THE LILY AND THE ROSE AS CULTURAL SYMBOLS: TRACING TRANSMISSIONS THROUGH TIME

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the specificities of the significance associated with the lily and the rose, in successive time periods. The investment of meaning, and its subsequent re-appropriations, transmissions, and transfers, form the crux of our reflections, guided by Régis Debray's insights on mediology. Through a discussion of myths, legends, cultural practices, iconography, and historical events, we highlight the two flowers' rich symbolism and versatility as they adapt to the exigencies of power figures and people's empowerment movements. The study underscores the role of material and organic vectors for ongoing meaning (re)construction, and showcases cultural vernacularisation and responses to mediological revolutions. It extends the scope to beyond France and Portugal, and brings under discussion similar flowers pertinent to reflections on cultural transmission.

Keywords: Mediology; Mediations; Régis Debray; lily; rose.

RESUMO

O presente artigo debruça-se sobre as especificidades do significado associado ao lírio e à rosa, em sucessivas épocas. O investimento de sentido e as suas subsequentes reapropriações, transmissões e transferências constituem o cerne das nossas reflexões, orientadas pelas ideias de Régis Debray sobre a mediologia. Através de uma discussão sobre mitos, lendas, práticas culturais, iconografia e acontecimentos históricos, destacamos o rico simbolismo e a versatilidade das duas flores, que se adaptam às exigências das figuras de poder e dos movimentos de emancipação das pessoas. O estudo sublinha o papel dos vetores materiais e orgânicos na (re)construção contínua de significados e mostra a vernacularização cultural e as respostas às revoluções mediológicas. Alarga o âmbito para além de França e Portugal e coloca em discussão flores semelhantes pertinentes para as reflexões sobre a transmissão cultural.

Palavras-chave: Mediologia; Mediações; Régis Debray; lírio; rosa.

INTRODUCTION TO MEDIOLOGY

Mediology is the fruit of French theorist Régis Debray. His doctoral dissertation presentation at the Sorbonne in 1994 introduced the idea of mediology and became the basis of Debray's book, *Media Manifestos* (1996). In 2004, he published *Transmitting Culture* (Turnley, 2011: 128). Debray's *Media Manifestos* sounds misleading; it is a book fundamentally about materialism rather than the media, and Debray does not speak much about film or media as it is conventionally understood. Szeman clarifies,

> It is in the original title of the book and the subtitle appended to it in English that we get a better sense of Debray's overall aims: these are *Manifestes medialogiques*, manifestos for 'mediology', a practice that explores 'the Technological Transmission of Cultural Forms' – the 'how' of symbolic transmission in each historical epoch that effects what can be transmitted, as well as the ultimate social significance of this transmission.
> (Szeman, 1999:3)

In his article, *Qu'est-ce que la médiologie?* (1999), Régis Debray compares the theory to the idea proposed by Victor Hugo[1] through his celebrated "This will kill that" to showcase the tussle between architecture and printing, ushering in mediological revolution at the juncture between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Mediologists thus explore the effects of the cultural structuring of technical innovation and, conversely, the technical bases of social or cultural development.

Debray (1991: 41) explains his understanding of the term "médio" as located in the middle. This would include the external material physical support (as the letter of a script), as also the collective organisation (for instance, school, church, club) or even a tradition, a memory, that is to say, a transmission chain functioning as an intergenerational vector for the body of a message. Mediology seeks to study the invisible connection between sym-

[1] Hugo, Victor (1831). This will kill that. In *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, Chapter 2, 174-188.

bolic form and material action (Brown, 2009: 2). It also examines the media and technical vectors of transmission. Debray groups them into two main categories: organised matter dealing with technical devices and materialised organisation drawing from organic devices. The former is purely logistic, including tools, materials, symbolic techniques, diffusion systems, etc. The latter are institutional vectors, that is, strategic norms and institutions, and refer to social and linguistic codes of communication, organisational and educational frameworks (Tiffon, 2011: 3-4).

Transmission is vital to mediology, and therein lies the political dimension in space and time. Debray is especially concerned with means of faith propagation, processes by which social mediations contribute to religion formation. According to him, the success of religion is not merely determined by the ability to use means of propagation but essentially by its mediatic consistency and its propension to develop mediations (Miège, 1992: 130). Furthermore, Debray explores connections between religious culture and political power. In *Le Scribe: Gènese du politique*[2] Debray showcases links between governmental political activity and cultural policy in his discussion of the expansionist imperial drive of the Carolingian dynasty in Europe instated by Charlemagne's consecration by the Pope as the Emperor of the West in 800 A.D. This momentous event heralded the Carolingian Renaissance, a revival after centuries of bleak cultural scenario in a vastly fragmented West Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D. Debray explains these major events as essential linkages between politics and culture: political power dependent on cultural authority for its exercise, and cultural authority in need of political power for its preservation. So, a new political order may involve a fresh organisation of culture; consequently, the perpetuation of the order would require the successful transmission across time of that culture (Ahearne, 2004: 113-114).

