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“But you could not have a green rose”: Presenting Blooms in Hungary

Having created light, the firmament, and dry land, “God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, (…) and God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1: 11/2). Thus God, early on, planted a garden. Joyce, in marked contrast, could be said to have planted a city, though not without mentioning an astonishing variety of plants, and in Ulysses, he repeatedly conjures up Gerard, the eminent Elizabethan botanist, compiler of a famous herbal and likely acquaintance of Shakespeare.[1] There is also a unique specimen of Hungarian origins: the Virag-Bloom-Henry Flower trefoil, a somewhat exotic variant of the native shamrock.

The present essay grew out of a talk given at the 2006 International James Joyce Symposium in Budapest. Its principal aim was to draw attention to plants, one aspect of Joyce’s work that has generally been overlooked. As it was beyond the scope of the talk to present a nosegay of Joyce’s assembled blooms, a bouquet of roses was picked from across Joyce’s works, with a few lesser flowers mixed in here and there and concluded with a visit to Gerard’s “rosery” in Fetter lane.

The rose is a flower particularly rich in associations, and Joyce, like so many other poets and writers, made good use of it. The symbolic range of the rose in Joyce, however, is modest compared to W. B. Yeats’s work, for example, where it functions in personal, universal and historical ways (O’Neill, ed. 2004: 109).[2] Occult mysticism, Dante and Blake, to mention just a few sources, led Yeats to make the rose variously symbolize spiritual love, Supreme Beauty, Maud Gonne, an idealized Ireland, the primal goddess,[3] the heart’s desires, and the spirit of poetry (Cullingford, 1997: 59). Joyce, in contrast, tends to play with the rose in its verbal forms of noun, adjective and verb.

In ancient times the rose was sacred to Venus, goddess of love, while in Christian symbolism it is emblematic of the one without peer and assigned to the Virgin Mary, one of whose titles is ‘Mystical Rose’. [4] The rose is an emblem of England; as Gerard maintains in his Herbal, the rose
doth deserve the chief and prime place among all flowers whatsoever; beeing not onely esteemed for his beauty, vertues, and his fragrant and odoriferous smell; but also because it is the honor and ornament of our English Scepter, as by the conjunction appeareth, in the uniting of those two most Royall Houses of Lancaster and Yorke. [sic] (Woodward, ed. 1985: 269-70).

The first and only rose mentioned in Dubliners briefly flowers in ‘Counterparts’. Mr Alleyne who had asked Farrington, “Do you think me an utter fool?”, “flushed to the hue of a wild rose” in reaction to Farrington’s infamous repartee “–I don’t think, sir, [that] that’s a fair question to put to me” (D 101). Gerard’s Herbal tells us what Mr Alleyne would have looked like: wild roses are “most commonly whitish, seldom tending to purple” (Woodward, ed. 1985: 274). ‘Sweet Briar’ is another common name for the wild rose and an appellation that might appeal to Miss Delacour who had “smile[d] broadly” at Farrington’s remark and on whose person or money the prickly Mr Alleyne “was said to be sweet” (D 99).

More memorable is the wild rose in Stephen’s first song in A Portrait, “O, the wild rose blossoms/On the little green place”, and his own defective if creative rendering “O, the geen wothe botheth.” (P 11). At Clongowes Wood College, Father Arnall divides the class into competing teams, York and Lancaster, during the lesson on sums. York and Lancaster were the warring English houses in ‘the Wars of the Roses’, a name coined by Sir Walter Scott.[5] Eventually, the red rose of Lancaster and the white rose of York combined as the Tudor rose.[6] Ireland in the 15th century had enlisted under the losing banner, that of the white rose; and Stephen, who cannot work out the answer for the sum, has a white silk badge fluttering on his jacket. Perhaps young Stephen’s green rose is an imaginative Irish creation somewhere between the red and white roses of England. The warring English houses reappear in Finnegans Wake as ‘Rose Lankester and Blanche York’ (FW 485.12).

