

“DIVINA PROPORZIONE” OF CANINE ROSE

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Abstract

The wild rose (commonly known also as dog rose, rose hip, briar rose) is widely recognized for the beneficial properties that it holds for our organism and its high content of active principals like vitamin A, C, E and K, bioflavonoids, tannins, pectins, organic acids, polyphenols and carotenoids; used both in herbal medicine and as a cosmetic, or like in Solvenia for the Cockta, a very popular soft drink, and also for its great symbolic role during medieval times. It had so many popular meanings, religious and in literature where writers were asked to trace a semantic reading in the variables of form, color, perfume, the number of petals, the presence of thorns.

Tied to a circle, symbol of the sky and the sun, we can find an interesting stylization of the rose in rosettes, that together with windows and lateral fissures, brightened the vast and dark gothic cathedrals, as a portal of communication between man and the divine. The rose an allegoric symbol of immortality has been known since ancient times, we can in fact see it on Egyptian tombs. It is a recurring architectural symbol on the Via sacra in Varese, the rose hip is the symbol of regeneration because it does not need to be pollinated, so it is used as the symbol of virginity and the resplendent visage of the holy mother, it defines absolute perfection, a deed without fault. The same which we see in the twelve star crown of the immaculate also called Morning Star meaning the one who announces the dawn, in other words the coming of the lord. Uniting the tips of the star, a regular polygon forms: a pentagon, a shape whose particular geometric elements are well known to the builders of gothic cathedrals. In fact, we are often faced with the “golden effect” or “divine proportions”, that part of a segment whose proportional average of the whole and the remaining part are the same, which, when it is adhered to, brings to mind our esthetic idea of beauty. And again in this case we find ourselves before an image of the divine, of beauty of itself, of perfection.

Keywords: canine rose, dog rose, architectural symbol , gothic cathedrals, divine proportions

The term “canine rose” “dog rose” has an uncertain origin, some say it is a disparaging expression more preferential to a type of commercial rose cultivated in gardens, which are much more pleasing to the eye than the briar rose or dog rose.

It seems however that the name has an antique roman origin: the famous historian Plinio the great, in his writings of the 1 century d.c.; stated that a reduction (decoction) of rose hip roots healed a roman legionary of rabies, which was transmitted to him by a bite, in this case by a dog. The same medical use for rabies continued in the following years, reaching its peak in the 18th and 19th century. The briar rose is a shrub that can range from one to five meters, it can also climb tree trunks, or intertwine in hedges or grow on buildings like ivy and in this way it can reach great heights. The trunks of this plant are covered with small hook shaped thorns which allow it to climb and stick to the surface; there is however a cultivated version that has no thorns. The Assisiensis, the appearance of these trunks are usually heavy and curved. The petals are fin shaped, and each one in turn is made up of 5-7 smaller petals.

The flowers bloom in May and the blooms usually last until well into July. They are usually 4.8 centimeter in diameter. They are usually a very light color; although the blooms do come in a variety of colors that range from pale white to dark red. The fruit of the briar rose from a botanical point of view are false fruits because they do not come from ovaries but from the enlargement of the receptacle, another floral structure. The technical name of these fruits are rose hip.

They are fleshy, oval and have a diameter of no more than two centimeters, they are usually a bright orange red. The fruit can be harvested around the end of august, beginning of September. The high concentration of vitamin C made it a useful specimen in the past, for the poor farmers and during the difficult times of war.

A confirmation of this can be seen in the United States during World War II when the cultivation of briar rose was encouraged, it can still be seen today in abundance in the many public parks, along the roads and even the coastal areas.

The main active principals of the briar rose are:

- vitamins (vitamins C, A, E, K);
- bioflavonoids (phytoestrogens) ;
- tannins;
- pectins;

- organic acids;
- polyphenols;
- carotenoids.

The fruit of the briar rose is characterized by high levels of vitamin C, up to 50-100 superior to that of citrus; 100 grams contain 426 milligrams, which is equal to 710% of RDA (regular daily allowance). [1]

The fruit is generally rich in many antioxidants (among which are beta- carotene and provitamin A) which fight free radicals, and allow the cells and tissue to stay young, slowing down the process of aging [2].

Furthermore vitamin C is an indispensable substance for the body's immune system. It helps prevent scurvy and blocks on coming flu and colds [3]. This substance is precious also because it stimulates the absorption of iron in the intestinal tract, contributing to the cure and prevention of anemia

For herbalists, pharmacists and beauticians the briar rose has a wide range of use because of its active principals, which are useful for the well being of our organism. The dog rose is highly regarded for its astringent, anti-diarrheal and anti inflammatory properties [4].