Debray sees information as interacting within a social and historical context that remains not merely exterior, but contributes as the setting for

[2] R. Debray, Le Scribe: Genèse du politique (Paris: Grasset, 1980).

the meaning of messages. The milieu is contextualised within a mediasphere that could be termed a technological moment, a period in time identified by "its foremost technique and practice of memory formatting" (Brown, 2009: 4). Debray lists the following mediaspheres in his consideration of the history of media: the logosphere, corresponding with the oral tradition and the advent of writing; the graphosphere, with the advent of printing; and the videosphere, with the advent of audiovisual. Debray uses the suffix "sphere" to convey a spatial and chronological relationship among different factors. The mediasphere is perceived as a middle ground for the transmission of messages. The mediaspheres, although corresponding to specific historical periods, do not succeed and substitute each other linearly; they are constantly involved in the process of mutual reactivation (Turnley, 2011: 130). Debray (2000: 7-9) further expounds that mediological revolution results in three kinds of effects: discovery (a sense of nostalgia resulting in a recursive movement), delirium (an optimism coupled with grandiose promises), and jogging (tendencies to revaluing the old).

Helene Roberts views surrogate images and art reproductions as forms of translation, transcultural interpretations, and cultural negotiations and exchanges, making them valuable objects of study (Codell, 2010: 215). Our research takes up two flowers - the lily and the rose - as objects of study for closer examination as cultural symbols in a broader context of Western Europe, and more specifically in France and Portugal. The selection of the two flowers has been determined by the imprint left by the lily and the rose on the cultural fabric of France and Portugal, respectively, over centuries of practice and belief. The following sections discuss the materiality of transmission, historical contexts, and vectors likely to impact meaning acquisition in an attempt to explore the evolution in symbolism that each of the flowers has been vested with. After foregrounding the lily and the rose in mythology and Christian tradition, the paper focuses on floral iconography as instrumental in fostering political-religious collaboration and highlights the subsequent vernacularisation of floral cultural essence. The concluding section connects with technical and organic devices and recent trends in the contemporary digital era in light of Régis Debray's conceptual thought.

FLOWERS IN MYTHOLOGY

Throughout art history, the rose has stood as a symbol embodying love, authority, regality, aesthetics, sensuality, and enigma (Frey, 2021). Its special significance may be traced to ancient civilisations. Cuneiform inscriptions have been unearthed within the royal tombs of Uruk, documenting the 24th century BC military campaigns of Sargon of Akkad, who brought back roses upon his return from crossing the Taurus Mountains[3]. Ancient cultures have immortalised the rose as a symbol of love and sacrifice and valued its botanical properties, which include medicinal, fragrance, and aesthetic value. In Greek mythology, Chloris, the goddess of flowers, transformed a lifeless nymph into an exquisite rose, honoured as the Queen of Flowers by Olympus, with Aphrodite christening it as a tribute to her son[4]. During the Roman era, roses were used in various forms, such as perfumes, cosmetic products, medicinal remedies, frescoes, chaplets, garlands, and confetti. Newly-weds often adorned themselves with rose crowns, and their bedding with rose petals, symbolising passion (Shinwari, Shinwari, 2003: 7-9). Romans dedicated May to the flower with the Rosalia festival (Tearle, 2021). By association with Venus and springtime, the rose also symbolised the transient nature of life. Through the propagation of myths, the inherent properties of the flower (medicinal, fragrant, thorny, sensual) were enriched by early humans to acquire related symbolism: passion, sacrifice, union, and springtime. With the advent of Christianity, fresh layers of meaning were added; early church legends used flowers as symbolic of Mary's assumption through the finding by the Apostles of roses and lilies in Mary's opened tomb in place of her body. Mary came to be especially associated with roses, red and white, and rose gardens to devotion. Marian apparitions underscore the rose as a religious

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[3] As noted by Heinz-Mohr and Sommer (1988), Beuchert (2004) and Kandeler; Ullrich (2009: 3612).

