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SMELL AND SOCIAL LIFE

Aspects of English, French and German Literature (1880–1939)

edited by
KATHARINA HEROLD
FRANK KRAUSE

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Katharina Herold and Frank Krause (eds.)

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Katharina Herold and Frank Krause

INTRODUCTION

Olfactory motifs are powerful devices of emotional communication and their contribution to rhetoric effects of literary texts deserves the attention of literary historians.[1] However, the weighty contribution made by odour imagery to our moods, emotions and affects goes largely unnoticed, which accounts for the comparatively late attention paid to smell in research on the significance of sensory images in literature. Literary-historical studies have only recently begun to explore pertinent themes, problems, views and techniques in more breadth and depth. As the field of enquiry is heterogeneous, it typically requires specialisation on specific periods and particular types of motifs; this also applies to surveys which take stock of diverse concerns in a succession of movements.[2] This book gives an overview of a range of innovative ways in which English, French and German literature between 1880 and 1939 have employed smell motifs in explorations of social life.[3]

By comparison with publications that deal with the literary significance of smell as a subordinate and lower-ranking part of the human sensorium,[4] and

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[1] For reference to olfactory motifs as emotional communication devices, see Emily C. Friedman, *Reading Smell in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2016), p. 5. For a critique of the reductive view that smell has only an affective significance, see David Howes, 'Epilogue: Futures of Scents Past', in *Smell and History: A Reader*, ed. by Mark M. Smith (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2019), pp. 203–17 (p. 208).

[2] The epigraph to Rindisbacher's survey makes this heterogeneity clear from the outset: 'The investigation of the olfactory is the investigation of everything else' (Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. v).

[3] Occasionally, chapters in this volume cast a glance at other literatures which help to illuminate the findings on German, French and English texts. The focus of this volume does not presuppose that these texts share a tradition which sets them apart from other literatures. The social history of the sense of smell in Germany, France and England is, however, marked by responses to shared problematics that differ to some extent from concerns in Russia; see, e. g., Alexander M. Martin, 'Sewage and the City: Filth, Smell, and Representations of Urban Life in Moscow, 1770–1880', *The Russian Review*, 67 (2008), 243–74.

[4] Cf. Peter Utz, *Das Auge und das Ohr im Text: Literarische Sinneswahrnehmung in der Goethezeit* (Munich: Fink, 1990); Silke Pasewalck, *'Die fünffingrige Hand': Die Bedeutung der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung beim späten Rilke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002); Haru Hamanaka, '*Körper* und *Sinne* in der deutschen Gartenliteratur um 1800', *Neue Beiträge zur Germanistik*, 3 (2004), 32–46.

with works by philosophers or theologians who explore historical links between olfaction, poiesis and the aesthetic,[5] this volume takes an interest in the specific historicity of olfactory motifs in literature from 1880 to 1939; and there are few literary-historical studies which specialise in the field. Hans J. Rindisbacher's pioneering study of 1992 on olfactory perception in literature covers the time-span from Bourgeois Realism to Postmodernism in a broad sweep; and John Sutherland's 2016 book on smells in George Orwell's work conceives of its subject matter as an exception from the literary-historical rule.[6] When works on smell in cultural anthropology deal with literary texts, they may touch upon examples from 1880 to 1939,[7] but they tend to bypass the specific historicity of literary concerns and methods. Before Rindisbacher's book, little was published in the field at all. Prior to a brief discussion in the 1960s and 1970s on stench motifs in eighteenth-century English literature,[8] the topic was chiefly explored in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century essays on works by Émile Zola or Lafcadio Hearn that defied contemporaneous expectations about the role of smell in literature.[9] Rindisbacher's work was made possible by Alain Corbin's groundbreaking study on the social history of smell from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century,[10] which laid the foundations for further historical contextualisation of literary smell motifs. However, setting books on the verge of infotainment aside,[11] it took almost a

[5] This strand of research includes enquiries into the links between olfaction and the sacred: see Volker Mertens, 'Frömmigkeit mit allen Sinnen: Mediologische Paradigmen', in *Studien zur Literatur, Sprache und Geschichte in Europa: Wolfgang Haubrichs zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. by Albrecht Greule and others (St Ingbert: Röhrig, 2008), pp. 143–59; Elizabeth L. Swann, 'God's Nostrils: The Divine Senses in Early Modern England', in *Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Robin Macdonald, Emile K. M. Murphy and Elizabeth L. Swann (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 220–43; Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006). For critical reflections on historical shifts in evocative modes of olfactory perception, see Michel Serres, *Die fünf Sinne: Eine Philosophie der Gemenge und Gemische* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 228–53.

[6] John Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose: A Pathological Biography* (London: Reaktion, 2016).

[7] See Hubert Tellenbach, *Geschmack und Atmosphäre* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1968); Annick le Guérer, *Les Pouvoirs de l'odeur* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1988).

[8] See Philip Stevick, 'The Augustan Nose', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 34 (1965), 110–17; Paul C. Davies, 'Augustan Smells', *Essays in Criticism*, 25 (1975), 395–406. They take their cue from Adrian Stokes's essay, 'Strong Smells and Polite Society', *Encounter*, 17.3 (1961), 50–56.

[9] See Léopold Bernard, *Les odeurs dans les romans de Zola* (Montpellier: Coulet, 1899); or Edward Larocque Tinker, 'Lafcadio Hearn and the Sense of Smell', *The Bookman* (January 1924), 519–27. These texts, referenced in Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 144 n. 2 and Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford Universiy Press, 2017), p. 163 n. 109 respectively, are only available from specialist libraries.

[10] Alain Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft: Eine Geschichte des Geruchs* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1984); orig. *Le Miasme et la jonquille* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982).

[11] Cf. Jim Dawson, *Who Cut the Cheese? A Cultural History of the Fart* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1999).

decade before further studies on smell motifs established a new branch of literary-historical research. This branch has hitherto focused on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century trends,[12] whilst the few studies with a focus on twentieth-century literature are highly specialised or concentrate on non-European literature,[13] so that a broader and more in-depth overview of the period from 1880 to 1939 has remained a desideratum.

In the meantime, the aesthetics of smell have become a serious subject of philosophical enquiry,[14] but whilst this research strand has taken up the dialogue with literary-historical studies,[15] more conclusive insights into the role of smell in human consciousness are currently emerging in specialised neuroscientific studies. Barry C. Smith's introductory essay thus provides an overview of recent neuroscientific research on the ways in which smell is always in the background of our consciousness.[16] He teases out the impact of odours on the ways in which we are aware of, and respond to, our environment. Moods, food preferences, choices of sexual partner, recognition of our kin, recognition of danger and awareness of emotional states of others depend to a significant extent on smells. To be sure, the extent to which perceptions of odours and verbal references to smell are comparable is still to be determined and the human capacity for olfactory imagination is discussed controversially;[17] scientific studies also often operate with heteronormative categories pertaining to gender and sexuality which literary texts may complicate or call

[12] See Janice Carlisle, *Common Scents: Comparative Encounters in High-Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford Universty Press, 2004); Friedman, *Reading Smell in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*; Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*; and the essays in *Littérature: Sociabilités du parfum*, 185 (2017).

[13] Frank Krause, *Geruchslandschaften mit Kriegsleichen* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016); Daniela Babilon, *The Power of Smell in American Literature* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2017).

[14] Cf. Mădălina Diaconu, *Tasten – Riechen – Schmecken: Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005); see also Larry Shiner, *Art Scents: Exploring the Aesthetics of Smell and the Olfactory Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[15] Mădălina Diaconu, 'Wenn Museen zu atmen beginnen', unpublished conference paper (2017) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317095709_Wenn_Museen_beginnen_zu_atmen_Möglichkeiten_und_Herausforderungen_der_Duftgestaltung_von_Ausstellungen> [accessed 1 March 2021].

[16] For a broader overview of neuroscientific research on the human sense of smell, see Shiner, *Art Scents*, pp. 37–75. For an earlier overview of scientific research on olfaction, first published in 2001, see Rachel S. Herz, 'I Know What I Like: Understanding Odor Preferences', in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. by Jim Drobnick (Oxford: Berg, 2006), pp. 190–203, and Matthias Laska, 'The Human Sense of Smell: Our Noses are Much Better than we Think!', in *Senses and the City: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Urban Sensescapes*, ed. by Mădălina Diaconu and others (Vienna: LIT, 2001), pp. 145–53.

[17] For open questions pertaining to the contested human capacity for olfactory imaging, cf. Diaconu, *Tasten – Richen – Schmecken*, p. 212; Friedman, pp. 5–6 and 130–31 nn. 25 and 26; Oliver Sacks, 'The Dog Beneath the Skin', in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. by Drobnick, pp. 184–86 (p. 185).

into question. Nevertheless, whilst Smith's overview of scientific findings cannot be directly transferred to the reception of texts that refer to smells, his essay shows that references to smell affect the same brain region as actual smell and that our reliance on odours is so fundamental to our pre-reflective experience that it largely goes unnoticed. It is thus no surprise that many literary texts pay attention to smells in situations which disrupt our habitual emotional recall in problematic or illuminating ways.

In the wake of cultural-historical 'turns' which have brought attention to the body and the senses since the 1980s,[18] literary historians have recently begun to explore the sense of smell as a site on which the boundaries of the bodily self are negotiated in processes of in- and excorporation; inspired by this trend, Michel Delville's essay is dedicated to disgust as one of the strongest disruptive affects which can be evoked by smell. His overview of salient positions in philosophical, cultural-historical and literary debates about disgust in relation to olfactory studies is focused on Modernist literature that deals with precarious ways of negotiating selfhood in destabilising social contexts. Delville explores ambivalent varieties of olfactory disgust which cut across the dichotomy of pleasure and displeasure; and he helpfully reminds us that Rindisbacher himself noted how Naturalism and literary Decadence 'infuse […] purged smells back into literary reality', thus also re-validating our awareness of repulsive smells.[19]

Historical Backgrounds

There is a long tradition of literary motifs of smell in social contexts; and their capacity to affirm and disrupt social and aesthetic norms cuts across historical periods, as a cursory glance at examples of references to smelly armpits shows. In Horace's twelfth epode (from the 30s BC), a stench reminiscent of male goats emanates from the armpit of a lustful old woman as a satirically depicted, worst-case aesthetic scenario; the disruption of aesthetic values affirms received gender stereotypes.[20] In eighteenth-century English satire, stench motifs are widely used to mark the incorrigible sides of human nature,[21] thus affirming norms to which

[18] Cf. Michel Delville, 'Senses', in *Literature Now: Key Terms and Methods for Literary History*, ed. by Sascha Bru, Ben de Bruyn and Michel Delville (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 87–97.

[19] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. viii.

[20] Horaz, *Oden und Epoden*, trans. and ed. Bernhard Kytzler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015), pp. 260–63. For references to repulsive armpit smell in works by Aristophanes, Plautus and Martial, see Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 31, 49.

[21] Davies, 'Augustan Smells', p. 403.

our species regularly fails to live up, but they go out of fashion in the Age of Sensibility, in which satirical references to stink become a mark of excentricity, as in Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), in which Matthew Bramble, who misses the fresh mountain air of Wales, qualifies the assembly at Bath as 'a compound of villanous smells' and, quoting from references to the most pungent smells in polite society, suggests: 'Imagine to yourself a high exalted essence of mingled odours, arising from putrid gums, imposthumated lungs, sour flatulencies, rank armpits, sweating feet and running sores and issues'.[22] By contrast, Arthur Rimbaud's symbolist derision is more subtle when he evokes an inner state in which the pure and the rank mingle in allusions to olfactory qualities that are never quite made explicit: in 'What is Said to the Poet Concerning Flowers' [Ce qu'on dit au Poète à propos de fleurs] (1871), lilies become 'clysters of ecstasy', whilst the shirt of the addressee who is awaiting his bath billows around his blond armpits above repulsive forget-me-nots.[23] Here, forms and motifs disrupt the limiting normative framework of the contemporary poet.

Émile Zola's Naturalist war novel *La Débâcle* (1892) thematises armpits in the smelly context of an amputation, depicted with close attention to medical detail and accompanied by a nauseous atmosphere that indicates potential health hazards.[24] The potential of smelly armpits to illuminate facets of social life is amplified as soon as their odour is no longer merely coded from such a scientific or clear-cut ethical point of view. As the above example from Rimbaud's work shows, their suggestive potential can now conjure up slices of the life of a singular mind immersed in suggestive atmospheres imbued with social meaning. In a literary sketch of 1880, Joris-Karl Huysmans praises the aromas of female armpits, which vary with hair colour and with the class-specific garment through which their exhalations are filtered to the recipient's delight. Even the armpit smells of female peasants spreading hay in the midday sun are not repulsive, their excessive and terrible qualities notwithstanding. Their creaturely scent of wild duck cooked in olive, mixed with the aroma of pungent shallots, fits harmoniously into peasant life.[25] In 'Song of Myself' (1855/1892), Walt Whitman proclaims:

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[22] Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (London: Cochrane and Pickersgill, 1831), p. 74.

[23] Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works: Selected Letters* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 108–17 (pp. 108–09).

[24] Émile Zola, *La Débâcle* (Paris: Arvensa, n. d.), pp. 251–52; cf. Krause, *Geruchslandschaften*, pp. 38–43.

[25] Joris-Karl Huysmans, 'The Armpit', in Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Parisian Sketches*, trans. by Brendan King (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2004), pp. 126–28 (p. 126). The French original has: 'elle était la note pure, complétant par le cri de chaleur de la bête humaine, la mélodie odorante des bestiaux et des bois' (Joris-Karl Huysmans, 'Le Gousset', in Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Croquis parisiens, A Veau-l'eau, Un Dilemme* (Paris: Plon, 1908), pp. 125–28 (pp. 125–26).

> the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy, | By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms. | […] Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from. | The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer.[26]

In both cases, the social stigmatisation of armpit smell is disrupted in favour of atmospheres which claim to be more inclusive and which are opened up by innovative poetic imagination.[27]

These few examples may suffice to illustrate that, as signs of social conditions, smells in literature have affirmed and disrupted social norms and aesthetic values in historically specific and complex ways for a long time. Most of the motifs cited above preceed the *fin de siècle*, of which Rindisbacher speaks in *The Smell of Books* as the time of an 'olfactory explosion'; in English, French and German texts of the 1880s and 1890s the scope for uses of smell motifs in depictions of social life increased significantly.[28] With reference to Corbin, Rindisbacher argues that new theories of contagious smelly gases had motivated the hygienic endeavour to deodorise social spaces since the 1750s.[29] The tolerance for bad smells sank from the mid-eighteenth century onwards and pertinent ideals of fresh air had left their mark on nineteenth-century literary representations of middle-class life.[30] Around 1880 Naturalism's turn to the experiential worlds of other classes rehabilitated factual odours as literary themes; at the same time, medical theories

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[26] Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 63–124 (p. 87). For cultural-historical contexts of Whitman's references to the smell of one's own body, see Christopher Looby, '"The Roots of the Orchis, the Iuli of Chesnuts": The Odor of Male Solitude', in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. by Drobnick, pp. 289–304 (pp. 295–96).

[27] For a non-fictional example of references to enjoyable armpit smell in the late nineteenth century, see Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, p. 136.

[28] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 143–219.

[29] Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft*, pp. 21–26. For earlier views on airborne contagion through smells, see Katelynn Robinson, *The Sense of Smell in the Middle Ages: A Source of Certainty* (London: Routledge, 2019); pertinent medical theories of smell, which fostered a medically aware theology, typically drew on Arabic-Galenic traditions and Aristotelian concepts that focused on airborne particles as the cause, trigger or medium of the impact of smell on the brain or soul. Related methods of deodorisation chiefly sought to eradicate the travel of such particles. By contrast, late eighteenth-century hygienists began to manage the gases of which air is composed. For an account of philosophical models from the Archaic to the Hellenistic age of olfaction effected by particles, see Han Baltussen, 'Ancient Philosophers on the Sense of Smell', in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, ed. by Mark Bradley (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 30–45 (pp. 35, 39).

[30] The stench caused by factories in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, bad smells of waste and exhalations of animals in growing cities and epidemics were strong motives for sanitary reform in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Western Europe (see Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, pp. 78–80). However, the 'sudden diminution in tolerance of bad smells in the mid-eighteenth century can […] only be marginally attributed to the hygienists and their obsession with eradicating the sources of putrid smells' (Robert Muchembled, *Smells: A Cultural History of Odours in Early Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), pp. 136–59; orig. *La civilisation des odeurs (XVIe – début XIXe siècle)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2017)).

of contagious gases became culturally obsolete, so that the scope for the literary coding of olfactory motifs widened. Deodorised public and private spaces also lowered olfactory nausea thresholds, helped to refine the sense for pleasant smells and made room for nuanced atmospheres; Symbolism's evocation of complex sense perceptions as responsive mirrors of the inner states of an imaginative self could thus take root in novel modes of social experience. According to Rindisbacher, the *fin de siècle* presents smell-induced inner states as examples for an affectivity that is regarded as typical for the modern social condition,[31] whilst Modernism is to a significant extent concerned with smells and their social regulation as signs of problematic power relations.[32]

From this point of view, the period from 1880 until 1939 marks the timespan from the 'olfactory explosion' to the Modernist critique of power invested in the social control of potentially anarchic smells. To be sure, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, literary 'smells are', as Rindisbacher reminds us, 'to stay with us';[33] and literary concerns with smells as affirmative or disruptive signs of social power relations cut across the subdivision of twentieth-century literature into periods and movements:[34] for example, the association of civilisatory decline with olfactory atmospheres of decay at the turn of the century inspires literature throughout the twentieth century.[35] However, in 1939 the first phase of literature in the wake of the 'olfactory explosion' comes to an end: Modernism continues the newly intensified concern of literature with olfaction until the inter-war literary scenes of Modernism and Modern Realism are broken up by death, emigration and the Second World War.[36] Whilst Modernism's specific interest in olfactory perception results to a significant extent from its focus on permeable ecstatic selves that in- and excorporate odourous air,[37] Modern Realism links up with earlier literary perspectives on olfactory perception: for example, narratives about life at the front in the First World War employ motifs of corpse stench as ethically coded signs for the disruption of peace-time social norms, but depart from the scientific approach to such motifs prevalent in Naturalism.[38]

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[31] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 194–215.
[32] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 221–81.
[33] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 143.
[34] Cf. Richard T. Gray, 'The Dialectic of "Enscentment": Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* as Critical History of Enlightenment Culture' [1993], in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. by Drobnick, pp. 235–53.
[35] For examples from the turn of the century, see Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 198–201.
[36] For a discussion of the links between these literary-historical trends, see Chris Baldick, *The Modern Movement (1910–1940)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 391–401.
[37] Cf. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 147.
[38] Krause, *Geruchslandschaften*; Frank Krause, 'The Stench of Corpses: On the Poetic Coding of Smell in the Literature of the Great War (1914–1933)', in *The Intellectual Response to the*

Lines of Enquiry

Since Rindisbacher's study, research into the significance of olfaction for the literature of this time-span has teased out a range of other pertinent themes and methods, in particular shifts in approaches to the social coding of perfumes[39] and the evocation of olfactory experiences which destabilise binary modes of sociocultural evaluation through inversion or subversion of stereotypes about inferior smelly 'others'.[40] However, current attempts to take stock of approaches to smells in literary explorations of social life in the wake of the 'olfactory explosion' merely add scattered heterogenous observations to the established overall picture; our volume aims to continue this strand of research with clearer focus and greater breadth and depth, and to complicate Rindisbacher's picture of the period in question. The findings of the following contributions suggest that three lines of enquiry deserve to be explored further.

Smell and Ethical Values: Modern Variations of traditional Diagnoses

First, traditional ways of coding smells as ethically significant signs continue to be relevant in literature after 1880; many texts continue the established concern with smells as signs of a challenge to ethical values, but their diagnoses are clearly framed by post-1870s ideas or contexts.[41] Whilst medical theories of contagious miasmas are discredited,[42] ideas of noxious smells still inform notions of artificial scents as addictive substances, as Maria Weilandt shows with reference to Edmond de Goncourt.[43] Her essay explores the ambivalent

First World War, ed. by Sarah Posman, Cedric Van Dijck and Marysa Demoor (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2017), pp. 171–84.

39 Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*; *Littérature: Sociabilités du parfum*, 185 (2017).

40 Babilon, *The Power of Smell in American Literature*.

41 These findings thus concur with Constance Classen's observation on odour symbolism in late nineteenth-century literature: 'It was as though, once odours were disempowered by science, they were free to be empowered by the imagination' (Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 86). This trend is also manifest in non-fictional texts: 'With the eclipse of the zymotic theory of disease, which presumed that smells in themselves caused illness, the threat evoked by odors transmuted into social rhetorics justifying racism, exclusionary politics and the stigmatisation of others, even torture' (Jim Drobnick, 'Introduction: Olfactocentrism', in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. by Drobnick, pp. 1–9 (p. 5)).

42 Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft*, pp. 292–93.

43 Scientific views on perceptual problems resulting from smell also informed Émile Zola's work (see Margot Szarke, 'Modern Sensitivity: Émile Zola's Synaesthetic Cheeses', *French Studies*, 74 (2020), 203–22).

fusion of naturalistic and decadent tendencies in Goncourt's *Chérie*, which presents a young woman's intoxicating immersion in scents of perfume as an addictive practice, whilst the scents are socially coded in accordance with culturally prevailing stereotypes. Frank Krause's piece on André Gide and Thomas Mann shows that Friedrich Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical smell symbolism of the 1880s inverts cultural dichotomies of sacred scent and unholy stench, but also secularises such traditional juxtapositions which continue to inspire Nietzschean literature.[44] Krause explores ways in which Gide and Mann complicate Nietzsche's vitalist smell symbolism with ambivalent motifs of attractively repellent odours that dubiously undermine the keeping of boundaries between self and social other. These smells are clear symptoms of a failed aestheticisation of life, the ethical ambivalence of which remains unresolvable. Susanne Schmid notes with reference to Arnold Bennett, Elizabeth Bowen and George Orwell that the method of employing smell motifs as indications of particular kinds of social encounter, something which was typical for Victorian novels, which employ such motifs sparsely,[45] has not become obsolete in the varieties of Modern Realism. Schmid compares the ways in which these authors use motifs of smell in hotel settings. Defying the ideal of deodorised social space, pertinent smells indicate problematic conditions of contemporary social life in class-specific contexts.

The Readability of Smells: Crises, Subversions and Complications

Second, the obsolescence of medical notions of contagious miasmas, the accelerated shifts in the social coding of pleasant fragrance, the critique of social hygiene and positive exoticisation as ideologies and the notion of arbitrary relations between signifier and signified sharpen the sense for the instability or unreliability of olfactory meaning.[46] As a result, writers radically problematise the readability of smells as signifiers of the social condition.

Sophie-Valentine Borloz examines texts by André Couvreur, Rachilde and Émile Zola which explore uncertainties about the social meanings of perfumes; she argues that the readability of perfume scents as ethically relevant indications of female social types becomes increasingly problematic, so that

[44] For an overview of smell motifs in Nietzsche's work, see Diaconu, *Tasten – Riechen – Schmecken*, pp. 195–200.

[45] Carlisle, *Common Scents*.

[46] Éléonore Reverzy explores the scope for olfactory masking in nineteenth-century literature ('Parfums de (petites) femmes: Pour une lecture olfactive', *Littérature: Sociabilités du parfum*, 185 (March 2017), 55–67).

habitual cultural categorisations of such smells are radically destabilised. Katharina Herold teases out the unresolvable ambivalence of 'Oriental' smells as cultural constructs in works by Paul Scheerbart, pointing out that these literary works employ motifs of 'exotic' smells in decadent Oriental settings satirically to expose and ridicule German cultural nationalism and European approaches to matters Oriental. Sergej Rickenbacher notes that Robert Musil highlights the formative symbolic significance of confusingly ambivalent perceptions of bad breath, whilst Robert Walser exposes the civilised practice of breath-refreshening as a deceptive mask for violent social exclusion. Rickenbacher notes that an early Modernist text by Musil complicates the traditional coding of bad breath as a source of contagion by using the motif as a confusingly fascinating symbol for civilisatory decline. By contrast, Walser exposes such codings as arbitrary and deceptive, linking halitosis and its masking with social power and concealment of coercive force.[47] In both cases, smell is presented as a signifying surface for the construction of unreliable meaning. Jon Day argues that James Joyce complicates the legibility of smells in literature by calling attention to the fact that neither the qualia of *any* of our sense perceptions nor the coding of smells are intersubjectively shared in the medium of linguistic references to sense impressions. The status of literary smell motifs as legible signs is thus fundamentally called into question: the perspectivism of pertinent scenes unmasks coded smells as cultural constructs, the sensory qualities of which cannot be fully evoked by poetic means. In all these cases, crises of the readability or legibility of smell accompany literary diagnoses about social relations.

The Authority of Smells: Reassessments

Third, the capacity of smell to contribute to knowledge is reassessed in the period in question. Focusing on Vernon Lee's understanding of smells as manifestations of reality's essence, Catherine Maxwell traces the significance of olfaction for the writer's work with particular emphasis on the interplay of smell, memory, emotion and thought which reveals the lasting essence of social relations based on friendship and love.[48] Érika Wicky examines how ascribing the faculty of 'flair' to the *fin-de-siècle* collector endows the practice of 'sniffing out' matters of value with new claims to validity. Here, olfactory

[47] Robert Jütte mentions Walser's ironic reference to mouthwash as a cornerstone of civilisation in passing ('Reodorizing the Modern Age', in *Smell and History: A Reader*, pp. 170–86 (pp. 178–79)).

[48] See Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility*, p. 269, n. 89.

perception is linked with a sense for the prevalence of aesthetic values.[49] English readers will need to bear in mind that the French word 'flair' originally refers to the 'odorat' as the capacity for perceiving smell and that this association may not always be manifest in the English usage of the word.[50] The social type of the collector is validated as a person with a good figurative nose for perceived aesthetic value. Andreas Kramer shows that Dada evokes repulsive smells which defy any claims to objective, moral, or aesthetic validity as a medium for the ludic transgression of an alienated social world.[51] Such discreation results from the use of bad smell motifs as signs of a revitalising decay of modern civilisation; from the validation of nauseous smell that cuts across distinctions of self versus other or 'the material' versus 'the emotional' and negates the distance senses' traditional claim to superior authority; and also from the reference to smells as part of an ineluctably grotesque condition of the human body. Taking a cue from late twentieth- and early twenty-first century artistic and literary codings of the perfume Shalimar as a medium for the daughterly remembrance of a lost maternal presence, Tag Gronberg explores the extent to which the allusion of the perfume's name to an Oriental tale of love and loss fashions and facilitates a particular interplay between olfaction and poiesis. The emergence in the early twentieth century of perfume names which allude to literary works shows that links between smell and poiesis, designed as a socially shareable cluster,[52] have provided a lasting stimulus for artistic production.

Smell and Affect
Beneath Build-Up and Release

Together, these lines of enquiry contribute to a broader and more nuanced understanding of the significant yet underexplored nexus between smells and social life in literature around 1880 to 1939. The studies in this volume demon-

[49] Such links are still contested in philosophy; cf. Diaconu, *Tasten – Riechen – Schmecken*, pp. 181–82, 276–81.

[50] See, e. g., Marcel Aymé, *Derrière chez Martin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994 [1938]), p. 153. He attributes the tendency of the adjudant Constantin to encounter the soldier Morillard whenever he is committing mischief to a mysterious intuition comparable to the good nose of a police dog: 'Quel flair de chien policier l'avait conduit à Morillard?' In French, *flair* initially refers to the 'odorat' of a dog, as Wicky explains in more detail below. Cf. the Latin word *sagax*, which 'means having a keen sense of smell, and also intelligent, clever' (Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 49).

[51] For references to stench of decay in Dada texts, see also Krause, *Geruchslandschaften*, pp. 25–26 n. 38.

[52] Cf. Richard H. Stamelman, 'The Eros – and Thanatos – of Scents', in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. by Drobnick, pp. 262–76 (pp. 266–67).

strate that Rindisbacher's heuristically helpful diagnosis of an 'olfactory explosion' which inaugurates a lasting liberation of pent-up desire invested in smells only illuminates one dimension of the role of literary smells in the history of social and cultural problematics. This is not to deny that nineteenth-century concerns with social hygiene and older cultural devalorisations of the 'lower' senses delimited the scope for olfactory desire, and that tensions between such desire and the social and cultural disciplining of the senses motivate a significant number of literary approaches to smell.[53] However, the time-honoured critical focus on the interplay between repression and recognition of olfactory desire, which finds strong backing in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School,[54] needs to be complemented by further enquiries into the ways in which smells are mediatised and resist mediatisation.[55] We may want to analyse forms and problems of such mediatisation critically with a view to their functions for the (de-)sublimation of olfactory desire, but this interest cannot dispense us from the task of taking stock of ethical, hermeneutic and cognitive problems related to olfactory perceptions in literature. Even though certain literary smell motifs may well be clear signs of lifted taboos on unsublimated fulfilment, to write about such perceptions means to integrate them into the pursuit of non-sensual or, in other words, sublimated goals in their own right. Certainly, Rindisbacher is aware of these issues; we merely note that his strong and justifiable focus on sense perceptions of ecstatic selves from the turn of the century to Modernism established a useful heuristic frame which deserves to be widened along the lines outlined above.

[53] For a critical reference to narcissism as a condition for heightened olfactory sensibility, see Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft*, p. 17.

[54] The Frankfurt School analysed the taboo on unsublimated pleasure derived from smell as a symptom for civilisatory repression; cf. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1984 [1947]), p. 165; Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation* (London: Abacus, 1973 [1955]), p. 44. On the whole, smell is a 'sense most closely connected in anthropological and sociological scholarship with bodily and environmental pollution, transgression and propriety' (Mark Bradley, 'Introduction: Smell and the Ancient Senses', in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, ed. by Bradley, pp. 1–16 (p. 8)).

[55] See the forthcoming volume by Jean-Alexandre Perras and Érika Wicky (eds), *Mediality of Smells/Médialité des odeurs* (Oxford: Lang, 2021).

Barry C. Smith

The Hidden Sense of Smell: Recent Scientific Findings

Smell is often described as a neglected sense and evidence of that neglect is not hard to find. With one or two notable examples, the mention of smell makes very few appearances in literature or history.[1] Philosophers have largely ignored it; and, more tellingly, it has received very little attention in psychology and neuroscience until recently. Even now the science of olfaction occupies a tiny fraction of the space occupied by the study of vision or audition. In daily life, too, we pay scant attention to smell, often believing that in comparison to other animals we have a poor sense of smell. It is also not uncommon to hear people say that if they had to lose one of their senses, smell is the one they would be readiest to give up. However, in this chapter I will present some recent findings from the science of olfaction that put pressure on the traditionally accepted idea of olfaction as playing only a minor role in our daily lives and show that smell makes a considerable contribution to our experience, subtly shaping our moods, influencing our food preferences, our choice of sexual partners, helping us to recognise our kin, alerting us to danger and signalling our emotional states to one another. By uncovering the many ways in which odours have an impact on our awareness of, and response to, our surroundings we can come to appreciate why smell has been unjustly neglected.

Our disregard for the olfactory dimension of experience is evident but what is less clear is why are we so little aware of it given that our sense of smell is better than we think, that odours play an important role in triggering early, emotionally charged memories and that ambient odours generate feelings of familiarity with the people and places we know. With this variety of effects on everyday life, the question is whether these impacts are the result of unconscious processing in the olfactory system or whether we simply do not attend to this important aspect of our experience until our attention is drawn to it.

[1] Smell and memory are connected in literature at the beginning of Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu*, although a confusion remains between taste and smell. See Barry Smith, 'Proust, the Madeleine and Memory', in *Memory in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Sebastian Groes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), pp. 38–42.

Before considering the evidence for each of these hypotheses let us consider the reasons for the relative neglect of smell.

A reason frequently offered for the scant mention of smell in the literary and historical record is that we lack the vocabulary to describe smells. Instead of having terms for odours themselves we refer to them by the names of their sources: e. g., leather, lavender, tar. However, some researchers have suggested that the lack of odour vocabulary is culturally specific and due to environmental circumstances. Asifa Majid and colleagues studied Jahai hunter-gathers in the Malay Peninsula and found that they categorised odours as readily as we categorise colours, using words to generalise across odours like the smell of fish, blood, meat and wood.[2] Majid and colleagues point out that the Jahai make regular use of sixteen generalised lexical categories for smells while they say European languages lack words of this kind. However, if we look closer we shall see that English has terms for the qualities of odours themselves: words like acrid, stinky, fragrant, musty, aromatic, heady, pungent, fetid, reeking, foul and rancid. Alongside these terms we have more general categorising terms for scent source types: floral, fruity, citrus, earthy, grassy, woody, metallic. Beyond the use of these terms, we encounter cross-modal words borrowed from the other senses: we say a particular scent is sweet or sour, even though sweet and sour are tastes not smells. Perfumers often resort to the use of cross-modal vocabulary in describing aromas like pine or mint as having a high note and the aromas of musk or leather as having a low note. In addition, we use hedonic terms to describe odours as pleasant or unpleasant, soothing or harsh. Thus, while English vocabulary is less extensive and specialised than that of the Jahai it is still rich enough to capture a wealth of information about any given olfactory experience when we are encouraged to say more about it. We can say whether a given odour is familiar, whether it is of something edible or not, how intense it is, as well as how pleasant or unpleasant it is. Although we strain to name odours even when we are sure we recognise them (the tip of the nose phenomenon), words for smells such as vanilla or cinnamon still have a powerful connection to olfactory experiences, since using, hearing or reading them trigger activation in the area of the primary olfactory cortex which would be activated were we perceiving those odorants in the environment.[3] This has been called the 'sommelier effect', whereby hearing someone mention a word for a particular aroma can facilitate the search for that aroma during wine tasting, making it more likely that that note is really perceived in the wine rather than it amounting to a mere matter of suggestion.

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[2] Asifa Majid and Niclas Burenhult, 'Odors Are Expressible in Language, as Long as you Speak the Right Language', *Cognition*, 130 (2014), 266–70.

[3] Julio González and others, 'Reading Cinnamon Activates Brain Regions', *Neuroimage*, 32 (2006), 906–12.

Another reason why so little attention may be paid to smells is that we think we only smell when we sniff. However, it is not so: we smell because we breathe, as psychologist J. J. Gibson points out.[4] Our olfactory apparatus is constantly at work processing the mixtures of complex volatile molecules we inhale from our immediate surroundings. We smell things all the time. So why does it not seem that way? Why does smell go missing from our experience? As mentioned above, we have two hypotheses to consider. Either we are not aware that we are taking in the smell of our surroundings and a large part of smelling occurs unconsciously; or it is part of conscious experience but one we do not attend to or notice till attention is called to it. Whichever it is – and we shall consider the evidence below – the failure to set much store by our sense of smell has led many to suppose it of little significance. Distinguished thinkers have had this thought, then invented lofty reasons to justify their dismissal. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac tells us: 'Of all the senses it is the one which appears to contribute least to the cognitions of the human mind.'[5] He thinks this is because it cannot afford any ideas of 'extension, shape, or of anything outside itself, or outside its sensations'.[6] The experience of smelling is about nothing but itself; and a smell, according to Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Thomas Reid, does not 'have any existence, but when it is smelled […] It is a sensation, and a sensation can only be in a sentient thing.'[7]

As contemporary philosopher of mind William Lycan puts it, 'it may *seem* that, phenomenally speaking, a smell is just a modification of our consciousness'.[8] As for its value, Immanuel Kant asks in 1798:

> Which organic sense is the most ungrateful and also seems to be the most dispensable? The sense of *smell.* It does not pay to cultivate it or to refine it at all in order to enjoy; for there are more disgusting objects than pleasant ones (especially in crowded places), and even when we come across something fragrant, the pleasure coming from the sense of smell is always fleeting and transient.[9]

[4] James J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Senses* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

[5] Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, 'A Treatise on the Sensations' [1754], in *Philosophical Writings of Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac*, trans. by Franklin Philip and Harlan Lane (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982), pp. 155–222 (p. 171); orig. *Traité des sensations*, 2 vols (London and Paris: Durand, 1954).

[6] de Condillac, 'A Treatise on the Sensations', p. 175.

[7] Thomas Reid, 'Of Smelling', *The Works of Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, 1863), pp. 104–14 (p. 105).

[8] William G. Lycan, 'The Intentionality of Smell', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5 (2014), unpag. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00436> [accessed 1 March 2021].

[9] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. and ed. by Robert B. Louden, intro. by Manfred Kuehn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 162; orig. *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Königsberg: Nicolovius, 1798).