The bucolic poet Bion in the 2nd century BC preserved the legend of how, upon the death of Adonis by a boar, Aphrodite shed as many tears as Adonis had shed drops of blood, and from each tear sprung a white rose and from each drop of blood a red rose (see Adonis flower; Adonis annua in Baumann, 1999: 76).

According to the folklore of plants (Baker, 2005: 129), red and white roses have differing reputations: while the red rose symbolizes earthiness, the white rose was attached to the spiritual aura of the Virgin Mary, and white roses were carried at her feasts. Stephen during the lesson on sums muses on roses and their colours, and he quietly transposes the flower into the realm of the imagination:

White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colours to think of. And the cards for first place and second place and third place were beautiful colours too: pink and cream and lavender. Lavender and cream and pink roses were beautiful to think of. Perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and he remembered the song about the wild rose blossoms on the little green place. But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could (P 16).[7]

Roses readily come to Stephen’s mind throughout A Portrait; such images are also attributed to him, and sometimes they introduce a rather ambiguous tone. After his confession “his prayers ascended to heaven from his purified heart like perfume streaming upward from a heart of white rose” [sic!] (P 153); according to the folklore of plants, a white rose was planted on a virgin’s grave (Baker, 2005: 131). When interviewed by the director of Belvedere College about his possible vocation, Stephen considers that at one stage, “it was only amid softworded phrases or within rosssoft stuffs that he dared to conceive of the soul or body of a woman” (P 165). From here on in the book, roses become associated with a heightened style, purple prose, with accumulating resonances. Increasingly, too, the flower ‘rose’ and the colour adjective are mixed or combined:

[h]is soul… swooning into… A world, a glimmer or a flower? Glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light,
an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to itself, breaking in full crimson and unfolding and fading to palest rose, leaf by leaf and wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flushes, every flush deeper than other' [sic] (P 181)[8]

or Lured by that ardent roselike glow (...) the roselike glow (...) the rays from the rose that was her wilful heart (...) covering the roselight in his heart. (P 229)[9]

Joyce commonly uses a word or image in different ways and with contradictory meanings, thereby showing how the sublime meets the ridiculous. His employment of the rose is a good example.

Two fertile literary sideshoots, Oscar Wilde and James Clarence Mangan, deserve a brief mention. Stephen's "geen wothe" which, after all, grows out of the song's "wild rose" (P 11), invokes Oscar Wilde's green carnation.[10] While Stephen at Clongowes is too young to reflect on Wilde's famous invention, he seems to long for a flower that blends art and nature: "But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could" (P 16). Speculation and yearning are part of the larger context of Stephen's being troubled by things (homo)sexual, just as throughout the novel he is shown to be sensitive to the allure of the decadent.[11] As it happens, the etymology of the word carnation, Latin carnea, 'flesh', simply accounts for the flower's colour,[12] but it is suggestive in a context of (homo)erotic overtones. Though only in the reader's mind, Wilde's green carnation does resonate with those verbally tenuous passages in which roses bloom in a sexually charged context: the purple patches in which Stephen's flower flourishes. Interestingly an anagram of 'rose' is Eros, a sensual note likewise struck in James Clarence Mangan's 'Dark Rosaleen', one of the most popular poems of the nineteenth century. Although Mangan reads the anonymous Irish poem 'Róisín Dubh' ('Little Black Rose') as a political allegory, ie, a parable of Irish loyalty to the motherland ('Dark Rosaleen'), he also addressed his Muse in it.[13] Ireland as 'Dark Rosaleen' evokes the green rose of Stephen's imagination as well as the red and white rose of England.[14]

