees, among others, while on the low level in the foreground are iris and mounds of ivy.

THE ROSE IN GARDEN PAINTINGS

The rose has, as would be expected, a prominent place in paintings of gardens, alongside other garden plants, including lilies and violets. The rose in these paintings seems to have been depicted as simply part of the greater whole of the garden in which it is seen. It does not provide the sole focus of these paintings, any more than it would in an actual garden (unless, of course, it was a commercial garden, where planting would follow different principles, not necessarily aesthetic ones).
The rose is usually depicted with poppies, violets and sometimes, ivy. All of these are low growing plants, suitable for planting in the front rows of a garden bed. In the fresco from the House of the Wedding of Alexander, the rose is shown growing near a fountain, as it does in a fresco from the House of the Golden Bracelet. It is also shown near a fountain in a fresco from the House of the Marine Venus, and to the sides of accent trees in the paintings in the House of Livia at Prima Porta. The obvious focus of attention in these paintings is the fountain, or the tree, perhaps, as it may have been in the layout of the kinds of gardens the paintings depict. The rose frames these features, perhaps in order to draw the eye onto the roses after the viewer has first noticed the feature, or, conversely, to draw the eye to the feature, after it had first been caught by the brighter colour of the rose’s blooms.

DOING THINGS WITH ROSES

Since the Romans used the rose in so many ways, its depiction in art is not limited to garden paintings alone. In the following examples, as in those above the rose, although not the central focus of the visual works,

---

18 Farrar, Roman Gardens, 144, 147. The older forms of the rose can be quite small in height, and have a growing habit closer to the brambles of the wild roses. Farrar also observes that violets are not depicted as often as would be expected, due to their growing too closely to the ground, so that they can not be seen behind the enclosing fences and screens.
19 See Plate no. 7b.
20 See Plate no. 8.
nonetheless occurs as an important part of the main theme of the composition.

In Chapter Two (above), I examined the role of the rose in garland- and chaplet-making. These activities are attested to in literature by, among others, Pliny the Elder.\(^\text{21}\) There are also visual depictions of garland-making in existence, in particular two mosaics, one housed in the Bardo Museum, originally from Carthage, and the other from the Piazza Armerina in Sicily.

In the Bardo Museum mosaic,\(^\text{22}\) a lady (probably the mistress of the estate) is depicted at the right bottom of the main panel, and appears to have just risen from her chair. She is leaning on a pillar, in a pose which D’Ambra likens to the “pose of a muse”,\(^\text{23}\) but which is seen as copying a stance of Venus by Blanchard-Lemee and others.\(^\text{24}\) Beside the chair is growing what appears to be a rose bush, while behind her chair a man stands holding a basketful of flowers. The flowers in the basket are too indistinct to make the identification certain, but their “rosy” colour and suggested shapes of the blooms on the top layer of the basket indicate, I think, that the flowers in the basket are roses. The scene is one of many in the panel showing the

---

\(^{21}\) Pliny *NH* XXI.1-9 ff.

\(^{22}\) See Plate no. 14.


wealth of the estate of the owner, sometimes referred to as “Dominus Julius”. Elsewhere in the panel we see the gathering of honey from hives, the harvesting of fruit from trees, the tending of animals, and hunting, among others activities. Although this mosaic stands at the very end of the era that I have endeavoured to discuss in this study, it shows the place in the life of a large estate of horticulture in general, and of rose-growing in particular. We cannot tell, of course, whether these roses are for the use of the household or may be bound for market, but the prominent position of the scene in one of the corners of the composition gives us the idea that the activity represented may be an important one on the estate. The scene is also balanced in the left hand corner by the presentation of fruit to a man, possibly “Dominus Julius” himself. Here we have the master and his mistress receiving the fruits of the estate.

David Parrish, however, sees the bringing of roses to the mistress as referring to the *Rosalia*, which, as I have noted above, took place in May or June, whenever roses were blooming at their best. The authors of *Mosaics of Roman Africa* see the roses as indicative of spring, and the fruit being presented to the master as indicative of autumn. The person viewing the mosaic, presumably standing at the bottom edge, since that

---

26 In Chapter Five.
would be the angle which would show the figures in the composition in an upright position, would have had his eye caught by the master and mistress directly in front of him. Afterwards, the eye would then travel upwards to the depiction of the villa itself in the centre, and beyond to the other activities of the estate. While these activities may be seasonal, I suggest that they are meant to represent the produce of the estate to the visitor to the villa. The mosaic intends to leave the visitor in no doubt concerning the wealth of the villa’s owner, and from where it comes. The roses here are, therefore, a part of that wealth and most likely do represent commercial rose growing.

The mosaic from the Piazza Armerina pictures the making of garlands in some detail. Here we can see the coronariae or garland makers, who are women, making the garlands, using string tied to tree branches to keep the work taut while they weave them. Each of the two workers has a full basket of roses at her feet while roses are strewn over the ground about them. Elsewhere in the mosaic, workers are harvesting the roses from tall rose bushes, while another coronaria is seated at her work amongst the bushes, holding onto the end of the garland on which she is working with one hand, while reaching back with the other to the brimming basket of roses that stands on the ground behind her. In another panel, a man is carrying two full baskets of rose blooms attached to a wooden pole which he balances

---

28 See Plate no. 3.
on his shoulders as he walks past a row of rose bushes. Here we are again seeing a commercial plantation of roses, I think, not a domestic garden, with the harvest in full swing. The seated garland-maker has already completed two garlands and is working on her third. Her pretty pose, seated on what could be a fallen column drum among tall rose bushes that tower over her head, reaching for the basket behind her seems a natural movement, in no way contrived.

There is, from Pompeii, a charming scene depicting cupids in a flower shop. To the right, a cupid leads a goat carrying panniers full of roses, while another cupid follows behind with a basket of roses hanging from a rod held over his shoulder. Garlands are draped over a “counter” (in reality an ornate marble table) and a stand on the “counter”, while a customer stands before it. The garlands are all depicted in shades of a rosy red with white highlights. The colouring may be to make the viewer think that they are rose garlands, made from flowers like those about to be delivered by the curious little procession on the right with the goat.