Many will be tempted to conclude with Kant that smell is dispensable, although in fact there is good reason to think that we are quite unable to estimate the significance to us of suffering a loss of smell until we undergo it. We know from olfactory science that those who suddenly lose their sense of smell as a result of a virus or head injury suffer a much-reduced quality of life and very often remain depressed for longer than those who lose their sight. After a year or two of sight loss people find coping strategies to help them navigate their surroundings, using touch, a cane or even echo-location to reconnect them with their surroundings. However, for those who have lost their sense of smell, there is no replacement strategy. A dimension is missing from our experience of the world and it is only when it is gone that we notice its absence and come to understand how important it was to us.

Thomas Hummel and colleagues in Dresden have studied the resulting impact on quality of life of those who lose their sense of smell and find many commonalities in people's descriptions of how it feels.[10] Many suffer from depression and anhedonia and speak of losing their savour for life, of feeling cut off from their surroundings and alienated from their own homes. Losing their capacity to smell brings vividly to people's attention a dimension of their ordinary experience that had previously gone unnoticed but which they now recognise as missing from everyday life.

Less dramatically, the threatened loss of a familiar smell can bring to consciousness how significant certain smells are for us. For instance, when the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow was to be closed from 2003 to 2006 while undergoing a multi-million pound refurbishment, Glaswegians were worried that something would be lost from the building and said, 'Don't change the smell!'. They wanted it to be preserved and it was. Visitors to the Kelvingrove Art Gallery had known this scent when they came here as children; they had encountered it as adults and again when they took their own children to Kelvingrove. They knew that incense-rich smell of furniture polish and old stone: it was reassuringly familiar. Only the threat of losing it made Glaswegians aware of how well they knew it and how much they valued it.

How do we become aware of odours? What helps to bring them to mind? Doubt has been expressed about whether we are capable of generating mental images of odours at will. Can you imagine the smell of cut grass, or frying onions, or sawdust in a wood mill? Although some say they can, many say they cannot and there is doubt in the scientific community about whether many have this capacity; whether it is a matter of individual difference; or

[10] Ilona Croy and others, 'Olfactory Processing: Rapid Detection of Changes', *Chemical Senses*, 40 (2015), 351–55.

whether, despite reports, there is no odour equivalent of visual or sound imagery.[11]

One way of bringing odours to mind is when we direct our attention to the aromas coming from a glass of wine, or bend down to sniff a flower. This is top-down attention, which requires an intentional act of sniffing or smelling something. In contrast, there is also the involuntary, bottom-up capturing of our attention when we are struck by an overwhelming odour from the fish market or suddenly detect the smell of burning. Here, attention is captured and awareness of a smell breaks through into consciousness. The capturing of our attention can be deliberately engineered, as when a foul-smelling mercaptan is added to odourless gas so we can detect gas leaks.

However, unless strong or ambient smells capture our attention, we are apt to pay very little attention to changes of smell in the environment; and some believe this neglect of smell is due to our having a poorer sense of smell than other animals, which rely much more heavily on smell to orient themselves in the world. However, humans have a very good sense of smell, at least as good as rodents and mammals. So why do they think they do not? In his recent article in *Science*, psychologist John McGann suggests that the reason people think they have a poor sense of smell in comparison to other animals is due to the myth perpetrated by nineteenth-century neurophysiologist Paul Broca that humans have limited olfactory abilities due to the small size of the olfactory bulb; and later by the idea that our genes only express about four hundred receptor types as compared to one thousand different receptor types in rats and mice. In fact, humans can discriminate a vast number of odours through the combined activations of different receptors: Andreas Keller and colleagues have estimated with the help of machine learning that humans can discriminate more than a trillion olfactory stimuli.[12] This is likely to be an overestimation, but the important fact to note is that there are families of odours, such as fruit odours, in which we have better discrimination than dogs. Humans have a lower threshold for n-pentoic acid than other animals and humans are three times more sensitive than mice to certain mercaptans, such as the odour added to natural gas. We are more sensitive to some odorants while dogs are more sensitive to others.[13]

[11] Robert G. Crowder and Frank R. Schab, 'Imagery for Odors', in *Memory for Odors*, ed. by Frank R. Schab and Robert G. Crowder (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), pp. 93–109.

[12] C. Bushdid and others, 'Humans Can Discriminate More than 1 Trillion Olfactory Stimuli', *Science*, 343 (2014), 1370–72.

[13] John McGann, 'Poor Human Olfaction is a 19th-Century Myth', *Science*, 356 (2017), 597 <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aam7263> [accessed 1 March 2021].

However, it is fanciful to think, as McGann does, that it is the scientific influence of Broca's thinking which is responsible for the popular, common-sense view that humans' sense of smell is less developed than that of other animals. The comparative lack of scientific attention does not explain why smell seems to play such a small role in our everyday conscious lives. A more likely explanation is the dominance of vision and our reliance on it. So much of our perceptual experience is occupied by seeing our immediate surroundings: we maintain a permanent, though constantly updated, visual scene as we move through the day. In this way, vision dominates our experience and olfaction appears to play a very minor role. In this respect we are unlike other mammals, which set great store by the olfactory nuances of their surroundings. We stand upright on our hind legs, able to look far into the distance, to see and hear things coming. Were we on all fours, with our noses closer to the ground, we might pay much more attention to smells than we currently do; and, as one recent study showed, when we are required to use our noses like dogs to find an odour source we can do it. Noam Sobel and colleagues blindfolded their students and had them follow a chocolate trail in the grass of a park. They took longer than dogs and their path was a little more circuitous, but the students were nonetheless able to locate the chocolate source by smell.[14]

This may seem to be where the parallel between humans and other mammals ends, but Sobel's team have produced other remarkable findings showing other olfactory similarities across the species divide. In a remarkable study, Sobel and colleagues demonstrated that there are odours released by women's emotional tears which reduce men's libido.[15] By collecting 1ml of the real tears participants produced when watching sad films and running a controlled experiment in which men sniffed negative-emotion tears and non-emotional tear fluid, the team were able to demonstrate that in the former case men showed neurophysiological measures of reduced sexual arousal, including reduction in levels of testosterone. Sobel came to this idea by studying the behaviour of a blind mole, which, when threatened by other males, plasters its face with tears, using them as a chemical blanket for protection.

Another transfer from animal to human behaviour is the way we sniff out others when we first meet them. Animals often sniff each other as a greeting and to evaluate one another's smells. What Sobel's group showed is that humans who shake hands with someone new smell their own hand

[14] Jess Porter and others, 'Mechanisms of Scent-Tracking in Humans', *Nature Neuroscience*, 10 (2007), 27–29.

[15] Shani Gelstein and others, 'Human Tears are a Chemosignal of Emotion', *Science*, 331 (2011), 226–30.

shortly after. They do this surreptitiously and without being aware that they do it. By collecting odours on latex gloves it could be shown that handshakes contain enough chemicals to transfer a person's body odour. In the study, participants came to the laboratory to take part in an experiment: when the experimenter met the participant they either did or did not shake hands and the experimenter then left the room on the pretext of fetching a piece of equipment. When the experimenter left the room, covertly filmed participants who shook hands were far more likely to touch their face or nose with the hand they had used, showing how humans, like other animals, sniff each other out. After shaking hands with someone of their own gender, participants spent more time smelling that hand (right hand), though when shaking hands with someone of opposite gender they spent more time smelling the other, left hand.[16]

It has been known for some time that humans use chemosignals for social communication and reveal their emotions to others through chemical release, subtly influencing one another's behaviour, though without any awareness of it. Social chemosignals below the threshold of consciousness communicate information about kin, mate-selection, reproductive state, fear and stress. Emotional contagion can happen through the mediation of chemical signals, indicating that unconscious olfactory processing can evoke emotions and influence behaviour. This has been repeatedly shown in the research of Bettina Pause and Denise Chen (for a summary, see Pause 2012).[17] In an experiment Chen asked participants to watch a funny film, then, a day later, to watch a frightening film. On each occasion she collected their odours on underarm gauze pads. These were sniffed by participants who were asked to say whether they were the odours of people who were happy or people who were afraid: men and women both chose correctly when the samples came from men (but not women). A similar experiment was conducted on tee-shirts used while exercising versus tee-shirts used while skydiving.[18]

We live in a world of odours but appear curiously unaware of them. Some researchers have argued that ambient odours are processed without us no-

[16] Idan Frumin and others, 'A Social Chemosignaling Function for Human Handshaking', *eLife*, 3 March 2015 <https://elifesciences.org/articles/05154> [accessed 1 March 2021]. Video evidence from the handshaking study is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6r91sFUTezE> [accessed 1 March 2021].

[17] Bettina M. Pause, 'Processing of Body Odor Signals by the Human Brain', *Chemosensory Perception*, 5 (2012), 55–63.

[18] Denise Chen and Jeanette Haviland-Jones, 'Human Olfactory Communication of Emotion', *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 91 (2000), 771–81. Chen discusses the later experiment here: <https://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2012/06/denise-chen-olfaction-and-emotion> [accessed 1 March 2021].

ticing them.[19] This would make smells a range of sensory informational intake of which we are largely unaware. However, although the constantly changing flux of ambient odours goes largely unnoticed, does this mean that much of olfaction is unconsciously processed, or is it simply because it is not attended to? In testing, unpleasant odours have a warning function and are attended to more often than new, pleasant odours or continuation of the same odour stimuli, although we know that odours in our immediate surroundings are being continuously processed or monitored unconsciously and that many of them are easily within our very sensitive detection range.[20] However, since we do not maintain a permanent olfactory scene of odours in the immediate environment in the same way as we maintain a permanent visual scene in consciousness of our immediately visible surroundings, changes in odour do not attract our attention as easily as changes in the visual scene. Could we, however, attend to them more if we intended to; and do we fail to attend because we think we have a poor sense of smell? Some people do attend to odours and believe that they have an acute sense of smell, but is their self-assessment accurate?

People's estimates of their olfactory awareness or acuity do not correlate with objective testing of their olfactory abilities to detect or discriminate odours; if anything there is an inverse correlation.[21] Wine novices do just as well as experts in free-sorting tasks in which they are required to blind-sort samples into groups that are similar or different by smell alone. Novices will declare in advance they are no good at such tasks and afterwards be sure they got the answers wrong, despite their scores being comparable to those of the professionals. It is tempting to conclude that the differences between novices and experts are not due to abilities in perceptual discrimination but to confidence. Experts know they can do these sorting tasks but novices do not. Thus, experts are able to build on this knowledge to improve their abilities to remember and categorise wine aromas. We can objectively test people's olfactory acuity in a number of ways; and one regularly used test deploys *Sniffin' Sticks*, pen-like odour-dispensing devices which enable researchers to

[19] Lee Sela and Noam Sobel, 'Human Olfaction: A Constant State of Change-Blindness', *Experimental Brain Research*, 205 (2010), 13–29; Egon P. Köster, Per Møller and Jozina Mojet, 'A "Misfit" Theory of Spontaneous Conscious Odor Perception (MITSCOP): Reflections on the Role and Function of Odor Memory in Everyday Life', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5.64 (2014), 1–12; Tylor S. Lorig, 'Cognitive and "Non-Cognitive" Effects of Odor Exposure: Electrophysiological and Behavioral Evidence', in *The Psychology and Biology of Perfume*, ed. by Charles S. Van Toller and G. H. Dodd (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1992), pp. 161–73.

[20] Richard J. Stevenson, 'An Initial Evaluation of the Functions of Human Olfaction', *Chemical Senses*, 35 (2010), 2–3.

[21] M. Louisa Dematté and others, 'Individual Variability in the Awareness of Odors: Demographic Parameters and Odor Identification Ability', *Chemosensory Perception*, 4 (2011), 175–85; Ilona Croy and others, 'Olfactory Processing: Rapid Detection of Changes'.

measure people's ability to detect, discriminate and identify odours.[22] Before testing, people often declare that they have a poor sense of smell, only to find that their combined score for threshold, discrimination and identification (TDI score) is high. By contrast, people who regularly complain about smells and declare themselves to be very sensitive to smells in the environment often have below-average or poor TDI scores when objectively tested. Antti Knaapila describes this as odour annoyance, rather than odour acuity; and it indicates the role that attention plays in making us aware of odours.[23]

Many pregnant women report having a heightened sense of smell during the second and third trimester but the scientific literature does not support the idea of enhanced odour acuity. Despite anecdotal reports of smells being more intense, there is no evidence of change in odour-detection thresholds during pregnancy, nor any change in odour-identification as objectively measured. If anything, there is a decline in odour-identification during the first semester. Nonetheless, while there is no evidence of a sensory change there could be cognitive changes and there do seem to be changes in the hedonic evaluation of odours, with increased attention paid to what are now considered unpleasant odours.[24] The evidence above suggests that how aware we are of odours may not be due to sensory differences between people but to the attention they do or do not pay to odours they are easily able to detect in their environment.

As we have seen, olfaction plays many, often unnoticed, roles in our daily lives. It helps to orient us towards odours in the environment, helping us to recognise cooking smells that influence appetite; the smell of the countryside or the sea; hazards like the odour of petroleum in a garage forecourt; the smell of smoke or burning in the home; the off-odours of decaying garbage that has not yet been put outside; or foods that have spoiled. Scents can tip us off about whether someone has been in a room recently; and odours can tell us whether a person has been smoking or drinking. Recognisable odours can produce feelings of familiarity when visiting the homes of family or friends, as can the aromas in a favourite store, library or museum. Smell plays a less noticeable but highly important role in sexual attraction and mate-selection, with odours providing clues as to whether someone's major histocompatibility complex – part of the immune system known as the HLA (human leukocyte antigen) in humans – is alike or different to our own. Sexual preference is, for those whose

[22] Thomas Hummel and others, '"Sniffin' Sticks": Olfactory Performance Assessed by the Combined Testing of Odor Identification, Odor Discrimination and Olfactory Threshold', *Chemical Senses*, 22 (1997), 39–52.

[23] Antti Knaapila and others, 'Self-Ratings of Olfactory Function Reflect Odor Annoyance rather than Olfactory Acuity', *The Laryngoscope*, 118 (2008), 2212–27.

[24] E. Leslie Cameron, 'Pregnancy and Olfaction: A Review', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5 (2014), unpag. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00067> [accessed 1 March 2021].

HLA is sufficiently different from our own, a feature which enhances the desire to procreate.[25] Instead of love at first sight, it may be love at first smell. Humans also emit and respond to odours that signal fear, anxiety or arousal; and through these chemosignals human beings can, unbeknownst to them, influence each other's emotional states.

A further unacknowledged but significant role that olfaction plays in everyday life occurs when we are eating or drinking. Volatiles are released in the oral cavity when chewing or sipping and they are pulsed, when we swallow, up through the nasal pharynx to the olfactory receptors in the epithelium in the nose. When processed, these retronasal food and drink odours are not experienced as smells but fuse with inputs from the tongue's receptors to produce our conscious experiences of flavour. So, smell is integral to the multisensory flavour perceptions by which we (mistakenly) think of ourselves as merely 'tasting' food and drink. Absent the involvement of smell in eating and drinking and people will often report that they are unable to taste anything. It is in those circumstances that they find out how much of what they call 'tasting' depends on their sense of smell. However, it is not smell as we usually think of it, taking in odours from outside-in when we inhale, a process which is called orthonasal olfaction; but when odours rise from the mouth to the nose at the back of the throat when we swallow and breathe out through the nose. This is called retronasal olfaction and it plays the largest part in creating our experiences of flavour. All the tongue can give us are sensations of salt, sweet, sour, bitter, umami (savoury) and perhaps metallic, based on dedicated receptors which detect salts, sugars, acids, bitter compounds, glutamates and iron. However, there is no arithmetic to make up the flavour of cherries, mango, banana, onion, olives, lamb or mint by adding together salt, sweet, sour, etc. Take the flavour of strawberries: we do not have strawberry receptors on the tongue. Our ability to taste the flavour of strawberry depends on retronasal olfaction and taste, whose input combines into an integrated, multisensory but unified experience of flavour.

Flavour perception is even more multisensory than this: we combine inputs from taste, smell, touch and irritation of trigeminal nerve endings which make mustard taste hot in the mouth and peppermint taste cool; and not only do these inputs combine, they modify one another's workings.[26] There is such a thing as odour-induced tastes, crucial for our understanding of flavour-perception. To experience odour-induced tastes, one need simply sniff odours

[25] J. Kromer and others, 'Influence of HLA on Human Partnership and Sexual Satisfaction', *Scientific Reports*, 6 (2016), unpag. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep32550> [accessed 1 March 2021].

[26] Barry Smith, 'The Chemical Senses', in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Perception*, ed. by M. Matthen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 314–52.

such as strawberry, vanilla or chocolate, all of which are routinely described by Westerners as 'sweet smelling'.[27] These sweet-smelling odours can make what we eat taste sweeter. The smell of vanilla is described as sweet, although a vanilla pod is not sweet at all. It is the brain's association between the aroma of vanilla and the sweet ingredients with which it is usually combined, such as ice cream, chocolate or custard, that transfers the attribute of sweetness from taste to the odour; and as a result of that association the aroma of vanilla enhances the perceived sweetness of what we are tasting.[28] Notice, however, that this association between vanilla and sweet is culturally specific and those South-East Asian cultures whose cuisines combine vanilla with salt will make vanilla smell 'salty'. Smell also interacts cross-modally with touch in a number of ways. In terms of texture and mouthfeel, certain odours in foods can make what we eat feel creamier in the mouth;[29] and there are odours in shampoo which make one's hair feel softer.[30]

A rather different way in which touch and smell interact is through the operation of the trigeminal nerve: the fifth cranial nerve that serves the eyes, the nose and mouth. As mentioned already, it is the irritation of trigeminal nerve endings by the chemicals in spices – such as capsaicin in chilli, zingerone in ginger, piperine in black pepper and menthol in mint – that gives rise to the characteristic sensations of tingling, stinging, burning and cooling. However, in addition to these effects the trigeminal nerve endings in the nose lead to the feelings in our nasal linings when we sniff odours. Most odours are trigeminal stimulants, although a few are not: phenyl ethyl alcohol (rose), for instance. The pattern of activation felt when sniffing powerful odours like ammonia can lead those who have lost their sense of smell to think they can still smell 'bad smells' like the fishy smell of trimethyl amine when they feel the sharp tingle in the nose. Very often our ability to tell that we are smelling something when we sniff comes from both the experience of the scent and the feeling in the nose of odour rushing in. Pure smelling experiences are rare.

The paradox is that smell is noticed most consciously as a contribution to our daily lives in a setting where it is not recognised for what it is: a case of smell. That is when retronasal olfaction fuses with taste and touch to create percep-

[27] Richard J. Stevenson and Caroline Tomiczek, 'Olfactory-Induced Synesthesias: A Review and Model', *Psychological Bulletin*, 133 (2007), 294–309 (p. 295).

[28] John Prescott, Victoria Johnstone and Joanne Francis, 'Odor-Taste Interactions: Effects of Attention Strategies during Exposure', *Chemical Senses*, 29 (2004), 331–40.

[29] Johannes H.-F. Bult, Rene A. De Wijk and Thomas Hummel, 'Investigations on Multimodal Sensory Integration: Texture, Taste, and Ortho- and Retronasal Olfactory Stimuli in Concert', *Neuroscience Letters*, 411 (2007), 6–10.

[30] Anne Churchill and others, 'The Cross-Modal Effect of Fragrance in Shampoo: Modifying the Perceived Feel of both Product and Hair during and after Washing', *Food Quality and Preference*, 20 (2009), 320–28.

tions of flavour we erroneously classify as 'tastes'. The failure to recognise the presence of smell in creating those experiences is due to the phenomenon of oral referral, whereby the precise experiential qualities that olfaction extracts as smell from the receptors' epithelium resemble referred sensations of pain, experienced as occurring somewhere other than where they are generated: namely, in the mouth.[31] It is usually not possible to separate retronasal smell and taste in the experience of flavour, but only to notice the absence of the former when using a nose clip to block smell when tasting a jelly bean. The chewed jelly bean will be perceived as sweet but the actual flavour – cherry, pineapple and so on – can only be perceived when the nose clip is removed. For a few milliseconds nothing happens and then odours rush in and connect the taste and smell into an indivisible flavour, making one think that all the flavour is coming from the tongue, even though a moment before it was clear how little the tongue was providing. In rare cases we can parse our experience into its component parts. Take the flavour of a menthol lozenge. Menthol flavour is at least three things: a minty aroma, a slightly bitter taste and a cool sensation in the mouth and nose. Take any one of these away and it is not menthol.

Sadly, towards the end of life, as our sense of smell begins to fade, we fail to experience much flavour in our food. Elderly people frequently say that food does not taste as good as it used to and will over-salt their food to compensate. This lack of savouring of food often results in lack of eating and poor nutrition, so a healthy sense of smell is important in later life. Smell plays an important role in food choice throughout our lives. Food preferences are set early *in utero*. Olfaction plays a large role for the foetus in determining food preferences after birth. Benoist Schaal and colleagues provided evidence that the mother's diet influences what the infant will eat or reject by means of an impressively designed study with two groups of expecting mothers who either ate or avoided eating aniseed-flavoured foods during pregnancy. After birth, the infants of mothers who ate aniseed-flavoured foods showed a preference for the odour of aniseed, while the infants of mothers who had avoided it showed aversion or neutrality to the smell of aniseed in milk.[32]

We have seen that smell plays a large part in our lives; and by understanding the function of olfaction we are also learning more about smell disorders which can provide advanced warning of neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's Syndrome and dementia. There is even reason to think that we can ward off the onset of dementia by protecting our sense of smell. Unlike the

[31] For oral referral, see Juyun Lim and Maxwell B. Johnson, 'The Role of Congruency in Retronasal Odor Referral to the Mouth', *Chemical Senses*, 37 (2012), 515–21.

[32] Benoist Schaal, L. Marlier and Robert Soussignan, 'Human Foetuses Learn Odours from their Pregnant Mother's Diet', *Chemical Senses*, 25 (2000), 729–37.

other senses, which fade gradually, the exercise of our sense of smell can help us to maintain it longer. Smell is a 'use it or lose it' sense; and there is evidence that by practising smell-training, whereby we sniff essential oils on waking and before sleep, older people can improve not just their sense of smell but their cognitive functioning and that it is better for them than doing Sudoku.[33]

Finally, what is it like to be born without a sense of smell? Congenital anosmics do not necessarily know what other people mean by smell, although they can develop social anxiety about cleanliness and worry whether they are producing unpleasant body odours. The Spanish philosopher, Marta Tafalla, was diagnosed as congenitally anosmic at fourteen years of age. Until that time she thought her perception of the world was complete. She would see people bend down and sniff at flowers but she could not see the point. Since that time she has spent her adult life trying to understand what she is missing in being unable to respond to the world of odours. In an essay charting her experience she makes an insightful observation about what she thinks she is missing when responding appreciatively to being in a formal garden. She says that while she enjoys the colours and the spatial patterns in which the flowers and foliage are arranged, she suspects that she feels less immersed in the space than those who can breathe in the scents around them.[34]

This idea of immersion in a space is useful to us in thinking about another puzzle about smell: namely, why we no longer smell our own homes. Everyone else's home has a smell but not our own. The reason usually given is that through habituation we are used to the smell; it no longer contains new information and so we no longer consciously respond to it. Note, though, that people who have suddenly become anosmic through a virus, head injury or onset of a neurodegenerative disease often describe themselves as feeling alienated from their own homes, as if they were living behind glass. Perhaps what this cruelly brings to mind is a dimension of their experience which was always there, reassuring them of the familiarity of their surroundings, something unobtrusive and not attended to. It is this now-missing dimension which inclines me to think that rather than being out-of-mind and unconscious, smell is a constant background to consciousness, modulating our mood, our responses to others, and is only brought to the forefront when smells surprise, delight or disgust us. It is the constant companion of our experience of eating and drinking and an indispensable part of well-being.

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[33] Birte-Antina Wegener and others, 'Olfactory Training with Older People', *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 33 (2018), 212–20.

[34] Marta Tafalla, 'Smell and Anosmia in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Gardens', *Contemporary* Aesthetics, 12 (2014), unpag. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/ca/7523862.0012.019/--smell-and-anosmia-in-the-aesthetic-appreciation-of-gardens?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [accessed 1 March 2021].

Michel Delville

THE SMELL OF DISGUST: MODERNISM AND THE SOCIAL POLITICS OF OLFACTION

Recent scholarship in the connected fields of sensory studies, food studies and affect theory has challenged the visio- and verbo-centric hierarchy of the senses. It has also re-evaluated the proximal senses of taste, touch and smell as an integral part of how writers experience and represent the human body and consciousness in their encounter with the world. Most prominent amongst studies of the lower senses in literature are the works of cultural historians, philosophers and literary scholars whose combined efforts have initiated a movement towards a recognition of how studying modern and contemporary literature requires attention not only to the workings of human consciousness but also to how the senses interact with one another, alternately fashioning and questioning accepted models of perception and meaning. I have investigated elsewhere the impact of Freudian, Bakhtinian and Deleuzian theories about corporeality on literary history and historiography before turning to how literary approaches to the lower senses have enriched and complicated literary representations of human perception as well as social relationships, especially as regards traditional idealistic notions of selfhood and dominant paradigms of the self-contained body, bourgeois or otherwise.[1] This essay provides an overview of current debates in olfactory studies, one which forays into specific examples, each of which is emblematic of a particular 'moment' in the history of literary representations of smells. Whether theoretical, critical or fictional, the texts examined below address smells and social life through the prism of disgust and other negative affects elicited by the olfactory sense insofar as the latter are liable to reproduce or challenge dominant models of hierarchy and authority in different contexts related to the complexities and permutations of Modernist literature.

[1] Michel Delville and Andrew Norris, *The Politics and Aesthetics of Hunger and Disgust* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–20.

The recent and current upsurge of studies devoted to disgust in philosophy, literature and the other arts has contributed to the shedding of light on the sociological and ideological value of smells as social as well as aesthetic markers. From Aurel Kolnai's seminal 1929 essay 'Der Ekel' [On Disgust] to the recent efforts of Winfried Menninghaus, William Miller and Carolyn Korsmeyer, disgust theorists have been struggling with the ambivalent meanings of disgust as an emotional, physical and moral category. Kolnai identifies disgust as a defence mechanism against specific elicitors such as putrefaction, body secretions, the viscous, crawling animals, spoiled food, the inside of the body, 'exaggerated fertility' and bodily deformation.[2] More importantly, at least in the context of this essay, he also acknowledges the possibility that 'the physiological can be said somehow to include the moral sphere' (p. 29) and insists upon the role played by disgust 'in moral rejection and in our recognition of the unethical' (p. 81). In their introduction to the English translation of Kolnai's volume, Korsmeyer and Barry C. Smith describe disgust as 'a powerful, visceral emotion […] rooted so deeply in bodily response that some theorists have even hesitated to classify it as an emotion in the fullest sense, considering it more akin to involuntary reactions such as nausea, retching, and the startle recoil' (p. 1). For William Miller – who devotes one chapter of *The Anatomy of Disgust* to 'the moral life of disgust' (p. 179) – such resistance stems from the fact that 'disgust looks too much like a purely instinctual drive, too much of the body and not enough of the soul, more like thirst, lust, or even pain than like envy, jealousy, love, anger, fear, regret, guilt, sorrow, grief, or shame'.[3]

The function of repellent bodily odours as markers of social inclusion, exclusion and differentiation has been acknowledged by recent studies on the theory and history of disgust. Miller's own foray into the ideological and political dimensions of disgust emerges as a significant addition to the developing field of affect theory (and the emerging field of disgust studies), one which argues for the centrality of disgust to the way we structure our sense of self and of the world around us. Miller stresses the function of disgust in structuring moral, social and political orderings, with a strong insistence on the 'powerful image-generating capacities' of the repellent (p. 18). *The Anatomy of Disgust* frequently refers to the likes of Montaigne, Shakespeare, Swift and Hazlitt and closes with a full chapter on George Orwell's sense of smell which

[2] Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust*, trans. by Carolyn Korsmeyer and Barry Smith (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2004 [1929]), p. 61; orig. 'Der Ekel', in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, 10 (1929), 515–69. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

[3] William Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 179, 7.

ought to be compulsory reading to anyone with an interest in the political and moral implications of the 'gatekeeper emotion'.[4] In a more specifically literary context, however, Winfried Menninghaus's 2003 study *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation* offers the first comprehensive account of how disgust informs not only our cognitive strategies but also our aesthetic choices. The essay considers Nietzsche, Freud, Bataille, Sartre and, of course, Kafka, whose poetics of defilement represents perhaps the ultimate Modernist processing of (self-)disgust into an aesthetic as well as existential category, as evidenced by, for example, his 'sulphurous' fascination with the 'repulsive ailment' of tooth disease, with depraved foul-smelling women, or with the 'syndrome of disgust with familial dependence, proximity, and sexuality' (e. g., in 'The Metamorphosis' and in the author's correspondence).[5] More generally, Menninghaus's consideration of the abject and the repellent in literature and the other arts – which takes us from Kant to the abject art of Cindy Sherman and Damien Hirst – underlines the ambivalent, Janus-faced nature of the anti-aesthetics of disgust, warning us against the prospect of a 'definitive victory' of abject art over idealised models of representation.[6] Born of a conflicting relationship between fascination and rejection, the sublime and the horrible, erotic and thanatotic drives, disgust serves to define the limits (and limitations) of the beautiful at the same time as it provides the necessary constituent for the very possibility of aesthetic analysis. Since art, Menninghaus concludes, 'thrives only on the continual generation of differences […] we can therefore expect to see further – new and different – conjunctions of the beautiful and the disgusting, of the disgusting and the beautiful'.[7] Carolyn Korsmeyer's *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* covers similar ground in the field of art history and shares a similar, though inverted, dialectical view that disgust represents 'the containment of the beautiful, that which keeps beauty itself from overreaching its own value and revolting us with a surfeit of pleasure',[8] with the essential difference that her corpus also addresses the potential for feminist artists and theorists to explore and challenge the disgust-laden normative discourse around the 'material vulnerabilities' of the female body, as evidenced in her readings of Jenny Saville and Julia Kristeva.[9]

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[4] Kolnai, *On Disgust*, p. 30.

[5] Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), pp. 231, 245.

[6] Menninghaus, *Disgust*, p. 401.

[7] Menninghaus, *Disgust*, p. 401.

[8] Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 129.

[9] On the subject of gender and disgusting smells, see also Chapter 5 of Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994), which discusses stereotypical feminine olfactory codes, including the

Olfaction in Literature

The history of literature is full of evidence that the world cannot be experienced exclusively through sight and – to a lesser extent – hearing; and that it can resist the power of the eye to become what William Wordsworth describes in the 1805 *Prelude* as 'the most despotic of the senses'.[10] Although certain literary forms have participated more than others in apprehending the full range of the human sensorium (e. g., literary representations of olfactory and gustatory perceptions are more likely to abound, say, in the French Realist or Naturalist novel as handled by Balzac, Hugo or Zola than in other genres and movements), throughout its history literature in general has drawn attention to how the lower senses can destabilise accepted notions of how textual representation relates to the mechanics of meaning and the dialectics of perception and knowledge. In a cultural environment which privileges the 'verbi-voco-visual' (or what Hegel called 'the two theoretical senses of sight and hearing'), the proximal senses of taste and smell return with a vengeance once they begin to invade our body and consciousness: one can close one's eyes or block one's ears to avoid seeing or hearing something unpleasant, but smells and flavours invade the body's sensory organs in a way which cannot be easily and promptly warded off.[11]

This is particularly true of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, when the desacralised body begins to be perceived by many as an organic factory whose capricious whims and demanding cries must be heard and cannot be contained or controlled. Hans J. Rindisbacher's 1992 study *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* was a foundational attempt to re-evaluate the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature through the lens (if one may say so) of smell, pausing importantly with Dostoevsky, Baudelaire, Fontane, Huysmans, Rilke and others. Chapter 3 of Rindisbacher's study sees the period stretching from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s as one which is marked by 'two contrary styles unit[ing] in reacting against the bourgeois repression of the olfactory', the first one, Naturalism, going 'far beyond bourgeois realism and introduc[ing] olfaction as a new aesthetic element in literature'; the second, Decadence, 'react[ing] to bourgeois realism with a vengeance in writers such as Huysmans, Wilde, Hofmannsthal, and Rilke'. What

uses of fragrance in the context of the olfactory scale of the feminine and the suspicion that women are 'naturally foul, reeking of unpleasant body fluids, such as menstrual blood' (p. 164).

[10] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: The 1805 Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1805]), p. 210.

[11] For Hegel's 'two theoretical senses', see Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 43.

both trends have in common is a need to rescue the lower sense from Western culture's dominant ocularcentrism and, more specifically, to 'infuse the purged smells back into literary reality'.[12]

Rindisbacher's book was inspired by Alain Corbin's study of the French 'social imagination' of smells, *The Foul and the Fragrant* [*Le Miasme et la jonquille*], which records the 'perceptual revolution' that took place in the eighteenth century with a view to understanding our current obsession with hygiene and the gradual deodorisation and sanitization of private and public spaces.[13] The third and final part of Corbin's volume explores the ways in which smell can act as a social marker stigmatising the horrid stench of the poor which, by the mid-nineteenth century, had become one of the bourgeoisie's worst nightmares.[14] Corbin's study of the social representations of smell echoes Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's suggestion that the price to be paid for the bourgeoisie's attempts to construct itself as stable, boundaried and inodorous bodies is the construction of the socially or racially inferior/different as 'grotesque otherness'.[15]

In the history of modern literature, the repression of smell as a marker of the lower class or an indicator of savagery climaxes in the asepticised environment of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), which explores the disastrous consequences of an over-hygienic society in which the technological reduction and manipulation of the olfactory spectrum have become a means of social control so that unpleasant smells (those which prevail as much in the Savage Reservation as in the old-fashioned, unsterilised family home) are experienced as a threat to civilisation itself. Another striking literary example of a dystopian narrative centred on the repression of smell is to be found in Mynona's 1911 'On the Bliss of Crossing Bridges', which is discussed both in Rindisbacher's volume and in the section entitled 'The Politics of Smell' in Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott's *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. The story features Dr Krendelen, a dystopian scientist who sets himself the goal of purifying the whole planet's atmosphere in order to establish a 'paradise of the lungs', a world purified of bad air and stench which would prove to be 'the surest way to improve humanity, better than all philosophical moralizing!'.[16] Krendelen's project ends in the spreading of new diseases and the annihilation of humanity,

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[12] Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. viii.

[13] Alain Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982).

[14] Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille*, p. 58.

[15] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 193.

[16] Cited in Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 176.

the bodies of the deceased burning 'without a trace of corrupting odor in the delightful air of early spring'.[17]

One of the lessons to be drawn from such fragant utopias and dystopias is that there is no middle way in the olfactory social scale as 'there is no compromise between the fragrance [or, in Mynona's case, the odourlessness] of civilisation and the stink of savagery':

> The former repels through its moral emptiness, the latter through its aesthetic ugliness. Once society is (metaphorically as well as actually) deodorized and perfumed […] the only alternative to it is the frank squalor of stench – the ultimate gesture of defiance. In the end, Huxley [and Mynona] leaves the reader with the feeling that, all things considered, the odour of flowing blood is of more value than the fragrance of perfume flowing from a scent tap.[18]

The opening chapter of Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964) deals precisely with this apparently unresolvable dichotomy. The author's retrospective account of his Paris years recounts the sordid odorous atmosphere of the Café des Amateurs, rue Mouffetard, a place of regression and foul-smelling drunkenness and abandon:

> The leaves lay sodden in the rain and the wind drove the rain against the big green autobus at the terminal and the Café des Amateurs was crowded and the windows misted over from the heat and the smoke inside. It was a sad, evilly run café where the drunkards of the quarter crowded together and I kept away from it because of the smell of dirty bodies and the sour smell of drunkenness. The men and women who frequented the Amateurs stayed drunk all of the time, or all of the time they could afford it; mostly on wine which they bought by the half-litre or litre. Many strangely named aperitifs were advertised, but few people could afford them except as a foundation to build their wine drunks on. The women drunkards were called *poivrottes* which meant female rummies.[19]

Hemingway's revulsive response to the unbearable stench of lower-class 'rummies' points to the potential for disgust to elicit moral statements (the café is depicted as a place of utmost regression, debauchery and depravation). It also suggests that the bad smell of the poor fuels anxieties which are related to how the higher classes reflect, often uncomfortably, upon their own contempt for the working classes, despite their democratic convictions or postur-

[17] Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 176.
[18] Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 179.
[19] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (London: Granada, 1977 [1964]), p. 11.

ing. Commenting on the role of disgust in reinforcing social hierarchies, Miller notes that George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) exhibits similar concerns in the author's own attempts to come to terms with the difficulty of overcoming socially acquired loathing for the lower classes.[20] 'Here you come to the real secret of class distinctions in the West –', Orwell writes:

> the real reason why a European of bourgeois upbringing, even when he calls himself a Communist, cannot without a hard effort think of a working man as his equal. It is summed up in four frightful words which people nowadays are chary of uttering, but which were bandied about quite freely in my childhood.