[4] The myth of Aphrodite and Adonis enhances the rose's symbolic association with devotion. Aphrodite's rush to warn Adonis of a plotted murder led her to traverse a rose bush, resulting in her injury and the transformation of white petals to red. She arrived too late, and Adonis perished, leading to her sorrowful tears mingling with his blood, giving rise to anemones.

symbol for Mary herself: Our Lady of Guadeloupe, Our Lady of La Salette, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Rosa Mystica.

A similar reappropriation of the flower's symbolic value by Christian culture is evidenced in the case of the lily, associated with Joseph, Mary's spouse, through an ancient legend that he was so chosen from among other men by the blossoming of his staff as a lily (Pflaum, 2021). During the early medieval period, the lily is further solidified as a heraldic symbol of the nascent Frankish monarchy. As with the rose, we note a tendency to augment the meaning originating from natural properties through myth propagation. The yellow iris was a common flower along the Lys river wetlands under the sway of the early Franks (Lestz, 2018). The Franks referred to the flower as "Lisbloem", "bloem" being the Frankish word for "flower" (André, 2024). Frankish etymology vested the flower with the term *lys* and, by replacing the earlier frog iconography with Marian floral imagery, paved the path for the creation of the French *fleur-de-lys*. The lily transposed its religious connotations onto the nascent monarchy in the 5th century A.D. by its repackaging as a gift to Clovis, the Merovingian Frankish king, by Mary at the time of his baptism. Clovis, regarded as the first king of the Franks, married a Christian Burgundian princess, Clothilde, who was instrumental in his conversion. On Christmas of 496, Clovis was baptised by Saint Remigius in Reims Cathedral (Arnaldo, 2024). Earlier, in 496, he was involved in a decisive battle with the Alemmani at Tolbiac, one that he stood in danger of losing. When stuck in a marshland during battle, the bright water lilies supposedly guided him to safe ground and to victory. The baptism of Clovis is widely represented in French iconography with analogies to that of Jesus by John the Baptist. In some later accounts, an angel comes down from heaven with a holy flask shaped like a lily and pours out holy oil to anoint Clovis. The iconic scene is also famously rendered in *The Bedford Hours*[5] through a triple reference to the flower, validating it as the medium of Clovis' and France's turning to

[5] Bedford Master 1423/British Library, Add. MS 18850

Christianity[6]. The triple evocation of the banner is reinforced by the three flowers on the banner in a possible allusion to the Trinity, but may also stem from an earlier banner of the Franks (Backhouse, 1981: 59). Clovis is believed to have been inspired following the aforementioned battle events to replace the prevailing design on his earlier banner (three yellow frogs on a blue background) with the three lilies (Miller, 2005).

Visual analogies between the three frogs and flowers are evident and point to the transfer of meaning into a new signifier, to be further reinvested until turning into a symbol for the French monarchy and for France. The Clovisian lily myth served to reinforce medieval kings' divine right to rule and to link them to early Frankish kings. The myth finds a singular tangible depiction through specific colour acquisition (gold on blue), alluding not just to Clovis (lily's light in darkness) but to Mary (blue) and to royalty (gold). Moreover, orality took on specific materials such as fabric in the form of banners, royal attire, and stone and metal for coats of arms and royal scepters. While the rose is not as colour-restrictive, its association with Mary in statuary, tableaux, and accounts of visionary experiences indicates the taking of profound religious meaning, along with simultaneous preservation of secular connotations linked to conjugal union, stemming from Greco-Roman tradition.

FLORAL ICONOGRAPHY

Over the centuries, the lily reinforced its image as a royal flower. From Clovis, it is transferred to the Carolingian emperor and is harnessed to support the Capetians' hold over France under threat from the Plantagenet empire. It is further mobilised to sustain the fragile Valois claim over the French throne in the period of the Hundred Years' War and later to assert rising French supre-

[6] The painting depicts God handing the banner with three lilies painted golden on blue fabric to an Angel; the Queen (whose cloak faintly reflects the banner) is seen receiving the banner from a hermit, handing it over to Clovis.

macy under the Bourbons, showcasing its propensity to function as a vector of cultural reorganisation accompanying changes in the political order. The lily served as a symbol of medieval politico-religious synergy instated through the papal collaborative origins of the Carolingian empire[7], as depicted in Jean Fouquet's illustration[8] of the event (Halsey, 2020). Apart from the banners, the emperor is highlighted in a cloak bedecked with golden lilies. Such representation accompanied by the flower (as a golden-on-blue motif on attire, decor, and accessories) will be repeatedly reproduced in French royal paintings to validate the claim to political power. A motif that originated with slim religious connotation in the Clovisian era and incorporated pagan political imagery acquired, through reproductions, substantial political significance. The flower as an icon for politico-religious synergy is exemplified in the divine right of kings claimed by later monarchs.