The tannins, which are present in large quantities, are important in resolving problems with diarrhea. The high levels of anti oxidants like vitamin C gives this plant vascular protective aspects, helping capillary veins and incrementing the micro circulation of blood. The rose hip has a diuretic action as well, it stimulates and eliminates toxins thru the urinary track and is recommended in case of swollen bladder and or kidneys.

It helps eliminate uric acid and is also useful in the treatment of gout. The briar rose is also recommended to people who are very debilitated, for example because of illness, infection, pharmacological therapies or after surgery. It is in fact an excellent tonic in the treatment of hypo vitamin syndrome, and the treatment of stress related illnesses or chronic fatigue.

This plant is particularly useful for those who suffer from allergies, because it has a low antihistaminic effect (especially respiratory relief) it allows the reduction of allergy symptoms. It is used as a powder, it is a good treatment for arthritis and rheumatism, and tendinitis and articulation pain.

The briar rose are commonly used in marmalades, jellies, composites, purees and confections, but also as syrup and tisanes.

Cockta is a Slovenian soft drink made with rose hip and eleven other ingredients, including lemon and orange. There are also other unusual varieties like rose honey, using rose petals as a natural colorant. The tisane made with dried rose hip are very popular, because they have a characteristic acidic taste and a pleasant aroma, it can be drunk hot or cold, and they are very refreshing. Tisane and reductions are usually made with the flowers and leaves of the plant, instead decoctions are more useful in cosmetics because it has a soothing effect on distressed or sensitive skin.

The rose hip fruit is also used to prepare homemade facial masks, eliminating the tough leaves and blending them; when applied to the face these masks smooth and have a toning effect on the skin. The rose hip berry can be used for refreshing and relaxing baths. The first step is making a reduction then mixing it with baking powder and salt then adding it to warm bath water. Some varieties of briar rose are used by many plant nurseries as rootstock for other commercial roses because of its adaptability and resiliency.

The briar rose is also cultivated on the border of cultivated fields as hedges, edgings and boundaries, or to stabilize a terrain and help against the corrosion of the soil. The rose is in the forefront of splendid medieval symbolism, there were so many esoteric, folkloristic, religious and literary meanings which were used to explain or incarnate a semantic braid of variables like the shape, color, perfume, the number of petals, the presence of thorns [5].

In literature praise and prayers to the Virgin Mary were invoked with the appellatives like "Mystic Rose", "Fragrant Rose", "Ruben Rose", "Novice Rose", and even "the rose of roses", "Rose among Roses", a majestic superlative "Queen of Roses".

However the mother of Christ was first of all a mother: compassionate and merciful, she intervenes to the Lord for her children whose souls and bodies suffer. This aspect of Mary as the creator of physical and spiritual salvation, and in the medieval mindset disability is equivalent to sin, which translates into the rose becoming a talisman against evil.

Whereas, in the medical field it is used in many preparations for its healing qualities for traumas, as a cure for nightmares, anxiety, the sight, anger (briar rose), superstition and devotion grant it magical powers like the ability to fight back any illness: during the plague that swept across Europe

rose hip was worn as an amulet against the risk of contamination. The petals purified the environment and disinfected clothing. Many medieval myths considered the Rose as testimony of a miraculous intervention of the Madonna: in one of the *De Cantigas Santa Maria* of XIII century, a monk dedicated five psalms every day to the Madonna, one for every letter of her name. Upon his death five roses grew from his mouth, astonishing his fellow monks.

A similar miracle occurred contemporarily in *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame* of Gautier de Coinci, where a cleric, died without having been confessed, was buried in an hallow ground, the Virgin Mary compassionately grew a rose from his mouth as a show of her divine intervention.

Furthermore in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a devote Knight, who said the rosary upon a bower of fresh roses every day, was saved from his enemies even though they had found him in a disadvantaged position, they did not see him, instead, by divine intervention of the Madonna, they saw a maid who was intent upon braiding a rose bower, they withdrew, disorientated by the sight.

A legend would like to demonstrate that Rosemary comes from the rose Maria, Rose of Mary, it narrates that at first the plant had white flowers which turned light blue when the Madonna opened her mantel over the plant. Another sacred symbol of the rose is directly borrowed from its circular shape and the disposition of its petals, like a message of perfection and infinity.