These words are: '*The lower classes smell*.' The point, for Orwell, is not so much that one is brought up to believe that the lower classes are 'ignorant, lazy, drunken, boorish and dishonest'; 'it is when [one] is brought up to believe that they are dirty that the harm is done'.[21]

The Smell of the Poor

In his semi-autobiographical memoir *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), Orwell writes of the difficulty of considering the inhabitants of the Paris slums as anything other than a symptom of the alliance of filth, immorality, deceit and raw, unbridled sexuality. Here is his tragi-comical description of the drunk pornographers-crooks the Rougiers:

> There were the Rougiers, for instance, an old, ragged, dwarfish couple who plied an extraordinary trade. They used to sell postcards on the Boulevard St Michel. The curious thing was that the postcards were sold in sealed packets as pornographic ones, but were actually photographs of chateaux on the Loire; the buyers did not discover this till too late, and of course never complained. The Rougiers earned about a hundred francs a week, and by strict economy managed to be always half starved and half drunk. The filth of their room was such that one could smell it on the floor below. According to Madame F., neither of the Rougiers had taken off their clothes for four years.[22]

Orwell's own 'down and out' condition, which he considers a form of freedom as well as a source of misery (he writes of his neighbours in the slums that

[20] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, pp. 235–54.
[21] George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin, 2001 [1937]), p. 119.
[22] George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (London: Penguin, 1989 [1933]), p. 3.

'poverty frees them from ordinary standards of behaviour, just as money frees people from work'), has plunged him into deep poverty. Still, his redeeming sense of pride and lucidity is what distinguishes him from the Rougiers and all the other zany slum dwellers he describes with a mixture of genuine fondness and ruthless cruelty.

A similarly ambivalent approach to the smell of the poor emerges from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), another story in which smells are central to the author's exploration of power relationships. It opens with the smell of bad gin and, more importantly, of the boiled cabbage that invades Winston's building. Smell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* acts not only as a marker of social status but also as an emblem of individuality: Parsons, Winston's neighbour and colleague at the Ministry of Truth, displays a personality which is reduced to the 'overpowering smell of sweat, a sort of unconscious testimony to the strenuousness of his life'.[23] Parsons's 'powers of sweating' are described as 'extraordinary' (p. 56); his awkward, overweight, sweaty stature being the measure of his complete, unthinking devotion to Big Brother. Later in the novel, in a reversal of the traditional value of social and cultural refinement attached to scents, Winston reminisces about his former wife's 'villainous cheap scent' (p. 64), which is 'nevertheless alluring, because no woman of the Party ever used scent, or could be imagined as doing so' since 'only the proles used scent', 'the smell of it [being] inextricably mixed up with fornication' (p. 64). Still, despite his misgivings about the lower classes, Winston believes that 'if there is hope', 'it lies in the proles' (p. 69), hoping that the stinking mass of workers which constitutes eighty-five per cent of the population of Oceania might possibly unite to defeat the Party.

In different but related ways, Hemingway's and Orwell's respective takes on the olfactory show that disgusting smells articulate a fundamental anxiety regarding the ethical dimensions of disgust: that which can help us combat 'cruelty and hypocrisy' can also lead some to find a regional accent repellent or cause them to complain about the smell of the lower classes.[24] In a liberal, democratic society, where tolerance and non-discrimination have become the official norm, some will argue that it is the dissimulation of disgust which is liable to produce 'behavioral models of faked nondisgust' such as those which are used to 'satisfy the demands of political correctness'.[25] From such a perspective, the perversion of disgust from a socially and physiologically regulating agent into a force that works against egalitarian ideas is directly related to a democratic

[23] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Signet, 1961 [1949]), p. 22. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.
[24] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, pp. 197, 21.
[25] Menninghaus, *Disgust*, p. 22.

model that has converted 'the once benign complacent contempt or indifference of the upper classes into a malign and deeply visceral disgust'.[26]

If, to quote Richard Hoggart, Orwell is 'a public conscience […] with an exceptionally well-developed sense of smell',[27] being capable of admitting his own contempt for and diffidence of the poor, Hemingway (or, at least the Hemingway of *A Moveable Feast*) is himself a bourgeois Socialist with fluctuating Communist sympathies, unashamed of his own prejudices against the individuals he claimed elsewhere to protect from social injustice and inequalities. More than anything it is the sheer density and teeming promiscuity of the drunks which appall him: he describes the inebriate crowd as an integral part of the cesspool of Paris, the stench of their excrement accumulating and invading the very texture and structure of the Café, a horrid, impure and viscerally contemptible environment from which one cannot escape and which increases the narrator's horror of the low. Even though Hemingway's Cubist treatment of the scene – the horse-drawn, cesspit-emptying tank wagons are likened to Braque paintings – momentarily draws it away from Social Realism towards an intermediate state of abstraction, the fear of contamination looms large in his assessment of the polluting reek of sweat, cheap wine, urine and excrement:

> The Café des Amateurs was the cesspool of the rue Mouffetard, that wonderful narrow crowded market street which led into the Place Contrescarpe. The squat toilets of the old apartment houses, one by the side of the stairs on each floor with the two cleated cement shoe-shaped elevations on each side of the aperture so a *locataire* would not slip, emptied into cesspools which were emptied by pumping into horse-drawn tank wagons at night. In the summer time, with all windows open, we would hear the pumping and the odor was very strong. The tank wagons were painted brown and saffron color and in the moonlight when they worked the rue Cardinal Lemoine their wheeled, horse-drawn cylinders looked like Braque paintings. No one emptied the Café des Amateurs though, and its yellowed poster stating the terms and penalties of the law against public drunkenness was as flyblown and disregarded as its clients were constant and ill-smelling.[28]

One can agree to a certain extent that defecation has democratising virtues since excrement is not only a central elicitor of disgust but a literal reminder of our own mortality, a leveller of social distinctions. It 'not only levels food, but reminds us […] that we the eaters of that food are not immune to its lev-

[26] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 252.
[27] Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p. xi.
[28] Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, p. 11.

eling powers', the levelling power of the products of defilement extending to the intersubjective as the sheer smell of shit is liable to be inhaled as vapour, making 'beauty a fraud and sexual desire a function of sustained and insistent self-deception'.[29] However, as Hemingway's and Orwell's narratives of abjection suggest, the symbolic democratic power of the old adage *inter urinas et feces nascimur* would seem to carry very little weight compared to the sheer physical menace of foul-smelling excrement invading the orifices of the bourgeois body while desecrating its supposedly self-contained purity and integrity. The idea of a corrupting stench is all the more threatening as smell (unlike taste, touch or sight) cannot be averted. Smell is the most obtrusive and irresistible of the senses, an unmediated sensation which 'in its immediate functions perceives odorous particles emanating from external bodies, without any reference to the object'.[30] Hamlet's caustic remark that Claudius will smell Polonius's body as he goes 'up the stairs into the lobby' encapsulates the irresistible, intrusive, unmediated immediacy of odours;[31] and as early as the eighteenth century the importance of smell as a marker of social and moral inferiority is perhaps best exemplified by the Kantian fear of inhaling miasmas, the most revolting stenches being found in 'densely-populated places',[32] a condition adumbrated by Aurel Kolnai's foundational definition of disgust as that which constitutes an example of the uncontrollable, teeming energies of organic life. Of the lower senses, smell is arguably the most disgust-eliciting one, because the idea of direct, physical corruption is always already implied by the act of inhaling millions of stinking molecules. The fear of contamination – be it psychological, social or political – is increased by the alleged capacity of the miasma to invade the human lungs and make its way directly into the veins. It is this unmediated and unblockable character of smells which causes them to be even more viscerally revolting than an ugly sight, a rotten meal or the prospect of touching a hairy spider, a toad or another slimy crawling creature.

Still on the subject of creeping beings, Franz Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' [*Die Verwandlung* (1915)] is undoubtedly a highlight in the history of literary representations of the sheer alienness of disgusting things. A tale of social dispossession and economic as well as emotional deprivation, it emerges as a climactic example of how disgust functions as a mode of social exclusion within the domestic as well as the social sphere. Gregor's dying scene features him unable to move his 'feeble little legs', weakened to a state of lethargy but none-

[29] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, pp. 99, 69.
[30] J. G. Spurzheim, *Phrenology; or, The Doctrine of the Mind* (London: Charles Knight, 1825), p. 263.
[31] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1982 [1603]), IV.3.38–9.
[32] Menninghaus, *Disgust*, p. 110.

theless able to think back on his family 'with tenderness and love'.[33] The human insect passes away in a 'state of vacant and peaceful meditation', in a private space which has become a prison, and all that is left of him is a dead body which is 'completely flat and dry' (as his sister Grete remarks, 'the food came out again just as it went in').[34] 'The corpse', 'the most sickening of wastes', Julia Kristeva has argued, 'seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection'.[35] Still, Gregor's empty dried-up shell is much less upsetting than his former living self as it seems to have expelled the monstrousness of body fluids and the putrid smell of half-digested food and has eventually acquired the hygienic solemnity of an entomologist's trophy. Revealingly enough, the other main reference to smell in the story is related to Gregor's own disgust at the 'normal' food with which he is presented and which he cannot help but find revolting after his transformation. In a strange reversal of sensorial values, the visual disgust aroused by the vermin parallels that which the latter experiences after he has undergone his physical and sensorial transformation.

Modernism's Synaesthetic Turn

One of the problems encountered by writers in their attempts to represent the olfactory is that the lexicon of smell is very limited and is usually confined to adjectives describing not the smell itself but 'the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the smell, most of which merely mean bad or good smell: fetid, foul, stink, stench, rancid, vile, revolting, nauseating, sickening'.[36] Kant was among the first to deplore the lack of diversity and accuracy of the vocabulary of smell. He writes:

> All sensations have appellations of their own, e. g. for sight red, green, yellow, for taste sweet, sour, etc., but smell cannot have proper appellations; rather, we borrow the appellations from other sensations, e. g. it smells sour, or has a smell of roses or carnations, it smells like moschus. These are all appellations from other sensations. Hence we cannot describe smell.[37]

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[33] Franz Kafka, 'The Metamorphosis', in *The Complete Stories*, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir and Tania and James Stern (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), pp. 114–64 (p. 160).

[34] Kafka, 'The Metamorphosis', p. 161.

[35] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Léon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4; orig. *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980).

[36] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 67.

[37] Immanuel Kant, 'Reflexionen zur Anthropologie', in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1900–97), xv (1913), 55–654 (pp. 104–5), trans. by and quoted in Menninghaus, *Disgust*, p. 111.

At least, we cannot describe it with reference to itself but must resort to similes and near-equivalents derived from the lexicon of other senses.[38] Odours resist analysis and defy understanding less because of their fleeting nature than of their lack of *meaning*: '[N]ot only do we lack a well-elaborated code of odors in the West, we are often unable to recognize even the most familiar odors when these are separated from their source.'[39] Hence the usefulness of a *synaesthetic* perspective on the representation of the 'mute sense',[40] a method to which many writers resort in the absence of a specific olfactory lexicon. Synaesthesia emerges as a useful model against sensory hierarchies and a popular trope in genres and modes as varied as French Symbolist poetry (a classic example of this is Arthur Rimbaud's poem 'Vowels'), Decadence and Naturalist fiction. Émile Zola's *The Fat and the Thin* [*Le Ventre de Paris* (1873)] is replete with descriptions of tastes and smells interacting with sights and sounds, sometimes to the point of saturation, as occurs when the food market of Les Halles, with its smelly overabundance of meat, fish, cheese, wine and fruit stalls, is likened to a pulsating belly whose mechanised parts embody the disquieting synthesis of the organic and the mechanical, 'some huge central organ beating with giant force, and sending the blood of life through every vein of the city', 'doling out the daily food of its two million inhabitants' and causing an 'uproar […] akin to that of colossal jaws'.[41] For Zola, as for many other Realist and Naturalist practitioners of the city novel, the teeming sensuous diversity of the city becomes perceived as the site of corruption and inhumanity. Whereas the smell of the poor invades the pages of much naturalist fiction, thereby signifying the threat of social pollution and contamination, one of the functions of the food market in Zola's novel is to signify the 'too much life' identified by Aurel Kolnai as a basic disgust elicitor.[42] More often than not, this sensory overload leads to dense, synaesthetic descriptions such as in the famous 'cheese symphony' scene taking place in Madame Lecoeur's cheese store-

[38] 'The linguistic restrictions for the sense of smell are particularly dramatic insofar as language has not developed an abstract terminology for referring to smells', so that 'the lack of terminological paradigms as they exist for colors necessitates a linguistic detour through the metaphoric, that is, a breach of reference level in the text each time we attempt to describe smells adjectivally. The same holds true for the common reference to smells in terms of their origins. "It smells like" or "the smell of" expresses relations of combination and contiguity rather than of selection and similarity. These two points may serve as a preliminary explanation of why the sense of smell is so often considered the most apt to trigger memory. Its very linguistic structure brings up an Other, a reference to the outside' (Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 15).

[39] Classen, Howes and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 152.

[40] Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (London: Orion Books, 2000), p. 5.

[41] Émile Zola, *The Fat and the Thin*, trans. by Brian Nelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1873]), p. 29; orig. *Le Ventre de Paris* (Paris: Raçon pour Charpentier, 1873).

[42] Kolnai, *On Disgust*, p. 53.

room, where 'each [piece of cheese] add[s] its own shrill note in a phrase that was harsh to the point of nausea'.[43] To contemporary readers, the word 'nausea' inevitably invites a comparison with Jean-Paul Sartre's Roquentin, who starts to feel nauseous 'as soon as objects start existing in [his] hands' and begins to suffocate as 'existence penetrates [him] from everywhere, through the eyes, the nose, the mouth'.[44]

At the other end of the spectrum which separates disgust from the pursuit of pleasure, Des Esseintes' 'mouth organ' in J.-K. Huysmans's *Against Nature* (1884) is a device for creating multisensorial analogies, 'each and every liqueur, in his opinion, correspond[ing] in taste with the sound of a particular instrument'.[45] Des Esseintes' invention (a bachelor machine which inspired Boris Vian's 'pianocktail' in *Froth on the Daydream* [*L'Écume des jours*]) has the capacity to summon correspondences and interferences between sound, smell, taste and touch in a way which echoes Baudelaire's sonnet 'Correspondences' (1857) [Correspondances]. Besides other salient examples, such as Christian Morgenstern's and Kurd Lasswitz's respective 'scent organs' (the former named *Geruchs-Orgel*, the latter *Ododion*), a comprehensive history of the 'synaesthetic turn' in European Modernist literature would need to include close readings of selected passages from Baudelaire's 'Correspondences', Huysmans's *Against Nature*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Rainer Maria Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge* (three central examples in Rindisbacher's chapter on 'the olfactory explosion' taking place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), alongside Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and Virginia Woolf's *Flush*. It would also have to consider Italian Futurism as one of its prime examples, especially as regards its approach to smell as an aesthetic category in and of itself.

Building upon the realisation that 'the distinction of the senses is arbitrary', to quote the Futurist 'Manifesto on Tactilism', Futurist recipes and dinners often comprised musical backgrounds. 'Raw Meat Torn by Trumpet Blasts', for example, sets out to 'divide' each mouthful from the next by 'vehement blasts on the trumpet blown by the eater himself', whereas the 'Drum Roll of Colonial Fish' (a portion of poached mullet marinated for twenty-four hours in a sauce of milk, rosolio liqueur, capers and red pepper) was to be eaten 'to a continuous roll of drums'.[46] Olfactory props were also common. They ranged from the '*conprofumo* of carnations' sprayed on the necks of the

[43] Zola, *The Fat and the Thin*, p. 139.
[44] Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 180. My translation.
[45] Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, trans. by Robert Baldick (London: Penguin, 2003 [1884]), p. 45; orig. *À rebours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1884).
[46] F. T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook* [1932], trans. by Suzanne Brill (San Francisco, CA: Bedford Arts, 1989), p. 102. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

eaters of Fillìa's 'Aerofood' (p. 144) to the 'ozonizer', a kitchen appliance that 'will give to liquids the taste and perfume of ozone' (p. 56). Marinetti's two-day long 'Extremist Banquet', at which no one eats and 'the only satiety comes from perfumes' (p. 116), aims at a further dissociation of smell from taste which implicitly conceptualises the ways in which the two 'lower' senses can cooperate or conflict with one another in a single sensory operation. Indeed, part of the thrill experienced by Marinetti's guests is that they are inhaling 'vaporizing food sculptures' through a sense which is bound to remain 'ambiguous in its phenomenal placement'.[47] Poised between intentionality and non-intentionality, the inside and the outside, the smell sensation is:

> in the body; but the smell qualities are perceived as belonging to the object of smell in such a way that one perceives a greater distance between the site of sensation and the producer of sensation than one does in the case of taste.[48]

It is precisely the ambivalent distance of smell sensations that leaves the guests at Marinetti's 'Extremist Banquet' alternately 'thoughtful' and 'astonished' until they 'begin feverishly chewing the emptiness' (p. 117). Once again, the 'obtrusive nature' of smell returns us to Kant's pronouncement that smell, like taste, is a private, passive sense without claim to aesthetic judgment.[49] For Hans Ruin:

> the paradoxical objectivity of smell is that it is more intruding, more immediate, than any other sensation, and at the same time essentially fleeting and elusive. […] The nose must continue to act incessantly, without being able to store the impression. The impression does not become more dense, it is not solidified as when we concentrate on a tone or a color.[50]

More recently, Derrida wrote that 'by limitlessly violating our enjoyment, without granting it any determining limit, [smell] abolishes representative distance […]. It irresistibly forces one to consume, but without allowing any chance for idealization.'[51] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett makes a similar claim when she writes that 'while taste is an analytical sense – we can clearly distinguish between sweet, salt, sour, and bitter – smell is widely held to be a

[47] Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, pp. 96–97.
[48] Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, p. 97.
[49] Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 150.
[50] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium', *Performance Research*, 4 (1999), 1–30 (p. 7).
[51] Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, p. 150.

holistic sense'.[52] In Marinetti's 'Extremist Banquet', the resistance of olfactory sensations to analytical representation would thus seem to account for the guests' complete disorientation and their desperate attempts to ward off the overwhelming scents produced by the experiment, 'us[ing] their hands like shields' and diverting the odors to the 'powerful suction fan' located in a corner of the dining room.[53] The inability of olfaction to integrate stable objects and pause to 'store impressions' confirms the status of smelling as a tasting activity in immediate relation to itself, which preempts reflexive self-examination. In this respect, the disorientating ambivalence of smell is clearly in line with an aesthetic that subordinates analysis to movement, rhetoric to action, and thwarts any attempt to oppose the intelligence of the mind to that of the body, preferring to explore the eater's somatic knowledge of the world around him (a principle best summarised by the 'critical rumble' produced by the intestines of the guests at the 'Aeropoetic Futurist Dinner').[54]

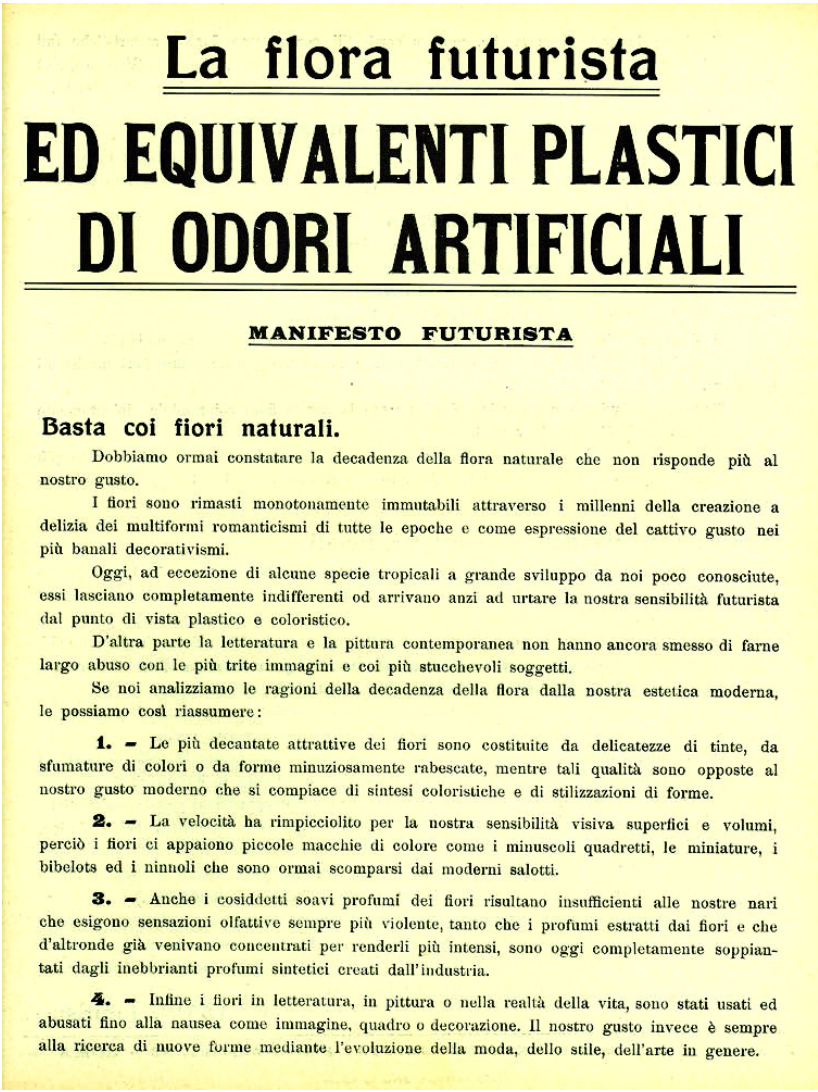
One cannot end this overview of the synaesthetic poetics of Italian Futurism without mentioning painter and designer Fedele Azari, whose long-unavailable *La flora futurista ed equivalenti plastici di odori artificiali* [*The Futurist Flora and the Plastic Equivalents of Artificial Odours*] (1924) (Fig. 1) is the only Futurist manifesto devoted to the olfactory sense. In it, Azari argues that the future of scent lies not in the old-fashioned odours of natural flowers but in the new laboratories producing synthetic scents. Such artificial odours are liable to excite the jaded palates of the sophisticated Italian artist, who has grown fond of ever more 'violent' smells, which are the olfactory equivalent of the revolution in the world of 'fashion, style and the visual arts' emerging from the new 'mechanic and synthetic modernity'.[55] Only such radical creations can do justice to a Futurist sensibility 'already familiar with the bold and subtle explorations of the symphonic-colourist performances and the tactilist meals devised by Marinetti' and one which is based on a recognition of the power of 'correspondences' between forms and colours on the one hand and perfumes on the other, 'such as those which exist between colour and music'.

In many ways, the Futurist project to isolate and synthetise and hypostatise smell and eradicate natural scents amounts to a modernist climax of what Corbin has described as the gradual deodorisation and sanitisation of social life in a society in which the bourgeois body must preserve the myth of its own inodorousness for fear of losing its ascendency and privileges. The Futurist aesthete emerges both as a late manifestation of the Decadent dandy à la

[52] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Playing to the Senses', p. 6.
[53] Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, pp. 117, 116.
[54] Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, p. 124.
[55] Fedele Azari, *La flora futurista ed equivalenti plastici di odori artificiali* (Rome: Direzione del Movimento Futurista, 1924), unpag.

Huysmans and a prefiguration of the systematic hygienic inodorousness promoted by the Western world. Moving away from the mimetic urge to represent smells towards more complex and sometimes more abstract ways of defining the olfactory in literature, Azari's manifesto mirrors a similar reversal of how literature can invite readers to rethink not only the relationship between language and the senses, but also the nature of the correspondences and confrontations between the high and the lower senses insofar as they reflect actual tensions in the social sphere. Andrew Norris and I have argued elsewhere that 'the intimacy of private experience' afforded by the lower senses of taste and smell 'opens onto the extimacy of social being and political agency, where our assumptions of impermeability, the sense that we can control our outermost borders and move through the world as self-contained units, vacillates and calls for reform'.[56] Such concerns have occupied the minds of scholars and philosophers with an interest in how our relationship to the lower senses is embedded in and emerges out of situations of power at the intersection of the sociological, the aesthetic, the physiological and the psychological. The foundational studies examined above would be profitably extended to a study of how Modernism develops in contexts where smell is not merely a metaphorical but a physical marker of difference which determines our perception of the social body as a whole as well as of accepted notions of individuality as an autonomous, self-contained and self-determined entity. It is to be hoped that the continuing rise of interest in affect theory, food and sensory studies will continue to refine our understanding of smell and its functions as a fundamental interface between self and world.

[56] Delville and Norris, *The Politics and Aesthetics of Hunger and Disgust*, p. 10.



La flora futurista

ED EQUIVALENTI PLASTICI DI ODORI ARTIFICIALI

MANIFESTO FUTURISTA

Basta coi fiori naturali.

Dobbiamo ormai constatare la decadenza della flora naturale che non risponde più al nostro gusto.

I fiori sono rimasti monotonamente immutabili attraverso i millenni della creazione a delizia dei multiformi romanticismi di tutte le epoche e come espressione del cattivo gusto nei più banali decorativismi.

Oggi, ad eccezione di alcune specie tropicali a grande sviluppo da noi poco conosciute, essi lasciano completamente indifferenti od arrivano anzi ad urtare la nostra sensibilità futurista dal punto di vista plastico e coloristico.

D'altra parte la letteratura e la pittura contemporanea non hanno ancora smesso di farne largo abuso con le più trite immagini e coi più stucchevoli soggetti.

Se noi analizziamo le ragioni della decadenza della flora dalla nostra estetica moderna, le possiamo così riassumere:

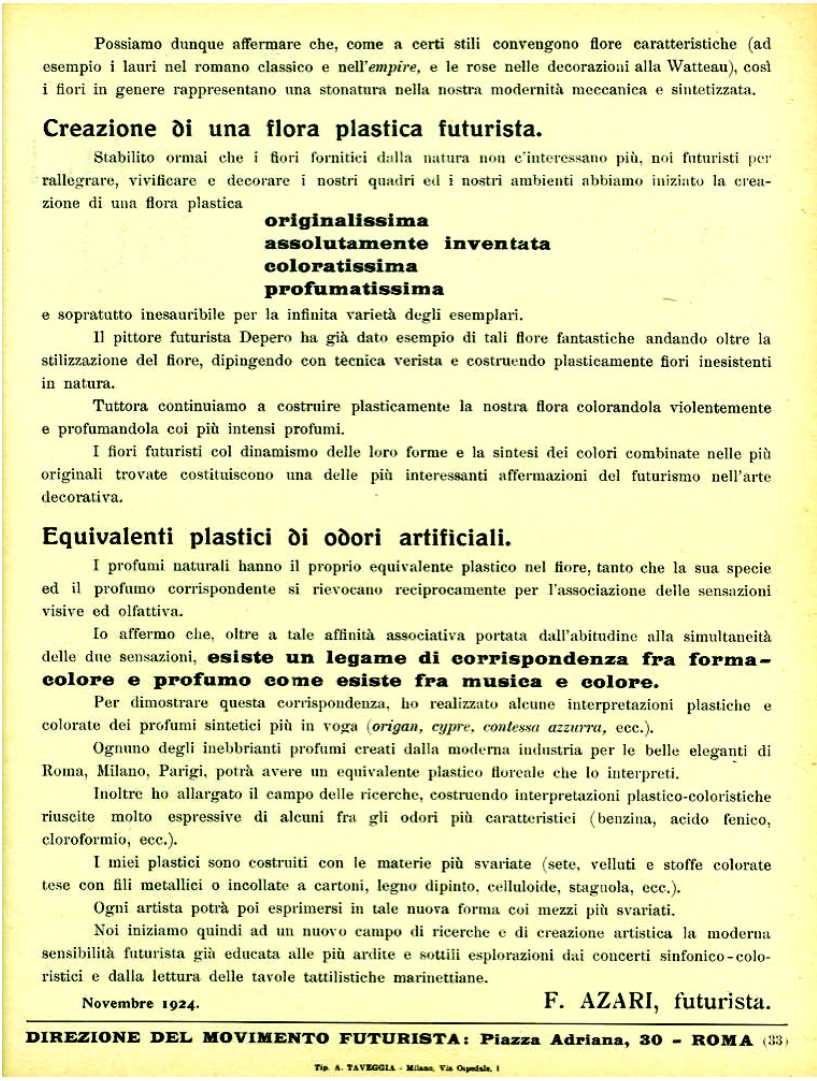
1. – Le più decantate attrattive dei fiori sono costituite da delicatezze di tinte, da sfumature di colori o da forme minuziosamente rabescate, mentre tali qualità sono opposte al nostro gusto moderno che si compiace di sintesi coloristiche e di stilizzazioni di forme.

2. – La velocità ha rimpicciolito per la nostra sensibilità visiva superfici e volumi, perciò i fiori ci appaiono piccole macchie di colore come i minuscoli quadretti, le miniature, i bibelots ed i ninnoli che sono ormai scomparsi dai moderni salotti.

3. – Anche i cosiddetti soavi profumi dei fiori risultano insufficienti alle nostre nari che esigono sensazioni olfattive sempre più violente, tanto che i profumi estratti dai fiori e che d'altronde già venivano concentrati per renderli più intensi, sono oggi completamente soppiantati dagli inebbrianti profumi sintetici creati dall'industria.

4. – Infine i fiori in letteratura, in pittura o nella realtà della vita, sono stati usati ed abusati fino alla nausea come immagine, quadro o decorazione. Il nostro gusto invece è sempre alla ricerca di nuove forme mediante l'evoluzione della moda, dello stile, dell'arte in genere.

Fig. 1 (1): Fedele Azari, *La flora futurista ed equivalenti plastici di odori artificiali* (Rome: Direzione del Movimento Futurista, 1924); unpaginated manifesto.



Possiamo dunque affermare che, come a certi stili convengono fiore caratteristiche (ad esempio i lauri nel romano classico e nell'*empire*, e le rose nelle decorazioni alla Watteau), così i fiori in genere rappresentano una stonatura nella nostra modernità meccanica e sintetizzata.

Creazione di una flora plastica futurista.

Stabilito ormai che i fiori fornitici dalla natura non c'interessano più, noi futuristi per rallegrare, vivificare e decorare i nostri quadri ed i nostri ambienti abbiamo iniziato la creazione di una flora plastica

originalissima
assolutamente inventata
coloratissima
profumatissima

e sopratutto inesauribile per la infinita varietà degli esemplari.

Il pittore futurista Depero ha già dato esempio di tali fiore fantastiche andando oltre la stilizzazione del fiore, dipingendo con tecnica verista e costruendo plasticamente fiori inesistenti in natura.

Tuttora continuiamo a costruire plasticamente la nostra flora colorandola violentemente e profumandola coi più intensi profumi.

I fiori futuristi col dinamismo delle loro forme e la sintesi dei colori combinate nelle più originali trovate costituiscono una delle più interessanti affermazioni del futurismo nell'arte decorativa.

Equivalenti plastici di odori artificiali.

I profumi naturali hanno il proprio equivalente plastico nel fiore, tanto che la sua specie ed il profumo corrispondente si rievocano reciprocamente per l'associazione delle sensazioni visive ed olfattiva.

Io affermo che, oltre a tale affinità associativa portata dall'abitudine alla simultaneità delle due sensazioni, **esiste un legame di corrispondenza fra forma-colore e profumo come esiste fra musica e colore.**

Per dimostrare questa corrispondenza, ho realizzato alcune interpretazioni plastiche e colorate dei profumi sintetici più in voga (***origan, cypre, contessa azzurra,*** ecc.).

Ognuno degli inebbrianti profumi creati dalla moderna industria per le belle eleganti di Roma, Milano, Parigi, potrà avere un equivalente plastico floreale che lo interpreti.

Inoltre ho allargato il campo delle ricerche, costruendo interpretazioni plastico-coloristiche riuscite molto espressive di alcuni fra gli odori più caratteristici (benzina, acido fenico, cloroformio, ecc.).

I miei plastici sono costruiti con le materie più svariate (sete, velluti e stoffe colorate tese con fili metallici o incollate a cartoni, legno dipinto, celluloide, stagnola, ecc.).

Ogni artista potrà poi esprimersi in tale nuova forma coi mezzi più svariati.

Noi iniziamo quindi ad un nuovo campo di ricerche e di creazione artistica la moderna sensibilità futurista già educata alle più ardite e sottili esplorazioni dai concerti sinfonico-coloristici e dalla lettura delle tavole tattilistiche marinettiane.

Novembre 1924. F. AZARI, futurista.

DIREZIONE DEL MOVIMENTO FUTURISTA: Piazza Adriana, 30 - ROMA (33)

Tip. A. TAVEGGIA - Milano, Via Ospedale, 1

Fig. 1 (2): Fedele Azari, *La flora futurista ed equivalenti plastici di odori artificiali* (Rome: Direzione del Movimento Futurista, 1924); unpaginated manifesto.

Futurist Flora

AND THE PLASTIC EQUIVALENT OF ARTIFICIAL SMELLS

A Futurist Manifesto

Let's Put a Stop to Natural Flowers.

The time has finally come for us to declare that natural flora has gone out of fashion and no longer meets our taste.

Throughout millennia of creation, flowers have remained monotonously unchangeable: a delightful tenet in the shape-shifting rituals of courtship of all eras and expression of bad taste in most trite efforts at decoration.

Today, aside from a few tropical species that can grow to great proportions yet are little known in these places, flowers no longer stir in us any emotion; at worst, their colour and shape represent an insult to our Futurist inclinations.

Still, to this day flowers feature exceedingly in our literature and contemporary painting, though they are nothing but banal representations and sickly-sweet subjects.

We shall sum up the motives leading to the decadence of flora in modern aesthetics thus:

1 – Flowers are customarily exalted because of their delicate hues, colour palette and minutely ornate shape; yet such qualities are directly opposed to our modern taste, which craves neat shades and stylised form.

2 – Speed has shrunk surfaces and volumes in our eyes, so that flowers now appear to us as mere blurred dots of colour, akin to the little paintings, miniatures, knick-knacks and assorted tat we have by now expelled from our sitting rooms.

3 – The so-called heavenly smells of flowers also fail to please our nostrils, now seeking violent olfactory sensations, so much so that the perfumes extracted from flowers (already sold in concentrated form to increase their intensity) have nowadays been largely supplanted by artificially produced, inebriating synthetic fragrances.

4 – Finally, where flowers have been used in literature, art and life as a nauseatingly common motif in imagery, painting and decoration, our taste now seeks new shapes through the developments of fashion, style and the visual arts in general.

Thus, we hereby state that, in the same way as certain styles demand the use of characteristic flora (such as the laurel in classic Roman and *Empire* or roses in Watteau-style decoration), flowers no longer have a place in our mechanical, synthesised modernity.

Creating a Plastic Futurist Flora.

Having posited that the flowers produced by nature no longer interest us, we Futurists have undertaken the effort of creating a new kind of plastic flora, to bring solace, life and colour into our paintings and interiors.

Our new plastic flora is

ultra-original

absolutely made-up

hyper-coloured

fragrant to the uttermost

and most importantly it exists in endless varieties.

The Futurist painter Depero has already given us an example of this new imaginary flora, moving beyond the mere representation of flowers and painting, instead, with impeccable realist style, flowers that have never existed in nature.

We keep finding new shapes for our new flora today, violently painting them and intensely infusing them with perfume.

Thanks to the dynamism of their shape and the original composition of their colours, Futurist flowers represent one of the most interesting creative statements of Futurism in the field of decorative art.

The Plastic Equivalent of Artificial Smells.

Natural perfumes find their plastic equivalent in the flower, so much so that a species and its corresponding perfume will naturally evoke each other through the association of our visual and olfactory experiences.

As well as this affinity, dictated by our expectation simultaneously to experience both feelings at once, I wish to claim that **there exists a corresponding relationship between shape-colour and smell, as well as between colour and sound.**

In a bid to exemplify such correspondence I have created plastic, colourful interpretations of the most current synthetic perfumes (*origan*, *cypre*, *contessa azzurra*, etc.).

Each of the inebriating perfumes created by the modern industry for the classy ladies of Rome, Milan and Paris may now find its embodiment in its plastic floral equivalent.