The rose proliferates in Ulysses, and the varieties include the dreaded Rose of Castile, Miss Douce's "jumping rose on satiny breast of satin" (U 11.08), The Last Rose of Summer and all the other flowers in the songs in "Sirens". 'Rose' as the past tense of 'rise' allows for sexual reverberations courtesy of the English language, especially in the charged atmosphere of "Sirens": 'Broncedouce communing with her rose that sank and rose sought Blazes Boylan's flower and eyes' (U 11.398); just as "At each satiny heaving bosom's wave (her heaving embon) red rose rose slowly sank red rose" (U 11.07). Such echoes reverberate to Bloom in "Lotus-Eaters" foreseeing his body in the bath, "sustained, buoyed lightly upward (...) his navel, bud of flesh" and "the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower" (U 5.569); where in the rise and fall we not only get a male member turned flower in English, but also an Irish one, as 'bod' (pronounced 'bud') is the Irish word for 'penis'.[15] As if to keep a gender balance, 'rose' in slang refers to the female pudenda or a maidenhead (Partridge, 1984), and, in Hiberno-English usage, 'roses' refer to a woman's menstrual period: Martha Clifford's bad headache makes Bloom think, "Has her roses probably" (U 5.285).[[16]

In "Nausicaa", during Benediction at Star of the Sea Church in Sandymount, the music suitably "rose and fell" (U 13.499), and the titles of Mary recited in the Litany of Loreto that waft through the open church window conclude with "mystical rose" (U 13.374). It comes as no surprise that Gerty has a "rosebud mouth" (U 13.88) and that her flush is as "delicate as the faintest roselight in his heart."[17]

First and foremost flowers generally and roses in particular are associated with Leopold and Molly Bloom. It all began when Rudolph Virag, Leopold's father, changed his Hungarian surname 'Virag' ('flower') by deedpoll to an English 'Bloom'. The translation of his family name remains to the fore in Bloom's mind. In "Eumaeus" he fantasizes about "something top notch, an all star Irish cast, the Tweedy-Flower grand opera company with his own legal consort as leading lady" (U 16.525). In "Ithaca" he contemplates "Bloom cottage" and "Flowerville" (U 17.1580) among possible names for his residence and foressees himself as "Bloom of Flowerville," "planting aligned young firtrees, syringing, pruning, staking" (U 17.1582), and so on. His "ultimate ambition" regarding a desirable residence includes "oval flowerbeds ... set with ... scarlet and chrome tulips, blue scillas, crocuses, polyanthus, sweet William, sweet pea, lily of the valley" (U 17.1552).

Early in the book Bloom is seen to have an affinity with plants. Having smelt the flower Martha sent, he thinks:

Language of flowers. (..) Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don't please poor forgetmenot how I long violets to dear roses when we soon anemone meet" (U 4.260).

In "Lotus-Eaters," daydreaming of the Far East, he imagines what a "lovely spot it must be: the garden of the world (Belipsis), said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life (U 18.06). Remembering the day sixteen years earlier that they were lying among the rhododendrons (literally the 'rose trees') in Howth, she muses that Bloom said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life (U 18.76).
There isn’t even a hint of irony in ‘A Flower Given to My Daughter’ which Joyce published in Pomes Penyeach in 1927. The image of the rose is central to the poem. In the language of flowers, the white rose bud signifies a girl too young to love:[17]

Frail the white rose and frail are
Her hands that gave
Whose soul is sere and paler
Than time’s wan wave.

Rosefrail and fair – yet frailest
A wonder wild
In gentle eyes thou veilest,
My blueveined child. (PP 1986)

Two of the images in ‘A Flower Given to My Daughter’ resonate with Stephen’s thoughts on Shakespeare in “Scylla and Charybdis”:


If ‘A Flower Given to My Daughter’ refers to “eyes” that “veil” and a “blueveined” child, “Scylla and Charybdis” contains an “azured harebell like her veins” and “Lids of Juno’s eyes, violets.”