In medieval France, two figures came to be closely associated with the re-affirmation of political power and canonised: Louis IX and Joan of Arc. The re-affirmation took place in the face of a powerful adversary, England. Notably, the lily as a symbol of French power did not diminish in the fragile political scenario, but saw further expansion in efforts at re-appropriation by England. Louis IX and Joan of Arc are notably portrayed with the lily, as are English princes and kings (Rhys, 2023). Edward III of England adopted the symbol as a display of the English claim on the French throne. The English flag was quartered with the French lily in gold and blue. The coat of arms of kings in England had a design divided into four equal halves with six lions and six lilies in a direct reference to their fight for a right to French territory (Trueman, 2024). The flower, which had acquired a heraldic status in France, was used to contest French supremacy on the continent. Battle illustrations show enemy kings of England carrying motifs of the flower in

[7] In 800 AD, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne (the Carolingian Frankish king) as emperor of West Europe.

[8] Jean Fouquet recreates the event that transpired in Rome with an illustration of Charlemagne surrounded by bishops who had come to witness the crowning of the Holy Roman Emperor.

a visual affirmation of their expansionist intentions in France and as a stark reminder to the French Valois dynasty of their contested and fragile hold over the French throne and land. Legendary scenes painting key events, such as the crowning of Charles VII by Jules- Eugène Lenepveu, amongst others, serve to reinforce the validity of the French claim and use the flower for propaganda. The lily continues to this day in English iconography, seen on the gates of Buckingham Palace (Schanche, 2023) and the stained-glass in the church of Saint Peter in Norfolk. Wartime political iconography harnessed the symbolic power of the lily in both England and France; its fundamental materiality linked to ceremonial vestment and insignia demonstrates the lily's acquisition of symbolic substance unrelated to its inherent properties.

In the graphosphere, the lily continued to be associated with royal iconography, especially in the wake of Louis XIV's expansionist policies. Over time, the flower has seen a change in connotations: the lily came to be etymologically linked to the most common name for French kings. Louis is a corruption of Clovis, the first king, whose name was given to many others (Wasson, 2014). The lily associated with the French monarchy was disinvested of its original etymological origins with the river Lys and acquired an etymology linked to Louis. The flower's geographical suffix, tracing the foreign origins of the Franks, is transformed into the royal personhood, carrying religious connotation, and is rendered *fleur-de-Louis*, a reference to the lily as a gift from heaven to Clovis, in an echo to his baptism and, to the alleged divine right to rule vested in the French monarch. Since the flower is depicted as luminous golden, it has also been given a flower of light symbolism that may be understood from the archaic variant *fleur-de-luce*[9]. Such reworkings of meaning, through word use, find propitious conditions in an era that promoted literature and printing. The lily's etymological links to kings bearing the name Louis and iconographical value as a symbol of France are exported overseas onto territories such as Quebec and Louisiana. The flower also takes on materiality linked to the human body through its malafide use in branding runaway slaves in Louisiana under the

[9] In Latin, lux or *luc* would mean "light".

Code Noir (Yates, 2015). Such an identifying function meant that by now, the lily had acquired brand value, equating it not just with the ruling royal class but with the very essence of France.

Intrinsically tied to the materialised organisation that shapes cultural politics, the flower is destined to see its rise and fall in the shadow of the ruling class. As the royal emblem of a monarchy deeply intertwined with ecclesiastical power, the lily undergoes a shift in values following the 1789 Revolution and the move towards republicanism and secularism. The French Revolution rejected the flower and adopted the flag with three stripes in blue, white, and red, thus associating with traditional political power, the colours of Paris, and the people. Earlier too, the lily had witnessed periods of ellipse when Napoleon Bonaparte had supplanted it with the imperial eagle (Lefort, 2018) motif to distance himself from France's traditional monarchy and establish his own lineage. Although never entirely rejected, the lily was occasionally sidelined in favour of personal iconography[10] as an assertion by powerful monarchs like Louis XII, Francis I, and Louis XIV. Having acquired, through sustained symbolic association, a specific meaning, the flower underwent a status change in times of sociopolitical upheaval, confirming the role of organic devices in shaping its meaning trajectory.