Furthermore, I have taken great care to broaden the field of my research, building expressive plastic-coloured interpretations of some of the most characteristic smells (fuel, carbolic acid, chloroform, etc.), with great success.

My models are built using a wide range of materials (silks, velvet and coloured fabric, strung across metallic filaments or glued down onto cardboard, painted wood, celluloid, tin foil, etc.).

Each artist may choose to express himself in this new form, through the means most appropriate.

With this, we wish to open up a brand new field of research and creative practice that welcomes modern Futurist sensibilities as exercised in the daring, subtle explorations of symphonic-colourist performances, as well as in Marinetti's tactile panels.

trans. by Livia Franchini

Maria Weilandt

Stereotyped Scents and 'Elegant Reality' in Edmond de Goncourt's *Chérie* (1884)

Edmond de Goncourt's last novel, *Chérie*, was published in 1884 and combines decadent as well as naturalistic elements. Conceived as the universal tale of a young girl, Goncourt's novel creates a protagonist who embodies the spaces in which she lives. While living in the French countryside, Chérie is surrounded by natural, pure and flowery smells, which are used to characterise her. When she has to move to Paris, though, and is introduced to Parisian high society, she develops a fondness for artificial perfumes that soon spirals into an addiction. The particular aesthetic of Goncourt's novel, which he calls '*réalité élégante*' [elegant reality], shapes the way scent is narrated in the text.[1] In this chapter I expand on the symbolic role played by scent in the novel and on the complex social coding of particular fragrances which is performed by the narrative through a link with popular stereotypes of the time.

Chérie: from Provinciale to *Parisienne*

Goncourt's *Chérie* tells the story of the young noblewoman Marie-Chérie de Haudancourt from her childhood until her untimely death at the age of nineteen. Although the novel was published in 1884, Goncourt set the narrative during the Second French Empire. Chérie grows up as an orphan under the care of her grandfather in a former convent in the Lorraine. Her father had died in the war in Russia and her mother subsequently went mad with grief and passed away shortly thereafter. At this point, the novel adopts a common gendered topos of nineteenth-century literature: the wife, who is not supposed to be able to live on without her husband, is overcome by grief and dies. The first part of the novel is interspersed with a variety of visual floral motifs, linking the con-

[1] Edmond de Goncourt, *Chérie* (Paris: Flammarion/Fasquelle, 1921 [1884]), p. ii (italics in original); translations are the author's own unless otherwise indicated.

vent to a notion of nature and idyll.[2] Even the name of Chérie's home, Nonains-le-Muguet, refers to the flower theme of the first part of the novel, 'muguet' being the French term for lily of the valley.[3] In a way, the atmospheric qualities of the place are then transferred to the story's central character. Choosing a convent as the place for Chérie to grow up further underlines the symbolic naturalness and purity of the young protagonist. Chérie thus corresponds to the ideal of a young, white, Christian and distinguished femininity.

In Goncourt's novel, Nonains-le-Muguet acts as a synecdoche for the so-called *Province*. Within the framework of centralistic discourses, France has been divided into two parts for more than two centuries: Paris and everything that is not Paris, namely, the provinces. This opposition is consistent with that of centre and periphery as it is analysed within imagological studies in different spatio-temporal contexts. 'The relationship between centre and periphery', as Joep Leerssen stresses, 'is not a spatial one, but one of power and prestige'.[4] Consequently, these discourses subsume the whole of France, apart from its capital, under the derogatory term 'provinces'. Different regions, cities, towns and villages thus become one homogeneous and retrogressive space, whereas Paris emerges as a modern and 'dynamic centre'.[5] Nonains-le-Muguet is evaluated quite positively by the novel because of its quiet, pure, reclusive nature, being a good environment for the noble female child to grow up in. Subsequently, when Chérie's grandfather is forced to move to Paris as Minister of War it constitutes a significant turning point in her development.

The novel reproduces the sharp contrast between the provinces and Paris. Paris is everything that Nonains-le-Muguet is not and the change in place is equated with personal change for Chérie. She is now gradually introduced into high society, the so-called *monde*, in keeping with her class and status in society. For Chérie, this means entering new spaces, acquiring new codes of behaviour and shaping her body through fashion. Interestingly, she has no difficulty adapting to her new environment. She learns easily and eventually surpasses all expectations. The reason for her effortless assimilation lies in her

[2] For a discussion of the flower motifs in *Chérie* see Andrea Oberhuber and Érika Wicky, 'Du mauvais usage des parfums: Chérie empoisonnée par le musc et l'héliotrope', *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 23 (2016), 131–40.

[3] The name of the monastery, as we are told at the beginning of the novel, is derived from the many lilies of the valley that grow in its large garden.

[4] Joep Leerssen, 'Centre/Periphery', in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 278–81 (p. 279).

[5] Leerssen, 'Centre/Periphery', p. 280. For a discussion on stereotypes of Paris and the provinces see Maria Weilandt, 'Nationality as Intersectional Storytelling: Inventing the *Parisienne*', in *New Perspectives on Imagology*, ed. by Katharina Edtstadler and others (Leiden/Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

construction as a character who enacts the stereotype of the place in which she lives. The novel reproduces the notion of a wealthy, fashionable, Parisian high society which is mirrored by its protagonist, who thus becomes the personification of this particular idea of a distinguished Paris. Chérie's development from Provinciale to Parisienne is told as a linear narrative of progress. It is made clear by the heterodiegetic narrator that Chérie always had the necessary predisposition for becoming a Parisienne.[6] She soon develops her own taste and the ability to put together her own fashionable ensembles. Thereby she seems to acquire her own agency, which, however, is limited to the way in which Chérie actively presents herself to be seen by others. Gradually, the attention she receives goes to her head, as the narrator comments: 'Chérie was at that stage of general coquetry which many Parisiennes go through' [Chérie en était à cette heure de coquetterie générale par laquelle passent bon nombre de Parisiennes].[7] Chérie's development, previously described as linear and positive, has virtually passed its zenith and is now descending into the negative. She rejects the gender roles that are envisaged for her and does not want to marry; the individuality of her fashionable appearances transforms into negatively connotated eccentricity; and what was once called 'above human' [surhumanité] suddenly becomes 'inhumane' [inhumaine].[8]

Artificial refinement which, if pushed too far, eventually leads to downfall is a common structure within Decadent fiction. The novel schematises Chérie's demise by repeating in reverse order the stages she had gone through in her development towards becoming a Parisienne: high society no longer has any fascination for her; she loses her fashionable taste and style; and finally she no longer dresses fashionably and starts to dream of a life in the provinces. When Chérie eventually stops eating, her regression becomes a physical one. The novel does not depict a death scene but concludes with a last visit to the opera. While she is dressing for the occasion, Chérie talks about a woman who died in her carriage on the Champs-Élysées and eventually wonders: '[D]on't you consider this to be the most desirable death for a Parisienne?' [[N]e trouves-tu pas cela la désirable mort d'une Parisienne?].[9] The novel's outcome may ini-

[6] The novel biologises the stereotypes of Paris and the provinces which it (re)produces. For an in-depth discussion on the Parisienne and the production of stereotypes in general, see Maria Weilandt, 'Voilà une Parisienne! Stereotypisierungen als verflochtene Erzählungen' [Voilà une Parisienne! Stereotypings as Entangled Narratives] (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Potsdam, 2019).

[7] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 196.

[8] Goncourt, *Chérie*, pp. 201, 218.

[9] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 269. Chérie's last word is an 'Adieu', which she utters to the friend with whom she has been to the opera. This utterance is immediately followed by her obituary, which marks the end of the novel. It therefore seems probable that she ultimately commits suicide.

tially seem ambivalent: why does Goncourt evaluate Chérie's transformation from Provinciale to Parisienne positively at first, but then lets her fail? To approach this question, I will focus on two key aspects: first, on scent as the central motif in Goncourt's novel; and, second, on the way this is integrated into the novel's distinctive aesthetic.

Stereotyped Scents

The novel employs scent to symbolise the protagonist's journey. During her childhood in Muguet, Chérie is surrounded by natural and flowery smells: of the rosebushes her grandfather cultivates, the lilies of the valley or the orange trees in the Abbey park. In Paris she misses these natural smells, which signify home for her. Life in the provinces is endowed with positive emotions and longing. To satisfy her yearning, Chérie develops a fondness for perfume, initially intended to imitate the natural floral scents of Nonains-le-Muguet. As Érika Wicky and Andrea Oberhuber state in their essay on perfume in Goncourt's *Chérie*, the flower which symbolises the protagonist's home, the lily of the valley, is in fact a flower whose essence cannot be extracted, making it impossible to use for the production of perfume.[10] It is thus symbolic of Chérie's failed attempts to recreate home and of her separation from the provinces and from being a Provinciale.

The novel categorises Chérie's perfumes as inferior, employing the evaluative opposition between natural and artificial, original and copy. Accordingly, they are incapable of satisfying Chérie's desires. As a result, she resorts to increasingly strong fragrances which no longer have any connection with the floral notes of her rural home. The artificiality of Parisian high society has its equivalent in Chérie's artificial perfumes. Chérie thus distances herself further and further from what the text assesses as a positive form of femininity. This process is clearly exemplified by an episode during which Chérie and her grandfather visit their old home, Nonains-le-Muguet. Upon their arrival Chérie mysteriously falls ill. The doctor who is called to her bedside deduces from her symptoms that it is, in fact, the smell of the freshly cut grass and weeds outside which causes her ill health. Thus, one may conclude, she has been transformed by Paris in such a way that her body literally repels nature. Scent thus acts as a marker to categorise and evaluate Chérie's development and to provide a foreshadowing of things to come.

In this part of the novel the readers are introduced to a great variety of different perfumes. In fact, Goncourt makes a point of naming the different

[10] Oberhuber and Wicky, 'Du mauvais usage des parfums', p. 133.

components and titles of Chérie's choices – often including their origin, ingredients or way of manufacturing and thereby revealing the extensive research that went into Goncourt's text. At one point, for example, the narrator emphasises Chérie's preference for triple-odour extracts with fashionable English names like 'New Mown Hay' or 'Kiss me Quick'.[11] Furthermore, the novel narrates the practices surrounding these fragrances. Accordingly, Chérie is shown acquiring, applying, smelling and wearing perfumes in different ways, for different occasions and to different effect.

What exactly Chérie perfumes is crucial to the story. Perfume does not play a role in the scenes which revolve around Chérie's self-fashioning and performances as a Parisienne in the *monde*. As Cheryl Krueger accurately points out in her paper on 'Decadent Perfume', Chérie does not use fragrances in social contexts, but solely for her own pleasure.[12] She does not intend to convey a particular message with her choices of perfume. They are motivated purely by her own reactions to the scents. For instance, she perfumes the romance novels she reads in order to increase the effect the stories have on her:

> The intimately happy emotion that the young woman would experience on reading *Paul et Virginie*, as well as other honourable love stories, to make it more complete, more intense, more penetrating in her whole being, can you guess what she thought up? The book that she was reading, she would drench it, she would drown it in scented waters and the love story would reach her imagination, her senses, via these pages, all wet, all damp with liquefied perfumes.
>
> [L'émotion intimement heureuse que la jeune fille éprouvait de la lecture de PAUL ET VIRGINIE, ainsi que d'autres livres honnêtement amoureux, pour la faire plus complète, plus intense, plus entrante avant dans tout son être, devinerait-on jamais ce qu'elle avait imaginé? Le livre qu'elle lisait, elle le trempait, elle le plongeait dans des eaux de senteur, et l'histoire d'amour arrivait à son imagination, à ses sens, par les pages toutes mouillées, tout humides de parfums liquéfiés.][13]

Interestingly, the book mentioned in this passage – *Paul et Virginie* (1788) by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre – is one which is also read by Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary.[14] Both *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *Chérie* thus describe the sup-

[11] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 223.
[12] Cheryl Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume: Under the Skin and through the Page', *Modern Languages Open*, 1 (2014), 1–33 (p. 15) <https://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/articles/10.3828/mlo.v0i1.36/> [accessed 3 January 2020].
[13] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 113; trans. in Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume', pp. 13–14.
[14] Krueger also draws this parallel (Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume', p. 13).

posedly negative influence which novels have on women; and both texts address a form of negatively connotated and ultimately destructive desire that is triggered by them. Unlike Emma Bovary, however, Chérie eroticises the practice of reading by adding another sensual layer to the tactile and visual reading experience. The erotic component of the olfactory experience is underscored by the choice of words in this paragraph.

Perfume is fetishised in Goncourt's novel and imbued with desire. Initially, it is the protagonist's desire for her provincial home – a desire that is valued positively because it is not sexual. In the course of the plot, perfume is charged with sexual desire and is given decidedly negative connotations. Chérie's preference for perfume is now described through the vocabulary of psychological and physiological addiction:

> Breathing in the atmosphere of heady exhalations, in a sort of nauseating embalming of the air, had become for Chérie a habit, a despotic habit, and when she did not have it, this ambrosial atmosphere, something was missing from her life; she was like a smoker deprived of smoking […].
>
> By smelling her handkerchief soaked in bouquets, Chérie experienced happiness having something like a light spasm. There was a relaxing of her nerves, a gentle resolution of her self, a sort of ticklish contentment, a torpor in her body that was at once sensual and a little lethargic, out of which, very often forgetting the people around her, Chérie would get up, to breathe in deeply through her nostrils a new aroma, throwing back her chest with ever such a slight tilt of the head, with her eyes closed in pleasure.
>
> [Respirer dans l'atmosphère des exhalaisons entêtantes, dans une sorte d'embaumement écœurant de l'air, c'était devenu, pour Chérie, une habitude, une despotique habitude, et quand elle ne l'avait pas, cette atmosphère ambrosiaque, il manquait à sa vie quelque chose; elle ressemblait à un fumeur privé de fumer […].
>
> A sentir le mouchoir trempé de ces bouquets, Chérie éprouvait du bonheur ayant quelque chose d'un très léger spasme. Il se faisait une détente de ses nerfs, une douce résolution de son moi, une sorte de contentement chatouilleux, un engourdissement à la fois jouisseur et un peu léthargique de son corps duquel, très souvent oublieuse des gens qui se trouvaient autour d'elle, Chérie se soulevait, pour aspirer de nouveau la senteur pleines narines, frénétiquement, dans un renversement du buste où sa tête s'en allait un rien en arrière, avec des yeux se fermant de plaisir.][15]

[15] Goncourt, *Chérie*, pp. 223–24; trans. in Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume', p. 15.

This passage describes Chérie not only smelling but inhaling fragrances on her handkerchief and the resulting effects they have on her. Without perfume, as the text states, she is like 'a smoker deprived of smoking' [un fumeur privé de fumer]. It becomes apparent that she not only uses perfume as an intoxicant, but the effects she achieves from sniffing perfume also have a distinct sexual connotation. The novel links these episodes to the stereotype of the Parisienne: 'Parisiennes of a delicate and nervous nature are often drawn to strong perfumes' [Il arrive souvent aux Parisiennes d'une nature délicate et nerveuse d'affectionner les parfums violents].[16] Chérie, who personifies this stereotype, discovers her own sexuality through her contact with perfume. However, the novel regards female sexuality as something positive only if it serves the purpose of procreation within a heterosexual marriage. Earlier, Chérie's first period is described and classified as a *rite de passage*, simultaneously linking it to a comparison between Paris and the provinces: 'For the little Parisienne, this physical revolution resulting in procreative maturity is a year or two years ahead of the other young girls in France' [Chez la petite Parisienne, cette révolution physique apportant la maturité procréatrice est en avance d'un an, de deux ans sur les autres jeunes filles de la France].[17] The Parisienne can thus take up her role as wife and mother much earlier; and it is solely for this reason that this physical development is emphasised at all. Chérie, however, is not channelling her own sexuality into marriage.[18]

The most striking instance of Chérie's use of perfume as a drug linked to auto-erotic pleasure occurs in the privacy of her bedroom. By now, perfume accompanies Chérie wherever she goes: when she wakes up in the morning, the first thing she does is to reach for her perfume atomizer to apply fragrance to the bed in which she lies:

> Now, each morning, upon awakening, the young woman would get up and, still drowsy, groping, would reach for a vaporizer and would begin imbuing her bed with white heliotrope.
>
> Immediately afterwards she would wrap herself in the perfumed sheets, taking care to move as little as possible. And, her head buried under the covers up to her eyes, she experienced inexplicable pleasure in feeling penetrated, caressed, refreshed by the fragrant dampness of the vaporiza-

[16] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 223.
[17] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 102.
[18] This is mainly due to Chérie's biological origin. Her mother, who died when Chérie was still a child, came from Cuba and, as is often stressed in the novel, Chérie inherited her mother's 'sang chaud' [hot blood] (Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 221). Ultimately, Goncourt refuses her a bourgeois marriage because of her race (the novel even mentions Chérie having 'sang des colonies espagnoles' [blood of the Spanish colonies] (Goncourt, *Chérie*, pp. 220–21)).

> tion in which, it seemed to her, still not quite awake, half fainting, her very being itself was taking flight, it too as if it had been volatized in fragrance, in good odour.
>
> After that, she would fall asleep again, finding voluptuousness in a sleep where there was a bit of cerebral inebriation and a dash of asphyxiation.
>
> [Maintenant, tous les matins, à son premier réveil, la jeune fille se levait, et, encore endormie, d'une main cherchant à tâtons, atteignait un vaporisateur, et se mettait à insuffler l'intérieur de son lit de la senteur de l'héliotrope blanc.
>
> Puis, aussitôt, elle se refourrait entre les draps parfumés, prenant soin de les ouvrir le moins possible. Et, la tête enfoncée sous la couverture jusqu'aux yeux, elle prenait une jouissance indicible à se sentir pénétrée, caressée, rafraîchie par l'humidité odorante de la vaporisation dans laquelle il lui semblait, son être encore mal éveillé, à demi s'évanouir, s'en aller, lui aussi, comme s'il était volatilisé, en parfum et en bonne odeur.
>
> À la fin elle se rendormait, trouvant une volupté dans un sommeil où il y avait un peu d'ivresse cérébrale et un rien d'asphyxie.][19]

Perfume has become a kind of fetish for Chérie and the novel stresses this point by equating the smelling of perfume with sex in this passage. Not only does this scene take place in Chérie's bedroom, but the perfume also metaphorically stands in for Chérie's lover.[20] Chérie's actions are evaluated very negatively, however, by associating her sleep with (near) death: '[S]he would fall asleep […] where there was […] a dash of asphyxiation.'

In this part of the novel, one of Chérie's favourite scents is, unsurprisingly, musk.[21] The narrator comments on this preference by emphasising the link between certain fragrances and sexuality and, thus, the impropriety of Chérie's taste:

> What I am rather led to believe is that perfumes and love do create pleasures very similar to one another, so similar, in fact, that the smell of civet causes caged birds to sing. So Chérie frantically loved scents; and, there is no way to hide it, she just adored musk.

[19] Goncourt, *Chérie*, pp. 225–26; trans. in Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume', p. 16.

[20] The wording of this passage clearly suggests such an interpretation (e. g., 'she experienced inexplicable pleasure in feeling penetrated').

[21] In her essay Krueger emphasises the intensity of musk as a perfume: 'Derived from an excretory gland' of the musk deer, 'musk is indeed one of the strongest and most tenacious perfume notes, brutally pungent and distinctly "animalic" in its raw state' (Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume', p. 24).

> [Ce que je serais disposé à croire plutôt, c'est que les parfums et l'amour donnent des jouissances qui voisinent de bien près, de si près, que l'odeur de la civette fait chanter les oiseaux en cage. Ainsi, Chérie aimait follement les odeurs, et même, il n'y a pas à le cacher, elle adorait le musc.][22]

The analogy of the first sentence evokes artworks by French eighteenth-century genre painters, such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Une Jeune fille, qui pleure son oiseau mort* (1765), in which the escape of a bird from its cage signifies lost virginity. Chérie is still a virgin; the bird is still in its cage – but it sings at the smell of certain scents.[23] The narrator subsequently compares Chérie's fondness for musk with that of Empress Joséphine, whose powder room, we are told, smells of it, despite all scrubbing and scraping, even forty years after her death.[24]

Interestingly, the novel does not evoke the scent of musk in this chapter but its physical presence: how it was acquired by the protagonist and how she stores it. This is the only time we see Chérie going to great lengths to acquire a specific fragrance – and she does so on her own and in secret. It becomes apparent that musk is characterised as a scent which is morally tainted. The fact that Chérie is very eager to obtain a grain of it from Tibet, which is then stored next to her jewellery in a lacquered box, further emphasises the link between sexuality, perfume and femininity in Goncourt's novel. From the floral scents of the Province to the artificial perfumes of Paris, scent and the practices pertaining to it are used to characterise Chérie and the spaces in which she lives. She does not die because of her addiction to perfume, but it is used to symbolise her demise. In order the better to understand the course of Chérie's journey and the system of values to which she is bound, it is helpful to focus on the particular aesthetic of Goncourt's novel.

Elegant Reality

Goncourt's *Chérie* combines decadent as well as naturalistic elements. This combination results in a rather ambivalent aesthetic which the author refers to

[22] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 224.

[23] Civet, like musk, is an animal secrete which was used in perfumery. It is produced by both sexes of a cat-like mammal, also called civet.

[24] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. 224. Krueger cites a second anecdote from Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac's *Pays des aromates* (1900) regarding Empress Joséphine: 'Montesquiou's history of perfume includes the widely circulated story of musk-crazed Empress Josephine ("la Folle de musc"). Years after she had left, workers toiling to rid the Malmaison [the Château de Malmaison was the Empress's private residence] of Josephine's indestructible *sillage* reportedly passed out from the musky animal stench' (Krueger, 'Decadent Perfume', p. 6).

as '*réalité élégante*' [elegant reality] in the novel's preface.[25] This hybrid form shapes the story's central character and the way scent is narrated in the text. In its preface, Goncourt outlines the novel's naturalistic approach. In fact, he states that with *Chérie* he had not even intended to write a novel, but rather a universal 'monograph of a young girl' [monographie de jeune fille].[26] In so doing, he claims his writing to be about *the young woman* as a collective singular and hence declares he presents forms of knowledge and evidence that extend beyond his novel. In the sense of a naturalistic 'document humain', Goncourt had asked his female readers in the preface to his last novel, *La Faustin* (1882), to send him letters containing their memories and experiences. These he claims to have integrated and aestheticised in *Chérie*. This narrative strategy – the incorporation of factual documents which have subsequently been aestheticised – he terms 'elegant reality'. It remains unclear how many letters Goncourt actually received and to what extent he really incorporated them into his novel. The letters that remain today are mostly from members of the author's circle of acquaintances.[27]

With regard to storytelling, the particular aesthetic of *Chérie* is reflected in the fact that the novel largely consists of descriptive passages; focuses almost exclusively on the protagonist; is nearly devoid of events, dialogue or other characters; and maintains a constant narrative pace without plot twists or the building of tension. The 105 chapters vary greatly in length and structure and do not always connect in a causal manner. The novel thus mainly focuses on the psychological analysis of its main character. Chérie is a hybrid figure marked by the conflicting intentions of presenting the story of a universal young woman and of telling a specific story with a specific protagonist. This leads to ambivalent characterisations of a protagonist who is described as a 'rare being' [être rare] on one page, then, on the very next, is said to be 'comparable to every sixteen-year-old girl' [semblable à toutes les jeunes filles de seize ans].[28] The novel's aesthetic underscores the protagonist's missing agency: because there is very little dialogue, Chérie exists almost exclusively within the descriptions and classifications of the omniscient narrator.

Katherine Ashley points to an indication that the novel's aesthetic strategy was indeed successful to some extent: a few years after the publication of *Chérie*, Goncourt was interviewed for the medical journal *Chronique Médicale*.

[25] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. ii (italics in the original).
[26] Goncourt, *Chérie*, p. i.
[27] For further information about the letters see Katherine Ashley, *Edmond de Goncourt and the Novel: Naturalism and Decadence* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 127–48; and especially Marie-Claude Bayle, *'Chérie' d'Edmond de Goncourt* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1983).
[28] Goncourt, *Chérie*, pp. 163–64.

The journal's editor-in-chief, the Parisian physician Dr Cabanès, consulted Goncourt on his 'insights into female madness'.[29] At the very beginning of this article, Goncourt states: '*Chérie* is, in fact, a sort of medical study. Chérie is a modern girl, overcome with hysteria because of a special life; she is neurotic precisely because she has all these desires and they are never satisfied' [*Chérie* est, en effet, une sorte d'étude médicale. Chérie est une fillette moderne, hystérisée par une existence spéciale; elle est névrosée précisément parce qu'elle a tous les désirs sans les avoir jamais satisfaits].[30] With his novel, Goncourt gives the impression of having combined genuine female views and biographies and of having rendered them visible in the figure of Chérie. In fact, his novel is an example of heteronormative male writing that produces a female protagonist who is characterised by her passivity and objectification. Therefore, *Chérie* is a text which silences female voices.[31]

In order to portray a universal young girl, the novel has Chérie enact popular stereotypes of the places in which she lives. When in Nonains-le-Muguet, she is a Provinciale; when in Paris, she is a Parisienne.[32] This is the reason for her immediate assimilation into her new environment and her success in Parisian high society. When she strays from the normative notion of what it means to perform the stereotype, Goncourt causes her to fail. Her death is actually used as an affirmative means to reproduce the norm of a nationalised, white, noble, heterosexual femininity. Additionally, scent is used to represent the value system of Goncourt's novel. The fragrances, and the practices pertaining to them, are always gendered and endowed with a distinct evaluation. *Chérie* reproduces a notion of femininity which is associated with nature and innocence (the natural, flowery fragrances), a notion of femininity which is weak and prone to sensual, non-rational stimulation (the romance novel drenched in perfume) which possibly spirals out of control (the perfumed bedsheets) if not constrained by heterosexual marriage.

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[29] Ashley, *Edmond de Goncourt and the Novel*, p. 72.

[30] Edmond de Goncourt, cited in Dr Cabanès, 'La Documentation médicale dans le roman des Goncourt', *La chronique médicale*, 3 (1896), 450–60 (p. 454) <http://www.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/histoire/medica/resultats/?p=454&cote=130381x1896x03&do=page> [accessed 6 January 2020].

[31] Ashley, *Edmond de Goncourt and the Novel*, p. 145.

[32] Other nineteenth-century novels that employ the evaluative opposition between Provinciale and Parisienne are, for example, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), in which the central character dreams of an exciting Parisian life as opposed to the boredom of the provinces; Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883) with its elegant, fashionable female shoppers seen through the eyes of the innocent young Provinciale Denise; or Honoré de Balzac's *Illusions perdues* (1837–43), in which the wealthy, elegant Mme de Bargeton moves to Paris with her young lover Lucien de Rubempré, only to discover that her fashion sense and status were only valid in the provinces; in response, she strives to become a Parisienne.

Edmond de Goncourt's last novel employs the evaluative contrast between the provinces and Paris and associates it with scent. While moving from Nonains-le-Muguet to Paris and from convent to ballroom, Chérie personifies both of the opposing spaces. Thus, the novel reproduces the stereotypes of Provinciale and Parisienne as rigid, essentialised structures which offer no possibility of evolution and of being outside of these roles. The particular aesthetic of Goncourt's *Chérie*, which he names 'elegant reality', is not only decisive for the way its protagonist is portrayed. It is also essential to the way scent is narrated in the text. The way fragrances are described and employed by the novel is highly symbolic. It represents not only the two settings of the novel, the provinces and Paris, but also characterises the protagonist and her development. This gendered, symbolic use of scent is characteristic of French Decadent literature. Nevertheless, the naturalistic approach of the novel ensures that the origins and compositions of contemporary perfumes are presented and specified as well, which allows for cross-connections between Goncourt's *Chérie* and the Western history of perfume in the late nineteenth century.

Frank Krause

'Follow the scent: one will seldom err': The Stench of Failed Nietzschean Practice in André Gide's *The Immoralist* (1902) and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912)

As is well known, the dictum by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) that life is justified aesthetically rather than morally proved inspirational for a number of Modernist writers who sought out ways of life guided by principles of art. In this context, literal and figurative qualifications of the sense of smell as the main organ of judgement have remained underexplored. This essay shows how André Gide's *The Immoralist* and Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* use olfactory motifs to renew Nietzsche's claim that the contemplative abandon to sacred aesthetic values is a symptom of the self's alienation from its bodily will. Both narratives continue Nietzsche's method of associating a weakened will with stench; however, Nietzsche contrasts the stale atmosphere of misguided thought and reverent practice with the fresh air of mountain life as the locus of solitary freedom (and sneezing as an exhilarating abjection of intrusive irritants). By contrast, aestheticised ways of life in Gide's and Mann's texts seek out the immersion in fulfilling scents of nature: their protagonists turn away from mountain life in search of a fragrant exotic south; and their quest for vitalising fulfilment is rendered problematic by their self-abandonment in odorous sexual attachments. These narratives continue Symbolism's concern with the autonomy of aesthetic processes, but they expose ruptures between such autonomy and social life as a result of the self's alienation from its bodily-centred will. In both texts, aesthetic form exerts an authority in its own right that is dispensed from the imperatives of moral judgement, but Symbolism's acceptance of an aesthetic experience that disrupts the bodily self's continuity is no longer embraced. *The Immoralist* and *Death in Venice* thus renew

Nietzsche's rhetorics of departure from decadent self-abandon; but whilst Nietzsche celebrates social distance, the protagonists of Gide and Mann search for freedom in social rather than solitary practice.

To contextualise these narratives, I briefly sketch Nietzsche's two main projects which most famously inspired creative writers: the early metaphysics of art and his later, emphatically anti-metaphysical idea of the *Übermensch* who surpasses the scope of the term 'human'. Gide's *The Immoralist* and Mann's *Death in Venice* think with Nietzsche against Nietzsche: Gide complicates Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical *Übermensch*-project of aesthetic life-affirmation with a weak-willed protagonist who fails to sustain his values in social life; and Mann problematises Nietzsche's early metaphysical view of art as a consolatory medium for the futile human condition: aesthetic contemplation is exposed as a mere mask for the pusillanimous self-abandon that it claims to prevent. However, both narratives explore unresolveable predicaments that arise when those who are too weak to sustain a self-willed way of life try to put philosophical insights into practice; both explore the failure to realise a way of life – guided by aesthetic values from Nietzschean perspectives – that regards the conscious mind as the tool of a bodily-centred will; and both maintain paradoxical perspectives which can only be justified aesthetically. The unresolvable contradictions between aesthetic values and social practice take on autonomous forms in which olfactory motifs function as indicators of the strength of vital energies.

NIETZSCHE: FROM 'ARTISTIC METAPHYSICS' TO THE *ÜBERMENSCH*

The early Nietzsche links up with the philosophical theory of Arthur Schopenhauer, who posits that empirical reality is a mere appearance.[1] As empirical reality appears only inasmuch as it is represented by and for us, its appearance as something in itself is a mere illusion which accompanies the constructive acts of a world-constituting mind. Schopenhauer and the early Nietzsche subscribe to a metaphysical version of this argument: the general and indispensable conditions for the possibility of experience cannot be part of the experiential world, but exist beyond empirical reality in a meta-physical realm. Schopenhauer's specific contribution to this theory consists of his introduction

[1] For a brief account of early Nietzschean metaphysics of art, see Frank Krause, 'Kaiser's *Der gerettete Alkibiades*: An Expressionist Revision of Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*', in *Ecce Opus: Nietzsche-Revisionen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Rüdiger Görner and Duncan Large (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 2003), pp. 83–110 (pp. 85–88).

of a metaphysical will: this trans-personal will, which drives the constitution of the world, eternally desires to create a constantly changing succession of appearances.

This concept turns the classical hierarchy of will and reason upside down. Traditionally, being free means to bind one's will to the light of reason and act accordingly;[2] for Schopenhauer, freedom is not a characteristic of responsible acts but a feature of the metaphysical will as the essence of our characters.[3] As the metaphysical significance of appearances lies in their constant fluctuation, all permanence of beings and meaning is a mere illusion. The early Nietzsche responds to the problematic ethical consequences of this model: to affirm the metaphysical essence of life means to say 'yes' to a higher will that chiefly brings about suffering. The metaphysical will is indifferent or hostile to our self-affirmation as individuated beings; and it sustains an empirical will of individuals that cannot be satiated in temporalised forms of being.

Nietzsche's metaphysics of art, expounded in his 1872 study *The Birth of Tragedy*, aims to offer a new solution to this dilemma. According to him, the metaphysical will operates through two drives of nature: an Apollonian drive, which aims to bring about finite forms, and a Dionysian drive, which dissolves form. External reality and our inner lives result from the interplay of both drives. In our minds, the Apollonian force is manifest in dream images, whilst the Dionysian force is manifest in ecstatic states of intoxication. The Apollonian principle underpins the fine arts and poetic imagination, whilst the Dionysian principle expresses itself in music. In everyday life, the Dionysian tendency of the metaphysical will to dissolve all individuated beings is in conflict with our Apollonian self-affirmation as individuals. Only art, in particular tragic musical drama, can integrate the Apollonian and the Dionysian principles in such a way that the latter is affirmed in the guise of the former, thus providing temporary relief from an otherwise inescapable conflict. The beautiful, visible appearance of the downfall and end of a hero whose self-assertion is thwarted by stronger forces satisfies our Apollonian desire, but it is accompanied by ecstatic Dionysian music which evokes a joy pertaining to the annihilation of the individual. The 'music', as Nietzsche puts it, 'endows the tragic myth with a convincing meta-

[2] From this perspective, persons are free insofar as they act in accordance with convincing reasons. In the context of metaphysical thought, the well-justified will claims unconditional freedom; in non-idealist notions of the freedom to act, the will's powers are more precarious (cf. Jürgen Habermas, 'Freiheit und Determinismus', in Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), pp. 155–86 (pp. 158–71)).

[3] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Über die Freiheit des menschlichen Willens*, in Arthur Schopenhauer, *Zürcher Ausgabe. Werke in zehn Bänden* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1977), IV, 41–142 (p. 139).

physical significance, which the unsupported word and image could never achieve' [verleiht die Musik […] dem tragischen Mythus eine so eindringliche und überzeugende metaphysische Bedeutsamkeit, wie sie Wort und Bild, ohne jene einzige Hülfe, nie zu erreichen vermögen].[4] To the spectator, it seems as if the music merely underlines the metaphysical content of the visible representation. Musical drama thus provides a metaphysically justified illusion with an aesthetic authority in its own right.

When the early Nietzsche claims that art 'constituted the essential metaphysical activity of man' [die eigentlich metaphysische Thätigkeit des Menschen] and 'existence could be justified only on esthetic terms' [nur als ästhetisches Phänomen das Dasein der Welt *gerechtfertigt* ist], he thus speaks from a pessimistic angle.[5] In his later works, Nietzsche continues his aesthetic justification of life, but revises its foundations. He now criticises any claim to universalisable knowledge, including metaphysical systems, as mere projections onto an unknowable world; and he re-locates the origin of our volition, which no longer stems from a metaphysical realm but from our body. As Nietzsche's mouthpiece Zarathustra, who regards the cultural devaluation of corporeality as a symptom of the bodily self's death wish, has it in 1883:

> But the awakened one, the one who knows, says: Body am I through and through, and nothing beside; and soul is merely a word for something about the body. […]
>
> A tool of your body is your small reason too, my brother, which you call 'spirit', a small tool and toy of your great reason.
>
> 'I' you say, and are proud of this word. But the greater thing […] is your body and its great reason: it does not say I, but does I. […]
>
> Tools and toys are senses and spirit: behind them there yet lies the Self. […]
>
> The creating Self created for itself respecting and despising, it created pleasure and woe. The creating body created spirit for itself as a hand of its will.[6]
>
> [Aber der Erwachte, der Wissende sagt: Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und nichts außerdem; und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe. […]
>
> Werkzeug deines Leibes ist auch deine kleine Vernunft, mein Bruder, die du 'Geist' nennst, ein kleines Werk- und Spielzeug deiner großen Vernunft.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 1–146 (p. 126); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993), p. 129.

[5] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 9; Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 11.

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 30–31.