Shakespeare has long been established as the source of Stephen’s phrases: the quotations are from Cymbeline and The Winter’s Tale. In Cymbeline Arviragus promises Imogen to sweeten her sad grave “with fairest flowers”: “Thou shalt not lack/The flower that’s like thy face, pale primrose, nor/The azured harebell, like thy veins; no, nor/The leaf of egplantine” (Cymbeline V.i.219-22).[18] which is a wild rose. Stephen’s “Lids of Juno’s eyes, violets” Joyce lifted out of The Winter’s Tale where Shakespeare’s delight in flowers is again unmistakable. Perdita wishes she had “Daffodils,/That come before the swallow dares, and take/The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,/But sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eyes/or Cytherea’s breath; pale primroses” (The Winter’s Tale, IV.iv.118ff);[19] and she continues her floral enumeration with oxlips, the crown imperial, lilies, and the fleur-de-lis. In both Cymbeline and The Winter’s Tale, these phrases are mentioned in connection with the grave and corpses, and this is, perhaps, what makes Stephen think “One life is all. One body. Do. But do” (U 9.653).[20]

Similarly floriferous passages can be found in Joyce. One example is Isobel in the Wake who is ever so pretty in her sleep with her “wildwood’s eyes and primarose hair, quietly, all the woods so wild, in mauves of moss and daphnedews, how all so still she lay, neath of the whitethorn, child of tree, like some losthappy leaf, like blowing flower stilled” (FW 556.17).[21] The Wake, obviously, is particularly accommodating of such thematic coloration.[22]

To return to Stephen’s thoughts on Shakespeare in the National Library: William M. Schutte (1957: 153, 157) maintained that the principal sources of Stephen’s theory about the poet’s life were George Brandes (translated 1898; part biography, part criticism), Frank Harris (a series of controversial articles in 1899, published in book form in 1909; impressionistic; not scholarly) and Sidney Lee (A Life of William Shakespeare, 1898; scholarly). Twenty years later, in 1977, Richard Ellmann (1977: 59-61) pointed out another source for Joyce’s inspiration regarding Shakespeare: a small volume entitled A Day with William Shakespeare by Maurice Clare, published in 1913 (Maurice Clare was the pseudonym of a prolific writer named May Byron). Ellmann traces various echoes of Clare’s book in Stephen’s reflections and speculations. Stephen, like Clare, deals with Shakespeare at age thirtyfive, emphasizing that he was still past his youth, and like Clare, has Shakespeare call on Gerard the Herbalist in his “rosery” in Fetter lane. Ellmann goes so far as to claim that “Maurice Clare’s little book, so slight and superficial, served as a promptbook to help Joyce determine the incidents of Bloom’s day and Shakespeare’s” (1977: 61).

It is worth noting how Stephen borrows freely from these various sources, particularly since Maurice Clare’s writing is highly imaginative and hence speculative, whereas Sidney Lee – at the other end of the spectrum – tries to stick to facts and dates. Lee (1996: v) avoids what he calls “merely aesthetic criticism” and tries to “reduce conjecture to the smallest dimensions consistent with coherence”;[23] and he warns against undue projection of autobiographical connections (ibid.: vi-vii).[24] Clare’s writing, on the other hand, is evocative, atmospheric, sensuous, and he even pens a dialogue between Shakespeare and Gerard that includes lines such as:

‘Well met, Will!’ said the grave and reverend herbalist, ‘no other man in London would I more gladly welcome: for that thou hast a most worthy apprehension of the seemliness of plants and herbs. Country blood, country blood, good sir! Come, now, into my poor enclosure and let me regale thee with new and marvellous things...’ (Clare, 1913: no pagination)

Clare, like several other writers (eg, Lee 1898, Harris 1899), refers to Shakespeare’s “auburn” hair and beard. Stephen calls him a “greying man (…), with thirtyfive years of life, nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita, with fifty of experience” and, in the passage from “Scylla and Charybdis”, he thinks of Shakespeare as “greyedauburn” (U 9.652). As for the rosery, Clare refers to Gerard’s “fruit ground” in Fetter lane; Thomas Fairman Ordish whose book Shakespeare’s London (1904) was Clare’s main source, to Gerard’s “fruit garden”. Ellmann maintains that Joyce specified the garden to be a rosery “to make Shakespeare fall in line with the rose and flower imagery associated with the Blooms in the book.” (1977: 61).