Apart from its insight into the business of selling flowers in Pompeii, this relief is attractive as a work of art with its light colours contrasting so well with the dark background of the relief. The colour of the roses in particular highlights this contrast. In this painting, the roses have a more prominent

29 See Plate no. 4.
place than in any of the other works I have examined so far. Whether this reflects the importance of the rose in the garland-making industry, or whether the artist has just used their colour to add more to the three-dimensional quality of the little scene, is hard to determine. Perhaps the roses have been placed there for both these reasons. This relief is one of many depicting cupids engaged upon everyday tasks. (The House of the Vettii, from which this relief comes, has others, for example, where cupids are selling perfumes and metalworking). Their light-heartedness is evident in little details. Ling mentions the cupid in the metalworking scene who is drawing back his head to avoid sparks.\textsuperscript{30} Such a detail in the flower-selling relief is the expression on the face of the goat, who obviously does not relish his role as beast of burden. The same detail is shown in the flowers and the garlands, where the white highlights give a three-dimensional quality to the blooms. Ling says of these paintings in general that they "achieve their success primarily from subtle parodying of human gestures and human self-importance."\textsuperscript{31}

In Chapter Four (above), which deals with The Rose and the "Good Life" I examined the use of the rose in banquets, and, in particular, a painting from Pompeii depicting such a banquet.\textsuperscript{32} The small tables have been removed from the dining room, or, perhaps, they have not yet been placed

\textsuperscript{30} Ling, \textit{Roman Painting}, 166.
\textsuperscript{31} Ling, \textit{Roman Painting}, 167.
\textsuperscript{32} See Plate no. 9.
there. Thus, it is hard to determine whether we are seeing the beginning, or the end of a banquet. One of the guests seems very much the worse for drink, and is being supported by another man (a slave perhaps?) while he vomits. Another slave is helping another guest with his shoes, while a third is offering a drinking cup. Other guests are reclining and some seem deep in conversation. The painting depicts rose petals on the floor of the dining room. They are in no way prominent, as are the roses in the relief of the flower sellers mentioned above. They are scattered, here and there, not concentrated in one place, their bright rosy red colour clearly seen against the floor. Indeed, I find my eye drawn to them as soon as I see the painting, so different is their colour to the floor’s ochre colour. As I have remarked elsewhere,\textsuperscript{33} the viewer may be instantly reminded of Horace’s instruction, “sparge rosas” (\textit{Carmina} III.19.22), since the petals look as though they have been strewn about. However, if the banquet is just ending, as the absence of the small tables and the intoxicated guest might indicate, the roses may have fallen from chaplets as the evening progressed. As in the paintings of gardens, the rose has its place in this scene, even if it is not the most important place, and has been included simply because it does belong. The description the artist is trying to give his viewer would be less than complete without it.

\textsuperscript{33} In Chapter Four (above), entitled The Rose and the Good Life.
ROSES AND ROSETTES

The rose’s original form is daisy-like. It consists of five petals spaced evenly around central stamens. This central space may, or may not, be coloured differently to the petals. This form of flower is not unique to the rose. Many other blooms have similar forms, for example, the acanthus flower and the daisy. When seen from above, the primitive rose form becomes a circle surrounded by five evenly-spaced ovals, each oval having a slight depression in the outer centre of their circumference. The resemblance of this to the decorative motif commonly called a “rosette” is immediately obvious. In fact, the Oxford English Dictionary defines a rosette as “an object or symbol or arrangement of parts resembling a rose.” The rose implied in this definition is most likely the primitive form.

It becomes difficult to determine in some instances whether the decorative motif being used is a rose seen from above, another similar flower seen from above, or the more stylised rosette. Of course, if there are five petals with the telltale small indentation in the outer edge, one can, with some certainty, recognise this motif as a rose. However, the rose itself can sometimes by stylised to the point where the indentation is not very obvious, and the number of petals can be increased to suit the composition at hand. The Romans knew of roses with any number of petals, including
the supposedly one hundred petalled "centifolia".\textsuperscript{34} In the following section, I have endeavoured for this reason to exercise caution when identifying decorative motifs as roses. Those with five, fleshy petals, with identifying indentations I have had no hesitation in identifying as roses. For the more stylised, I have had to include other features, such as colour, to distinguish them from rosettes.

\section*{THE ROSE AS DECORATION}

In our culture today, the rose is an important decorative device. Its image adorns a great many objects we encounter in our everyday lives, from greeting cards to clothing; from soft furnishings to kitchen utensils. The decorative rose has, indeed, a long history. Roses appear in the frescos of the Minoan palace at Knossos,\textsuperscript{35} for example. The Romans were not alone in using them to decorate their surroundings.

In the eighteenth century, A. R. Mengs fortunately copied in watercolour a wall painting in a house discovered under the Villa Negroni in Rome. This was later engraved by A. Campanella. The wall painting has since disappeared, leaving the watercolour and its engraving as our only record.

\textsuperscript{34} Pliny advises, quoting Caepio, that, when making garlands, a centifolia, or cabbage rose, should be used only at each end. (NH XXI.10)

\textsuperscript{35} In the House of the Frescoes — in the fresco identified as Fresco with Blue Bird. See O. Reverdin, Crete and its Treasures (London : Thames & Hudson, 1961), 106.
of the wall. The original wall painting dates from the reign of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.). It has a central figured panel within an architectural frame. To each side of this central panel are two rectangular decorative panels, while a similar panel is repeated to one side and below the figured panel. This last panel is balanced by another on the opposite side, depicting an animal scene. The rectangular, decorative panels each bear an attractive spray of flowers, delicately painted, prominent among which is a rose. The flower sprays in these paintings are performing a decorative function as one part of the greater whole of the wall decoration. They add their lightness to the otherwise formal arrangement of the decorative elements of the wall, which Ling likens to the Fourth Style of wall painting from Pompeii. The rose, as well, adds its colour to this lightness.

A very good example of the rose used as a decorative motif is to be found on the ceiling of a cubiculum in Pompeii. This ceiling in the House of the Theatrical Panels is divided into nine panels, the largest of which is the central panel. All of the panels bear decoration of varying patterns, but the central panel is quite remarkable. Sadly, it is damaged, but enough is left to enable us to surmise the effect the artist may have intended. The figure in the centre (where most of the damage lies) is probably Venus.