A similar trend is observed with the rose. Within Catholicism, the rose holds particular importance for its Marian symbolism. In the medieval period, it is increasingly associated with women saints - Elizabeth (Isabel) and Therese of the Child Jesus are depicted cradling roses. The legend of Queen Isabel of Portugal narrates how her secret charity to the poor was miraculously concealed when the bread she was carrying transformed into roses, convincing King Dinis of her good intentions (Esteves, 2022). The Queen's generosity has been orally transmitted in Portuguese folklore and found in iconographical depictions seen in numerous reproductions: statues of the Saint Queen, with her opened cloak streaming out roses. The reproduction of this medieval, mundane, people-centric event, embedded in the

[10] Porcupine, salamander, sun.

cultural fabric, reinforced the monarchy's connection with the common people and has been immortalised in literature, lately adapted as an ebook on Kindle, in video adaptations, animated versions on YouTube, and as a fado. The adaptations testify to the lasting popularity of the meanings invested in the rose through time. Literary expressions in the graphosphere have been complemented by digital adaptations in the numerosphere[11]. McCleery (2006: 678) attributes the documentation of the 16th-century chronicler Damião de Góis and reveals a reverse version of this episode, with roses turning into money form[12]. It is noteworthy that the rose episode, which dates from the fourteenth century, finds no written mention before the sixteenth century.

Writing the legend that originated in the mnemosphere[13] or logosphere is a sign of politico-religious synergy, as in the case of the lily. Toipa (2016) credits the persistent efforts of John III with advancing the cause of Isabel's canonization. McCleery explains that she exemplifies queenship in two primary ways: by upholding traditional ideals of religious and political conduct, modelled by her mother and other royal women, and by serving as a template for future queens of her dynasty, with her *vita* likely intended as guidance (2006: 692). The volume of writings retelling the legend of the roses coincides with late medieval and early Renaissance efforts to validate royal power with sainthood. Narrative variations point to transformative materiality between roses, coins/gold, and bread, and extend to other women saints: Zita of Italy, Roseline of France, Elisabeth of Hungary, Cacilda of Spain. The sacred connotations of the rose mingle with those of bread in the legend's attempt to divinise royalty and defend monarchical power from people's questioning. The persistence of the legend of the roses thus implies a distancing of monarchs and nobility from

[11] Mediasphere marking the advent of digital technology.

[12] Note, too, a reverse version of the story where Isabel hands out roses that later turn into cash, found in the short *vita* attributed to Damião de Gois: 'Lenda', 46 (McCleery, 2006: 678)

[13] Mediasphere in which memory and orality were prominent.

the people. Paradoxically, it also transmits, through the generosity that is consistently reinforced, the saint protagonist's efforts to bridge distances by transgressing social norms.

The subtle association of the rose with Portuguese feminine nobility continues with Dª. Leonor de Almeida, fourth Marchioness of Alorna, also known as Alcipe who, after being accused of starting a secret society by Pina Manique, the Head of Lisbon Police, actually founded one, calling it the Rose Society (Barreto 1926 *apud* Ferreira, 2018: 53). In this case, the rose is disinvested of its materiality and retained for its pure symbolism linked to secrecy, arising out of its botanical features. Such examples are also seen in the export of the rose symbolism from Portugal to Brazil, in the form of the Imperial Order of the Rose, a Brazilian order of chivalry, instituted by Emperor Pedro I of Brazil, on 17 October 1829 to commemorate his marriage to Amélie of Leuchtenberg.(Silva, 2014: 75).

VERNACULARISATION IN BLOOM

The symbolic significance of the enclosed structure of the rose represents secrecy in different cultures. In medieval times, roses were affixed to meeting chamber ceilings to signify the confidentiality of discussions, a practice that later inspired the decoration of room ceilings with painted roses. This tradition led to the rose symbolising discretion, as evidenced by the latin expression *sub rosa*, meaning under the rose, which denotes secrecy (Tearle, 2021). Residing in materiality linked to architecture and present in popular practice, the rose's significance also diffused horizontally among social classes. Bowen (2023) explains how rose windows as a Gothic architectural feature, developed from Roman oculi, smaller circular windows without glass, permitting more light into buildings. The Gothic rose window symbolised unity and wholeness created from perfectly balanced parts. Later, the rose windows became a symbol of the Virgin Mary. This revival of Marian rose symbolism is akin to the jogging process described by Debray: in a back-and-forth movement, the rose is periodically invested with and disinvested of Marian narratives intertwined with saint legends in favour of secular floral figurative cultural practices traced to art, architecture and popular