The English herbalist John Gerard (1545-1612) was superintendent of gardens for Queen Elizabeth’s secretary of state. He compiled a catalogue of English garden plants in 1596 and prepared The Herbal or Generall Historie of Plantes in 1597, a work that has won an unchallenged place among old-time herbals. It is remarkable for its prose, folklore, quaint conceits and humour. Reading Gerard’s Herbal is like strolling through an Elizabethan garden with a companion who has a story for every flower and is full of little wisdoms. He also gives a matchless description of wild-flower life in London in Elizabethan times. Gerard had
numerous international connections and grew many a plant from far-flung countries. It is likely that Gerard knew Shakespeare. Eleanor Sinclair Rohde maintains that "[i]n those days two such prominent men could scarcely have failed to know one another" (1971: 118);[25] moreover, Gerard was a prominent member of the Barber-Surgeons' Company, which had its hall almost across the street from the Huguenot's house where Shakespeare lived from 1598-1604. Certainly Shakespeare's plays are full of the English herb-lore in which Gerard delighted.[26]

In Stephen's thoughts of Shakespeare in the National Library, it appears to be Gerard's flowers and, maybe, their scents that make Shakespeare toy with floral phrases from, or for, his plays; a case of the poet responding to his environment (though, of course, the flowers would be roses in a rosery!). It is interesting, however, that Gerard appears twice more, in "Sirens" and in "Eumaeus". As in "Scylla and Charybdis" roughly twelve hours earlier, Stephen in "Eumaeus" draws on his vivid mental picture of Shakespeare's environment when, in the context of Elizabethan music, he praises the bard's songs and mentions "the lutenist Dowland who lived in Fetter lane near Gerard the herbalist" (U 16.1763).

If it doesn't surprise that Stephen thinks of Gerard with considerable historical accuracy, it is amazing that in "Sirens" the herbalist should also come to Bloom's mind, and that indeed Bloom shares Stephen's earlier thoughts almost verbatim. As he ponders his postscript to Martha he muses:

Too poetical that about the sad. Music did that. Music hath charms. Shakespeare said. Quotations every day in the year. To be or not to be. Wisdom while you wait.

In Gerard's rosery of Fetter lane he walks, greyedauburn. One life is all. One body. Do. But do. Done anyhow. Postal order, stamp. (U 11.907)

Admittedly, both Shakespeare and music are on Bloom's mind, but the adjective "greyedauburn" and the sequence "In Gerard's rosery of Fetter lane he walks, greyedauburn. One life is all. One body. Do. But do." seem very unlikely to occur to two characters. Of course, this sequence is one short interpolated paragraph which interrupts more typically Bloomian musings. It appears to be an erratic block of text.[27] one of those instances of interjected textual fragments that draw attention to themselves first and foremost. Perhaps it suggests a mental affinity between Stephen and Bloom. In any case, Stephen's existentially anguished "Do. But do" is transmogrified in front of our eyes into Bloom's more appeased and mundane "Done anyhow. Postal order, stamp." Bloom is ready to move on: "Walk now... Walk" (U 11.909), and there we must leave him.

References


Bible: the King James Version.


Gula, Marianna (2001/2002). 'From Cuchulin to the 'Man in the Gap': Hero-Worship in the 'Cyclops' Episode of James Joyce's Ulysses", in Papers on Joyce 7/8, pp. 18-22.


[2] Yeats attributed different meanings and functions to the image of the rose over time; see also Unterrecker, 1959.


[5] *Anne of Geierstein*, 1829; ch. vi: "...Edward the Fourth of England (...) renowned for the numerous victories over the rival House of Lancaster, by which he had, after various reverses, obtained indisputed possession of the throne (...) was now turning his eyes to the regaining of those rich and valuable external possessions which had been lost during the administration of the feeble Henry VI and the civil discords so dreadfully prosecuted in the wars of the White and Red Roses.”