> 'Ich' sagst du und bist stolz auf dies Wort. Aber das Größere ist […] dein Leib und seine große Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber tut Ich.
> […]
> Werk- und Spielzeuge sind Sinn und Geist: hinter ihnen liegt noch das Selbst. […]
> Das schaffende Selbst schuf sich Achten und Verachten, es schuf sich Lust und Weh. Der schaffende Leib schuf sich den Geist als eine Hand seines Willens].[7]

From this angle, there is no rupture between the creative will and selfhood and thus no reason for philosophical pessimism and a withdrawal from life into the sphere of contemplation. Metaphysical doctrines of morality now count as illusory projections, with the help of which the weak assert their inhibited will to power in a concealed way; by contrast, strong beings distinguish themselves openly from the weak and claim what is theirs. Against the universalist morality of the herd, Nietzsche affirms an aristocratic 'morality' of lords which empowers the individual to embrace and live out his bodily-centred inner fate. Nietzsche's project of the *Übermensch* or superman is a mission statement for the higher, post-metaphysical man: to surpass the confines of humankind means to abandon the ethics of compassion, to engage in the Dionysian process of a permanent re-valuation of all values, to assert actively the strength of one's will and to become progressively dissimilar from others. Life as a creative process, sustained by inspiration, becomes a work of art. In a retrospective self-critique of 1886, Nietzsche finds the metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy* 'poorly written, heavy-handed, embarrassing' [schlecht geschrieben, schwerfällig, peinlich], but 'in its essential traits it already prefigured that spirit of deep distrust and defiance which, later on, was to resist to the bitter end any moral interpretation of existence whatsoever' [dass sie bereits einen Geist verräth, der sich einmal auf jede Gefahr hin gegen die *moralische* Ausdeutung und Bedeutsamkeit des Daseins zur Wehre setzen wird].[8]

Figuratively speaking, life is a question of taste; and for Nietzsche the sense of smell becomes the epitome of pertinent judgement.[9] In his autobiography *Ecce Homo* (written 1888, published 1908) he proclaims that his genius was in his nostrils [Mein Genie ist in meinen Nüstern].[10] In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) he recommends following one's nose in search of the origins of a

[7] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), pp. 27–28.
[8] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp. 6, 10; Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, pp. 8, 11.
[9] Mădălina Diaconu, *Tasten – Riechen – Schmecken: Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), pp. 195–200.
[10] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1977), p. 127.

deplorable philosophical system: 'Man darf […] seiner Nase folgen: man wird selten irre gehn.'[11] He states:

> Books for the general public always smell foul: the stench of petty people clings to them. It usually stinks in places where the people eat and drink, even where they worship. You should not go to church if you want to breath [*sic*] *clean* air.[12]
>
> [Allerwelts-Bücher sind immer übelriechende Bücher: der Kleine-Leute-Geruch klebt daran. Wo das Volk ißt und trinkt, selbst wo es verehrt, da pflegt es zu stinken. Man soll nicht in Kirchen gehn, wenn man *reine* Luft atmen will.][13]

Nietzsche prefers fresh air, as he professed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: 'The gravediggers dig illnesses for themselves. Under old ruins lurk evil vapours. One should not stir up the morass. One should live upon mountains' [Die Totengräber graben sich Krankheiten an. Unter altem Schutte ruhn schlimme Dünste. Man soll den Morast nicht aufrühren. Man soll auf Bergen leben]. For Zarathustra, sneezing is the best cure against bad odours: 'With blissful nostrils I again breathe mountain-freedom! Redeemed is my nose at last from the smell of all humankind! | Tickled by keen breezes, as if by sparkling wines, my soul *sneezes* – sneezes and jubilates to itself: *Gesundheit*!' [Mit seligen Nüstern atme ich wieder Berges-Freiheit. Erlöst ist endlich meine Nase vom Geruch alles Menschenwesens. | Von scharfen Lüften gekitzelt wie von schäumenden Weinen, *niest* meine Seele – niest und jubelt sich zu: *Gesundheit!*].[14]

André Gide, *The Immoralist*

At first glance, Michel, the protagonist of Gide's *The Immoralist*, seems to share Nietzsche's view of good smells as a source of vitality: when the former comes back to health, the smell of cassias seems all-pervasise and it seems to affect several ('plusieurs') senses: 'The cassias […] gave off a sweet scent – or perhaps it emanated from everywhere, that light, unfamiliar smell which seemed to enter into me by all my senses and filled me with a feeling of exaltation' [Les cassies […] embaumaient – à moins que ne vînt de partout cette sorte d'odeur

[11] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel, 1984), pp. 92–93 (§ 190).
[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 31.
[13] Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, p. 42 (§ 30).
[14] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 161; Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p. 176.

légère inconnue qui me semblait entrer en moi par plusiers sens et m'exaltait].[15] He remains receptive to vitalising smells, for example of 'fragrant lemons', which 'taste sweet, sharp, refreshing' (p. 45) [citrons […] parfumés; […] ils sont doux, âcres; ils rafraîchissent (p. 65)], and learns to employ them actively. After a refreshing dive into a mountain stream, he notes:

> There was some wild mint growing there. I picked some, crushed the sweet-smelling leaves between my fingers and rubbed them over my damp burning body. I gazed at myself, no longer with shame, but with joy. I felt, if not exactly strong, then at least potentially so, harmonious, sensuous, almost beautiful. (pp. 46–47)
>
> [Là, des menthes croissaient, odorantes; j'en cueillis, j'en froissai les feuilles, j'en frottai tout mon corps humide mais brûlant. Je me regardai longuement, sans plus de honte aucune, avec joie. Je me trouvais, non pas robuste encore, mais pouvant l'être, harmonieux, sensuel, presque beau.] (p. 68)

The motifs of lemons and water are suggestively linked with earlier allusions to classical myth:

> The finest monuments of antiquity meant less to me than the sunken gardens of the Latomies, where the lemons have the sharp sweetness of oranges, or the banks of the Cyane, still as blue now as it flows through the papyrus as on the day it wept for Persephone. (p. 43)
>
> [J'en vins […] à préférer aux plus beaux monuments de passé ces jardins bas qu'on appelle des Latomies, où les citrons ont l'acide douceur des oranges, et les rives de la Cyané qui, dans les papyrus, coule encore aussi bleue que le jour où ce fut pleurer Proserpine.] (p. 62)

On the one hand, the allusion to Persephone as a goddess associated with rebirth seems to confirm the revitalising significance of Michel's awakened senses. On the other hand, given that Persephone was allowed to transform the body of the nymph Mintha *into* fragrant mint,[16] Michel's sense of bodily recovery may be deceptive. However, for the time being, 'the smells made' him 'feel so alive' (p. 50) [les senteurs […] m'emplissait du charme adorable de vivre (p. 72)]; when he returns to Normandy and recovers a sense of his past, he 'suddenly recognized the smell of the grass' (p. 59) [je reconnus soudain

[15] André Gide, *The Immoralist* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 34; André Gide, *L'Immoraliste* (Paris: Folio, 2007 [1902]), p. 46. Subsequent references are by page number in the text. References to both editions provide page numbers for the original version in square brackets.

[16] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), II, *Books 9–15*, 116 (X.729).

l'odeur de l'herbe (p. 82)] and 'a whiff of sea air from afar' (p. 67) [au loin on soupçonnait la mer (p. 94)]. Rendered suggestively in French, these contribute to an intoxicating atmosphere, whilst 'the smell of wet leaves' (p. 67) [une odeur de feuilles mouillées (p. 95)] evokes for Michel's wife his pleasure in being alive. Later, a 'sickly sweet scent rose from the meadow and mingled with the smell of ploughed earth' (p. 69) [L'odeur montant du pré était âcre et douceâtre et se mêlait à celle des labours (p. 98)]; the adjective 'âcre' again highlights a sharpness which accompanies Michel's renewed olfactory sensibilities from the outset and which is thus not necessarily negative:

> It was the start of haymaking. The air was full of pollen, of scents, and it went to my head like strong drink. It was as if I hadn't breathed for a year, or else had been breathing nothing but dust, so smoothly did the honey-sweet air fill my lungs. (p. 89)
>
> [On y faisait les premiers foins. L'air chargé de pollens, de senteurs, m'étourdit tout d'abord comme une boisson capiteuse. Ils me sembla que, depuis l'an passé, je n'avais plus respiré, ou respiré que des poussières, tant pénétrait mielleusement en moi l'atmosphère.] (p. 131)

When Michel hears stories about the house of the Heurtevents, in which incest and rape are a regular occurrence, he becomes attracted to them 'like a stinking den of depravity' to which his 'imagination was drawn […] like a fly to rotting meat' (p. 95) [un lieu brûlant, à l'odeur forte, autour duquel […] mon imagination, comme une mouche à viande, tournoyait (p. 140)]; here, desire is contaminated by moral repulsion. The stories themselves give off 'vapours of the abyss' which he 'inhaled' 'uneasily' (p. 95) [une trouble vapeur d'abîme […] qu'inquiètement je humais (p. 140)]. For the moment, such smells remain metaphors, but the fact that he now lives entirely by all his senses, which no longer find fulfilment in the pleasures of daytime, indicates a literally transgressive sensuousness.

Other smell motifs continue to confirm a link with pleasing vitality, but they also expose the ethical limits of related enjoyment. The frail Marceline feels sick when she smells a 'very faint, discreet smell of honey' (p. 113) [une fine, fine, une discrète odeur de miel (p. 164)], thus betraying her lack of vital strength: 'The smell of these flowers is making me feel sick' (p. 113) [L'odeur de ces fleurs me fait mal (p. 164)]. Unlike Nietzsche and his Zarathustra, Michel flees the alpine mountains in favour of 'denser air' (p. 111) [l'air […] plus dense (p. 160)] in which Marceline's health deteriorates: 'It was like exchanging abstraction for life, and even though it was still winter, I thought I could smell scents everywhere' (p. 111) [Il me semblait quitter l'abstraction pour la vie, et bien que nous fussions en hiver, j'imaginais partout des parfums

(p. 160)]. There are echoes of his earlier appreciation of citrus fruit smells (p. 114 [p. 166]), but his transgressive desire to attach himself to the 'lowest types' [des pires gens] is associated with bad smells: for example, he feels drawn to the 'smell of sour wine' and a 'stinking market' (p. 115) [odeurs de vin suri; puante échoppe (p. 167)]. His homosexual sensibility remains delicate when he notes that a Sicilian coach driver is 'fragrant and delicious as a piece of fruit' (p. 115) [odorant, savoureux comme un fruit (p. 166)], but his attraction to unbridled primitive energies makes him resilient against and receptive to the less delicate smells of a barber's shop (p. 48 [p. 70]), over-ripe fruit (p. 69 [p. 98]), poultry (p. 98 [p. 145]) and actual stink.

Like the strong individual affirmed by Nietzsche, Michel abandons the quest for universally binding knowledge; he begins to value bodily-centred strength, and he devalues compassion with the weak in favour of a strong will that transcends the confines of received morality. He feels drawn to transgression as a positive source of primitive energies; and he gives a public lecture in which he claims that the spiritual pretensions of artistic culture extinguish the very vitality that originally sustained it (p. 74 [p. 106]). Ménalque, who responds positively to the changes in Michel's thought, aims to 'heighten life' in a Nietzschean manner through 'intoxication' of a lucid and active kind (p. 76) [une ivresse; une exaltation (p. 109)]. Ménalque remains distant from the moral value judgements of the crowd; instead, he strives for beauty in a way of life in which poetry, philosophy and the praxis of life coincide; he aims to re-valuate life anew in each situation, an act which will free him from lasting attachments (p. 85 [pp. 124–25]). Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Michel claims to see through the illusory values of religion, senses the aesthetic value of the body and feels drawn to a way of life in which the weak have no place. However, he also states: 'Knowing how to free oneself is nothing; the difficult thing is knowing how to live with that freedom' (p. 15) [Savoir se libérer n'est rien; l'ardu, c'est savoir être libre (p. 17)]; and he does not know how to live with it. When he attaches himself to the primitive strength of transgressors who defy received cultural values, he merely contemplates freedom lived by proxy; in these moments, his homoerotic attachments are associated with repulsive impressions such as stench.[17] He wavers between incursions into zones of primi-

[17] A note on the cultural-geographic location of primitive strength: the quest for vitality in the Maghreb and in Normandy confirms Susan Tebbutt's observation that modern artists have turned to 'exotic', non-European – for example African or Oceanic – and European regions of 'primitive' inspiration, as Paul Gauguin's attitude towards Brittany shows (Susan Tebbutt, 'Paul Gauguin and Wassily Kandinsky: Linked by their Fascination with the Exotic, Regional and Primitive', in *Frankreich und der deutsche Expressionismus/France and German Expressionism*, ed. by Frank Krause (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2008), pp. 99–114 (pp. 102–05)).

tive and repulsive energies and relapses into other-orientated care for his dependent wife.

Gide's narrative problematises both the indifference of Michel's doctrine of freedom towards the weak, which Marceline spells out, and the possibility of translating a compelling bodily desire for freedom into practice. Even recognising this freedom is not unproblematic: first, Michel celebrates the allegedly liberated Maghrebian way of life: 'What is so wonderful about the Arab people is that they live their art', he claims (p. 117) [Le peuple arabe a ceci d'admirable que, son art, il le vit' (p. 170)]. However, he then becomes disenchanted with the lives of the Arab children by whom he once was enthralled. The text leaves these problems unresolved, but sympathises with someone who attempts to explore the Nietzschean project, thus implicating listeners and readers in the relativisation of moral counter-perspectives. For Gide, the task of art is not to provide an answer, but to give a persuasive form to an open problem; this art also values life from an aesthetic viewpoint, but remains contemplative, dispensing itself from the imperatives of positive knowledge and purposive action. The framing device contributes to the ambiguous effect of the text: at the beginning and the end the persuasive but alarming account of Michel's self-experience is filtered through the views of friends whose conservative outlook on life remains unshaken. The conflicting angles problematise one another, thus undermining any determinate judgement on the issues explored in the main part of the narrative.[18]

Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

In Mann's *Death in Venice*, olfactory atmospheres seem at times to correspond with Nietzsche's indictment of smelly churches: 'A heavily ornate priest intoned and gesticulated before the altar, where little candle-flames flickered helplessly in the reek of incense-breathing smoke' [Vorn wandelte, hantierte und sang der schwergeschmückte Priester, Weihrauch quoll auf, er umnebelte die kraftlosen Flämmchen der Altarkerzen].[19] The suffocating incense merges with scents of decay: '[…] and with that cloying sacrificial smell another seemed to mingle – the odour of the sickened city' (p. 57) [und in den dumpf-

[18] For an account of Nietzschean trends in Gide's explicit departures from and aesthetic appropriations of Nietzsche, see Duncan Large, 'Nietzsche entre Gide et Valéry', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 69 (2017), 153–68.

[19] Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, n. d. [1955]), p. 57; Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* [1912], in *Der Tod in Venedig und andere Erzählungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1993), pp. 7–87 (p. 64). Subsequent references are by page number in the text. References to both editions provide page numbers for the original version in square brackets.

süßen Opferduft schien sich leise ein anderer zu mischen: der Geruch der erkrankten Stadt (p. 64)]. These smells highlight the proximity of decay and sacred beauty which Aschenbach perceives as contrasts: 'But through all the glamour and glitter, Aschenbach saw the exquisite creature there in front turn his head, seek out and meet his lover's eye' (p. 57) [Aber durch Dunst und Gefunkel sah Aschenbach, wie der Schöne dort vorn den Kopf wandte, ihn suchte und ihn erblickte (p. 64)]. The substances supposed to combat decay give no relief, since 'on the boat that bore him back to the Lido he smelt the germicide again' (p. 56) [Auch auf dem Dampfer, der ihn zum Lido zurücktrug, spürte er jetzt den Geruch des keimbekämpfenden Mittels (p. 63)], which gives off a 'disagreeable odour' (p. 56) [fatalen Geruch (p. 62)]. One of the many figurations of death in the novella exudes 'a strong smell of carbolic' (p. 64) [Schwaden starken Karbolgeruchs (p. 71)] (cf. p. 76 [p. 83]). Stench is devitalising: '[…] the air was heavy and turbid and smelt of decay. […] the heat took away his appetite and thus he was haunted by the idea that his food was infected' (p. 74) [Denn die Schwüle wehrte der Eßlust, und die Vorstellung drängte sich auf, daß die Speisen mit Ansteckungsstoffen vergiftet seien (p. 82)]. Aschenbach had decided to travel to Venice as he 'dreaded the summer in the country […], dreaded to see the familiar mountain peaks' (pp. 7–8) [Er fürchtete sich vor dem Sommer auf dem Lande, […] vor den vertrauten Angesichten der Berggipfel und -wände (p. 12)]; and with his descent to the 'other air' (p. 8) [Fernluft (p. 12)] of fragrant zones, he exposes himself to a problematic atmosphere.

Certainly, Aschenbach's hotel room in Venice is 'decorated with strong-scented flowers' (p. 25) [mit starkduftenden Blumen geschmückt (p. 31)] and the park is 'sweet with the odours of evening' (p. 29) [in dem abendlich duftenden Parke (p. 35)], but when he opens his window, 'he thought he smelt the stagnant odour of the lagoons' (p. 29) [glaubte er den fauligen Geruch der Lagune zu spüren (p. 35)]. The park continues to be 'balsamic with the breath of flowers and shrubs from the near-by park' (p. 43) [die Pflanzen des Parks balsamisch dufteten (p. 49)]; and Aschenbach imagines Socrates and Phaidros in a scene 'fragrant with willow-blossom' (p. 47). In the German original, the reference to a location filled with the fragrance of cherry blossom is more openly charged with erotic connotations: 'jener […] vom Dufte der Kirschbaumblüten erfüllte Ort' (p. 54). Aschenbach's growing infatuation with the boy Tadzio is underlined by 'the nocturnal fragrance' (p. 55) [nächtlichen Duft (p. 61)] of garden plants, but when flowers on a 'crumbling wall' send 'down an odour of almonds' [nach Mandeln duftend, über morsches Gemäuer], good smell mingles with the traces of decay that define the 'stagnating air' (p. 59) of the town [deren fauliger Luft (p. 65)]. Aschenbach begins to savour the mingled smells: 'The atmosphere

of the city, the faintly rotten scent of swamp and sea, which had driven him to leave – in what deep, tender, almost painful draughts he breathed it in!' (p. 39) [Die Atmosphäre der Stadt, diesen leis fauligen Geruch von Meer und Sumpf, den zu fliehen es ihn so sehr gedrängt hatte, – er atmete ihn jetzt mit tiefen, zärtlich schmerzlichen Zügen (pp. 45–46)]. He is more alarmed by a 'sweetish, medicinal smell, associated with wounds and disease and suspect cleanliness' (p. 55) [einen süßlich-offizinellen Geruch, der an Elend und Wunden und verdächtige Reinlichkeit erinnerte (p. 62)], though eventually the 'hospital odour' [Hospitalgeruch] casts a dream-like 'spell' [Traumbann] on him as well (p. 65 [p. 73]; cf. p. 76 [p. 83]). Even from the outset, Aschenbach's impulse to travel is contaminated with inklings of decay, as it is accompanied by a vision of a tropical scene, the tepid mephitic breath of which ('der laue, mephitische Odem' (p. 10; cf. p. 74)) is ommitted from the English translation.

The contrast to vitalising smells in Gide's narrative is no coincidence: whilst Gide complicates Nietzsche's vitalism which warrants a celebration of strengthening smells, Mann shows how a particular metaphysical view of art and life is undermined by the very Dionysian forces it aims to keep in check. The smell of decay suggestively evokes the destructive presence of such forces, which prove seductive exactly because they transcend stifling boundaries of propriety, and in this respect Michel and Aschenbach are similar. Both belong to the cultural establishment, value exotic regions in the South as a source of rejuvenating energies and discover a capacity for homoerotic attachment in response to the beauty of a graceful boy. They also share the topos of bad smell as a figurative characterisation of homosexual relations which defy the civilised consensus in specific ways (and this usage is not an isolated case; the German Modernist Hanns Henny Jahnn, who by no means denounces male homosexuality, associates the motif of the yellow stinking flower in the context of anal excitation with a fantasy about sexualised contact with a child in his novel *Perrudja* (1929)).[20]

Death in Venice justifies, and indeed calls for, the use of the category 'Dionysian': in a dream which marks Aschenbach's surrender to the 'demon' he has attempted to combat or appease, the protagonist takes part in Dionysian rites which culminate in *sparagmos*, i.e., the ritualistic dismemberment of a living goat, accompanied by song. As the Greek word for 'tragedy' literally means 'goat song', the idea that the scene alludes to tragedy and Nietzschean ideas is not far-fetched. The narrator even highlights sight and sound as the most important senses:

[20] Hans Henny Jahnn, *Perrudja* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1998 [1929]), p. 337.

> Beguiling too it was to him who struggled in the grip of these sights and sounds, shamelessly awaiting the coming feast and the uttermost surrender. He trembled, he shrank, his will was steadfast to preserve and uphold his own god against this stranger who was sworn enemy to dignity and self-control. But the mountain wall took up the noise and howling and gave it back manifold; it rose high, swelled to a madness that carried him away. His senses reeled in the steam of panting bodies, the acrid stench from the goats, the odour as of stagnant waters – and another, too familiar smell – of wounds, uncleanness, and disease. His heart throbbed to the drums, his brain reeled, a blind rage seized him, a whirling lust, he craved with all his soul to join the ring that formed about the obscene symbol of the godhead, which they were unveiling and elevating, monstrous and wooden, while from full throats they yelled their rallying cry. (pp. 71–72)
>
> [Lockte er nicht auch ihn, den widerstrebend Erlebenden, schamlos beharrlich zum Fest und Unmaß des äußersten Opfers? Groß war sein Abscheu, groß seine Furcht, redlich sein Wille, bis zuletzt das Seine zu schützen gegen den Fremden, den Feind des gefaßten und würdigen Geistes. Aber der Lärm, das Geheul, vervielfacht von hallender Bergwand, wuchs, nahm Überhand, schwoll zu hinreißendem Wahnsinn. Dünste bedrängten den Sinn, der beizende Ruch der Böcke, Witterung keuchender Leiber und ein Hauch wie von faulenden Wassern, dazu ein anderer noch, vertraut: nach Wunden und umlaufender Krankheit. Mit den Paukenschlägen dröhnte sein Herz, sein Gehirn kreiste, Wut ergriff ihn, Verblendung, betäubende Wollust, und seine Seele begehrte, sich anzuschließen dem Reigen des Gottes. Das obszöne Symbol, riesig, aus Holz, ward enthüllt und erhöht: da heulten sie zügelloser die Losung.] (p. 79)

As in the early Nietzsche's fusion of drama and music, dream images and sounds of ecstasy merge into one, but in Aschenbach's dream tragic myth unreservedly affirms a Dionysian force which ousts any Apollonian trends:

> Foam dripped from their lips, they drove each other on with lewd gesturings and beckoning hands. They laughed, they howled, they thrust their pointed staves into each other's flesh and licked the blood as it ran down. But now the dreamer was in them and of them, the stranger god was his own. Yes, it was he who was flinging himself upon the animals, who bit and tore and swallowed smoking gobbets of flesh – while on the trampled moss there now began the rites in honour of the god, an orgy of promiscuous embraces – and in his very soul he tasted the bestial degradation of his fall. (p. 72)
>
> [Schaum vor den Lippen tobten sie, reizten einander mit geilen Gebärden und buhlenden Händen, lachend und ächzend, – stießen die Stachelstäbe

> einander ins Fleisch und leckten das Blut von den Gliedern. Aber mit ihnen, in ihnen war der Träumende nun und dem fremden Gotte gehörig. Ja, sie waren er selbst, als sie reißend und mordend sich auf die Tiere hinwarfen und dampfende Fetzen verschlangen, als auf zerwühltem Moosgrund grenzenlose Vermischung begann, dem Gotte zum Opfer. Und seine Seele kostete Unzucht und Raserei des Unterganges.] (pp. 79–80)

Aschenbach certainly tries to give his 'ageing body' [alternder Leib] 'youthful touches' [jugendlich aufheiternde Einzelheiten], adding 'jewellery and perfumes' (p. 73) [Edelsteine; Parfums (p. 80)], but his attempts at rejuvenation take place in an 'air' that 'was heavy and turbid and smelt of decay' (p. 74) [die Luft war feucht, dick und von Fäulnisdünsten erfüllt] (p. 82)]. The u-sound in the dream 'echoes', as T. J. Reed notes, 'the vocative form of Tadzio's name';[21] and the odour highlights the corrupting force of transgressive sexual desire.

As the motif of the competing gods helpfully reminds us, Aschenbach initially subscribes to a metaphysics of art that values aesthetic form over dissolute practices. His point of reference is not Schopenhauer, but Plato, as Aschenbach's inadvertent travesty of the dialogue *Phaidros* shows. In this text Socrates values the beauty of the male body inasmuch as it serves as a reminder of the beauty the soul once beheld in divine celestial realms; as a manifestation of the sacred, the homoerotic attraction is spiritualised, which functions as a protection against dissolute tendencies (not surprisingly, Socrates also values the good smells of a natural landscape that seems to be a sacred site).[22] However, according to Socrates, the way we attach ourselves to a lover depends on the god we revere – his examples include the followers of Dionysus as well as Apollo – and Aschenbach's dream shows a shifting allegiance from the god of form to the god of primitive desire.[23] As Mann exposes Aschenbach's metaphysical view of art as a mask for a bodily-centred will that asserts itself in a concealed manner, his approach is akin to Nietzsche's psychological interpretation of illusory moral thought; however, in order to understand the implications of Mann's literary form, we need to look more closely at Aschenbach's initial views on art.

Thematically, the writer Gustav Aschenbach is a problematist: aware of the morally disintegrating effects of rational knowledge which leads to pusillaminity, i. e., a lack of moral strength, he does not shy away from represent-

[21] T. J. Reed, 'Notes', in Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* [1912], ed. by T. J. Reed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 158–80 (p. 177).

[22] *Phaidros*, in Platon, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Ursula Wolf, 4 vols (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1994), II, 538–609 (p. 546).

[23] For the connection between reverence and love-attachment, see Platon, *Phaidros*, pp. 574–75. For reference to Dionysus, see p. 591.

ing related problems of life. Formally, however, he is a moralist: he uses form, which in itself is indifferent to good and evil, to create an ethically meaningful distancing effect. Aschenbach's strict use of detached form is indicative of a moral self-discipline which has lost its grounding in rational knowledge, but which survives in the writer's performance; the self-willed writer enjoys both: elegant forbearance in the face of life's problems and a heightened sense of being alive. This is comparable with Nietzsche's metaphysics of art: life is justified from an aesthetic perspective which superimposes an Apollonian form on a process that is chiefly governed by Dionysian forces.

With the thematic problem of his novella, Mann seems to play out Nietzsche's psychological critique of metaphysics against a metaphysical aesthetic. However, with his form, he distances the reader from Aschenbach's perspective; whilst the rhetoric of smells contributes to this effect, Mann chiefly relies on the narrator's subtle irony. Aschenbach's initial view of life is no longer tenable, but the disintegration of his self-willed artistic view of life is not celebrated as a liberation. The novella performs the very aesthetic move which its content undermines and it thus holds out a paradox. Unlike Nietzsche, who proclaims with strong pathos that the destruction of metaphysical certainties is liberating and exhilarating, Mann links the unmasking of such certainties with a decay and death that defy convincing beautification. Like Gide, Mann explores and problematises the persuasive force of Dionysian energies; and both are – each in their way – ambivalent: Gide wavers between the embrace and the avoidance of a Dionysian life, whilst Mann associates the Dionysian with death but confirms its power to unmask – and affirms, albeit with gentle irony, the very Apollonian form which Aschenbach failed to sustain.[24]

After Symbolism: the Cultural Grammar of Olfactory Imagination

The protagonists of both stories share, albeit in different forms, a particular kind of problematic self-experience: their will to commit to a moral way of life is undermined by the persuasive force of beauty. For Aschenbach, this results in a process of progressive decline: his old convictions fall apart, whilst his new desire provides neither strength nor fulfillment. For Michel, it leads to a

[24] In the late 1930s Mann praises the 'humanity' of Schopenhauer's 'pessimism' which values 'irony' as a means of creative freedom from the ineluctable 'power of instinct' (Thomas Mann, *Schopenhauer* (London: Cassell, 1942 [1939]), pp. 12, 25). However, this 'return' to Schopenhauer is filtered through the Nietzschean conviction that the 'pleasure we take in a philosophical system' 'is always of a preeminently aesthetic kind' (p. 1).

wavering between an exhilarating attachment to exoticised boys or strong and primitive men and a caring attachment to a weak, devout and needy wife. In both cases, though for different reasons, the disintegration of a strong-willed identity is presented as problematic. At the same time, both texts value the aesthetic form of artifice as an authority in its own right that is liberated from the task of conveying moral judgement on the problem in question. From a literary-historical point of view, both texts can be regarded as post-Symbolist.

The Symbolists such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, Rainer Maria Rilke and Maurice Maeterlinck aimed to evoke an inner state in which sense perceptions and figments of the imagination mingle to suggest a particular mood; the artefact, the form of which exerts an authority in its own right, brings forth an ineffable inner episode. The writers are interested in such autonomous artefacts as enigmatic revelations of occult forces beyond the grasp of reason and traditional beliefs. Art is supposed to bring the self into the realm of a force that imposes itself on an intoxicated and momentarily depersonalised consciousness.[25] The Symbolists had explored poetic fusions of the smellable and repulsive with the attractive before Gide and Mann: in 'Vénus Anadyomène' (1870), Rimbaud's travesty of the classical motif of the love-goddess's emergence from the foam of the sea, a fat and blemished female body rises from an old bathtub and gives off a strangely terrible smell:

> Venus Emerging
>
> It resembles a green tin coffin;
> From an ancient bathtub emerges,
> Slow and stupid, a woman's head, her thickly
> Oiled brown hair ill-concealing bald patches.
>
> Then the fat-grey neck, the wide-wing shoulder-blades;
> The short back, all dents and bumps;
> Then rump roundness rises;
> Subcutaneous fat shows like flat leaves;
>
> The spine's a touch red; and the whole thing smells
> Strange and strong; and many oddities
> To be subjected to the microscope.
>
> Two words are tattooed on the buttocks: CLARA VENUS;
> – And the whole thing stirs, proffering hindquarters
> Hideously jewelled with an ulcer on the anus.[26]

[25] Paul Hoffmann, *Symbolismus* (Munich: UTB Fink, 1987).

[26] Arthur Rimbaud, 'Venus Emerging', in *Collected Poems*, trans. by Martin Sorrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 37.

[Comme d'un cercueil vert en fer–blanc, une tête
de femme à cheveux bruns, fortement pommadés,
D'une vieille baignoire émerge, lente et bête,
Avec des déficits assez mal ravaudés,

Puis le col gras et gris, les larges omoplates
Qui saillent, le dos court qui rentre et qui ressort.
Puis les rondeurs des reins semblent prendre l'essor.
La graisse sous la peau paraît en feuilles plates,

L'échine est un peu rouge; et le tout sent un goût
Horrible étrangement. On remarque surtout
Des singularités qu'il faut voir à la loupe.

Les reins portent deux mots gravés: *Clara Venus*.
– Et tout ce corps remue et tend sa large croupe,
Belle, hideusement, d'un ulcère à l'anus.][27]

The concluding image of the body merges an allusion to beauty with an ugly movement, thus presenting an unresolvably ambivalent, evocative scene as a valid poetic form in its own right. In a similar vein, Charles Baudelaire's 'Une Charogne' (1861) merges the image of a stinking carcass, the posture of which suggestively evokes a lecherous woman, with allusions to the beauty of the persona's lover: the rotting corpse serves as a reminder of the lover's divine ephemeral beauty, the form of which deserves to be preserved poetically.[28] In both poems, permeable boundaries between the smellably nauseating and the attractive are a condition for an illuminating aesthetic experience.

Nietzsche had sought to overcome his early 'decadent' admiration for Richard Wagner's musical drama in favour of a way of life that liberates the will of the bodily self. Not unlike the early Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Rimbaud aim to conjure up decentring episodes of a contemplative self in thrall of a stronger force, whilst Gide and Mann critically expose the rupture between autonomous artistic values and practical life as the self's alienation from its bodily-centred volition; and the form of the novella allows the latter writers to explore moments of poetic illumination in narrated practical contexts. However, whilst the anti-metaphysical Nietzsche celebrates a pathos of social distance, Gide and Mann explore the interplay between the aesthetic and the social, and the literary-historical grammar of the olfactory imagination changes

[27] Arthur Rimbaud, 'Vénus Anadyomène', in *Sämtliche Dichtungen: Französisch und Deutsch*, ed. and trans. by Walther Küchler (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1982), p. 46.

[28] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal: Die Blumen des Bösen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984 [1861]), pp. 60–64.

accordingly. Stench as the invasive other of the bodily self is no longer a decentring ingredient of illuminating intoxication, but an irritant on the self's boundaries that are not protected in fresh atmospheres of solitary freedom, but challenged by ambivalent forms of attraction on the ethical margins of exhilarating vitality.

Susanne Schmid

Lemon Trees, Vile Odours and No Smells at All: Olfaction in Elizabeth Bowen's, George Orwell's and Arnold Bennett's Hotels

> 'YES, sir?'
> Jules, the celebrated head waiter of the Grand Babylon, was bending formally towards the alert, middle-aged man who had just entered the smoking-room and dropped into a basket-chair in the corner by the conservatory. It was 7.45 on a particularly sultry June night, and dinner was about to be served at the Grand Babylon. Men of all sizes, ages, and nationalities, but every one alike arrayed in faultless evening dress, were dotted about the large, dim apartment. A faint odour of flowers came from the conservatory, and the tinkle of a fountain.[1]

The two initial paragraphs of Arnold Bennett's novel *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902) refer to the five senses several times: sound (the waiter's voice, the fountain); sight (the waiter, the middle-aged man, the room and its interior, men resembling dots, the dim quality of the light); smell (the flowers); taste (the impending dinner, soon to turn into a major incident); touch (the 'sultry […] night', the thick rugs underneath the feet, the handling of plates).

If one drew up a list of references to sensory perceptions occurring in this or other fictional texts about hotels, it would be the visual, not the haptic, acoustic, tactile or olfactory perception that would dominate. Moreover, this list would contain many instances of what Hans J. Rindisbacher has described as the visualisation of smell.[2] One example: in Bennett's novel, the 'smoking-

[1] Arnold Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel: A Fantasia on Modern Themes*, ed. by Randi Saloman (Peterborough: Broadview, 2016 [1902]), p. 43.

[2] Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 43.

room', a masculine space designed for the enjoyment of tobacco, is presented in purely visual terms, although in the world exterior to the novel smoking is an activity creating noticeable smell. Nor does the dinner, 'about to be served', emit any odour the narrator considers worth mentioning. Like the Savoy, Bennett's model, and other *fin-de-siècle* grand hotels, the Grand Babylon offers many luxuries one can perceive visually: architecture, furniture, decorations, staff in uniforms, dresses, etc. The golden age of the grand hotel in Europe, which lasted from the 1880s to the 1930s, coincides with the period in which odours had already disappeared or been reduced in many public places, hence the tendency to visualise representations of smell. Nevertheless, although good hotels do not smell, the occasional whiff, scent, odour, even stench reaches the nostrils of a character or two and these smells are signifiers: they add information about protagonists as well as settings, implicitly comment on interaction from polite talk to erotic entanglements and express social criticism. This chapter considers three novels, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* (1927), George Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and Arnold Bennett's *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, as well as a journalistic text, Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933).[3] They all describe hotels, ranging from grand hotels to cheap lodging-houses and worse; and contain olfactory references – to a greater or lesser extent – which add layers of meaning.