tradition. Rose shows, festivals, and gardens[14] testify to the significance of the rose in sociocultural tapestry. Artists like Malangatana Ngwenya use roses in vibrant artwork to showcase traditional culture. Earlier, Renaissance artists had privileged still life *vanitas* paintings, juxtaposing flowers with skulls, to contrast life's pleasures with human mortality. The rose plant's thorny features offered scope for a symbolism of juxtaposition and contrasts. The jogging effect of return is characteristic of its cultural transmission as the rose became a fashion statement in the rococo era, featured in royal portraiture of the time[15] emptied of religious connotation such as that of Isabel of Portugal, only to resurface as the subject of still life paintings in the work of artists like Van Gogh. Moreover, the graphosphere's wide appropriation of the rose's symbolism through literary motifs points to the versatility of the flower across social classes. William Shakespeare's use of the rose in his sonnets confers on it a lyrical textual materiality. The symbolist poet Camilo Pessanha used brave defoliated roses to symbolise the ephemerality of life, thus re-engaging with *memento mori* imagery of the Renaissance. José Craveirinha skilfully incorporated the rose symbolism into his verses to transmit universal themes of love, yearning, and fortitude, while Sofia da Costa and Carlos Cardoso portrayed roses as symbols of the Angolan people's resilience, hope, and reconciliation.

In the modern period, both flowers have seen an expansion in symbolism, through association with republican ideals, democracy, and people-led sociopolitical initiatives. Economic considerations and popular traditions have contributed to their appeal; they have been mobilised for solidarity and support. The lily has become a symbol of rebirth and renewal in Louisiana since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Pope, 2021). Its three petals are seen modified in the Bon Secours[16] symbol. From a single stem,

[14] Alentejo, Vila Franca do Lima, Funchal, Madeira, among others.

[15] Marie Antoinette, Madame de Pompadour.

[16] History of the 'fleur-de-lis' symbol. Sisters of Bon Secours, USA. Acessed on 29 October 2024. https://bonsecours.us/associates/about-us/history-of-the-fleur-de-lis-symbol/#:~:text=The%20Bon%20Secours%20symbol%20is,future%20with%20compassion%2C%20healing%2C%20and

three shoots arise: for stability, rootedness, and constancy of the mission; an ability to adapt to the present needs of those they serve; and openness and agility in moving into the future with compassion, healing, and liberating love. The contemporary form moves beyond the earlier explicit trinitarian analogy embedded in the flower petals. As for the rose, accompanied by a fist, it has aligned with modern political imagery. The fist and rose symbol is employed by socialist and social democratic parties: the rose symbolises aspirations for a better life under socialist governance (Gordiejew, 2009), and the clenched fist represents the activist dedication and solidarity needed to realise these ideals (Korff, 1992). The emblem typically appears in red, associated with leftist politics (Maestre, 2022); recent versions incorporate green leaves to reflect growing environmental concerns (Cépède, 1994).

As the lily and the rose expanded their meaning base, they were also subject to a process of amalgamation with similar flowers. In North Portugal, the traditional appeal of the rose is also conferred on the camellia flower, a product of intercultural connections. In the Victorian era, the camellia flower, native to China-Japan, emerged in Porto as a prestigious emblem of opulence and prosperity, frequently incorporated into lavish floral displays and exchanged as tokens of admiration and esteem. (Riobom, 2016). The initial documentation of camellias in Porto traces back to 1810 when Luis Van Zeller imported these flowers from England into Porto, which had a notable English presence associated with the Port wine trade. Due to these historical reasons, Porto is endowed with a distinct natural heritage: camellias assume the role of an emblematic symbol within the city's cultural fabric, with Camellia Festival and Camellia Routes[17]. Through select word use (*japoneiras* as the Portuguese identifier), the flower carries meaning evocative of its exotic origins, as well as its identification with Porto; "Porto is a river running between camellias" is a quote attributed to the poet Carducci Giusuè (Riobom, 2016). With camellia, both substance and meaning have

[17] Atlantic Bridge, 2024. Last accessed on 4 April 2024. https://blog.atlanticbridge.com.br/en/camellias-of-porto

been diffused through transcontinental voyages made possible by the Age of Discoveries; to the rose common in Europe, new meanings were ascribed following colonial era exchanges. We note in Humberto de Campos' *The Legend of the Blue Rose* (1921) intertextuality with the blue rose of the legends of the Orient, drawing to the rose a new meaning associated with mystery, and unattainable pursuit through references to an inexistent colour variety. The lily's trajectory has been similar to that of the rose, being largely supplanted by the lily of the valley in modern-day practice in France. With the shift in meaning from religious to secular, the lily of the valley, widely connected with the onset of spring, has become a token of good fortune, to be gifted on the first of May. Coincidental associations with Labour Day dim monarchical origins of the flower's symbolism: royal patronage by Charles IX, who popularised the practice by offering the flower to court ladies on the day. Thus, while organic devices realigned from medieval monarchical interests to intercontinental exchanges among people and from royal divinisation strategies to common folk interactions, the lily and the rose evolved to extend their sway of symbolism onto similar flowers like the lily of the valley and the camellia.