---

36 Ling, *Roman painting*, 176.
37 See Plate no. 13.
by two amorini, she is scattering a profusion of flowers across the panel, creating the effect of a tapestry stretched out above the room. Ling, indeed, calls it a “floral carpet”. Jashemski identifies these flowers as “roses, Madonna lilies, bachelor’s buttons, daisies and other flowers”. The predominant colour of the flowers is pink, with some white, blue and yellow. The background colour is dark, thus emphasizing the colours of the flowers.

It is difficult to determine any other purpose for this ceiling with its tapestry-like flowers other than being for decoration. Even to modern eyes, the riot of colour against the dark background is attractive. The roses are easily picked out among the other blooms. Their dusky pink colouring sets them apart, being slightly darker than the other pinks among the blooms surrounding them. The types of roses depicted here are different from the five-petalled form usually portrayed and discussed above as giving rise to the decorative motif of the rosette. Some of the roses here more closely resemble the R. damascena varieties which look similar today, as in the form of the R. damascena bifera, which may be, or may be related to, the roses grown in the rosebeds of Paestum. Like the garden painting on the wall of the bedroom in the House of the Orchard, this ceiling would have made an attractive sight for the eyes’ first sight of the day.

41 See Plate no. 2 for an illustration of a modern R. damascena X bifera.
THE ROSE AS PICTORIAL SYMBOL

The old roses are spring flowers, as I have commented in the previous chapter. They, therefore, came to symbolise spring, alongside other spring blooms, such as violets. In the last chapter, above, I demonstrated that the rose’s habit of “dying off” each winter and coming “back to life” in the spring also led to its adoption as a symbol of life after death. The rose is not alone in this growth habit or in this identification, of course, sharing both with the acanthus, as one example. However, the rose has so many other uses and connotations, as, for example, in banquets, garlands and as a garden flower, that its image reinforces this symbolism by its simple ubiquity. The image of the rose, therefore, is also to be found in funerary art, where it is at the same time both decorative and symbolic, as I will demonstrate below.

SPRING AND ROSES

Spring brought roses to the Roman world. As I demonstrated in the last chapter, this association was known and used by the poets and writers of Rome. The association was also used by artists. The best body of work to illustrate this is that of the depictions of seasons, in particular those found in the mosaic pavements of Roman North Africa, where the greatest
number of such mosaics have been found. Parrish considers them a coherent group because “of the many stylistic and iconographic features they share.”

The authors of *Mosaics of Roman Africa* consider the representation of seasons in the provinces of North Africa to be representative of time, both eternal and cyclical; eternal because the seasons of the year constantly repeat themselves, and cyclical because each year renews the cycle of the seasons in their appropriate order. They summarise this as being representative of the “harmony and permanence of the universe, as well as the perpetual renewal of the beings inhabiting it.” Some of these mosaic compositions have an intricate beauty, combining so many diverse elements and colours that, at first glance, they seem more like paintings than mosaics. I propose to examine just a few examples here.

Ancient Thysdrus, modern El Djem, in Tunisia, a city recreated as a *colonia* by Julius Caesar to settle veterans in 45 B.C., has given us several examples of these “time” pavements. One of these, from the House of Silenus, excavated in 1960 and now in the El Djem Museum, depicts Spring, in a roundel, as a young woman wearing a crown of roses. She is in the company of the other seasons, each with their identifying symbols,

---

42 Parrish, *Season Mosaics*, 1  
44 See Plate no. 15 for an example of these pavements.
wheat for Summer, grapes for Autumn, and reeds for Winter. In the centre of the pavement, presiding over these others is a figure of an older man, probably representing Aeon, god of time, or even of eternal time.\textsuperscript{45} To either side of him are roundels depicting the sun and the moon in the guise of Apollo and Diana. The whole composition is surrounded by foliage panels, drawing the eye to the roundels and their busts. This pavement presents the year in these images. Around Aeon, the other six roundels seem almost like a wheel, creating a circle around him, a circle that could be said to be in motion, especially if the observer were to walk around the edges of the composition.

From the House of the Dionysian Procession, also from Thysdrus, and dating from the mid 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, is another "time" pavement. The centre of this one has been identified as a bust of Annus, personification of the year. His bust is enclosed by a roundel made up of laurels and fruits of the year, including pomegranates, figs, apples, grapes and pinecones. There are also some flowers there, including roses. Annus also has symbolic plants in his hair: rosebuds, representing spring, olives representing autumn and wheat sheaves representing summer. The figure of Spring is, again, a young woman, crowned with roses. This composition has basket bearers at the corners, one under each seasonal bust. Some have seen Dionysiac

\textsuperscript{45} Blanchard-Lemée and others, \textit{Mosaics of Roman Africa}, 40. He is also called a "lord of fecundity" by these authors.
imagery in this mosaic, with the central figure of Annus perhaps to be equated with Dionysus himself as guarantor “of fruits in their proper season.”

In the T-shaped triclinium of the same house was found another pavement with the four seasons. A bust of each of the seasons is to be found in each of the corners, enclosed in a roughly diamond-shaped frame made up of foliage. They form the largest of the elements in the pavement, yet are almost lost among the profusion of other motifs around them in the mosaic. Every space is taken up with small images of what appear to be birds, fruit and other food, while the smallest spaces left within this crowded composition each carry a single rose. A border runs along three sides of the mosaic (presumably the fourth side would have been where the door or dining couches were). These wide borders have a close-packed line of foliage roundels, each containing the depiction of an animal. Spring, unfortunately, has been all but destroyed, but enough of her bust remains to determine that, again, she wears a crown of roses in her hair. This entire pavement does not have the elegance of the two previously mentioned. The motifs all seem crowded and bewildering to the eye, falling into pieces rather than being tied together into a pleasing whole.