Rindisbacher's study *The Smell of Books* (1992), an analysis of the olfactory dimension in German nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, starts from the observation that 'aesthetic theory […] does not deal with the olfactory'.[4] In contrast to colour classifications that enable descriptions of visual experience, the olfactory experience has no clear classification system.[5] Smells are highly individual in terms of quality and intensity. Therefore, the 'vocabulary of smell is highly personalized', as Jonathan Reinarz states.[6] The famous 'madeleine' at the beginning of Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu* testifies to a smell's ability to evoke individual memories which the very same odour will not evoke in others. Unlike visual artefacts such as paintings, smells are not usually stored or archived.[7] Moreover, Rindisbacher diagnoses an Enlightenment tendency to intellectualise the senses,[8] yet since smell, elusive by its very nature, seems to escape such intellectualising, it becomes sup-

[3] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel* (London: Vintage, 2016 [1927]); George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (London: Penguin, 2014 [1936]); George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (London: Penguin, 2001 [1933]).
[4] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. vi.
[5] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 15, 64.
[6] Jonathan Reinarz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), p. 186.
[7] Reinarz, *Past Scents*, p. 6.
[8] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 3, 17.

pressed in the body as well as in theory.[9] Moreover, some Enlightenment philosophers have 'exclude[d] the lower senses' such as smell from notions of the aesthetic.[10]

From a socio-cultural perspective, it is noticeable that if smell was extremely present in the everday life of earlier centuries, its importance has decreased, partly as a result of the drastic increase in hygiene over last three centuries.[11] Significant milestones include Alexander Cummings's patenting of the flush toilet in 1775, the development of the London sewerage system in the nineteenth century and the slum clearance in cities, which helped to remove bad smells. Hygienic progress went hand in hand with medical progress. Odours 'recede[d] into the background' and thus more or less disappeared from public awareness, while at the same time interest in the stagnation of air and its quality grew.[12] Increasingly, bad smell was considered a sign of social backwardness. High Victorian fiction documents the movement from 'stenches' to 'odors': the poor were reeking not so much of sewage as of food or smoke.[13] Thus, eventually, the 'line of demarcation' between the pleasant- and the bad-smelling was used to justify a division of social classes, or to emphasise moral difference.[14] Smell became 'value-coded' and coded in terms of class, gender and space.[15] The smoking-room in the quotation above, for example, signifies masculinity and wealth. However, if smell is a perception to be eradicated, then the literary sublimation of the olfactory into the visual makes sense because this process ensures that the dimension of smell remains in a text but stirs up no trouble, attacking the nostrils of neither character nor reader.[16] Literary texts name smells so that they may evoke a memory or a reaction in the reader, but the smell as such does not appear as a perceptible sensation on the page. One methodological tool helping to unravel olfaction has been suggested in a recent study of George Orwell. John Sutherland shows that an author's use of the olfactory dimension can be approached through the writing of a 'smell narrative'.[17] Similarly, Emily C. Friedman uses the term

[9] See, e. g., Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, pp. 61, vi.
[10] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 17.
[11] See also Emily C. Friedman, *Reading Smell in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2016).
[12] Reinarz, *Past Scents*, p. 183.
[13] Reinarz, *Past Scents*, p. 167; for examples see Janice Carlisle, *Common Scents: Comparative Encounters in High Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 15, 17.
[14] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 22.
[15] Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 3.
[16] For the eradication of smell perception and sublimation of the olfactory into the visual, see Rindisbacher on 'sanitized hypermimesis' (*The Smell of Books*, p. 61).
[17] John Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose: A Pathological Biography* (London: Reaktion, 2016), pp. 26, 237–41.

'smellscape', which can account for layers of olfactory references in a text's structure.[18]

Even though hotels may not be institutions which spring to mind when it comes to analysing stenches, odours and scents, they are exemplars of modernity. Descriptions of hotel life contain their own smell narratives, even if the smells are subdued. Hotels are modern spaces which host multiple social interactions and rituals.[19] To explain their significance, a brief look at the history of the hotel as an institution is required. In eighteenth-century Britain inns were situated alongside the major roads and hosted guests from various echelons of society, offering rooms to stay overnight, food and stables. The 'old' coaching inns, which lost their elite status after 1800, were the predecessors of 'modern' hotels, which sprang up in the nineteenth century due to the growing railway system and increased mobility. Hotels also offered short-term accommodation for holidays. Their number grew steadily and they were increasingly differentiated along the lines of class.

The luxurious grand hotels, which are a *fin-de-siècle* institution, are sometimes considered to be the climax of all hotel development. Their predecessors were huge, purpose-built hotels in America around 1800 and later, such as the famous Boston Exchange Coffee House and Hotel, finished in 1809.[20] If, in the United States and also in some European countries, grand hotels became increasingly popular, Britain was lagging behind. The heyday of the grand hotel was the turn of the century, when famous establishments such as the Waldorf-Astoria in New York and the Savoy in London, the setting for Bennett's novel *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, opened their doors to the public. Grand hotels were much more than mere accommodation. They were temples of luxury and consumerism, offering a range of amenities to their guests: lifts, hot water, telephones, heating; and they usually possessed a large number of function rooms, where highly specialised and extremely well-trained staff looked after the wealthy customers. Wes Anderson's recent film *Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), an exemplar of the recent 'grand hotel nostalgia', pokes fun at the

[18] Friedman, *Reading Smell*, p. 3. The concept of smellscapes is also used in Frank Krause, *Geruchslandschaften mit Kriegsleichen: Deutsche, englische und französische Prosa zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016).

[19] For explorations of the hotel see Ralf Nestmeyer, *Hotelwelten: Luxus, Liftboys, Literaten* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015); Annabella Fick, *New York Hotel Experience: Cultural and Societal Impacts of an American Invention* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017); Monika Elbert and Susanne Schmid (eds), *Anglo-American Travelers and the Hotel Experience in Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nation, Hospitality, Travel Writing* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018); Seán M. Williams 'Modern Central European Hotels and Spas in Cultural Criticism', Special Section in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 55 (2019), 415–93.

[20] Andrew K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 27–29.

machinations of a big hotel but also pays homage to it.[21] At the other end of the spectrum were lodging-houses, smaller and cheaper accommodation, where some guests lived for years.

Hotels, microcosms of society, are popular settings for literary texts, allowing characters from different backgrounds to meet and mingle. A hotel setting is like a soap opera: opening one door leads to one story, opening another door means starting to watch another story, while the generally accessible representative rooms – lobby, dining-room, smoking-room, conservatory – allow protagonists from different subplots to meet. In this sense, the lobby resembles the 'street' in *Coronation Street*.

Do hotels smell? Searches on Google Books yield poor results if one types in 'hotel' and 'stench', 'reek', or 'stink', while 'perfume', 'scent' and 'odour' generate more results. Good hotels do not smell of food, alcohol or cold smoke; possibly, however, they smell of perfume or flowers. Hotel texts often focus on vision while suppressing smells. Henry James's famous description of the Waldorf-Astoria uses terms like 'a temple builded with clustering chapels and shrines', 'a gorgeous golden blur', a 'maze', thus foregrounding the visual experience.[22] What needs to be kept in mind, though, is that the scentlessness of hotels is only a veneer. Occasionally, eruptions of smell, or the mere threat of their emergence in this institution, are staged in fiction and on screen.

A comic version of the visualisation of smell in hotel narratives occurs in 'The Kipper and the Corpse' (1979), an episode of the comedy series *Fawlty Towers*. A guest is found dead after the proprietor, Basil, has served him a breakfast in bed that includes two kippers past their sell-by date. Although the deceased man had not touched the kippers, Basil panics, his main worry being not that the fish will be smelt but that it will be seen. A number of comic situations ensue in which Basil's desperate attempts to rid himself of the kippers mirror his equally desperate attempts to remove the corpse from sight. Neither kippers nor corpse seem to smell. Although he hides the kippers in his sweater, stuffs them into his trousers and throws them out of the window, they – like uninvited guests – have the uncanny ability to return to him, to regain visibility. Thus, to Basil these items become visual, not olfactory offences. The audience, however, to whom smell cannot be conveyed through a TV set, must be aware of the olfactory dimension, if not of the smell exuded by the corpse then at least of that emanating from the fish.

[21] On 'grand hotel nostalgia' see Seán M. Williams, 'Modern Central European Hotels and Spas in Cultural Criticism: Grand Hotel Nostalgia: An Introduction', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 55 (2019), 415–25 (p. 418).

[22] Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), p. 106.

Elizabeth Bowen, *The Hotel*

Like other twentieth-century writers, Elizabeth Bowen follows the strategy of toning down the olfactory dimension in her novel *The Hotel* (1927), which at first glance does not seem to devote much space to smells. It contains only around ten to fifteen explicit references to olfaction, which, however, add an additional layer of meaning that is easily overlooked. Bowen employs these olfactory references sparingly, creates atmosphere through them and centres them on one male character, the rejected suitor James Milton.

In this novel, her first, the individual characters' perceptions as well as their dialogue dominate an authorial narrative voice; reflections take up more space than the events of a story that is not action-driven. Bowen maintains a satirical tone, yet her social satire is mild in comparison to Bennett's, whose hotel novel draws on the conventions of the farce. Bowen wrote about hotels variously: in other novels such as *The Death of the Heart* (1938); in several short stories; and in *The Shelbourne* (1951), her history of the famous Dublin hotel.[23]

The setting of Bowen's 1927 novel is a hotel somewhere on the Italian Riviera inhabited by English guests, some of whom, like Sydney Warren, a modern young woman, and her older cousin, Tessa, stay for an extended period of time, whereas others such as the less affluent middle-class clergyman James Milton only come for a comparatively short holiday.[24] The nameless hotel, which Hermione Lee terms an 'isolated microcosm of English social life', caters for well-to-do, leisured English travellers, whose lives are organised around pastimes such as tennis, meals, card games and excursions in the vicinity.[25] With its amenities – a lift, bathrooms and various function rooms – it seems comfortable enough, but it is no luxurious grand hotel.[26] If the guests take limited interest in their surroundings, they are rather keen on observing one another, especially when it comes to erotic entanglements. For young unmarried women the hotel functions as a marriage market. Sydney's family, for example, hopes that she 'might distinguish herself in tennis tournaments; she might get engaged'.[27]

[23] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Shelbourne* (London: Vintage, 2001 [1951]).

[24] On Sydney's modernity see Petra Rau, 'Telling It Straight: The Rhetorics of Conversion in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* and Freud's *Psychogenesis*', in *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women and National Culture*, ed. by Laura Doan and Jane Garrity (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 217–31 (p. 225).

[25] Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation* (London: Vision; Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1981), p. 59.

[26] On the rooms of the hotel in Bowen's novel see Emma Short, *Mobility and the Hotel in Modern Literature: Passing Through* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 78–81.

[27] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 22.

While the structure is episodic and follows the guests' day-to-day activities, a dominant plotline, Sydney's interactions with two characters, emerges. The episodes are set in and around the hotel, sometimes in buildings (pâtisserie, church, villa), sometimes outside when the guests enjoy picnics, walks and excursions. Several episodes are mildly comic, for example when the children wreak havoc on the lift, or when the clergyman – of all characters – creates embarrassment by accidentally using a bathroom reserved by female guests. At the centre is the young unmarried hotel guest Sydney's involvement in two relationships: her attachment to the older Mrs Kerr, who abandons her, and her acquaintance with James Milton, which leads to a short-lived engagement, broken off by Sydney. Love and rejection, disillusionment and intensity of emotion are themes accompanying these developments.[28]

In terms of perception, the visual dimension dominates. If as a tourist region the Riviera can boast of a beautiful landscape with a rich flora and is also renowned for its food, these recognised attractions, which are important to the hotel's guests, appear predominantly in visual terms: colours, bright sunlight, shades, reflections.[29] The very beginning of the novel provides the description of a Mediterranean setting in terms of light and shadow. Food is mostly described in visual terms, as are nearly all flowers, yet although smell is underrepresented, it resonates symbolically.

The drawing up of a smell narrative of *The Hotel* involves a consideration of spaces, plot structures and characters. Smell appears in three distinct spaces: inside the hotel, in nature and in a church. Inside the hotel, the 'big, deserted, crumby, orange-scented dining-room' is mentioned; the bathroom, where Mrs and Miss Pinkerton's 'bowls of soap, their loofahs, their scented bath salts could remain secure from outrage'; and a smell of 'faint perfume' is exuded by Mrs Kerr.[30] Food, for example oranges and patisserie, is often referred to in visual terms. When the events occur outside, the natural scents of thyme, lemon and spring are mentioned.[31] Since some of the characters enjoy tobacco at various times, smoke as well as the hotel's smoking-room are referred to, albeit in visual, spatial and communal rather than olfactory terms.

Interior and exterior olfactory experience coincide in a gift when Sydney brings 'scentless' carnations to her friend, Mrs Kerr.[32] This carnation episode

[28] On parallels with Samuel Beckett see Sinéad Mooney, 'Unstable Compounds: Bowen's Beckettian Affinities', in *Elizabeth Bowen: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Susan Osborn (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), pp. 13–33 (pp. 18–20).

[29] In some respects, Bowen's strategy is reminiscent of the 'eradication of smells and odors' in Adalbert Stifter's epoch, as described by Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 61.

[30] Bowen, *The Hotel*, pp. 27, 28, 92.

[31] Bowen, *The Hotel*, pp. 41, 87, 149, 143.

[32] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 67.

is situated at a point in time when the close friendship between the two women, or their possible erotic attachment, which is more hinted at than explicitly named, begins to decline. Mrs Kerr, mother to the grown-up Roland, whose plans to join her she announces to Sydney, is older and more experienced. She has so far taken the leading role in their friendship, in which Sydney, who is often detached from her environment, seems to be fairly powerless in comparison to the manipulative older woman.[33] In this olfactory key episode, Sydney, who is eager to please, buys and arranges carnations which do not have the spicy smell for which they are known, but are 'scentless':

> The carnations, among which, walking slowly, she now was burying her face, were scentless, but gave one an acute pleasure by the chilly contact of their petals. She had an armful of two colours – sulphur with a ragged edge of pink and ashy mauve with crimson at the centre, crimson-veined.[34]

Sydney is a character who remains aloof, rarely shows her emotions and seems to be in a state of 'estrangement'.[35] Her pleasure in the 'chilly contact' denotes her unwillingness to display strong feelings, as does the missing olfactory experience. Moreover, the colours – sulphur and ashy mauve – are both reminiscent of ashes, which symbolise death or some sort of ending. Although Sydney finds that her 'senses were absorbed by the carnations', she cannot read the symbols.[36] The lack of scent and the colour-coding mirror both her distance from the sensuous quality of life and of nature as well as the impending demise of her friendship. When Sydney takes the flowers to Mrs Kerr's room, her friend informs her of her son Ronald's looming arrival, which will make her withdraw from her young companion and terminate the friendship.

Scents emanating from plants have an emotional if not sexual dimension in the novel. During the picnic in Chapter 5, where potential couples interact, the surrounding landscape and the plants (olive trees, thyme) are described as visually appealing. At one point Mr Lee-Mittison, another hotel guest, sits down on 'flame-bright' anemones in the middle of the wild thyme, which suddenly 'stung the nostrils, reinforcing the glare with its pungency till two of the

[33] For Sydney's 'haunting' through Mrs Kerr see Matt Foley, *Haunting Modernisms: Ghostly Aesthetics, Mourning, and Spectral Resistance Fantasies in Literary Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 155–56. On *The Hotel* as a gender narrative see Elizabeth Cullingford, '"Something Else": Gendering Onliness in Elizabeth Bowen's Early Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53 (2007), 276–305 (pp. 280–89).

[34] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 67.

[35] Jessica Gildersleeve, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Writing of Trauma* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), p. 28.

[36] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 67.

senses reeled'.[37] Unlike other members of the party, he is hit by the olfactory experience to an extent that his body momentarily becomes out of control. Another relaxation of constraint happens while Veronica talks about a man, Victor, and Sydney and Milton who get closer to each other in the course of the little excursion. The shock induced by the smell of thyme proves that this act of olfaction, which occurs only once, in a momentary outbreak, symbolically anticipates a loss of control, of sexual inhibition, which several characters will experience. An explosion of smell has the potential to wreak 'havoc', as Rindisbacher states.[38] Smell can affect individuals in unforeseen and unforeseeable ways, even induce 'mischief' by conjuring up long-forgotten memories, and can thus lead to a fundamental questioning of 'the closely knit system of reality'; hence smell is often suppressed.[39]

The one character on whom most olfactory experience centres is James Milton, an outsider in terms of class. His arrival in the hotel is marked by his accidental use of a bathroom (with the above-mentioned 'scented bath salts') which he has not hired and through which he accesses one of the rare interior spaces that are described with reference to olfactory experience. In the course of the novel he emerges as a potentially erotic object, although he is not described as being of any particular sexual attraction. Surprisingly, it is in his presence that several other characters have olfactory experiences. For example, when he and Eileen Lawrence have a conversation with overtones of erotic interest, they talk about the 'balmy and languorous' night and its good smells.[40] Later, the 'scent of the lemons' is again mentioned in connection with the Lawrences.[41]

Another olfactory experience, in fact olfactory confusion, which Milton encounters occurs in the course of a walk with Sydney, who, having rejected him once, now practically proposes marriage to him. When he finds himself under a chestnut tree, he muses: 'The air about them was gummy, smelling faintly of spring.' However, immediately afterwards he tells Sydney that the budding leaves feel 'like autumn' to him.[42] Olfactory and visual perception are at odds with one another. Like the 'scentless' carnations, these contradictory perceptions signal future relationship problems and anticipate the couple's incom-

[37] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 41.
[38] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 65. Rindisbacher employs the word 'havoc' to describe the effect of perfume in Patrick Süskind's novel *Das Parfum: Die Geschichte eines Mörders* (Zurich: Diogenes, 1985).
[39] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 65.
[40] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 87.
[41] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 149.
[42] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 143.

patibility and eventual break-up. Ultimately, their relationship turns out to be as impermanent as the smells that accompany it.[43]

The episode preceding the immediate end of their relationship is again marked by an olfactory event when Sydney, who so far has refrained from smelling actively as an agent, has an intense negative olfactory experience. Chapter 23 tells the story of an outing: the well-meaning Tessa has decided to ask Mrs Kerr and James Milton to join Tessa's and Sydney's excursion to an old village so that they will get to know one another better. Tessa seems to be unaware of the emotional entanglements, of the fact that Sydney has turned to Milton after her attachment to Mrs Kerr has been severed and that he functions as a sort of substitute. It is a church that causes a major olfactory reaction in Sydney, who seems otherwise immune to smells and their promises. Having entered the building, she realises: 'The air of the church was stale with the incense of years, the breath of long-dead congregations had not been disturbed; it was cold with the exhalations of stone for ever in darkness.' With an emphatic 'I can't stand this air any longer, I shall be sick', Sydney leaves the church.[44] When, shortly afterwards, Mrs Kerr puts her hand over Sydney's in the pâtisserie, she gives an outward signal of maternal care, but in fact recalls much deeper emotions. The reader is left to wonder whether the combination of the musty smell and the renewed contact with Mrs Kerr has opened up old wounds. The same afternoon, even before they reach the hotel, Sydney breaks off her engagement. The reason she gives Milton is that she has experienced 'the shock of being alive'.[45] She has realised that she does not want to marry him because she can survive emotionally on her own.[46]

The end of their relationship is also coded with smell, but only for Milton: although he would like to write to her, he tears up his note because it 'seemed to reek with the meanest solicitudes'.[47] Of all characters, he has the best access to the olfactory side of human life but is powerless when odours overwhelm others. As an olfactory character, he stands out in more than one sense: his ability to smell or to induce others to perceive scents symbolises his ability to bring up neglected or suppressed dimensions in individuals. Perhaps the incompatibility between these two characters is also olfactory. Sydney cannot open herself to tempting, positive, natural smells, whereas Milton can. She is more geared towards the artificial hotel world, where smells (if they exist at

[43] On 'impermanence' in hotel narratives see Short, *Mobility and the Hotel*, p. 33.
[44] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 178.
[45] Bowen, *The Hotel*, p. 183.
[46] On Sydney's 'survival', her engagement and the escape from it, see Gildersleeve, *Elizabeth Bowen*, pp. 29–30.
[47] Bowen, *The Hotel*, pp. 187–88.

all) are manufactured, whereas he consciously notices scents that belong to living things outside buildings.

In other stories and essays Bowen refers to olfaction, yet often sparingly. The story 'Salon des Dames' (1923), her first published work, centres on the guests' interaction in a Swiss hotel. On a rainy day, the women sit together, knitting. The only explicit olfactory reference is: 'The smell of their woollen clothes against the radiator was warm and comforting.'[48] This reference is a break of expectation because readers would expect luxurious smells from a Swiss hotel, or fresh odours from the countryside, yet the reference to woollens also fits the time of year and underlines the prevailing sense of austerity. That Bowen uses smells sparingly is apparent in her short 'Letter from Ireland' (1937), which praises Cork's liveliness but criticises its 'boring hotels': 'Their lounges, though often lofty, are claustrophobic, and often smell of milk pudding.'[49] Again, this is the only reference to smell in a very short text, expressing disillusionment with the domestic, boredom and perhaps thwarted desires.

George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and *Down and Out in Paris and London*

George Orwell's frequent, even obtrusive mentioning of smells, mostly unpleasant ones, differs starkly from Bowen's sparse use of olfactory references. *Orwell's Nose* is the title of a recent biography by John Sutherland. In addition to treating the author's life and writing, it focuses on what is called Orwell's 'smell-talent', which, Sutherland argues, the writer acquired through his French mother.[50] Orwell definitely noted smells – especially offensive ones – in places and people and employed multiple olfactory experiences in his writing. The two texts under consideration here, Orwell's first published book *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and his autobiographical novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), both provide graphic descriptions of bad and irritating smells and stenches in hotels and other accommodation; they are, however, no hotel novels. Since Orwell travelled widely, and since he did not possess a large income, accommodation, and especially cheap accommodation, looms large in his writing. If *Down and Out in Paris and London* uses the olfactory experience in descriptions of a string of utterly unacceptable lower-class

[48] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Salon des Dames' [1923], in *The Bazaar and Other Stories*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 29–34 (p. 33).
[49] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Letter from Ireland' [1937], in *People, Places, Things: Essays*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 152–54 (p. 153).
[50] Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose*, p. 20.

hotels, aiming to denounce poverty and abuse of power, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* contains two central episodes set in awful hotels, where references to smell add further layers of meaning.

Down and Out in Paris and London is both a memoir and a study of poverty.[51] Orwell explored London's East End before living in Paris for eighteen months in 1928 and 1929; yet his book describes the two capital cities in reverse order. In what Margery Sabin calls an 'immersion of his own body', he lived with the poor for a period of nearly two years, sharing their experience of privation.[52] Since the finished book is not a diary or a reportage, the first-person narrator is largely but not entirely identical with Orwell the man. The narrator works as a *plongeur* (a dish-washer) in Paris; he also teaches English and writes. In other periods he is entirely without work and income. If in Paris some of his mates are from previously wealthy backgrounds, like Boris, whose parents had been killed in the Russian Revolution, Orwell's companions in and around London are among the poorest: beggars, street artists and vagrants. The manuscript was initially rejected by publishers worried about Orwell's use of swearwords and about some licentious scenes, but eventually accepted by Victor Gollancz. It is brimming with references to smell, especially in descriptions of dreary accommodation, hotels and restaurants, in Paris, in and outside London. Especially in the second part, set in England, the narrator follows a downward spiral in moving from terrible lodging-houses to even worse shelters. Nearly all olfactory experience is located inside buildings and is often connected with humans and their food: his smell narrative encompasses sweat, excrement and waste. Interiors rarely offer comfort and relaxation; on the contrary, they often annoy and disturb the journalistic first-person narrator.

Parisian life is not related via the city's flourishing culture, nor in terms of its well-known art and architecture. Orwell's Paris is ugly, mean and dirty. His narrator's stay is structured by a number of hotels and restaurants, all horrible and unhygienic. The memoir commences with the Hôtel des Trois Moineaux, Rue du Coq d'Or (in fact, Rue du Pot de Fer), where he stays for eighteen months. Among its eccentric inhabitants are the Rougiers, 'an old, ragged, dwarfish couple':

[51] Generically, the text is difficult to position: Orwell initially thought of a reportage (Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose*, p. 120). By and large, the book describes what he experienced, yet as he omitted a number of persons and incidents it is hardly a reliable chronicle (Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose*, pp. 120–24). One reason for his stay was to enjoy the comparative liberty he had in Paris. On the context of *Down and Out in Paris and London* and his other non-fiction writing of the 1930s see Margery Sabin, 'The Truths of Experience: Orwell's Nonfiction of the 1930s', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, ed. by John Rodden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 43–58.

[52] Sabin, 'The Truths of Experience', p. 45.

> The Rougiers earned about a hundred francs a week, and by strict economy managed to be always half starved and half drunk. The filth of their room was such that one could smell it on the floor below. According to Madame F., neither of the Rougiers had taken off their clothes for four years.[53]

Throughout his stay, Orwell enters various hotels, where he lives or meets friends or potential employers and is greeted by symptoms of extreme poverty, shabby furniture, dirt, unpleasant smells. His companion Boris's hotel, 'the dirtiest' in the street, emanates 'a vile sour odour, a mixture of slops and synthetic soup'.[54] The narrator stinks, too, admitting at one point that he has not had a bath for weeks.

Penniless and starving, he decides to take a job at the Hôtel X, apparently a renowned place, where it is not unusual to work a seventy-eight-hour week. He drudges in a den below street level, on a hideously low salary, becoming part of the hotel's strictly hierarchic 'caste system' that serves to exploit the staff.[55] Smelling of food and sweat, the scullery lacks the most basic hygiene: the waiters sometimes wash their faces in the water in which the clean crockery is rinsed.[56] Soon, he moves on to the Auberge de Jehan Cottard, a 'chic' restaurant among whose customers are titled Russian refugees, but receives no better treatment.[57] The Auberge uses the same caste system as the Hôtel X; staff and customers are equally exploited and deceived. Its kitchen is a 'pigsty'; uncooked ingredients are lying on the bare earth.[58] Old army blankets, 'smelling incorrigibly of sweat', cover the tables underneath the table-cloths; and in an act of resistance Jules, the second waiter, occasionally wrings a dirty dish cloth into a customer's soup to avenge himself on the bourgeoisie.[59] As narrator, Orwell relishes dirt, lack of hygiene and evil smells, thereby of course provoking his readership.

The visual prevalence of dirt is mirrored by smells. Together, they function as indicators of hard work (sweat is often mentioned), squalid living conditions and poverty. They also lend colour to Orwell's biting social critique. Himself a *plongeur* and therefore of low status, Orwell concludes that the hotels and restaurants constitute an exploitative system which promises luxury but provides only cheap imitations and deceives everybody, including the bourgeois customers.

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[53] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 4.
[54] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 25.
[55] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 72.
[56] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 69.
[57] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 111.
[58] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 112.
[59] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 110.

In and around London, Orwell likewise joins the underdogs. Again, hotels, cheap lodging houses, shelters and spikes structure his narrative. He uses descriptions of building structures that have nothing homely about them to make a point about the homelessness of the poor. Early in this section, he sells his clothes and turns himself into a tramp to explore the East End, staying at various lodging-houses, which are a cheap and lowly form of hotel. In addition to offering singularly unappealing interiors, insufficient furniture, unacceptable sanitary conditions and bad food, these lodging-houses smell. On entering a 'battered-looking' house, he is welcomed by 'a wave of hot air and cheese', complemented by 'a sweetish reek of paregoric and foul linen'.[60] In Pennyfields, he finds an 'improvement', namely that 'the sheets were not more than a week from the wash'.[61] In Bow Road, the beds 'smelt loathsome'.[62] Another lodging-house in a back alley near the Strand is just 'evil-smelling' and its dormitory emanates 'a horrible reek of urine'.[63] Elsewhere, the kitchen 'stank horribly'.[64] Philanthropic work is no answer: the Salvation Army shelters 'stink of charity'.[65] His graphic descriptions of dirt, smell and lack convey a depressing picture of the living conditions of the London poor.

The lowest form of shelter which he visits on a journey resembling a downward spiral is the so-called 'spike',[66] a casual ward for vagrants in and outside London, here, for example, in Lower Binfield:

> In the morning, after breakfast and the doctor's inspection, the Tramp Major herded us all into the dining-room and locked the door upon us. It was a limewashed, stone-floored room, unutterably dreary, with its furniture of deal boards and benches, and its prison smell. The barred windows were too high to look out of, and there were no ornaments save a clock and a copy of the workhouse rules. Packed elbow to elbow on the benches, we were bored already, though it was barely eight in the morning. There was nothing to do, nothing to talk about, not even room to move. The sole consolation was that one could smoke.[67]

The Lower Binfield dormitory stinks 'abominably'; in another spike 'the reek of dirty feet' and the smell of latrines hit him.[68] Such detailed enumerations of smells and dirt are intended as social criticism. The living conditions of the

[60] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 138.
[61] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 141.
[62] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 146.
[63] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 169.
[64] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 193.
[65] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 168.
[66] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 152.
[67] Orwell, *Down and Out*, p. 210.
[68] Orwell, *Down and Out*, pp. 214, 154.

poor, Orwell points out, are unbearable. The last chapters give names and biographies to the English poor, thus endowing Orwell's social critique of a failing welfare system and his political demands with faces und human stories: Paddy the tramp and Bozo the pavement artist provide harrowing tales.[69]

Orwell presents an intense and unmasked smellscape, using references to olfaction both literally and metaphorically. Smells emanate from food in general, individual foods such as cheese, the human body, its parts (feet), its fluids (sweat), excrement, likewise rooms and entire houses. Orwell names these smells repeatedly and without detailed descriptions as regards the process of perception. Since nearly all vagrants are male, the smells are gendered. Other references are metaphorical: the Salvation Army's restrictions 'stink of prison and charity', or a room 'stank of *ennui*'.[70] Smelling, a highly subjective perception, is nearly always coded as negative and there is little distinction between individual acts of smelling. Orwell evokes smell to criticise unacceptable living conditions for the poor; he is citing smells as if waving a flag to signal a violation of the code of humanity. The book ends on a series of general observations and political demands. He castigates the Vagrancy Act, which forces the poor to be constantly on the move, and demands better-quality lodging and food. The poor, he emphatically argues, are no parasites: they are hungry and lonely victims of a legislation enforcing idleness and homelessness. His map of bad odours serves to underline his argument that the poor need better legislation, not mere charity. It is interesting to note that in the part about France, stenches are less frequently mentioned than in the part about England, possibly because Orwell's presentation of the poor people's Paris is sometimes romanticised. In this 'tale of two cities', Paris is, as Sutherland put it, 'more fun'.[71] Orwell's demands concerning exploited workers in Parisian restaurants are more general than the precise demands he makes to improve the vagrants' lot. In 2018, public readings of this once again very topical text were staged in Paris and London.[72]

Keep the Aspidistra Flying, a novel with autobiographical elements and a stringent critique of capitalism, is full of scents and smells. It is also biting comedy which, after many ups and downs, ends in marriage. The story centres on Gordon Comstock, who slaves away in a bookshop, as Orwell himself had been in

[69] Orwell, *Down and Out*, Chapters 30, 31, 34, 35.
[70] Orwell, *Down and Out*, pp. 226, 212.
[71] Both quotations taken from Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose*, p. 129.
[72] Vanessa Thorpe, 'Orwell's Take on Destitution, Live from Paris and London', *The Guardian*, 29 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/28/george-orwell-down-out-london-paris-live-performance?CMP=share_btn_fb&fbclid=IwAR0K2A86LB-fEzwo1-SCNXzt df65QwJaiaODJZRsF-dws0el9df0xZb28Gc> [accessed 10 December 2019].

1934 and 1935 when he worked in Booklovers' Corner in Hampstead.[73] Gordon's once well-to-do family has declined into lower-middle-class nothingness. Although his private education has led to many sacrifices for his impoverished family, especially for his sister, who now works in a tea-shop,[74] Gordon cannot fulfil their expectations and leaves his good job at the 'New Albion Publicity Company',[75] an advertising company which he detests for its dishonesty, in order to pursue a literary career, yet finds that his work in the bookshop renders him financially destitute.[76] Although he despises capitalism, his lack of money increasingly traumatises him and at the end of the novel he quits his ambitions, destroys a long manuscript and utterly betrays his ideals by accepting a job in his old company.[77]

The novel presents an urban smellscape, which often has to do with food, drink, tobacco, pubs and toilet requisites. Smells accompany Gordon throughout: his customers smell of 'breadcrusts' or 'Parma violets'; the pubs where he drowns his sorrow reek of the 'fume of beer', 'faint tidings of beer' or 'gunpowdery tobacco-smoke', 'sights, sounds, smells, all so blatantly and offensively male'.[78] It is a world in which smell denotes economic activity: Gordon wants to escape the 'money-stink' through his drudgery in the bookshop.[79] At New Albion he had worked on creating texts for the 'Queen of Sheba Toilet Requisites Co.', promoting especially the deodorant 'April Dew'.[80] Once he is back in advertising, he busies himself with a campaign raising public awareness about 'Pedic Perspiration' (or smelly feet), aiming to increase his company's sales and eventually himself becomes a major agent in the national smellscape.

The novel contains two key episodes involving two rather awful hotels, where social interaction is characterised by smells: a trip to the countryside with his girlfriend Rosemary and a visit to a brothel. Both hotels contribute to the novel's smellscape. The first hotel episode is part of a string of misfortunes. Prior to his ill-fated day out with Rosemary, Gordon borrows money from his sister to afford the outing, but wastes it on a bad lunch in a bad hotel. After an

[73] Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose*, pp. 39–40, 146.
[74] Orwell's own sister Avril set up a tea shop (Sutherland, *Orwell's Nose*, pp. 38–39).
[75] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 54.
[76] On literature and advertising see Michael L. Ross, *Designing Fictions: Literature Confronts Advertising* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015). Chapter 3 deals with Orwell.
[77] On capitalism and the trauma of poverty see Michael Levenson, 'The Fictional Realist: Novels of the 1930s', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*, ed. by Rodden, pp. 59–75 (p. 67).
[78] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, pp. 15, 17; pp. 79, 82, 96; p. 113.
[79] E. g., Orwell, *Aspidistra*, pp. 51, 52.
[80] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, pp. 58, 271.

unsuccessful attempt at love-making, abandoned by Rosemary who fears pregnancy, Gordon has to borrow money again, this time from his girlfriend, to afford his fare back home. To his consternation, Rosemary feels so sorry for him that she even buys his cigarettes. The squandering of Gordon's meagre resources occurs at the 'vulgar', 'pretentious' and 'desolate' Ravenscroft Hotel, which is uninviting from the start. The advertisement outside promises: 'THE RAVENSCROFT HOTEL | Open to Non-residents. | LUNCHEONS – TEAS – DINNERS | DANCE HALL AND TENNIS COURTS | Parties catered for.'[81] In terms of class, this is an exclusive world in which they are not meant to participate: 'But there was an expensive smell in the draughty hallway – a smell of chintz, dead flowers, Thames water and the rinsings of wine bottles.'[82]

The characters' olfactory perception underscores their discomfort. In Orwell, social class often smells, or reeks, and here the poor, about to be ripped off, can smell what awaits them. When seated, they find that 'offensive upper-middle-class eyes' look at them.[83] The wintry hotel and its smells convey drabness and disillusionment, stagnation, more than any visual description. The olfactory is complemented by taste: the food is cold and damp, accompanied by wine that tastes 'like mud'.[84] Later, when sexual gratification fails, Gordon suffers the humiliation of having to accept Rosemary's money, thereby failing in his roles as lover and provider.

The second hotel constitutes a symbolic entry point into a modern underworld. Soon after the failed excursion, financial rescue appears on the horizon: receiving an unexpected cheque for over fifty dollars for a poem he had sent to an American magazine, Gordon sets out to squander the money with his wealthy socialist friend Ravelston and Rosemary on a night out. Drunk and sexually frustrated because of her renewed refusal of intercourse, he enters a sleazy hotel via 'a smallish, darkish, smelly hallway, lino-carpeted, mean, uncared-for and somehow impermanent'.[85] The description of his inebriated downward progress contains a Latin phrase, 'Difficilis ascensus Averni', an adaptation of a quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid*, 'facilis descensus Averno',[86] meaning, 'it is easy to descend to the underworld.' In the novel, 'facilis' ([easy] becomes 'difficilis' [difficult], while the descent becomes, at least temporarily, a symbolic ascent, accompanied by a 'smell of slops and a fainter smell of stale

[81] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, pp. 145, 146.
[82] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 146.
[83] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 147.
[84] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 150.
[85] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 195.
[86] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 196; P. Vergilius Maro, *Aeneis. Lateinisch/Deutsch*, ed. and trans. by Edith and Gerhard Binder (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2017), p. 294 (VI.126).

linen'.[87] When Gordon, who is completely drunk, enters a bedroom, he symbolically falls; the next morning he wakes up in a police cell.

His descent into the underworld is not over yet. If in Virgil, Aeneas's descent is accompanied by intense smell, Gordon undergoes a similar experience: the cell in which he and several other men are locked up is equipped with only one toilet, whose plug cannot be pulled properly. The 'faecal stench' the men have to suffer precedes a court scene in which Gordon is sentenced to a fine.[88] Subsequently, he is dismissed by his employer, finds another, even worse-paid job and moves into appalling lodgings. Chapters 9 and 10, which deal with the time after the mad evening, contain repeated references to downward movements, for example, 'down, down' and 'under ground, under ground'.[89] It is telling that the new premises in which he works are next to an undertaker's. The hotel is the entry point to an evil-smelling underworld: the new lodgings have a stinking sink; the odour of his room is 'the stuffy sweetish smell of rooms that have been lived in a long time and never cleaned'; the stairs are 'evil-smelling'.[90] This is a new encoding for the description of smells because 'evil' is also a moral category. Moreover, his own room smells like a grave. The underworld symbolises his professional failure, his poverty, his distance from any real life and from love. The intensity of bad smells grows in the course of this episode and mirrors his state until his Persephone, Rosemary, comes and saves him: they finally have the sexual intercourse Gordon had desired so much, she gets pregnant and helps him to leave the underworld.