[6] Henry Tudor (1457-1509), after his victory at Bosworth (1485), became king as Henry VII and in 1486 married Princess Elizabeth of York. The union of the two Houses gave rise to the Tudor Rose, a superimposition of the white rose on the red. (Brewer’s *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*)

[7] The passage, so simple yet suggestive, foretells Stephen’s frustration with the sham of his paper recreation of the wonderful island cave from *The Count of Monte Cristo*, transfers, paper flowers, coloured tissue paper and all: “When he had broken up this scenery, weary of its tinsel, there would come to his mind the bright picture of Marseilles, of sunny trellises and of Mercedes.” (P 66) The images his mind creates surpass in beauty and potential the narrow limitations of material reality.

[8] Stephen, as if recovering from intuiting his destiny on Dollymount strand, has closed his eyes.

[9] Remember Stephen awaking towards dawn, “His soul... all dewy wet”, following an instant of enchantment and inspiration, or was it “long hours and years and ages?” (P 226) The phrases on that page of the book surround the verses that pass from his mind to his lips. A little later in the novel, trying to avoid the common noises outside that offend him, Stephen turns towards the wall, staring "at the great overblown scarlet flowers on the tattered wallpaper. He tried to warm his perishing joy in their scarlet glow, imagining a roseway from where he lay upwards to heaven all strewn with scarlet flowers.” (P 233). That last image of the "roseway (...) to heaven all strewn with scarlet flowers” calls to mind the Elizabethan custom of scattering flowers in chambers on ceremonial occasions.

[10] Only an essay-length study could do justice to the connections between *A Portrait* and Oscar Wilde.

[11] The physical description of the brothel area of Dublin and Stephen’s response to it are an example as are some of his more lurid nightmares.

[12] Vicki Mahaffey drew my attention to the word’s etymology. ‘Carnation’ is the general name for the cultivated varieties of Clove-pink (*Dianthus caryophyllus*).


[14] Joyce considered Mangan to be “the most distinguished poet of the modern Celtic world”. (Joyce 2000: 130)

[15] One is also reminded of the mysterious Penrose whose name echoes through the pages of *Ulysses*.

[16] 'Flowers', according to Partridge’s *Dictionary of Slang*, is an abbreviation for ‘monthly flowers’ and refers to the menstrual flux.

[17] Different roses have different significations in the language of flowers: the Musk Rose symbolizes capricious beauty; a Faded Rose beauty is fleeting; the Yellow Rose, infidelity (Brewer’s *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*).

[18] Eglantine, or sweetbrier, is a wild rose with white to deep rosy pink single flowers and leaves of a "beautifull greene colour", as Gerard the Herbalist notes (Woodward ed.,1985: 274).

[19] ("...pale primroses./That die unmarried ere they can behold/Bright Phoebus in his strength–a malady/Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and/The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,/The flower-de-luce being one: O, these I lack/To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend/To strew him o’er and o’er!"") Cytherea is one of the names of Venus, the goddess of beauty and sensual love to whom the rose was sacred. Talking of flowers to present to guests, Perdita also mentions rosemary, rue, carnations, gillyvors, lavender, mints, savory, marjoram and marigold.

[20] Yeats associated the rose with the goddess of beauty and love. In *More Seaweed from a Red Rose* (1933), Yeats wrote: "I have touched the rose and come to know/In man’s eye and woman’s mind the bright image of the world" (p. 26).
Stephen’s thought may also specifically echo Guderius’s remark “Prithee have tone, /And do not play in wench-like words with that which is so serious. Let us bury him (…) to th’ grave.” (Cymbeline, IV.ii.228ff).

A Daphne is a woodland shrub with fragrant flowers.