These shifts in meaning and flower form are perhaps best epitomised in the carnation, the symbol of revolution in Portugal and Russia. Portugal's Carnation Revolution was a coup executed through the flower, and resulted in the overthrow of an oppressive dictatorial regime, through no violence. The 25th of April 1974 marked the beginning of a new democratic era in Portuguese history, ending a harsh dictatorship under Marcello Caetano, who had continued the regime begun by Antonio Salazar (Ribeiro, 2024). An incident involving the gifting of a carnation to a soldier, synonymous with a spontaneous solidarity gesture, led to a domino effect of symbolic flower exchanges, paving the way for the Carnation Revolution and eventually toward democracy in Portugal (Brookes, 2023). The event had significant and far-reaching effects, with the dismantling of colonial rule that the earlier dictatorial regime had held on to, and the flower is to this day re-harnessed toward revolutionary symbolism on each anniversary. Through links with the Bolshevik revolution, and later the Soviet Union's revolutionary ideals, the red

carnation has functioned as a potent symbol for communism and socialism. The revolutionary symbolism has over time diminished, in favour of connotations linked to remembrance and respect for the past (Prokhorov, 2009).

The lily and the rose have distanced from earlier power dispensations to become flowers of the people. This vernacularisation of their cultural essence has been possible due to new material vectors ushered in by artistic and architectural innovation and the Age of Discoveries, as well as organic vectors like colonial exchanges, revolutionary activity, the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the spread of socialist and democratic institutions. The ability to assimilate previous Roman-era people-centric practices, or by coincidental juxtaposition to align with majoritarian labour class concerns, has opened the doors to cultural amalgamation with related flowers, enabling a wider base of vernacular-level symbolism.

CONCLUSION

Both flowers have had a longstanding influence on human cultures and continue to be re-invested with layers of meaning. From their original relevance stemming from natural properties, they have acquired a firm positioning in cultural expression through a sustained transmission of meaning across generations. Initial connotations originated from their botanical features: the rose's complex layers added to its beauty and transmitted the idea of guarding the precious, rendering it a conducive symbol to love and secrecy; the lily's appearance amid murky waters made it synonymous with purity. In both flowers, these natural properties were supplemented with religious connotations, originating from a blend of spiritual tradition and legends linking royalty to Christian values. The flowers appropriated political power by direct or indirect association with royal iconography. The transmission has been supported by art reproduction in various forms. Such politico-religious imagery naturally ceased with the decline in medieval sensibilities.

Outstanding among these flowers' attributes is their ability to repackage themselves as symbols, adapt to the demands of each passing age, and re-appropriate novel layers of meaning. During this cultural metamorphosis,

the flowers take on diverse material forms: from flowers in nature, they have been painted on tableaux in a variety of mediums. They have been set in stone and metal, fashioned out of delicate paper, miniaturised in art and print, appeared in gigantic proportions in architecture: stone flooring, monumental metal gates, wooden doors, frontispieces, glass windows. Their earlier use to embellish royal insignia, and consolidate traditional power structures, contrasts with later usage in the service of revolution and people. The cultural essence has been transmitted through a variety of languages - in manuscript, print, and digitalised forms. Part of orality in prose and poetry, the floral symbolism has carried over into music[18] and dance[19]. Featuring in artwork and embroidery, in bridal crowns and everyday fashion, in verses of love, and in the rhetoric of persuasion, on stamps, football club logos and the like, the flowers have become part of the common person's cultural repertoire. Through the deployment of diverse media, they have been upheld by organisational vectors (church hierarchy, communal traditions, royal patronage, dynastic compulsions, guild preferences, literary movements and fine art aesthetics, market forces, revolutionaries' requirements, political parties' resurgence needs, cities' unifying efforts, youth leisures) each adding successive layers of connotations. In the case of the lily and the rose, we note a mobilisation of both Debray's vector categories: organised matter and materialised organisation in intertwined networks to finally confer on each flower, a plethora of signification. Transport and communication systems served as a medium for transposing the flowers' cultural appeal overseas.