46 Blanchard-Lemée and others, Mosaics of Roman Africa, 41, where the representations of the basket carriers are said to be reminiscent of the basket carriers in Dionysiac processions.
47 See Plate no. 17 for an example of a bust of Spring with a crown of roses.
The Bardo Museum holds another mosaic pavement, which was found at La Chebba, to the north of Acholla, again in Tunisia, dating to c. A.D. 150, and therefore roughly contemporaneous with the two mosaics above. It was discovered in a colonnaded room in a villa on a cliff. This time, the centre of the composition is Neptune in his chariot, drawn by sea beasts, while a sea nymph and a triton hold the reins of the beasts, each to one side of the chariot. Neptune and his attendants are enclosed in a roundel which takes up most of the composition. In the corners of the pavement stand the four seasons. Instead of busts, as in the other mosaics described above, these figures are full figures, each enclosed in an oval formed of some symbolic plant, while between them is depicted some activity typical of the season. Spring is a nude young woman enclosed by roses. She carries a single rose in one hand, and a basket of roses in the other. The activity next to her depicts a man harvesting roses. Her fellow seasons are enclosed by wheat (Summer), grapevines (Autumn) and olive branches (Winter). The authors of Mosaics of Roman Africa comment on the “great aesthetic value” of this particular mosaic, especially referring to the “lightness and suppleness of its plant decoration.” Indeed, compared to the overcrowded mosaic mentioned above, its composition is much more elegant and graceful. Its original location, that is, in a room off a colonnade, makes it likely that this mosaic was meant to be seen in natural light. Its

48 See Plate no. 16.
49 Blanchard-Lemée and others, Mosaics of Roman Africa, 50.
lighter colours and broad sweeps of blank space would have made it most suitable for such a location and to be viewed in this way.

Even from the few examples described above, it is clear that Spring and the rose have a natural association, at least in this grouping of “art works”. There is evidence from other parts of the Empire, however, that would seem to indicate that the association can likewise be extended into the other provinces. There is, for example, an early 4th century sarcophagus, now housed in the Museo Pio Cristiano in the Vatican, which bears a depiction of the four seasons. These seasons are male, and they flank a figure of the Good Shepherd. Spring here, too, stands next to a bucket of flowers, and holds a cornucopia brimming with flowers. The flowers in the bucket seem to be roses, although the number of petals on each bloom portrayed varies. Perhaps roses are depicted here mixed with other spring blooms.

ROSES AND THE RENEWAL OF LIFE

Winter, in the appropriate climates, brings death to the world. Trees seem to die, standing with bare branches. Animals migrate or hibernate. Spring brings with it the promise of the return of life from these seemingly lifeless depths of winter. It is also associated with new life springing from the earth and the animals and birds that inhabit it. The symbolism of death and
rebirth is especially evident in those plants and animals that sleep through winter, for example, the dormouse who hibernates until spring, and then seems to “wake up”. Some plants have similar habits. The acanthus dies away in autumn and seems to almost re-appear from the earth in the spring. The rose loses its leaves and becomes a prickly, bramble-like bush with bare, blanched branches, seemingly devoid of life. In spring, its leaves appear, and shortly thereafter, it buds and bursts into luxurious blooms, bright with colour and fragrant with perfume. It would be surprising, perhaps, if this growing habit and the promise that it seemed to hold out did not come to the notice of human beings, nor that it became incorporated into the art that adorned funerary equipment and tombs.

MUMMY PAINTINGS

The mummy paintings from the Faiyum and elsewhere in Egypt are rightly famous. The style of preparing mummies and coffins in the Roman era in Egypt (as it had been in the Ptolemaic one before it) became elaborate. The linen bandages forming the binding were wrapped to form patterns, such as lozenges and diamonds. At the head of these superbly crafted

50 Mummy paintings were dealt with more fully in Chapter Five, dealing with the commemoration of the dead.
bandages was sometimes bound in a portrait of the deceased painted on board or linen shrouds.\textsuperscript{51}

As I stated in an earlier chapter, the rose is found on many of these cartonnage and board paintings, most often clasped in the hand of the deceased, but also sometimes as a chaplet on the head. The rose garlands and chaplets occur so often that it is difficult to see them as being only decoration. The roses here would seem to have some symbolic value beyond their mere beauty. Although there are a great many examples, I have selected two to examine here.

In Chapter Five (above) I discussed one particular shroud painting, where the deceased, a young man, is holding not only roses but ears of wheat in the same hand.\textsuperscript{52} Since wheat had in Egypt, from ancient times, connotations of rebirth beyond the grave, being associated with the god Osiris, the roses held in the same hand tell us that the rose shared that connotation. The figure of the deceased, himself, sends us the same message, standing as he does within Anubis' embrace and in the presence of Osiris. He is surrounded by smaller figures representing various other, minor Egyptian funerary deities. His face is calm, the eyes gazing steadily

\textsuperscript{52} See Plate no. 12.
forwards to meet the eyes of the observer, giving us the impression that he is contemplating the life that all his painted symbols promise.

The Petrie Museum in London holds a cartonnage mummy mask, dated to the first century A.D. This mask which would have covered the mummy from the head to the waist, is completely gilded on the top side.\textsuperscript{53} The lady depicted, unfortunately nameless, is portrayed dressed as a Roman matron, with a veil modestly drawn over her head. Her hair-style, however, is quite elaborate, consisting of piles of curls to either side of her face. She wears equally elaborate jewellery consisting of two snake-shaped bracelets with double heads, that is, a head at each end of the body, that coil around her arms from wrists to elbow and a pectoral about her neck depicting Sarapis, Harpocrates and Isis. She wears as well another necklace and several rings. Her right hand is crossed over her chest and holds a folded garland of petals, which, from their colour and shape, are rose petals.

This lady’s hopes for a life beyond the grave are clearly conveyed by the symbols that adorn her. The deities on her pectoral, namely Isis, the goddess’ consort Serapis, and her son, Harpocrates, held out just this promise to those initiated into the mysteries of Isis. The appearance of the

\textsuperscript{53} See Plate no. 11a.
rose garland among these other symbols is surely no coincidence. It too provides a symbol of the renewal of life.

There is, in the collection of the Classics Museum of the Australian National University, a marble cinerarium, dating from the second half of the first century A.D. (fig. 1). The cinerarium originally held the ashes of a young child, by the name of Nicephor, according to the central inscription, who died at the age of two years, eight months and nineteen days.