The satirical ending describes Gordon's successful metamorphosis into a petit-bourgeois figure who, rather than sell books, returns to work in advertising, using his poetic talent to promote once again Queen of Sheba toilet requisites, artificial smells, devising the campaign to save the nation from smelly feet. Gordon's movement is one from a bad-smelling underworld to a sanitised advertising world and he builds a bourgeois home on synthetic smell. Participating in the brave new world of marketing toilet requisites, he now embraces a lower-middle-class lifestyle, symbolised by the aspidistra of the title. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is closer to Bowen's hotel novel than *Down and Out in Paris and London* in so far as smells are linked to characters and to social interaction, yet in Orwell's novel olfaction is rarely individualised to the extent that different characters are shown to react in different ways to smells. Moreover, Orwell's odours are often negative. If they are tied to the sexual side of life, it is the stench in a brothel, not the lemon scent outside a hotel, which carries meaning.

[87] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 196.
[88] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, p. 208.
[89] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, pp. 219, 244; pp. 227, 244.
[90] Orwell, *Aspidistra*, pp. 234, 247.

ARNOLD BENNETT, *THE GRAND BABYLON HOTEL*

Bennett's *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902) is a satire on London's Savoy and its scandals. Of all the texts explored in this chapter, it is the one that most frequently sublimates olfaction into visual experience. The novel, one of his early pieces, is subtitled 'A Fantasia on Modern Themes', yet his fantasia – in the original meaning a musical composition which may contain bizarre elements – does not stretch far enough to include a great deal of olfaction. Its author, Bennett, a popular and prolific writer of novels, stories, plays and other texts, was no avant-garde Modernist and is sometimes counted among the 'middlebrows'.[91] He published a further hotel novel, *Imperial Palace* (1930). Reacting to the fashionable luxury hotels, *The Grand Babylon Hotel* is an absurd story about the Savoy, which had opened in 1889. The London Savoy was a grand hotel fitted with many modern luxuries. It boasted lavish interior decoration and took pride in its exceptional service. Two heroic figures stand out in its early history: the Swiss hotelier César Ritz, who ran the hotel, and his French celebrity chef Auguste Escoffier.[92] Both, however, were dismissed in 1898 following financial misdemeanours.[93] As the Savoy was very famous, the scandal attracted considerable attention.

At the beginning of the novel, the American millionaire Theodore Racksole, a guest at London's Grand Babylon with his daughter Nella, orders 'filleted steak and a bottle of Bass', that is, utterly unsophisticated food and drink, which the famous waiter Jules and the chef Rocco refuse to serve.[94] Racksole's reaction is to buy the hotel from its proprietor, the Swiss Félix Babylon, thereby guaranteeing that his wishes will be fulfilled in future. While a love-and-murder story unfolds, it soon becomes obvious to the new proprietor that some inexplicable activities involving his staff are going on behind the scenes. At the centre of the unlikely action is a guest, Prince Aribert von Posen, whose companion, Reginald Dimmock, is found dead, while his nephew, Prince Eugen, has mysteriously disappeared. *The Grand Babylon Hotel* is a typical farce: fast-paced, absurd, excessive and exaggerated. After kidnappings, a trip to Belgium, a wild chase on the Thames and other improbable

[91] Rob Hawkes, *Ford Madox Ford and the Misfit Moderns: Edwardian Fiction and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 27–29.

[92] Derek Taylor, *Ritzy: British Hotels, 1837–1987* (London: Milman Press, 2003), pp. 118–20; Nestmeyer, *Hotelwelten*, pp. 95–100. For an analysis see Randi Saloman, 'Arnold Bennett's Hotels', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 58 (2012), 1–25; Short, *Mobility and the Hotel*, pp. 48–53; Susanne Schmid, 'English Inns and Hotels in Nineteenth-Century Fiction', in *Anglo-American Travelers and the Hotel Experience*, ed. by Elbert and Schmid, pp. 38–57 (pp. 51–55).

[93] Taylor, *Ritzy*, pp. 147–56.

[94] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, pp. 50–51.

situations, Nella becomes engaged to Prince Aribert and Racksole sells the hotel back to its previous owner.

Since hotels such as the Savoy did not aim to attract their patrons through smell experiences and, in fact, were not meant to smell at all, references to olfaction are sparse. The novel contains a number of episodes, for instance those involving Dimmock's corpse, in which references to smell are possible or might even be expected but do not occur because olfaction is suppressed or visualised. There are three types of reference to or visualisation of smell: (1) smells relating to food as well as drink and to Rocco, the chef; (2) smells relating to luxury items and drugs, tobacco, perfume and the laudanum Eugen uses in his suicide attempt; and (3) references to ventilation and the quality of air.

The initial fight between Racksole and the hotel staff about steak and beer is a battle for taste, literally and figuratively. Since one of the characteristics of steaks is their smell (the same goes for beer), it is also a fight about olfaction because the smell, which is not mentioned explicitly, would normally come to the other guests' notice. Throughout the novel, food, cooking and eating remain strangely odour-free. This is also apparent in a detailed description of the hotel kitchen, enthusiastically hailed as 'one of the wonders of Europe'.[95] Period photographs of kitchens in grand hotels display tiled, almost clinical working-spaces with a host of expensive equipment. Rocco, the absolute ruler over the kitchen, appears as a much-admired artist, for example, when he carves meat:

> Rocco was bending over a freshly-roasted partridge which lay on a blue dish. He plunged a long fork into the back of the bird, and raised it in the air with his left hand. In his right he held a long glittering carving-knife. He was giving one of his world-famous exhibitions of carving. In four swift, unerring, delicate, perfect strokes he cleanly severed the limbs of the partridge.[96]

Here, as in other passages which give details of the handling of food, no olfactory references appear, although most readers would associate freshly-roasted fowl with an appetising smell. This narrative strategy underscores the clinical presentation of cooking as a skill; yet Rocco turns out to be more than a cook and Racksole discovers that his chef is actually embalming Dimmock's corpse, which, as in *Fawlty Towers*, does not seem to exude any smell. The only olfactory reference in this embalming episode is the following: when Racksole, clumsily playing the detective, accidentally sets fire to a whole box of matches,

[95] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 120.
[96] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 121.

he is 'half smothered in the atrocious stink of phosphorus'.[97] The potentially offensive smell a reader might expect shifts from the corpse to the intruding observer.

Among the second type of smells connected to luxury consumerism, tobacco is the most noticeable, as a substance creating gendered smell. The hotel's smoking-room, mentioned several times, signifies wealth and class.[98] Moreover, smoking was coded as a masculine activity in the nineteenth century. Since it is, however, overlooked from Miss Spencer's bureau, the room and the activities going on there are all subject to control – after all, Miss Spencer aids the waiter Jules in his dark machinations. The reader is rarely told about cigar smell. When characters enjoy cigars, these become visible as objects. Cigars serve to aid male bonding: for example, when Racksole talks to Félix Babylon, or when he works with a policeman, Hazell. They get on so well that they 'reached the cigarette stage'.[99] Tobacco only smells when it is cheap. On a whim Racksole buys a one-penny cigar and is admonished by Félix that these fumes 'would ruin any hotel'.[100] Another smell linked to luxury consumption is perfume, which Racksole notes when walking past 'Eugène Rimmel's establishment for the sale of scents'.[101] Rimmel managed a famous perfumery and the smells and toiletries he produced were sought after. Finally, laudanum is mentioned, a tincture of opium that was a fashionable painkiller as well as a soporific and could lead to addiction. Depressed about his lack of funds, the utterly unheroic Prince Eugen attempts suicide but is found just in time. Bending over him, Prince Aribert detects on Eugen's lips 'the odour of laudanum'.[102] In a text that largely ignores the olfactory, this fashionable drug, which does not match other characters' careless attitude towards luxury, is thus conspicuous in more than one sense, if it is awarded olfactory presence. Through his languishing, Eugen appears feminised. Finally, the novel contains a number of references to clean or polluted air. When trying to play detective, Nella becomes stuck in a ventilation shaft, a situation which symbolises the murkiness of the activities that go on. When Jules, the waiter-intrigant, is finally caught by the police, the air clears up. In Bennett's novel, the smellscape is fairly small, yet it is matched by visual descriptions which substitute for references to smell. Smell is often gendered.

[97] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 123.
[98] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 43.
[99] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 202.
[100] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 179.
[101] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 178.
[102] Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, p. 219.

Unlike Bowen's characters, Bennett's display less introspection. His European princes and American capitalists are satirised but they are not presented as highly complex individuals. They do not struggle with the kind of suppressed desires whose complexity Bowen underscores by occasional references to smell. Bennett's writing is diametrically opposed to Orwell's political journalism, which uses stench as a marker of poverty, as well as to his biting critique of the artificial world of advertising. In fact, Orwellian stenches would probably ruin Bennett's Grand Babylon Hotel. In the interaction between author and reader, smell is the red flag Orwell waves to rouse the reader.

Sophie-Valentine Borloz

'We are beginning to suffer indigestion from the flowers of innocence':[1] The Subversion of Floral Fragrance in French Literature of the End of the Nineteenth Century

Translated from French by Philip Lindholm

'Paris, we can say, has the flower-madness' [Paris, on peut le dire, a la folie des fleurs], wrote a journalist for *Le Petit Parisien* in 1891.[2] Indeed, late nineteenth-century France showed a marked interest in the floral world, with this craze taking on various forms. Botanical gardens multiplied, while urban green spaces emerged in order to respond to hygienists' concerns. New species were imported following colonial expansion and these gave rise to considerable speculation, before decorating the winter gardens of the *haute bourgeoisie*. Flora also invaded the art world during this period, proliferating in various genres and styles, of which Art Nouveau and its vegetal arabesques arguably constitute the most accomplished expression. The flower was therefore omnipresent at the end of the century; so much so, in fact, that art historian Annette Stott speaks of a veritable 'fetish for flowers'.[3] This *fleurimanie* – the term first appeared in dictionaries in the middle of the century – is also encountered in *fin-de-siècle* literature, which places a great emphasis on the vegetal.[4] This aspect became so cen-

[1] 'On commence à en avoir une indigestion des fleurs de l'innocence!' (Rachilde, *La Jongleuse* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1900), p. 135). These and the following translations from cited works are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

[2] Jacques Lefranc, 'Courrier de la semaine', *Le Petit Parisien. Supplément littéraire illustré*, 26 April 1891, p. 2.

[3] Annette Stott, 'Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition', *American Art*, 6.2 (1992), 60–77 (p. 71).

[4] For *fleurimanie* see, e. g., Jean-Baptiste Richard, *Enrichissement de la langue française: Dictionnaire de mots nouveaux* (Paris: Léautey, 1845 [1842]), p. 193.

tral to the aesthetics of the time that the literary historian Jean Pierrot identifies it as 'the imaginary theme which will come to dominate the Decadent era' [[le] thème imaginaire [qui] va dominer l'époque décadente].[5]

The flower can have a value in and of itself, but it can also lend itself to figurative or symbolic purposes. In the latter case, it is frequently employed to describe women, with the association of the feminine and the vegetal constituting 'perhaps the most established type of flower metaphor'.[6] This is evidently not a nineteenth-century invention; Érika Wicky even perceives this assimilation as 'one of the tiredest literary clichés' [un des poncifs littéraires les plus ressassés].[7] However, the flower-female model underwent a marked revival at the time and took on a strong ideological dimension, with the flower becoming an ideal of femininity. Stott sums up this new imperative by means of a triple injunction: 'To look, smell and act like a flower.'[8] This not only transposes beauty, delicacy and softness from the vegetal to the feminine, but also passivity and fragility, traits which outline a bourgeois vision of women and their social role.

In this context, the olfactory acquires a new-found importance, the floral fragrance becoming an indication of a certain conception of the feminine, of which it ensures readability. This evolution corresponds to the period's attribution of a signification to fragrances, which fulfil a truly semiological function, informing the perceiver of the identity, status and morality of the person exuding the fragrance. As one contemporary observer writes, 'every socialite allows herself be read by her perfume' [chaque mondaine se laisse lire par son parfum].[9] Thus, floral smell became a sign of female respectability in both society and literature.

The Decadent interest in the floral theme threatened this assimilation. In accordance with their recognised taste for subversion, numerous late-century writers were engaged in an enterprise of the axiological reversal of traditional symbolism.[10] Initially perceived as decorative, chaste and passive, the flower now became menacing, sulphurous and dangerous. Fragrance played a key role in this transformation, with scents often constituting the instrument

[5] Jean Pierrot, *L'Imaginaire décadent 1880–1900* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2007 [1977]), p. 277.

[6] Pirjo Lyytikäinen, 'The Provocative Flora of Decadence: From Charles Baudelaire and Émile Zola to Octave Mirbeau', *Excavatio*, 30 (2018), 1–10 (p. 1).

[7] Érika Wicky, 'Ce que sentent les jeunes filles', *Romantisme*, 3.165 (2014), 43–53 (p. 44).

[8] Stott, 'Floral Femininity', p. 62.

[9] René Fleury, 'L'Art des parfums', *La Vogue*, 15 January 1900, pp. 38–46 (p. 43).

[10] On the Decadent taste for subversion, see Isabelle Reynaud-Chazot, 'Détournements de l'olfaction dans la littérature de la deuxième partie du XIX^{e} siècle (France et Angleterre)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Paris IV – Sorbonne, 2000) <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01418918/document> [accessed 26 May 2020].

through which the plant exercises its new powers of morbid fascination. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to highlight the crisis of readability affecting floral fragrance in late nineteenth-century literature. To this end, we must first return to the traditional model of the woman-flower in order to focus on its olfactory dimension. We shall subsequently observe three strategies of subversion implemented by the Decadent tradition – artificialisation, eroticisation and morbidity, respectively – by examining their olfactory undercurrents. At the end of this process, we shall see that the articulation of the feminine and the vegetal proposed by the end of the century actually corresponds to a new prescriptive model, that of the floral femme fatale [*femme-fleur fatale*].

Traditional symbolism

The 'mysterious collusion between woman and flower' [l'étrange complicité de la femme et de la fleur] consistently emphasised in the nineteenth century influenced numerous aspects of women's lives, both physically and morally, by virtue of a significant network of supposed analogies and similarities.[11] One of the most commonly drawn parallels was to compare female and plant life cycles. It was chiefly the young girl who was assimilated to a flower, with this connection 'providing a sober, charming and asexual register to evoke puberty, considered as the spring of life' [fournissant un registre sobre, charmant et asexué pour évoquer la puberté considérée comme le printemps de la vie].[12] The young girl in bloom thus becomes the common site of both medical and literary discourse. This association is pursued, albeit less systematically, throughout a woman's life. 'Flowers so acutely illustrate the beauty of youth, the fading that comes with middle age, and finally death, thus serving as a common, easily grasped sign of mutability, which Western writers relate to women in multitudinous ways', notes Beverly Seaton.[13] The evolution of beauty in bud, which first flourishes and then fades – though, a priori, constitutive of the human experience as a whole – is thus perceived as an essentially feminine trait.

The supposed similarity of the feminine and the floral is equally observable in character and temperament. An article in *Le Figaro* thus establishes a genuine typology of women, 'whose character can be divined from the way

[11] Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (New York: Berg, 1986), p. 183; Alain Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social XVIII–XIXe siècles* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982), p. 215.

[12] Wicky, 'Ce que sentent les jeunes filles', p. 44.

[13] Beverly Seaton, 'Towards a Historical Semiotics of Literary Flower Personification', *Poetics Today*, 4 (1989), 679–701 (p. 680).

they treat flowers' [dont le caractère [peut] se deviner d'après la manière dont elles traitent les fleurs]. According to this principle, one should be wary of 'ladies who do not like flowers' [[les] dames qui n'aiment pas les fleurs], because they are 'miserable at heart' [des miséreuses du cœur], incapable of truly loving. Similarly, those whom 'perfume alone exalts […] belong to the species of people whom it is better to love for a time, than to wed' [le parfum seul exalte […] appartiennent à l'espèce des personnes qu'il vaut mieux aimer un temps que d'épouser]. Only 'garden lovers' [les amoureuses des jardins] make suitable wives: patient, gentle and reliable, they possess 'moral discipline' [une discipline morale], acquired through contact with plants.[14] Gardening would thus appear to constitute a veritable school of life for the future wife.

In addition to defining age and behaviour, floral femininity plays a central role in determining what the historian of perfumery Eugénie Briot terms 'olfactory elegances' [les élégances olfactives].[15] In the entire history of modern perfumery, 'there never was a real coquette, *mignonne*, or lady who was not at the same time a flower – a flower sweet to perceive, a flower of musk and amber, smooth to inhale' [il n'y eut vraie coquette, vraie mignonne, vraie gente dame qui ne fût doublement fleur, fleur douce à voir, fleur musquée, fleur ambrée, à respirer suave], affirms the poet René Fleury.[16] It is thus not enough simply to look like a flower; one must also smell like one. The injunction may simply concern the wearing of perfume. The lifestyle manual *L'Art de la toilette* considers that 'with the *toilette* of pretty women, it is the same as with the flower: perfume completes and idealises her' [il en est de la toilette des jolies femmes comme de la fleur: le parfum la complète et l'idéalise].[17] To wear a delicate fragrance amounts to perfecting one's transformation, making the illusion even more complete.

The reference to the floral world can also have a more specific function, taking it upon itself to prescribe the type of perfume to be chosen. The strict standards governing the world of perfumery consider only a very limited number of exclusively floral scents to be in good taste. 'I have forbidden you prepared perfumes; but those spread by natural flowers seem to me very permissible, when they are in no way disturbing' [Je vous ai interdit les parfums préparés; mais ceux que répandent les fleurs naturelles me semblent très permis, quand ils n'incommodent point], the Countess of Bradi conceded in

[14] Fœmina, 'Les Fleurs', *Le Figaro*, 8 August 1907, p. 2.
[15] Eugénie Briot, 'De *L'Eau Impériale* aux *Violettes du Czar*: Le jeu social des élégances olfactives dans le Paris du XIX^{e} siècle', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 55 (2008), 28–49.
[16] Fleury, 'L'Art des parfums', p. 43.
[17] Violette (Alice de Laincel), *L'Art de la toilette: Bréviaire de la vie élégante* (Paris: Dentu, 1885), p. 274.

1838.[18] The discourse had not changed by 1872, when Ernest Feydeau stated that 'perfumes must be light, penetrating, always reminiscent of the smell of flowers' [[l]es parfums doivent être légers, pénétrants, rappeler toujours l'odeur des fleurs].[19]

Similar recommendations aimed to deter women from so-called 'animal' perfumes; that is, those containing raw materials of animal origin, such as musk, amber, civet or castoreum. These intense aromas were met with increasing distrust in the nineteenth century, owing mainly to their odorous power, which went against injunctions for olfactory discretion, but also due to their strong symbolic charge. Deriving in part from the genitalia of animals, these fragrances were considered vulgar, undistinguished and charged with impulsive eroticism. As Alain Corbin points out, their condemnation acquired a moral value:

> Delicate scents set the seal on the image of a diaphanous body that, it was hoped, simply reflected the soul. These were ambitious tactics that attempted to render harmless the threat of animality and to imbue the woman's impulses with wisdom. She should be rose or violet or lily – certainly not feline or musky; floral images supplanted those borrowed from the carnivorous cycle.[20]
>
> [Les délicates senteurs signent l'image d'un corps diaphane, que l'on voudrait simple reflet de l'âme. Ambitieuse stratégie qui tente de désamorcer la menace de l'animalité, d'assagir les pulsions de la femme. On la veut rose, violette ou lys, surtout pas féline ou musquée; les images florales expulsent du discours celles qui sont empruntées au cycle carnassier.][21]

The valuing of floral fragrances, therefore, possesses an eminently ideological substrate. As Stott underlines, 'dependence and passivity are concepts easily expressed through flowers, whose principal function is decorative'.[22] To exude a floral scent is to comply with the current prescriptive olfactory code, but also to have a constant reminder of one's place and role in society literally in front of one's nose. 'Cultivated beauty, silence, moral purity, graceful but limited movement, [a] decorative function and a discreet suggestion of fertility' are but a handful of the traits which flowers teach women through their scents.[23]

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[18] Comtesse de Bradi, *Du savoir-vivre en France au XIXe siècle* (Strasbourg: Vve Berger-Levrault, 1838), quoted in Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, p. 183 and Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille*, p. 215.
[19] Ernest Feydeau, 'Causerie', *Revue de France*, 2 (1872), 565–78 (p. 577).
[20] Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, p. 186.
[21] Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille*, p. 218.
[22] Stott, 'Floral Femininity', p. 62.
[23] Stott, 'Floral Femininity', p. 76.

The advent of what has come to be known as Decadence has singularly complicated this interpretative framework and the imaginary of a unanimously candid vegetation. Stimulated by the appearance of new, unknown and suggestive varieties, the literary flora were now perverted, becoming sulphurous, deceptive and dangerous. This movement was initiated in the middle of the nineteenth century through the publication of Charles Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* [*Les Fleurs du mal*], which launched the fashion for 'teratophytes', a new botanical category that the poet's heirs would continue to enrich.[24] On the olfactory level, this change translates into the overturning of the law according to which a floral scent signifies distinction, whereas an animal scent expresses debauchery and vulgarity. There was now a blurring of the correspondence previously unifying an olfactory signifier and a moral signified. Smelling of the iris or violet was no longer a guarantee of morality, as writers began to take a wry pleasure in subverting traditional semiology.

Artificialisation

One of the most frequent forms of subversion consists in the artificialisation of flora. This literary trend corresponds to a genuine transformation of consumer habits. The natural flower may well be very popular, but, at the end of the century, it is not without its concerns. Many authors of behavioural manuals warned against the harmful effects of floral scents. Baroness Staffe, for example, believed that while 'flowers are the most charming of luxuries' [[l]es fleurs sont le plus charmant des luxes], it is nevertheless advisable 'to select those that do not have a perfume or whose scent is weak or delicate' [de choisir celles qui n'ont pas de parfum ou dont la senteur est faible ou délicate].[25] The simplest way to enjoy the beauty of flowers without having to risk being troubled by their scent was to have recourse to artificial flowers. This market experienced intense development throughout the century. Historian Claire Lemercier estimates that the number of manufacturers active in this industry rose from between one and two hundred around 1820, to between seven hundred and one thousand in 1855, reaching several thousand in the following decades.[26] Products were refined

[24] T. S. Miller, 'Lives of the Monster Plants: The Revenge of the Vegetable in the Age of Animal Studies', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 23 (2012), 460–79 (p. 465).

[25] Baronne Staffe (Blanche-Augustine-Angèle Soyer), *Usages du monde: Règles du savoir-vivre de la société moderne* (Paris: V. Havard, 1891 [1889]), p. 84.

[26] Claire Lemercier, '"Articles de Paris", fabrique et institutions économiques à Paris au XIX^{e} siècle', in *Les Territoires de l'industrie en Europe (1750–2000)*, ed. by Jean-Claude Daumas, Pierre Lamard and Laurent Tissot (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2007), pp. 191–206 (p. 199).

during this evolution, incorporating new technical improvements, such as impregnating a flower made of fabric with perfume in order to confer a delicate scent upon it while maintaining absolute control over the type of fragrance and dosage. Mrs Celnart, in her *Manuel des Dames*, goes so far as to consider that 'giving artificial flowers their natural scent is the best way to carry perfumes on one's person' [donner aux fleurs artificielles leur parfum naturel […] est la meilleure manière de porter des parfums sur soi].[27]

The theme of the false flower soon spread to literature, not merely because it constituted a feature of the period, but also because this new vogue echoed the *fin-de-siècle* fascination for the artificial, especially when the latter takes precedence over the natural. Decadent texts thus continuously celebrated the superiority of the artefact over nature's productions. The most obvious example of this reversal in the vegetal domain is the floral collection of Des Esseintes in Joris-Karl Huysmans's *Against Nature* [*À rebours*], where the plants are chosen precisely for their apparent artificiality, despite the fact that they are, in fact, real plants.[28] Lyytikäinen recognises the fundamental role of this text in Decadent floral symbolism when she writes that, in the *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic, 'flowers are used *à rebours*'.[29]

It is not Huysmans's novel, however, that serves as a prototypical illustration of the phenomenon, but rather a poem published by one of his close friends, the Belgian poet Theodore Hannon. This text is of interest because it more directly links the question of artificiality to that of olfaction. In the long poem 'Artificial Flowers' [Fleurs artificielles] in his collection *Rhymes of Joy* [*Rimes de joie*], Hannon evokes the shop of a milliner, which, under his pen, soon turns into a 'tropical greenhouse' [serre tropicale],[30] an eminently sulphurous space, as Jane Desmarais has demonstrated.[31] In this Decadent cavern, silk, velvet and wire are combined to create flora that is both disturbing in its authenticity and 'adorable in its falsity' [adorable en sa fausseté] (l. 64).

The evocation of the fantastical country where such flowers might grow takes the form of a paradisiacal landscape, albeit one devoid of any life:

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[27] Élisabeth Celnart (Élisabeth-Félicie Bayle-Mouillard), *Manuel des dames; ou, L'Art de l'élégance* (Paris: Librairie encyclopédique Roret, 1833), p. 97.

[28] Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À rebours*, ed. by Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Gallimard, 1983 [1884]).

[29] Lyytikäinen, 'The Provocative Flora', p. 1.

[30] Théodore Hannon, 'Fleurs artificielles', in *Rimes de joie* (Brussels: Kistemaeckers, n. d. [1881]), l. 5. Line numbers will henceforth be indicated in brackets in the body of the text.

[31] Jane Desmarais, *Monsters under Glass: A Cultural History of Hothouse Flowers from 1850 to the Present* (London: Reaktion, 2018).

This Eden, fertile in mysteries
Has banned immutably
From its impassive flowerbeds
Smell, sound, movement!

[Cet éden fécond en mystères
A proscrit immuablement
De ses impassibles parterres
L'odeur, le bruit, le mouvement!] (ll. 93–96)

This manufactured garden, which is fertile only with respect to its strangeness, and whose flowers appear to be 'cadavres' [corpses] (l. 97), lacks floral fragrance, the buzzing of insects, and stems swaying in the wind. Gradually, however, the scene comes to life in the agile hands of the milliner. Upon contact with her, 'we see on its sturdy stem | The surprised flower rising | Then blooming, very much alive!' [l'on voit sur sa roide tige | La fleur surprise se hausser | Puis s'épanouir, bien vivante!] (ll. 100–02). Life reclaims its rights, even if this is an obviously artificial activity, resulting from a more accomplished illusion.

The agency of the milliner also makes it possible to integrate scent, which is absent at the beginning of the poem. However, this odorising is not without consequences:

The false blossoms, however,
Group themselves into rich bouquets
Scented on your pretty fingers,
O milliner! And, – metamorphoses! –

Among these dead flowers taking on
Life at your providential hand,
You appeared to me, incontinent,
To be the artificial flower.

[Cependant les floraisons fausses
Se groupent en riches bouquets
Parfumés à tes doigts coquets,
O modiste! et, – métamorphoses! –

Parmi ces fleurs mortes prenant
Vie à ta main providentielle,
Tu me parus, incontinent,
Être la fleur artificielle.] (ll. 129–36)

In keeping with the fashion of the time, the young woman perfumes the artificial flowers; the aroma, however, does not originate from a bottle, but from

her own body odour, transmitted from her hands to the flowers. The plants appear effectively to vampirise their creator, absorbing her very life force through her scent. Following this olfactory transfusion, the exsanguinated milliner is herself, in turn, transformed into an 'artificial flower' [fleur artificielle].

The fake flower, which was supposed to eliminate the dangers of the real flower, develops a new form of noxiousness. 'She' is no longer the woman's harmless companion, but a kind of competitor whose own development comes at the expense of the milliner's. The end of the poem, which sees the animation of the vegetal and the reification of the living, nevertheless blurs the boundaries between the kingdoms, with woman and flower, united by the same vital substance, becoming to a certain extent interchangeable. The recurrent motif of the woman perfuming the artificial flower, which is to be found in other texts, initiates a new type of rapprochement between the feminine and the vegetal, one marked by both predation and fusion. From an emblem of harmless passivity, the flower now becomes doubly threatening, on the one hand because, when manufactured, it escapes nature and its laws and, on the other, because it is endowed with a will and a power to harm. As for the woman, she is both victim and accomplice, simultaneously emptied of substance and invested with the same dual identity.

Eroticisation

Another frequent strategy for the subversion of vegetal imagery in *fin-de-siècle* literature consists in its eroticisation. Once again, this is by no means a purely literary invention. Botanists at the time were well aware that the flower, and more specifically its pistil and stamens, function as the genitalia of the plant, while its perfume is primarily intended to attract pollinators. This sexual undercurrent strongly informs the model of the flower-woman. Christina Bradstreet thus highlights 'the pervasiveness of the metaphor of feminine "bloom" in nineteenth-century novels to suggest sexual promise (attractiveness, availability and nubility) and eligibility for marriage'.[32] Wicky has also emphasised the importance of the floral metaphor in medical discourse aimed at addressing the delicate issue of puberty in young girls. She cites in particular the pharmacist and chemist Cadet de Vaux, for whom 'the young girl, as

[32] Christina Bradstreet, '"Wicked with Roses": Floral Femininity and the Erotics of Scent', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 6 (2007), 1–22 (p. 8) <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring07/46-spring07/spring07article/144-qwicked-with-rosesq-floral-femininity-and-the-erotics-of-scent> [accessed 26 May 2020].

well as the young plant, exhales an embalmed emanation: one at puberty, the other at flowering' [la jeune fille, ainsi que la jeune plante, exhale [une] émanation embaumée: l'une à sa puberté, l'autre à sa floraison].[33]

The eroticisation of the vegetal is also based on scientists' interest in the role of the olfactory element in plant reproduction. Several scientists emphasised the proximity of plant fragrances to human sexual scents. In 1819 the osphresiologist Hippolyte Cloquet noted that 'the smell of sperm is extremely marked in the flowers of the barberry, *berberis vulgaris*, and in the chestnut, *castanea vulgaris*' [l'odeur du sperme est extrêmement marquée dans les fleurs de l'épine-vinette, *berberis vulgaris*, et du châtaignier, *castanea vulgaris*], an opinion which was reaffirmed throughout the century.[34] Such an assimilation confers an eminently sulphurous character to the once innocent act of inhaling floral scent. The proto-sexologist Havelock Ellis maintained that women were particularly receptive to this carnal dimension of floral fragrance. According to Ellis, 'in many people, most often if not exclusively in women, the smell of flowers not only produces a very pleasant effect, but one that is distinctly and specifically sexual' [chez nombre de personnes, le plus souvent sinon exclusivement chez des femmes, l'odeur des fleurs ne produit pas seulement un effet très agréable, mais distinctement et spécifiquement sexuel].[35] Burying one's nose in a bouquet thus becomes a subversive gesture.

Several physicians at the time engaged with the phenomenon of the floral orgasm, whose pictorial modalities Bradstreet has brilliantly explored. Many of them repeated the words of the patient of Italian hygienist Paolo Mantegazza who exclaimed: 'I feel so much pleasure in smelling a flower that it seems to me that I am committing a sin' [J'éprouve tant de plaisir à sentir une fleur qu'il me semble que je commets un péché].[36] Among the varieties most likely to provoke physical pleasure, experts favoured white flowers with heavy aromas. This selection corresponds to a chemical reality, since these species contain a molecule, indole, which gives them 'an underlying animalic character, with fragrance notes that hint at the body and sex'.[37] These are, then, flowers that well and truly smell of sex.

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[33] Antoine-Alexis Cadet de Vaux, 'De l'atmosphère de la femme et de sa puissance', *Revue encyclopédique* (1821), 427–45 (p. 434).

[34] Hippolyte Cloquet, 'Odeur', in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, 60 vols (Paris: Panckoucke, 1812–22), XXXVII (1819), 99.

[35] Henry Havelock Ellis, *La Sélection sexuelle chez l'homme: Toucher – odorat – ouïe – vision*, trans. by A. van Gennep (Paris: Mercure de France, 1925 [1905]), p. 173; orig. *Sexual Selection in Man* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1905).

[36] Paolo Mantegazza, *Physiologie de l'amour* (Paris: Fetscherin et Chuit, 1886 [1873]), p. 151.

[37] Catherine Maxwell, 'Carnal Flowers, Charnel Flowers: Tuberose in Late Victorian Poetry', in *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 182–200 (p. 184).

Physicians were complacent when relating the disorder experienced by their female patients. Auguste Debay reports, for example, the case of a young girl in whom the perfume of tuberose, the 'carnal flower par excellence',[38] causes 'a kind of voluptuous intoxication' [une espèce d'ivresse voluptueuse], followed by the 'collapse of muscular forces similar to that ensuing from the venereal paroxysm' [affaissement de forces musculaires semblable à celui qui succède au paroxisme [*sic*] vénérien].[39] The description of this state is reminiscent of the terrifying picture that medicine has painted of masturbators ever since Tissot. Procuring women an intense and solitary pleasure, the floral orgasm appears as a form of olfactory onanism:

> While for men, female body odor and artificial perfumes worn by women were generally thought to lead to arousal, copulation, and the propagation of the human race, female scent arousal was described in masturbatory rather than reproductive terms, with women being attracted to floral rather than male body odors.[40]

Sexual pleasure derived from a floral scent was, therefore, overwhelmingly condemned by those who reported on it. The insistence on the deleterious nature of the act highlights the highly transgressive dimension of a practice which excludes men, as well as the prospect of reproduction, in favour of a type of gratification considered purely selfish and hedonistic.

Such a sulphurous motif could not fail to find its place in literature and *fin-de-siècle* texts were full of what Catherine Maxwell calls 'carnal flowers', that is, species 'whose nature inevitably causes one to think of sex and sexuality'.[41] Floral orgasms were numerous, with the most famous example of this type of pleasure probably being that of Clara, the chilling protagonist of Octave Mirbeau's *The Torture Garden* [*Jardin des supplices*]. As she walks with her lover through the lush gardens of Canton's prison, the young woman perceives a familiar smell:

> Anxious, nervous, with nostrils flaring, like a doe that has just sniffed the scent of a male in the wind, she inhaled the air around her. A shiver, which I knew to be the precursor of a spasm, ran through her body. Her lips instantly became redder and more swollen.
>
> [Inquiète, nerveuse, les narines battantes, ainsi qu'une biche qui vient de flairer dans le vent l'odeur du mâle, elle huma l'air autour d'elle. Un fré-

[38] Maxwell, 'Carnal Flowers', p. 183.
[39] Auguste Debay, *Hygiène des douleurs* (Paris: Dentu, 1867), p. 39.
[40] Bradstreet, '"Wicked with Roses"', p. 12.
[41] Maxwell, 'Carnal Flowers', p. 183.

missement, que je connaissais pour être l'avant-coureur du spasme, parcourut tout son corps. Ses lèvres devinrent instantanément plus rouges et gonflées.][42]

Clara questions the narrator, who at first only remarks the scent of peonies:

– It's not that! … Couldn't you smell it? … Remember! …
And, nostrils opened even more widely, eyes brighter, she said:

– It smells like when I love you! …

Then, keenly, she leaned over a Thalictrum plant, which, at the edge of the alley, erected a long, thin, branched, rigid stem, of a light purple colour.

Each axillary branch came out of an ivory sheath in the shape of a genital organ and ended in a bunch of very small flowers, pressed against each other and covered with pollen …

[– Ce n'est pas cela! … Tu n'as pas senti? … Rappelle-toi! …
Et, ses narines encore plus ouvertes, ses yeux plus brillants, elle dit:

– Cela sent, comme quand je t'aime! …

Alors, vivement, elle se pencha sur une plante, un thalictre qui, au bord de l'allée, dressait une longue tige fine, branchue, rigide, d'un violet clair.