The lily and the rose have been active in human consciousness for ages. Myths and legends have been circulating in the mnemosphere until finding a textual anchor in the logosphere. Oral tradition and popular practices kept alive their memory, as did pictorial inscriptions and manuscripts. Early gra-

[18] Fados like *Rosa Branca* by Marisa

[19] Ballet *Le Spectre de La Rose* (Brown, Ismene (2020). The Magic of Vaslav Nijinsky and His Iconic Spectre de la Rose. Sotheby's. Accessed on 29 October 2024. https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/the-magic-of-vaslav-nijinsky-and-his-iconic-spectre-de-la-rose).

phic depictions often predated or accompanied oral traditions. The lily and the rose were validated in the logosphere through manuscripts and artwork, especially over the medieval period. These trends were strengthened in the graphosphere as printed literature was able to further popularise the stories and histories linked to the flowers, and emphasise certain aspects beneficial to ruling class interests. The videosphere has been a catalyst to an explosion in media, in the form of song, radioclips, documentaries, cinema, and televised coverage of popular community events linked to the flowers, propelling further vernacularisation of the flowers' cultural essence. Video films and video games[20] in particular contributed to the flowers' appeal among the youth. Historical forces of a period have built upon those of preceding periods, equipping the flowers with symbolic value that would be re-harnessed by subsequent periods. So, the advent of the written account did not bring to an end the trend of pictorial representation, which continues to this day. Popular traditions reminiscent of the mnemosphere are still prevalent in recent times. The audiovisual products of the videosphere continue to be consumed alongside the spontaneous digital production in the numerosphere. All this points to jogging and discovery effects, as outlined by Debray. Practices specific to different spheres are reinvigorated to cater to an individual and a community's need to share a flower experience. While in religious institutions and museums, the flowers may be consumed ornamentally in their historical context, they have also been put to widespread pragmatic use disassociated from traditional power structures in the service of popular utilitarian consumption and business interests (decorative elements on gates, logos). The rose and the lily have been mobilised for economic gain through digital branding for a variety of products and services. These contemporary trends may be interpreted as a reinforcement of Debray's position. From his reflections on how photography changed art, we draw parallels with recent reproductions of the lily using digital technology, changing the form of the flower, to a modern outline, with aesthetics clearly outweighing conceptual meaning.

[20] Rose in the Twilight and Rule of Rose.

The numerosophere reinforces the flowers' power through posts, pictures, tweets, and videos on social media, making them accessible as meaning definers to the common man. The internet, with its digital possibilities, allows for greater manipulation, as human-flower individual-level experiences are materialised in virtual community-level diffusion through the acts of *sharing, reacting,* and *liking.* With digital technology, an experience with the flower ceases to belong solely to the subject, who often releases it for public consumption. Nick Knight's still-life photography[21] of roses picked from his garden, deliberately avoids a camera and tripod, preferring the use of his iPhone for an intensely personal experience. Although reminiscent of classical paintings, through the melancholic vision of beauty and decay, his works embody the latest mediological revolution. Their original otherworldly effect is obtained through AI (artificial intelligence) touching, rendering them hybrids-part-painting, part-photograph. AI use takes rose artwork into the genre of hyperrealism, by contorting still-life photographs into paintings. The creative process of engaging on a personal level with the rose makes it the subject standing in for the human experience. This trend was earlier seen with surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, who replaced faces with roses. The latter's 20th-century imagery and Knight's 21st-century photography demonstrate modern human behaviour in the technological era. This engagement with the self through the flower is a natural by-product of material and organic devices such as cameras and smartphones, digital media and virtual interaction platforms, that push individuals into narcissist self-contemplation through a lens, for final satisfaction in public diffusion and reaction measurement.

Our study of mediological revolutions in connection with both lily and rose, has brought out the flowers' capability to adapt to historical forces and to align with successive reigning power fulcrums: clergy, monarchy, nobility, revolutionaries, republicans, socialists, common people, and individuals. In time, there has been a vertical shift downwards and a horizontal expansion of the floral influencers' support base. Their transmission over time regar-

[21] SHOWStudio. Nick Knight's 'Roses from My Garden' Travels to Nice. Accessed on 29 October 2024. https://www.showstudio.com/news/nick-knights-roses-from-my-garden-travels-to-nice.

dless of the material medium employed, or of a community's or individual's techniques of production and diffusion, is a sign of their deep connection with humans. The complex layers of symbolism that the two flowers have wrapped themselves in, and the reach of their appeal extending beyond a specific geographical space or social group, testify to their enduring legacy, right to the present times, when they are seen to embrace modern-day vectors. Down the ages, the transmission has been creative and sustained, transforming flowers from mere botanical elements to cultural symbols.

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