We assimilate to this circular vision of perfection that of the rose as a mirror of Heaven: Dante in the *Divina Commedia* sees Maria at the centre of concentric skies of Paradise like a Rose that reigns at the heart of other roses. From the circle to the wheel, the symbol of the infinite passage of time and an eternal paradigm and of eternity, the rose assumes new symbolic meanings burgeoning on divine works and in the metaphorical enclosure of alchemy and the coming of the divine work in short. The rose, resembling a philosophical writing tool, the philosopher's stone, and the prized flower of the alchemists', their treaties often have titles like "The Philosopher's rose garden", "Rosarius", or "Rosarium" accredited to Arnaldo da Villanova.

Tied to a circle, symbolizing the sky and the sun, we can see a very interesting stylization of the rose in the rosettes' which along with the windows and the lateral fissures, illuminated the vast and dark gothic

cathedrals. The rosettes represent, in their form, beauty and perfection of creation, they also project the mystery of the god of light and source of life. These windows, are portals of communication between the divine and man, they are wider when facing the inside and more narrow facing outwards, because the light, which is the mirror of divine revelation, penetrates the church as it penetrates man's inner being, through small glimmers, which quickly spread through the act of contemplation. The rose, allegory of immortality, of the passage from earthly life to the hereafter has been known since ancient times: we can see it on the tombs of ancient Egypt and the Romans in May celebrated "Rosalie", there were flower basins near cemeteries where roses were offered to the departed, so much so that for a very long time roses were associated with cemeteries.

The first Christians, refused to offer roses to the dead, in this way differentiating themselves from pagans. For the convents of the medieval era, starting with the gardens of Charlemagne, cultivating this flower was a must, as a symbol of the preparations for eternity in fact ointment with rose oil was a sacrament for the dying.

Rose petals were showered onto the assembled during the mass of Pentecost. In the middle ages, and as an allegory of the holy spirit that manifested itself as a flame above the heads of the apostles. The rose thanks to its shape and perfume, represents perfection and harmony (Fig. 1)

The briar rose because it has no need to be pollinated to regenerate itself is a recurring architectural symbol on the Via Monte Sacro of Varese. Thanks to this characteristic it has symbolized virginity and the resplendent visage of the Mother, which embodies absolute perfection, a creation without fault.

The five petals that compose the corolla are characteristic, when it is represented with nine petals it is an emblem of initiation, symbolizing a high level of initiation for those few who have reached an elevated level of knowledge. At times we can see that inside the external petals five other smaller petals and in the centre, a semi circular structure that represents the sun, in fact Maria was often called the morning Star.

The rose represents the resplendent visage of the Mother, which embodies absolute perfection without fault.

A stylization of the Rose allows us the possibility to design a five point star, the same star that we can see in the crown of twelve stars of the Immaculate defined also as The Morning Star and indicates, She who presents us the dawn, in other words the coming of redemption (Fig. 2, and Fig. 3). Uniting the points of the star, a regular five sided polygon appears; a pentagon. This shape has geometric characteristics, specifics that were well known by the constructors of gothic cathedrals, in fact we often deal with the so called "golden effect of divine proportions".

That part of a segment that has a proportional average between the whole segment and the remaining part, when this relationship is respected, our ingrained sense of beauty is brought to mind. Even in this case we find ourselves facing a representation of the divine, beauty in of itself, of perfection (Fig. 4)

From a Christian stand point the five petal rose represents the five wounds of Christ, it is also the flower chosen by Dante to represent heaven where each of its petals contains the number of souls liberated by earthly rebirth, to which the light is redistributed in proportion to how much it can absorb. The plea "mystic Rose pray for us", probably elaborated in the XII century, presumes specific spiritual dispositions. Rose, insomuch as the appropriate image of unchanging beauty because of its shape, color, perfume, a sane expression of living and love, pure and liberating. Mystic because it is necessarily destined to define worth and reality that surpass it. In modern terms we could say because it is "symbolic" [6].

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Figure 1: Sacromonte di Varese, Portal, architectural detail of the vault



Figure 2: Charting of the canine rose



Figure 3: The canine rose, particular sculptural

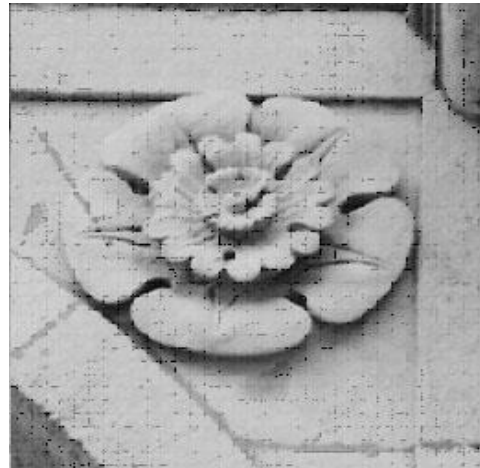


Figure 4: Charting of the canine rose, in a five-pointed star