---

Surrounding this inscription on three sides is a border composed of nine flowers. The border which runs along the bottom of the inscription consists of five of these flowers, which could be described as rosettes, that is, flower-like decorations drawn in the fashion of a rose. There are five different types of flowers represented, as indicated in the diagram (fig. 1). One group forms the corner pieces (nos. 3 and 7), another (consisting of only one type) the motif in the centre of the bottom row (no. 5). The third grouping sits between the corners and the centre (nos. 4 and 6). The side borders each have two flowers (if the corner rosettes are not counted). These last four flowers do not seem to me to be rosettes, as the five along the base do. Each of these, forming the last two groups has five petals, the uppermost ones (nos. 1 and 9) having the tiny indented piece at the top of each petal which marks the artistic representation of the rose. Motifs numbered 2 and 8 on the diagram, forming the last group of the four, could be roses without the identifying petal indent, or could be acanthus flowers, drawn here with five petals. All the flowers depicted here, not least the rose, can be seen as symbolising spring, or youth, just as the rose does in literature as well, a fitting symbol for the child whose ashes once resided within. The rose, uppermost on the design, also symbolises a hope for the

---

55 This piece is, indeed, a good example of the problem I mentioned above under the heading Roses and Rosettes. The five-petalled rose seen from above is clearly represented here, as are the other flowers treated in the same way as the rose on the bottom border.

56 As was demonstrated Chapter Six entitled The Rose in Literature.
renewal of life beyond the grave, just as the rose re-appears every spring after dying every winter.

CONCLUSION

Waking up to see a cascade of flowers on the ceiling seems a delightful way in which to begin the day. The owner of the ceiling in the House of the Theatrical Panels, or, at least, the occupant of the cubiculum in which it is located, presumably saw it, likewise, as a pleasing decoration. The roses in the overhead “carpet” are not the centre of the composition, but are one of many blooms. Yet, would a cascade of beautiful flowers be as beautiful without the rose? Would garden scenes, whether depicting real or ideal gardens, be quite as striking without roses? Even today, the answers to these questions would possibly be no different from the answers gained from the Romans themselves. The rose is considered a beautiful bloom today, and was probably so considered among the inhabitants of Rome and her provinces as well. Its appearance in the decorative arts certainly leaves the viewer with that impression.

The depictions of roses being harvested and used to make garlands are also not centred on the rose. These activities are one of a number of other activities being carried on, as in the Domus Julius mosaic from North
Africa. Among the typical estate activities undertaken throughout the year in that mosaic, the rose harvest has its place, alongside the fruit harvest and hunting. Roses can make a pretty backdrop to the scenes of garland making, as in the mosaic from the Piazza Armerina, or provide a bright splash of colour as in the cupids as garland sellers from the House of the Vettii. In all the examples in the section, Using Roses, the rose is not the central focus, yet its presence is obvious, and, I suggest, important.

Above all, perhaps, is the fact that the rose is associated with good times and depicted for its beauty. Rose petals depicted at a banquet in a wall painting from Pompeii are scattered on the floor, simply because the artist would expect them to be there. So it is also used in decorative compositions for its beauty as well as this connotation, as in the ceiling in Pompeii.

However, it is more than just a decorative element. It symbolizes spring and hope, both in the context of this world, and in the world beyond the grave. In art, therefore, it carries the same meaning as it does in literature. The rose is the flower of Spring in mosaics from North Africa and from other parts of the empire and it represents renewal after death in funerary contexts, such as mummy portraits and grave furnishings. In art, as in other aspects of life, the rose has a special, if often little acknowledged, place.
CONCLUSION

In the Introduction (above), I stated that the rose had a pervasive presence in our world of today, being found in many facets of our everyday lives, from confectionery to toiletries; from home decorating to figures of speech. The comment was made that the rose may have had a similar presence in the ancient Roman world; a presence which was described as “pervasive but little noticed”. The preceding seven chapters have been an attempt to show that the rose did have such a presence.

Chapter One, “The Rose and its Roman Environment” provided some background to the discussion, including a little of the long history of the rose’s association with the human race. Also included were some brief comments on gardens in the Roman world of various types, such as commercial gardens, funerary gardens and pleasure gardens. Also looked at were the plants grown in such gardens with an emphasis on the flowers which would have enlivened them. The rose was considered in this environment, with some discussion as to which roses were the flowers grown by the Romans. Several species were put forward, among them the *R. damascena X bifera*, which many have claimed was the Rose of Paestum, mentioned by Vergil in the *Georgics* (although it seems more
likely that Vergil was referring to the rose beds of the plantations near that town in Southern Italy).

Having set the scene, Chapter Two, “The Rose as a Commercial Crop”, examined the place of the rose in the commercial life of ancient Rome. The chapter discussed the various aspects of commercial flower growing, especially the products that were manufactured from them, in particular the garland industry and the perfume industry. Garlands were used in many facets of Roman life. They were used to decorate altars and shrines during religious festivals and to decorate tombs during festivals to commemorate the dead. The flowers used in making these garlands are examined by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis historia*, mainly in Book XXI. Of the flowers used, he lists the most popular as being the rose, the lily and the violet.

Flowers were also used extensively in the making of perfume. Pliny lists many of the flowers which could be used in perfume manufacture, mainly in Book XIII. Foremost among these, he lists the rose, especially Campanian roses and the Rose of Cyrene. Chapter Two also discussed the uses of perfume, including its use as an air freshener and a breath freshener, as well as an enhancement to beauty. Pliny describes the manufacture of perfume, telling us that perfume requires two distinct sets of ingredients, the *sucus* and the *corpus*, which must be macerated, that is, boiled together until they fuse into one mixture. The *sucus* carried the
scent which could be derived from a number of sources, most commonly from plants, while the *corpus* carried the scent and was usually some kind of oil. This process of perfume making is depicted in a fresco from the House of the Vettii in Pompeii where cupids are performing all these processes, from crushing the oil to macerating in a cauldron. Perfumes were then sold, usually in small bottles known collectively today as *unguentaria*.

Pliny tells us also in Book XXI of how a rose should be grown. He records the type of soil that roses need to grow and how far apart they should be planted. He also recommends grafting, pruning and burning. Many of his recommendations are probably still followed by rose growers today, except, perhaps, for burning. Gardens have been excavated in Pompeii: for example, in the Garden of the Chaste Lovers, where rose plantings have been identified by their carbonised roots and pollen analysis. In the House of the Chaste Lovers, the beds are laid out with the rose bushes planted with distances between them much as Pliny recommends. A commercial rose garden possibly has also been identified in the House of the Garden of Hercules in Pompeii. Commercial rose gardens are also attested by receipts from Roman Egypt.