Examples include “Onzel grootvatter Lodewijk is onangonamed before the bridge of primerose and his twy Isas Boldmans is met the blueybells near Dandelion. We think its a gorsedd shame” (FW 361.21) in a passage in which leaves and underwood abound: “Here all the leaves alift aloft, full o’liefing, fell alaughing (…) And they leaved the most leavely of leatimes and the most folliagenous…” (FW 361.18). Elsewhere in the book, in a description of “our fredeland’s plain,” various flowers become distinguishable as “young pricket by pricket’s sister nibbleth on returned viridities; amaid her rocking grasses the herb trinity shrans lowliness; skyup is of evergrey. Thus, too, for donkey’s years. Since the bouts of Hebear and Hairyman the cornflowers have been staying at Ballymun, the duskrose has choosed out Goatstown’s hedges, twolips have pressed togatherthem by sweet Rush, townland of twinedlights, the whitethorn and the redthorn have fairygeyed the mayvalleys of Knockmaroon” (FW 14.33).

He writes of Shakespeare’s “unapproached affluence in dramatic instinct and invention–an affluence which enabled him to identify himself with every phase of human emotion” (1996: 109).

Particularly regarding the sonnets he goes to considerable lengths to show the enormous influence on Shakespeare of current conventions of Elizabethan sonnetteering and of the huge European output; a view which makes the autobiographic element in Shakespeare’s sonnets shrink to slender proportions (1996: 109).

When Rohde writes that the older herbals list numerous herbs as being “of special virtue when used as amulets to protect the wayfaring man from weariness” (1971: 108), one thinks of Bloom and his talismanic potato, but Gerard mentions only mugwort and Agnus castus (Chaste Tree) as endowed with special power. Gerard did have the potato in his garden as early as 1596 (1971: 108), only sixteen years after the Spaniards had brought the plant from Quito. Also of Joycean interest are Gerard’s version of the legend of the barnacle geese (Woodward, ed. 1985: 282V85) and Rohde’s critical account of Nicholas Culpeper, one of the embryologists mentioned in “Oxen of the Sun” (14.1235). Culpeper wrote a popular herbal in which he affirms his belief in the connection between herbs and stars. Rohde (1971: 166) maintains that “[o]ne cannot help suspecting that Culpeper knew perfectly well what nonsense he was talking, but that he also realized how remunerative such nonsense was and how much his customers were impressed by it.”

Rohde argues that “[o]utside the herbals there is more old English herb lore to be found in Shakespeare than in any other writer. It is, in fact, incredible that the man whose own works are so redolent of the fields and hedgerows of his native Warwickshire, did not visit the garden of the most famous herbarist of his day” (1971: 118).

“Quick warm sunlight came running from Berkeley road, swiftly, in slim sandals, along the brightening footpath. Runs, she runs to meet me, a girl with gold hair on the wind” in “Calypso” (U 4.240) is another example. Such erratic blocks of text are, of course, precisely not manifestations of the artist remaining “within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence” (P 224).
These roses without beautifully coloured petals can be an added attraction for any rose garden, depending on whether you like them or not. This rose is very special for another reason. It shows us a little of what the first flowers may first have looked like as they gradually mutated into the dazzling array of colours we see today - as they modified their leaves to make themselves irresistible to insects, birds and other potential pollinators. Rosa chinensis, one of the prettiest roses I've seen. They are very hardy and require no more care than their other colourful family members. They have a mild peppery fragrance. Read about the Green Rose of the Month. For more photos just click here: Rosa chinensis viridiflora. What was a green rose? A real rose or some island plant or Polynesian cultivar? Why in English? Hawaiian songs are rife with flower symbolism and layers of meaning, the surface one innocuous, the hidden one less so. If a rose is a rose, what does it signify? It is a rose, but no ordinary one. Instead of a conventional rose fragrance, it has a peppery smell. It's not hardy, more a tropical plant. Of course, since the reproductive parts are missing, the green rose is sterile - an evolutionary dead end, except that it seduces humans, who propagate it from cuttings. Some gardeners have claimed that their green roses reverted to a pink-flowered parent form. Viridiflora may have been in cultivation since 1743.