Chapter Three, “The Rose in Food, Drink and Medicine”, examined the use of the rose as a consumable product. Having set the rose as food against
Roman eating and dining habits, the consumption of the rose was discussed. Firstly, it was an item of food. Pliny and Apicius both give recipes for a rose wine, made from flavouring wine with rose petals. Apicius records other recipes using rose petals, including a *minutal* with hare’s livers and a *patina* with *liquamen*, that is, a kind of fish sauce.

Medicine in Rome was discussed, especially herbal medicine. Doctors were known in the Roman world, although at first they had a low status, being listed by Varro as an artisan that one might need on a farm. Pliny and Cato both stress that they believe that the herbal medicine of their ancestors is sufficient. Pliny, for example, recommends the use of herbs and simples such as could be found growing in Italian gardens, rather than expensive imported substances. Cato was a great believer in the healing powers of cabbage. Pliny examines numerous plants for their medical properties, mainly in Books XXI to XXIII. He tells us that the rose was valued for its cooling and astringent properties, a point with which Dioscorides agrees. Most parts of the rose could be used for herbal remedies, including the galls that grow on the stem. The most useful part would seem to have been the rose oil, which Pliny recommends for many ailments when mixed with other substances.

Chapter Four, “The Rose and the “Good Life”, examined the more frivolous uses of the rose. Firstly, the Roman concept of the “good life” was
discussed, whether it was Pliny’s ideal as lived in his country villa, or that of Horace’s steward on his farm, who longed for the recreations of the city, including wineshops and girls. Among the aspects of the “good life” with which the rose could be connected was its place among the flowers blooming in a pleasure garden. Numerous wall paintings in Pompeii, for example, depict these gardens. The rose is present in many of them. Such paintings are found in other places as well, such as those of the magnificent painted room in the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, where four sides of the room are painted with one long mural depicting a garden where all seasons are occurring together, spring blossoms with autumn fruit. The rose occurs in several places in these wall paintings.

Another aspect of the “good life” examined was banquets. These could be very grand affairs with numerous courses of food and dancing girls as entertainment, or quiet, intimate affairs such as described by Pliny the Younger and Martial. Nero is criticised by Suetonius for holding magnificent banquets which began at noon and lasted well into the night. One of these is described as a “rose dinner”, at which the emperor Nero spent over 40,000 sesterces on roses alone. Roses were present at other banquets as well, most often, perhaps, as chaplets on the heads of the attendees. Ovid and the other lyric poets mention these chaplets on the head in many of their poems. Pliny the Elder records an incident where a banker was imprisoned during the Punic Wars for appearing on his balcony
wearing a rose chaplet from the night before. It is also likely that roses or
rose petals were strewn on the floor during banquets, as is to be seen in a
wall painting from Pompeii. Horace speaks of scattering roses at dinner
parties.

The rose was also associated with what I have called “luxurious excess”. Cleopatra VII of Egypt is recorded, for example, as scattering a thick carpet
of roses on the deck of her barge when she invited Marcus Antonius to
dinner at Tarsus. Cicero attacks the governor of Bithynia for using a
mattress of rose petals in his litter.

Among the aspects of the “good life” examined in Chapter Four was the
association of the rose with seduction and passion. Ovid suggests a
cosmetic for women to use. Roses are part of the recipe. The maidservant
in the Metamorphoses of Apuleius clearly has just this on her mind when
she comes to the room of the novel’s hero Lucius with rose garlands and
rose blossoms. Roses are associated with seduction in the works of the
lyric poets.

Chapter Five, “The Rose in Religious Observance and the
Commemoration of the Dead”, examined the more solemn uses of the
rose. Firstly, traditional Roman religion was discussed and the role of
flowers in the observance associated with that religion. Flower garlands
were used, for example, to decorate altars and shrines on religious festivals and to decorate work animals on certain country festivals, such as described by Propertius. Roses were offered to various deities on certain festivals as well. Ovid mentions some of these in his *Fasti*, including the festival of Flora and that of Venus Erycina. The cult of Isis was also discussed and the role the rose had to play in the worship of this goddess. There is a relief on an altar which depicts a worshipper crowning himself with roses. The best known association of roses with Isis occurs in the pages of Apuleius' novel the *Metamorphoses*. After being accidentally turned into a donkey by magic, the hero Lucius is told that he must eat roses to be changed back. This he is able to do with the aid of the goddess Isis who arranges for one of her priests to carry some roses which he can eat in a procession. The standards of the legions were hung with roses and paraded during a festival recorded by the *Feriale Duranum*.

Roses were among the offerings laid at the tombs of the dead. Some tombs are decorated with images of roses, perhaps in an attempt to have a permanent offering of these flowers, as Toynbee suggests. The Rosalia, indeed, was a festival that involved decorating the tombs of the dead with roses and having a meal at the site of the tomb. Roses were sometimes grown in gardens attached to tombs, either to be used directly as offerings, or to be sold so that offerings could be purchased. There are gravestones
and other inscriptions still extant with instructions for, and descriptions of, gardens like these.

In Roman Egypt roses were placed in the tombs, sometimes bound to a staff. The first of these was discovered at Hawara by Flinders Petrie in the nineteenth century. Also found at Hawara and other places in Egypt, most often in the cemeteries of the Faiyum, were portraits of the deceased painted on shrouds or on a board which was then bound onto the bandages of the mummified body. Sometimes the paintings were found on cartonnage coffins. Many of these depict the deceased holding a garland of roses in his/her hand, or wearing a wreath of roses on the head. The roses in these paintings, it was suggested, are representing the hope of the deceased for life beyond the grave, since the rose dies every winter and is reborn in the spring.

Chapter Six, “The Rose in Literature” examined the use of the rose as metaphor in the writings of ancient Roman authors. The pink and red colours of the rose were used to describe the dawn, so that Aurora is aid to have “rosy steeds”, a “rosy chariot”, and "rosy light" spilling from her doorway. The association of the colour and dawn is a popular one, being used by a wide range of poets, from Vergil to Lucretius.
From the opening of the day to the opening of the year, the rose became likewise a symbol of spring. In its original blooming habits, it is a flower of spring. Vergil credits an industrious farmer with growing the first rose of spring. Martial, in naming a girl whose Greek name will not fit his metre, namely εαρ, meaning Spring, uses a variety of images which will convey the sense of the name instead. The rose is prominent among these. In the Priapea, the spring offering to Priapus is roses, just as fruit is offered in the autumn.

Plautus uses the rose as a term of endearment, and indeed, the rose and passion and seduction are closely linked in the writings of the lyric poets. They use it to speak of the beauty of their beloveds, both male and female, so that they have "rosy lips" and "rosy cheeks". Vergil ascribes such characteristics as a "rosy neck" to goddesses and heroines of ages past, as when Lavinia blushes, her cheeks becoming "roses mixed with lilies".

Roses bloom in the spring. The old European roses bloom only once and then the bush itself dies in the autumn and seems dead over winter. This transience suggested itself to the poets as a symbol of the shortness of life, and the brevity of beauty. Ovid, for example, speaks of the thorn that is left behind when the beauty of the bloom has gone. Just as the rose can symbolise beauty, it also suggests seduction and passion. The lyric poets,
especially, often equate the two. Venus showers roses on the triumph of her son Cupid, in which Ovid is led as a captive. According to Horace, Pyrrha sets the stage for seduction among roses in a grotto, presumably secluded. Propertius and Tibullus see the rose as blooming in Elysium; Tibullus in an Elysium reserved for lovers. Martial speaks of the gift of roses and rose wreaths to several people. Ovid uses the symbolism of a wilted rose to describe an evening of passion which did not go as planned.

Chapter Seven, "The Rose in Art and Ornament" examined the use of the image of the rose in a variety of contexts. Wall paintings of gardens were discussed and the function that they may have had in the Roman home. Also discussed was the positioning of these paintings and the functions of these painted rooms. The rose has an important place in these garden paintings, being often depicted as growing near a garden feature, such as a fountain or a statue. Roses are also depicted in representations of activities in which they were usually involved, as in, for example, garland making. Such an activity is represented in various artistic compositions: for example in a wall painting from Pompeii where Cupids are staffing a garland shop, and in a mosaic from North Africa where garlands are being made. In the mosaic from North Africa depicting the estate of Dominus Julius, the lady of the estate is shown seated among roses, while roses are being delivered in a large basket behind her, presumably from the harvesting of a commercial garden. The rose as a decorative motif was
also discussed, with a panel from the Villa Negroni in Rome providing an example.

Roses also appear regularly in the Four Seasons mosaics so popular in Roman North Africa. Spring is usually associated with roses in these mosaics. Most often she is shown wearing them as a wreath in her hair, but in at least one example she is depicted as standing surrounded by flowering branches of roses.

The rose also appears in the mummy paintings from the Roman period tombs in Egypt. These were examined in the light of three examples. One of these, that of a young man painted on a linen shroud accompanied by Osiris and Anubis, carries a wheat sheaf and a garland of roses in his hand, perhaps combining the symbols of rebirth beyond the grave of both the Pharaonic era and the Roman. This use of the rose as a symbol of rebirth is also used in Roman tombs and other funerary equipment from elsewhere in the empire. The cinerarium now held in the ANU Classics Museum was discussed. This interesting piece is carved with roses and other flowers in the form of rosettes.

Is it possible, then, to conclude that the rose had a presence in the ancient Roman world that was pervasive and little noticed, much as it has today? The evidence presented here supports that conclusion convincingly. The
rose surrounded the inhabitants of the Roman world in most of their
everyday lives. It was painted on the wall decorations of the houses of the
wealthier inhabitants. The rose would have perfumed their houses and
their bodies. Roses in garlands, whether alone or with other flowers would
have hung in houses and decorated altars and shrines. In the country,
such garlands would have adorned work animals during agricultural
festivals. Chaplets of roses would have been worn on the head for special
occasions, or even just to a dinner party with friends. Rose petals might
even have been strewn on the floor during these occasions. A woman
could use roses in mixing her cosmetics, hoping that her lover had strewn
roses on her threshold during the night.

The poet and the novelist would imagine the rose being involved in scenes
of seduction and passion. Perhaps their readers would even expect it to be
there. Roses would be offered to certain deities at festivals and used to
decorate the tombs of the dead during the Rosalia. Commercial gardens
grew roses and sold them in cities and towns to perfumiers and garland-
makers, or simply perhaps to householder who would make their own rose
decorations. Doctors would have purchased roses and rose oil to concoct
their herbal medicines. Cooks would have used them in their cooking. Most
of all, the rose was grown in the gardens of the wealthy just for the
pleasure of seeing them, just as we do today.
It was not noticed as much as one would expect, however. As I commented in the Introduction, there are no major studies on the rose surviving among the Latin literature that we have that I was able to find. Pliny devotes a considerable amount of space to the rose, but only in the company of other plants when discussing such topics as herbal medicine and garland making. The rose appears in almost all facets of Latin literature, but nowhere is it the central point of attention, even in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, where Lucius’ search for them is such a dominant theme. The dominance of that theme is surpassed by the salvation of Lucius himself. The same is true of art. Although it appears in any number of compositions, it is not usually the central point of that composition, but is an integral part of the whole. There were rose gardens, it is true, but they were plantations, producing roses as just another crop for the market, along with *uiolaria* producing violets for the same purpose as well as other flowers. Just as with the world today, the rose in the Roman world is simply there, just as it has always been. It may not be noticed very much, but we would be conscious of something important missing from our world if it were not there. The Romans would very possibly have missed it likewise.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES QUOTED IN TEXT

Apicius
ANDRE, Jacques 1974 L'art culinaire.

Appendix Vergiliana

Apuleius

Cato

Catullus
QUINN, Kenneth 1977 Catullus. The Poems.

Cicero

Horace
FERRY, David. 1997 The Odes of Horace.

Juvenal
GIFFORD, W 1992 Satires, Juvenal, with the Satires of Perseus.
London : Dent.

Lucretius
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHOWERMAN, Grant</td>
<td>Heroides and Amores</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIXON, P.</td>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>London : Heinemann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny the Elder</td>
<td>Natural History</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suetonius
Bristol : Bristol Classical Press.

Tibullus

Varro

Virgil
FAIRCLOUGH, H. Rushton 1953 Virgil in Two Volumes. Eclogues, Georgics,
Aeneid I-VI.

-------- 2000 Virgil. Aeneid VII-XII; Appendix Vergiliana.
SECONDARY SOURCES

ADKINS, Lesley and Roy A. Adkins

--------
   1996 *Dictionary of Roman Religion.*

   Wauconda, Ill. : Bolchazy-Carducci.

ALARCAO, J. de and R. Etienne
   1981 "Les Jardins à Conimbriga (Portugal)"
   in: E.B.MacDougall and W.F. Jashemski (editors),
   *Ancient Roman Gardens: 7th Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture,*
   1979,

ALLASON-JONES, Lindsey
   1989 *Women in Roman Britain.*
   London : British Museum Publications.

--------
   1999 “Health Care in the Roman North”.
   *Britannia* 30 (1999), 133-146.

ALLISON, Penelope
   Los Angeles, Calif. : University of California at Los Angeles.

ARNOTT, Peter D. 1972 *An Introduction to the Roman World.*
   London : Sphere.

BALSDON, J. P. V. D.
   1962 *Roman Women: Their History and Habits.*
   London : Bodley Head.

BEAGON, Mary 1992 *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder.*


London : Cassell.

COGGIATTI, Stelvio 1986 *The Language of Roses.*
New York : Gallery Books.


-------- 1981 "Roman Gardens in Britain",
in E.B.Macadougall and W.F. Jashemski (editors),

D'AMBRA, E. 1996 *Roman Art.*
Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

D'AMBROSIO, Antonio 2001 *Women and Beauty in Pompeii.*
Rome : Bretschneider.

DARK, Ken and Petra Dark 1997 *The Landscape of Roman Britain.*
Stroud, Glos. : Sutton Publishing.

D'ARMS, J.H. 2000 "Memory, Money, and Statues at Misenum: Three New Inscriptions From the Collegium of the Augustales",

DAVIES, R. W. 1970 "Some Roman medicine",

DEISS, Joseph Jay 1985 *Herculaneum: Italy’s Buried Treasure.*
Rev. and updated ed.
DELLA CORTE, M.  
1954  Case ed abitanti di Pompei. 2nd ed.  
Rome : Bretschneider.

DICKERSON, Brent C.  
1999  The Old Rose Adventurer: The Once-Blooming Old European Roses, and More.  
Portland, OR : Timber Press.

DONAHOE, John F.  
2004  The Roman Community at Table During the Principate.  

DUDLEY, Donald R.  
New York : Barnes & Noble.

DUNBABIN, Katherine M. D.  
1999  Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World.  
Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

------  
Cambridge : University of Cambridge Press.

DUIN, Nancy & Jenny SUTCLIFFE  

EDGEWARE, Robert Joseph  
1974  "The Uses of Color in the Aeneid".  

ELLIS, S. P.  
2002  Roman Housing.  
London : Duckworth.

ETIENNE, Robert  
1992  Pompeii: The Day a City Died.  
London : Thames & Hudson.

FAAS, Patrick  
2002  Around the Roman Table.  
London : Macmillan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FARRAR, Linda</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Gardens of Italy and the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire: From the 4th century B.C. to the 4th century A.D.</em></td>
<td>(BAR international series ; 650). Oxford : Tempus Reparatum, for British Archaeology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELLIER, Chris</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>“Summer Sacrifice”.</td>
<td><em>Archaeology</em> 54.6 (2001),12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher/Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


PETRIE, Sir William Matthew Flinders  
1898  *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe*.  
London : Trubner.

PHILLIPS Roger and Martyn Rix  
1993  *The Quest for the Rose*.  

PRICE, Simon and Emily KEARNS (eds.)  
Oxford : Oxford University Press.

PURCELL, Nicholas  
1987  "Town in Country and Country in Town".  
in Macdougall, Elisabeth Blair (editor)  
*Ancient Roman Villa Gardens*  

-------------  
1995  "The Roman Garden as a Domestic Building"  
in Ian M. Barton (editor), *Roman Domestic Buildings*  
Exeter : Exeter University Press, 121-151.

QUINN, Kenneth  
1972  *Catullus: An Interpretation*.  
London : Batsford.

RAVEN, Peter H., Ray F. Evert and Susan E. Eichorn.  
2003  *The Biology of Plants. 6th ed.*  
New York : W.H. Freeman.

REA, J. R.  
1978  *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri. 46*.  
London : British Academy.

REVERDIN, Olivier  
1961  *Crete and its Treasures*.  
London : Thames & Hudson.

RITNER, Robert K.  
2000  "Innovations and Adaptations in Ancient Egyptian Medicine".  

ROSE, Graham and Peter King  
1990  *The Love of Roses: From Myth to Modern Culture*.  
London : Quiller Press.
ROSE, H.J. 1970 “Rosalia”.
in Hammond, N.G.L and H.H. Scullard (eds.)
The Oxford classical dictionary. 2nd ed.

Adelaide : Ross Roses.

SINCLAIR, Alan and Rosemary Thorley
1995 Gardening With Old Roses.
Melbourne : Cumulus.

TOYNBEE, J.M.C. 1996 Death and Burial in the Roman World.
Baltimore, Maryland : Johns Hopkins University Press.

VEHLING, J. D. 1975 Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome.
New York : Dover.

VERRIER, Suzanne
1995 Rosa Gallica.
Balmain, N.S.W. : Florilegium.

WACHER, John 1978 Roman Britain.
London : Dent.

WALKER, Susan 1997 “Mummy Portraits and Roman Portraiture”.
in Susan Walker and Morris Bierbrier (eds.).
Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt.
London : British Museum Press.

-------- and Morris BIERBRIER (eds.)
1997 Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt.
London : British Museum Press.

WALLACE-HADRILL, A.
1994 House and Society in Pompeii and Herculeum.

London : Bristol Classical Press.

WEBSTER, Graham
1969 The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D. 2nd ed.
London : Adam & Charles Black.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>