Chaque rameau axillaire sortait d'une gaine ivoirine en forme de sexe et se terminait par une grappe de toutes petites fleurs, serrées l'une contre l'autre et couvertes de pollen …][43]

Her companion finally perceives 'a powerful, phosphatic smell, the smell of human seed' [une odeur puissante, phosphatée, une odeur de semence humaine] exhaling from the plant. Clara 'forces him to breathe in the strange smell' [[le] forc[e] à en respirer l'étrange odeur], 'smearing his face with pollen' [[lui] barbouillant le visage de pollen], while swooning: '"Oh, darling … darling …" she said … "the beautiful plant! … And how ecstatic it makes me! … How it frenzies me! … Isn't it strange that there are plants that smell of love?"' [Oh! chéri … chéri! … fit-elle … la belle plante! … Et comme elle me grise! … Comme elle m'affole! … Est-ce curieux qu'il y ait des plantes qui sentent l'amour? …].[44]

This famous scene exploits the imaginary surrounding spermatic flora on several levels. The fact that Clara is the only one who initially perceives the smell corresponds to contemporary scientific discourse affirming a greater female sensitivity to the scents concerned. Viewed from this angle, it also seems

[42] Octave Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, ed. by Michel Delon (Paris: Gallimard, 1991 [1899]), p. 198. All translations are mine.
[43] Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, p. 198.
[44] Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, p. 198.

logical that only she should experience its effects. However, this passage offers Mirbeau the opportunity to play on notions of kingdom and gender. Clara reacts to the vegetal sexual odour instinctively. She behaves like an animal whiffing the scent of a male, her nostrils probing the air like those of a deer. Her human identity is therefore in doubt. On the other hand, the plant undergoes a form of anthropomorphisation, its 'rigid' stem and its 'ivory sheath' in the shape of a phallus [gaine ivoirine en forme de sexe] visually complementing the human character of its scent.[45] The boundaries between species are therefore blurred, with human, animal and plant united in a common kingdom, one marked by both metamorphosis and indeterminacy.

Clara does not merely observe the flower, but begins 'to chew on the cluster, whose pollen stuck to her lips' [[à] mâchonner la grappe, dont le pollen se collait à ses lèvres].[46] This gesture, which Manon Raffard qualifies as 'fellatio', is indeed a form of 'strange interspecies union' [étrange union inter-espèces].[47] The young woman reacts to the smell by displaying the signs of erotic excitement (spasm, red and swollen lips), then impregnates herself with the plant's pollen-sperm. In doing so, she bears witness to her perfect consonance with the garden and with the natural world in general. Following this *intercourse*, she reveals a 'face yellow with pollen, the stem of the Thalictrum between her teeth' [visage tout jaune de pollen, la tige de thalictre entre les dents], thereby exhibiting her identity as an eminently sensual and instinctual 'woman-flower-animal' [femme-fleur-animale].[48]

From this perspective, the narrator's inability to perceive and appreciate the smell acquires a different implication. It attests to his refusal, if not his inability, to join Clara in the cycle uniting beings and objects outside the sphere of morality. Insensitive to the sensual appeal of the flower, he neither shares Clara's excitement nor her enthusiasm and he is therefore excluded from her relationship with the vegetal. Although he recognises in his mistress the signs of sexual arousal, he is neither its cause nor its object; he serves, at most, to register these signs. Unable to do more than observe his companion's pleasure, he is reduced to the position of an impotent external observer.

The act of smearing his face with pollen can therefore be read, as Raffard suggests, as 'a baptism, a pagan and sacred rite of initiation which fails' [un baptême, une initiation païenne et sacrée qui échoue].[49] It also contributes to blurring the boundaries between kingdoms and genders. Clara tries to sensi-

[45] Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, p. 198.
[46] Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, p. 199.
[47] Manon Raffard, 'Corps senti, corps sentant: Imaginaire fin de siècle de l'olfaction' (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Bourgogne, 2016), p. 94.
[48] Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices*, p. 199.
[49] Raffard, 'Corps senti', p. 95.

tise her lover to a sexual scent that is both vegetal and masculine, thereby questioning his dual nature as a human being and a man. This circulation between identities does not, however, determine the same fusion with the garden, but on the contrary provokes feelings of aggression and self-dispossession. The symbolic violence underlying the act of forcibly subjecting him to an olfactory sexual experience recalls the words of sociologist David Le Breton, for whom the smell of another's body, embodied here in the plant, 'reaches the other with a sexual connotation, giving the feeling of having being assaulted, even raped' [atteint l'autre dans une connotation sexuelle, elle donne le sentiment d'être envahi, voire violé].[50]

At the end of the scene, both characters bear the traces of the fragrant pollen on their faces; however, if this 'ornament' is a matter of choice and prerogative in the case of the young woman, it is for the narrator only the stigma of a form of brutality. Man is incapable of finding his place amid this new fusion of the feminine and the vegetal, which, far from involving modesty and restraint, is understood as the union of beings within a natural order that goes well beyond human norms of decorum and morality. The eroticisation of the vegetal thus leads to a new convergence of woman and plant, one resting on their *natural* shared identity and effectively excluding the male protagonist.

Morbidity

The Torture Garden very closely associates flora and death, since the garden owes its luxuriance to the bodies of the torture victims buried there. This assimilation is the third strategy for subverting traditional floral symbolism. Whereas the flower previously represented the emblem of life and fertility, at the *fin de siècle* it is transformed into a factor of death, with the theme of the *fleur-qui-tue* or 'killer flower' becoming a veritable literary leitmotif. Once again, this is not pure invention on the part of writers. The scientific discourse of the time was particularly concerned about the danger of asphyxiation represented by plants, especially when they were kept indoors. Dr Caufeynon's warning that 'a bouquet of flowers left in a room can provoke serious disorders and even death' [un bouquet de fleurs oublié dans une chambre peut produire de graves désordres et même la mort] is encountered in numerous books.[51] Similarly, the list of symptoms established in 1816 by Dr Guersent,

[50] David Le Breton, 'Les Mises en scène olfactives de l'autre ou les imaginaires du mépris', in *À fleur de peau: Corps, odeurs et parfums*, ed. by Pascal Lardellier (Paris: Belin, 2003), pp. 115–28 (p. 117).

[51] Jean Fauconney (Dr Caufeynon), *La Volupté et les parfums: Rapport des odeurs avec le sens génital: Le parfum naturel de la femme* (Paris: Offenstadt, 1903), p. 11.

which included headaches, increased heart rate, vomiting, syncopations, convulsions and, in the most severe cases, asphyxia, corresponds to diagnoses made throughout the century.[52] Inhaling a flower thus acquires novel implications, yet again: not only can breathing in a flower provoke sexual arousal, but it might also cause illness and, following prolonged exposure, even death.

The species that were considered to be the most dangerous were the heavily perfumed white flowers: 'Among these flowers, those of the oleander, jasmine, tuberose, narcissus and hyacinth are the most frequently incriminated. Each of them is associated with a certain number of cases of death, asphyxiation or nervous accidents of varying degrees of severity' [Parmi ces fleurs, celles du laurier-rose, du jasmin, de la tubéreuse, du narcisse et de la jacinthe, sont le plus fréquemment incriminées. Chacune d'elles a à son passif un certain nombre de cas de mort et d'accidents asphyxiques ou nerveux plus ou moins prononcés].[53] The very same plants are therefore capable of bringing about delight and demise, *la petite mort* and *la grande mort*. In addition to its transgressive aspect, this dual role of the flower also corresponds to a chemical reality. Indeed, indole is not only present in sexual and body odours, but it is also found 'in faeces and rotting corpses'.[54] Following a circular logic in which cause joins effect, flowers that smell of death have thus been accused of causing it.

Medical treatises with case histories on the subject abound, such as the regularly cited example of a London woman found dead in her bed, 'leaving no cause to suspect this unfortunate event other than the exhalations of a large number of flowering lilies that she had kept in her room' [sans qu'on ait pu soupçonner d'autre raison de cet événement malheureux que les exhalaisons d'un grand nombre de lis fleuris qu'elle avait gardés dans sa chambre].[55] However, it is literature that constitutes the richest repository of examples of this type, with writers constantly exploring the narrative potential of deadly flora. The motif of suicide-by-flower thus experienced a surge of popularity in literature at the end of the century, so much so that perfumer Clément deplored the widespread mistrust surrounding floral fragrance: '"One accepts it now only as a means of suicide", he said indignantly: "instead of lighting a charcoal stove, we would now simply place a bouquet of roses on our fireplace"' [On ne l'accepte plus que comme moyen de suicide, s'indigne-t-il: au lieu d'allumer un réchaud de charbon, on se contentera de déposer un bou-

[52] L. B. Guersent, 'Fleur', in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, XVI (1816), 32–33.
[53] Alexandre Layet, 'Odeurs', in *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales*, 18 vols (Paris: Masson et Asselin, 1874–85), XVI (1880), 168.
[54] Maxwell, 'Carnal Flowers', p. 184.
[55] Hippolyte Cloquet, *Osphrésiologie ou traité des odeurs, du sens et des organes de l'olfaction* (Paris: Méquignon-Marvis, 1821), pp. 93–94.

quet de roses sur sa cheminée].[56] The model for this genre undoubtedly remains Albine's suicide in Émile Zola's *The Sin of Father Mouret* [*La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*]. The young woman, abandoned by her beloved, puts an end to her life by filling her room hermetically with fragrant plant species, foremost among them hyacinths and tuberose, which are indole-rich flowers. This sensual floral demise inspired numerous writers and gave rise to countless avatars over the course of the century.

Other novelists decided more specifically to investigate, from this lethal perspective, the union of woman and flower, the scents of each blending in a narcotic mixture. The female character thus ceases to be the victim of vegetal emanations in order to become their accomplice and literature soon found itself populated by floral femmes fatales [*femmes-fleurs fatales*] possessing deadly charms. Here again, there are countless examples, the motif constituting a genuine aesthetic cliché of the *fin de siècle*. One might mention in particular the 'great anti-syphilis fresco' [grande fresque anti-syphilis] that constitutes the novel *The Manchineels* [*Les Mancenilles*] by André Couvreur.[57] This text denounces the supposed devastation caused by prostitutes and other women of low virtue, who are accused of spreading 'evil' at all levels of society.

To express the venereal contagion that is spreading inexorably, Couvreur has recourse to the image of the mancinella (or manchineel), a shrub native to the American continent, of which the flowers, leaves, fruit and even bark contain a powerful toxin that can cause serious burns or even death when ingested. According to Mireille Dottin-Orsini, this plant, which has entered the French collective imaginary, becomes 'the tree of the femme fatale' [l'arbre de la femme fatale], the traditional representation of her deadly seduction.[58] In the novel by Couvreur, it is used to designate the deceptive attraction of vice. The physician Bordier, functioning as the author's spokesman, warns his friend, the young Maxime Duprat, of the dangers of the capital and its enticements:

> Remember the manchineel tree, the tree which kills when you fall asleep under its flowers? Well: Paris is a manchineel. The flowers of that fatal tree are these women who pour forth the poisoned fluid […] from which we die morally, from which we can even die physically.
>
> [Tu te souviens du mancenillier, de cet arbre qui tue quand on s'endort sous ses fleurs? Hé bien: Paris est un mancenillier. Les fleurs de l'arbre fa-

[56] P. Clément, *Le Manuel complet de parfumerie* (Verdun: Bertinet, 1882), p. 5.
[57] Mireille Dottin-Orsini, *Cette femme qu'ils disent fatale* (Paris: Grasset, 1993), p. 217.
[58] Dottin-Orsini, *Cette femme qu'ils disent fatale*, p. 216.

> tal, les mancenilles […], ce sont ces femmes qui versent le fluide empoisonné dont on meurt, dont on meurt moralement, dont on peut même mourir physiquement.][59]

The perverted city is a tree, the prostitutes constituting so many of its poisonous flowers. The vegetal is no longer that which charms, but that which fatally harms. Bordier's warnings prove to be ineffective, with Maxime ultimately succumbing as a 'victim of these accursed manchineels' [victime de ces mancenilles maudites] at the end of the novel.[60]

Couvreur thus distorts the customary floral symbolism by showing that sweet perfume conceals contagion and death. In order to do so, he uses an exotic plant, noted for its dangerousness, which he opposes to a woman-flower in the traditional sense of the term. Jeanne, Maxime's cousin and later wife, is in fact systematically assimilated to a 'flower of charm, delicacy and poetry' [fleur toute de charme, de délicatesse et de poésie].[61] The novel can therefore be seen to oppose good and evil flowers, the classical model surviving in part in the character of Jeanne.

The transgression is even greater when the *femme-fleur fatale* is assimilated, not to an exotic or indole-bearing variety, but to a flower usually considered delicate and harmless. This form of subversion is explored by Rachilde in *The Marquise de Sade* [*La Marquise de Sade*]. The predatory relationship that her heroine, the cruel Mary, entertains with men is systematically mediated by flowers and, more specifically, by reseda. The fragrance of this plant is not in the least a sulphurous scent; it is, on the contrary, an elegant perfume, very much in vogue at the time of the novel's writing. In the case of young Mary this smell does not seem to result from the use of a particular fragrance, but is rather exuded naturally from her body. Rachilde hereby transgresses the olfactory code requiring that body odour reveal the inner truth of beings by endowing her dubious heroine with a scent associated with the purity and morality of the honest and respectable woman.

The first male protagonist to succumb to Mary's floral effluvia is her uncle and guardian, Dr Barbe. Usually indifferent to women, the doctor is troubled by his niece's exhalations: 'Either the atmosphere – it was August – was saturated with electricity, or Mary spread a very real smell of reseda around her, so that Uncle Barbe became nervous' [soit que l'atmosphère – on était au mois d'août – fût saturée d'électricité, soit que Mary répandît autour d'elle une véritable odeur de réséda, l'oncle Barbe devint nerveux].[62] The greying old man

[59] André Couvreur, *Les Mancenilles* (Paris: Plon, 1900), p. 17.
[60] Couvreur, *Les Mancenilles*, p. 241.
[61] Couvreur, *Les Mancenilles*, p. 17.
[62] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996 [1887]), p. 207.

passionately kisses his ward; immeditately, 'it appeared to him that his heart, crushed for a century under an ice cube, burst out of his chest and that a rain of new blood was rejuvenating him, a rain made of the intimate scents of reseda' [[i]l lui sembla que son cœur, écrasé depuis un siècle sous un glaçon, éclatait hors de sa poitrine et qu'une pluie d'un sang nouveau le rajeunissait, une pluie aux intimes parfums de réséda].[63] This kiss has the effect of a rejuvenation treatment on him; far from announcing a renewal, however, the blood spurt foreshadows his imminent death. The blood which Dr Barbe believes to perceive circulating within himself once again is described as exuding a smell of reseda, an image marking Mary's almost venomous penetration of her guardian's privacy. Shortly after this scene, the uncle dies in the explosion of his laboratory, the young woman deliberately leaving him to suffocate in the noxious gases released by the deflagration. Dr Barbe is, therefore, well and truly killed by odour.

Mary's second victim is her husband, Baron de Caumont. The latter violently separates from his wife when he catches her in bed with his own son. However, he soon falls back under the fragrant spell of his wife and her hair, 'which had the delicate scents of the mysterious reseda that she carried within her being, despite the fault, despite the crime, the flower of youth at the height of passion, the flower of provocative love, always innocent' [[qui] avaient des senteurs délicates de ce réséda mystérieux qu'elle portait en son être, malgré la faute, malgré le crime, fleur de jeunesse au paroxysme de la passion, fleur d'amour provocante et toujours ingénue].[64] Despite his intimate knowledge of Mary's perversity, the baron cannot free himself from the traditional olfactory code, interpreting his wife's reseda scent as the proof of her sincerity. The closer he comes to his wife, the more the Baron finds his restored sexual ardour increasing, which he attributes to her fragrant emanations, given that, 'as soon as one breathed the air around her, one became a satyr' [[d]ès qu'on respirait l'air qui l'entourait on devenait satyre].[65] This sexual vigour gradually transforms into a sickening frenzy; the Baron, obsessed by his desire and exhausted by his escapades, soon dies of a particularly violent attack of satyriasis. He dies without knowing that the erotic drive which caused his demise was actually due to cantharides, a powerful aphrodisiac administered to him in secret daily by his wife.

The third and last victim is Paul Richard, the illegitimate son of the Baron de Caumont. From the moment he first meets Mary, the young man is 'drunk with the perfume of love which she spread around her' [ivre de ce parfum

[63] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade*, p. 208.
[64] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade*, p. 276.
[65] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade*, p. 284.

d'amour qu'elle répandait autour d'elle].[66] No matter how hard he tries to fight it, he cannot resist the perfumed power of the baroness:

> 'I think I am going to die!', thought the young man to himself as he tried to escape the delicate torture; but she brought his head closer to her slightly open bodice, from which came the strange scent of heated flowers, a scent of reseda.
>
> ['Je crois que je vais mourir!' songeait le jeune homme en essayant de fuir la délicate torture; mais elle rapprochait sa tête de son corsage un peu ouvert d'où sortait un parfum bizarre de fleurs chauffées, un parfum de réséda.][67]

As with the doctor and the Baron, Mary's personal scent appears both intoxicating and deadly. It determines Paul's surrender, despite his moral scruples, which is expressed in the simple words: '*You smell so good, Mary*!' [*Vous sentez si bon, Mary!*].[68]

The relationship of Paul and Mary is placed under the sign of violence and cruelty. In accordance with the contemporary theory identifying a close connection between the nose and genitalia, the young man tends to experience a nosebleed when Mary is present, illustrating the 'genital epistaxis' [épistaxis génitales] evoked in Dr Joal's theory.[69] The Baroness, fascinated by blood, takes a wicked pleasure in amplifying the phenomenon, which is a symbol of her deleterious effect on men's noses. Paul is weakened by this treatment at her hand, but nevertheless succeeds in escaping the one who would probably have been his downfall once he learns that she was responsible for his father's death. However, he has to relinquish some of his flesh to Mary, who bites him violently as he leaves her. By means of this gesture, she reveals her true nature, which is more carnivorous flower than innocent reseda.

The end of the nineteenth century thus largely called into question the innocuousness of flowers. Medical concerns and literary inspiration combined to create new varieties which were misleading in their apparent truth, be it erotic or deadly. The assimilation of woman and flower also began to change significantly. The vegetal was no longer the guarantor of female respectability, but on the contrary provoked the artificialisation, excitement or asphyxiation of heroines in a relationship that excluded male protagonists. In this conception the

[66] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade*, p. 242.
[67] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade*, p. 249.
[68] Rachilde, *La Marquise de Sade*, p. 247.
[69] Joseph Joal, 'De l'épistaxis génitale', *Revue mensuelle de laryngologie, d'otologie et de rhinologie*, 8 (February/March 1888), 74–85, 129–38.

woman alternately becomes the plaything, the mistress or the victim of plants, which act on her through the intermediary of their perfume. Woman and flower might also merge into a single entity. Their respective charms then combine to give birth to contagious, deceitful and deadly characters. The subversion of traditional plant symbolism thus partially frees women from the demands of passivity, gentleness and modesty which originally underpinned it. However, by virtue of the resolutely threatening dimension of this new *fin-de-siècle* flora, the Decadent aesthetic contributes to the development of a new model, one that is just as restrictive as the previous one, namely that of the *femme-fleur fatale*. This imaginary is still very much alive today, as evidenced by the names of perfumes such as *Fleur d'interdit* (Givenchy, 1994), *Fleur narcotique* (Ex Nihilo, 2014) or *Fleur fatale* (Kim Kardashian, 2014). Whether it expresses sweetness or danger, therefore, the floral comparison continues to confine the female character to a constraining botanical ideology.

Katharina Herold

'European noses […] have never smelt anything like it': Satirical Scents in Paul Scheerbart's Decadent Orient

European Decadent literature frequently localises sensuality and the erotic in what Western tradition came to call 'the Orient', resulting in a great wealth of portrayals of female dancers, enslaved people, harems and hammams in art and literature. Throughout the nineteenth century olfactory representations of the Oriental through perfumes and scents played a decisive role in this fictional distortion of Near and Middle Eastern cultures. In paintings and poems, for example, odours were often conveyed through bathing scenes or similar practices of body cleansing and adornment. Often these representations aimed at an aestheticisation of femininity, celebrating perfume as the essence of mysterious allure. Charles Baudelaire, the often-cited father of Decadence, dedicated several poems in his *Flowers of Evil* [*Les Fleurs du mal*] (1857) to perfume. The poem 'Exotic Perfume' [Parfum exotique] transports the reader to a sun-drenched and seductive desert island. It conjures up voluptuous scenes of 'charming shores' populated by 'men who are lean and vigorous and free, | Women whose frank eyes are astonishing' [Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux, | Et des femmes dont l'œil par sa franchise étonne].[1] The poem 'The Flask' [Le Flacon] tells the reader that 'there are some strong perfumes that cannot be contained […]' [Il est de forts parfums pour qui toute matière | Est poreuse. […]]. The flask is likened to an 'Oriental chest' or 'a house […] | Full of the smell of time – acrid, musty, dank' [un coffret venu de l'Orient; une maison | Pleine de l'âcre odeur de temps, poudreuse et noire], fusing the sensation of smell with a sense of the uncanny. The European Deca-

[1] Charles Baudelaire, 'Exotic Perfume' and 'The Flask', in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1993), pp. 48–49 and 96–99; orig. 'Parfum exotique' and 'Le Flacon', in *Les Fleurs du mal* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1868 [1857]), pp. 118 and 156–58.

dent canon also provides the reader with some memorable English examples, such as Arthur Symons's 'White Heliotrope' (*London Nights*, 1895), in which, after a night of passion, the speaker evokes 'a ghost of memory, if | Ever again my handkerchief | Is scented with White Heliotrope'.[2] Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, once addicted, praises the opium dens as his 'strange heavens'. Wilde provides a key example of the Decadent obsession with perfume in the notorious Chapter 11 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890):

> And so he would now study perfumes, and the secrets of their manufacture, distilling heavily scented oils, and burning odorous gums from the East. He saw that there was no mood of the mind that had not its counterpart in the sensuous life, and set himself to discover their true relations, wondering what there was in frankincense that made one mystical, and in ambergris that stirred one's passions, and in violets that woke the memory of dead romances, and in musk that troubled the brain, and in champak that stained the imagination; […].[3]

Wilde, a dedicated Decadent, also planned to make the 1892 London premiere of his Orientalising play *Salome* an overwhelming sensory experience, using lurid, saturated colours for the set and costumes and releasing scents into the auditorium during the performance; however, the play was censored and the premiere cancelled. Whether or not perfuming the audience would have been a good idea remains to be imagined. One thing is for sure: Decadent authors were drawn to the Orient as a place of exquisite tastes and smells. While these smells were not always pleasant and were certainly in conflict with the representation of Middle Eastern realities, they were still extremely enticing and effective in literary terms.[4]

Much like the Orient itself, perfumes and scents were perceived as precious, alluring and seductive on the one hand, yet on the other hand frivolous, trivial and a sign of effeminacy. This discussion aims to show how Decadent writing transforms the frivolous into the satirical. To that end I will introduce a relatively unknown German Decadent, Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915), a master of aesthetic satire and self-declared connoisseur of the 'Orient'. This chapter investigates the ways in which Scheerbart uses smells and tastes in Oriental literary settings to launch a critique of European perceptions of the East, ges-

[2] Arthur Symons, 'White Heliotrope', in *London Nights* (London: Leonard C. Smithers, 1895), p. 49.

[3] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001–21), III (2005 [1891]), ed. by Joseph Bristow, 281.

[4] For a more detailed discussion of usages of perfume in English Decadence see Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

turing towards Europe's own state of degeneracy at the turn of the century. In contrast to his French and English predecessors, Scheerbart introduces a new element of satire to his Decadent description of stereotypically Oriental 'smelly' scenes. The following excerpt presents a harem scene from his novel *The Death of the Barmecides: An Arabic Novel of the Harem* [*Der Tod der Barmekiden: Arabischer Haremsroman*], in which an Oriental revenge drama is played out in front of an audience of rather dim-witted Europeans. This is Scheerbart's rendering of Oriental sensuality:

> Abbasah also lies on a white linen divan and dreams as well […]. A thousand scents waft intoxicatingly from the halls of alabaster. The European noses sniff – they have never smelt anything like it. Abbasah's baths always had to smell really strongly, of course. She only appreciates very expensive frankincense and only the costliest of soaps. Never had there been a base drip of water in her bathtub of Alabaster. There only swim things like goat's milk with honey and wild herbs, blood of castrated rams fused with the essence of roses. And when bathing time arrives, a lot of other things are thrown into the mix as well; and these smell all so numbingly that the flowers outside in the garden lose their scents completely.
>
> [Abbasah liegt auch auf einem weissen Linnelager und träumt auch […]. Tausend Wohlgerüche wehen berauschend aus der Alabasterhalle heraus. Die Nasen der Europäer schnuppern – so was haben sie noch nie gerochen. Abbasahs Bäder dufteten stets sehr stark. Sie liebt nur sehr theures Räucherwerk und nur sehr kostbare Seifen. In ihrer grossen Alabasterwanne war nie ein Tropfen Wasser. Da schwimmt nur warme Ziegenmilch mit Honig und Wildkräutern, Schöpsenblut und Rosenöl herum. Und wenn's erst ans Baden geht, kommen noch viele viele andre Sachen hinein; und die duften alle betäubend, dass die Blumen draussen im Garten ihren Duft verlieren.][5]

Scheerbart's Orient demonstrates that, in Decadent literature, as Kirsten MacLeod argues, 'satire, even self-satire, could function well as a radical counter-discourse'.[6] Scheerbart quite literally 'sniffed out' the potential of scents and tastes to deliver his subversive critique directed at the politics and the development of the artistic scene in Wilhelmine Germany. Looking at his Oriental

[5] Paul Scheerbart, *Der Tod der Barmekiden: Arabischer Haremsroman* (Leipzig: Kreisende Ringe, 1897), p. 33. Most of Scheerbart's texts have not been translated into English. Therefore I will provide my own literal translation, attempting to preserve Scheerbart's ironic tone, which is often very colloquial, if not explicitly absurd, in the original.

[6] Kirsten MacLeod, *Fictions of British Decadence: High Art, Popular Writing and the Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 71.

novellas *Tarub, Baghdad's famous Chef: An Arabic Cultural Novel* [*Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin: Ein arabischer Kulturroman*] (1897), *The Death of the Barmecides* [*Der Tod der Barmekiden*] (1897) and *The Ancient Orient: Cultural Novellas from Assyria, Palmyra and Babylon* [*Der Alte Orient: Kulturnovelletten aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon*] (1910), it becomes clear that exotic smells and tastes are used to comment upon and ridicule European literary traditions of Decadence as much as the nature of Europeanness. I will focus on the short story 'Battle-Pomade' [Schlachtpomade], which critiques Wilhelmine militarisation; and on his story 'Of People who Lost their Head: A Palmyreian Novella by Torchlight' [Von Leuten, die den Kopf verloren: Palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novellette], which launches a comical attack on the *fin-de-siècle* cultural sector more broadly.

In an autobiographical note dating from 1904, Scheerbart encapsulates the Decadent attitude towards East-West dichotomies:

> I never felt Hellenic – but most certainly Oriental – the East was simply closer to the gods and monsters than to 'humankind' – that was just how I felt. That is the reason why I was most embarrassed to be born on 8 January 1863 post Christum natum in my so-called hometown Danzig – as a compatriot of the funereal Schopenhauer.
>
> [Hellenisch habe ich niemals empfunden − wohl aber orientalisch – der Orient war eben den Göttern und Ungeheuern näher als den 'Menschen' − mir gings ebenso. Und deshalb wars mir höchst peinlich, daß ich am 8. Januar 1863 post Christum natum in meiner sogenannten Vaterstadt Danzig geboren wurde − als Landsmann des trübsinnigen Schopenhauer.][7]

Scheerbart's resentment at being born into a pessimistic German nation, and his satirical comment on this circumstance, make him a useful case study for the relationship between German Decadence and the East. Scheerbart, who also published under the pseudonym Kuno Küfer, is often discussed as an architectural theorist and Surrealist or Expressionist writer of fantastic literature, but rarely as a literary figure who helped to shape the face of German Decadence through his engagement with the ancient Orient. Born in West Prussia, part of today's Poland, Scheerbart and his wife Anna were between 1885 and 1900 mainly settled in Berlin, which was, together with Vienna and Munich, one of the cultural capitals of the German-speaking *fin de siècle*. Emerging at the beginning of the 1880s and throughout the 1890s, the German intelligentsia, Scheerbart among them, criticised the accelerating capitalism

[7] Paul Scheerbart, 'Autobiographisches', in *Paul Scheerbart: Bibliographie mit einer Autobiographie des Dichters,* ed. by Kurt Lubasch and Alfred Richard Meyer (Berlin: Privatdruck, 1930), pp. 14–15.

and imperialism of Wilhelmine Germany, which were especially visible in Berlin. Scheerbart was well connected within the cosmopolitan networks of Berlin, which he referred to in 1898 as 'the temperament of the world's brain' [das Temperament des Weltgehirns]. Today Scheerbart is remembered as an author of fantasy/science fiction and nonsensical poetry associated with the artistic circles of 1890s Berlin, where he socialised with some of the most influential German writers: Richard Dehmel, Stefan George's literary rival and co-founder of *Pan* magazine in 1895; the critics and publishers Heinrich and Julius Hart; Franz Servaes; Willy Pastor; Detlev von Liliencron; Peter Hille; Herwarth Walden (founder of the Expressionist magazine *Der Sturm*, to which Scheerbart contributed more than twenty articles between 1910 and 1912); Else Lasker-Schüler; Frank Wedekind; Otto Julius Bierbaum; and Oskar Kokoschka. His correspondents include the artist Alfred Kubin, the publisher Ernst Rowohlt, the anarchist writer Erich Mühsam, the satirist Karl Kraus and Richard Strauss, the composer of an opera based on Wilde's *Salome*, who in 1899 commissioned Scheerbart to write a libretto for him. In 1901 the translator and author Paul Wiegler characterised Scheerbart as a:

> parodist with […] an increasingly fanatical addiction to gaudy special effects and eccentric interior decoration combined with an in itself absurd taste recalling *À rebours*. [Scheerbart] rivals the most decadent French writers. […] He makes Huysmans's Des Esseintes look like a schoolboy.
>
> [Parodist mit […] einer immer fanatischeren Sucht nach knalligen Feuerwerkseffekten und sonderbaren Innendekorationen in einem an sich selbst irren à rebours-Geschmack. [Scheerbart] rivalisiert mit den dekadentesten Franzosen. […] Hier wird Huysmans Des Esseintes ein Schulknabe.][8]

In his 1897 memoirs of the Berlin Bohème entitled *Stilpe: Novel Written from a Worm's-Eye View* [*Stilpe: Roman aus der Froschperspektive*], Otto Julius Bierbaum pays homage to his friend and fellow writer Scheerbart as a:

> whimsical man, who lived in the midst of Berlin with the stoicism of an Oriental sage and, poor as a Persian mendicant friar, lived on other people's charity with a delightful spiritual grace. […] A fakir with a sense of humour.
>
> [wunderlicher Mensch, der mitten in Berlin mit dem Gleichmut eines orientalischen Weisen lebte und, arm wie ein persischer Bettelmönch, sich mit einer köstlichen Grazie des Geistes aushalten ließ. […] Ein Fakir mit Humor.][9]

[8] Paul Wiegler, 'Ohne Titel', *Das litterarische Echo*, 3, 16 May 1901, p. 1148.
[9] Otto Julius Bierbaum, *Stilpe: Roman aus der Froschperspektive* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1897), pp. 330–31.

Scheerbart's taste for provocative irony and satire earned him a reputation as a political author. Walter Benjamin was impressed by Scheebart's pacifist stance in response to the rearmament of Germany. In disapproving of the term 'World War', for example, Scheerbart redefines its absurdity through irony. If it were a true World War, it would need to include extra-terrestrial planets as well. In his essay 'On Scheerbart' (1940), Benjamin quotes Scheerbart's rejection of the term, published in an article in *Zeitecho* (August 1914):

> Let me protest first against the expression 'world war'. I am sure that no heavenly body, however near, will involve itself in the affair in which we are embroiled. Everything leads me to believe that deep peace still reigns in interstellar space.[10]

In many instances Scheerbart's aestheticised writing uses satire to expose the absurdity of political deficiencies. Scheerbart's strategic use of irony and satire comes to the forefront especially when pitting the Orient against Europe in his literature. Scheerbart was convinced that 'the Orient must always serve as an example to the Europeans' [[d]er Orient muss den Europäern stets zum Muster dienen].[11] Two Oriental phases define Scheerbart's development as a Decadent author: the first at the beginning of his writing career (1894–97) and the second towards the end (1910–11).

Oriental 'Genuß' and Walter Pater's Definition of Aesthetic Experience in *Tarub*

Scheerbart's first Oriental novel, *Tarub, Baghdad's famous Chef*, which was published in 1897, celebrates smell, taste and the belief in the regenerative potential of the East. *Tarub* is a Decadent *Künstlerroman* set in Baghdad in 892 AD. It tells the story of the poet Safur, 'a relative of Huysmans's Des Esseintes and Wilde's Dorian Gray', as Mechthild Rausch has noted.[12] The novel follows the poet's dilemma between art and life, embodied by his problematic marriage to the pragmatic Tarub, a famous Baghdad chef. *Tarub* reverberates with the art-life dialectic which dominated English Decadence. As Rausch and Peter

[10] Walter Benjamin, 'On Scheerbart', in *Selected Writings*, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996–2003), IV (2003), *1938–1940*, ed. by Howard Eilan and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and others, 386–89 (p. 386).

[11] Paul Scheerbart, *Der Tod der Barmekiden: Arabischer Haremsroman*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1992), p. 101.

[12] Mechthild Rausch, 'Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin', in *Paul Scheerbart: 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden* (Paderborn: Igel, 1992–98), III (1998), *Rezensionen: Artikel zu Leben und Werk*, ed. by Paul Kaltefleiter, 52–54 (p. 52).

Sprengel observe, the protagonists are modelled on Scheerbart and his wife Anna, also known among his friends as Scheerbart's 'bear' [Bär] owing to her resolute character.[13] Safur, often read as a representation of the author himself, is torn between the principle of rationality personified by Tarub and her Dionysian counterparts: the 'blue-eyed djinns, those wild, black spirits of the desert, who chase through the desert at night on fiery stallions' [blauäugigen Dschinnen, jene wilde[n] schwarze[n] Wüstengeister, die auf feurigen Hengsten nachts durch die Wüste jagen],[14] that is, a pre-Islamic, Orientalised rendition of the Decadent *femme fatale*.

Scheerbart's novel resumes Walter Pater's call for an individualised perception of art and an understanding of the self as fluid, put forward in the 'Conclusion' to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873).[15] Pater describes the constant decay and renewal of the physical body, a breaking away of individual atoms and cells, as a 'concurrence, renewed from moment to moment' (p. 118). Pater equates this continuous decay with the internal 'drift of momentary acts of sight and passion' (p. 118) that is channelled through the individual's selective perception. By the acts of looking, feeling and smelling, each individual becomes a critic of taste, experiencing the self in different constellations according to outward aesthetic stimulation. As a result, through aesthetic perception the individual becomes aware of his or her own scent-like 'continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves' (p. 119). For Pater, the goal is to reach an intensification of the senses; '[n]ot the fruit of the experience but experience itself is the end' (p. 119). To be successful in this ongoing search for evanescent 'ecstasy', 'exquisite passion' and 'as many pulsations as possible' (p. 120), Pater controversially recommends being 'for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions' (p. 120). Art and poetry, and not least sensory pleasures, offer the best way to procure this 'enthusiasm' (p. 121).

Scheerbart's Safur conveys the Paterian search for an intensification of sensations through the analogy of Oriental food and the relationship between testing and tasting. Safur devotes himself to the sharpening of the sense of enjoyment, a process which he terms 'Genußverschärfung' (p. 70) and which operates along Paterian lines. In a manner that is reminiscent of Dorian Gray's

[13] Peter Sprengel, *Literatur im Kaiserreich: Studien zur Moderne* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1993), p. 205.

[14] Paul Scheerbart, *Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin: Ein arabischer Kulturroman*, in *Paul Scheerbart: Dichterische Hauptwerke*, ed. by Else Harke (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts, 1962), pp. 17–227 (p. 24). All references are to this edition. Hereafter page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

[15] Walter Pater, 'Conclusion', in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 118–21. All references are to this edition. Hereafter page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

zeal of maximising pleasure, he proclaims in Chapter 4: '[I]n each and every moment one needs to seek out the sensation of a new or intensified enjoyment […]. The highest happiness in life depends on the greatest number of happy moments. […] I want to enjoy myself – enjoy!' [[M]an muß in jedem Augenblick einen neuen Genuß oder einen verschärften Genuß zu empfinden trachten […]. Das höchste Lebensglück besteht in dem Leben, das da aufweisen kann: die größte Zahl von glücklichen Augenblicken. […] Genießen will ich – genießen!] (pp. 70–71). Safur expounds his idea of enjoyment [Genuß], which correlates with the Paterian quest for sensation and the constant renewal of the self:

> [T]he only thing I want is enjoyment. But there is never enough refinement in my enjoyment. I want to refine enjoyment to make it feel like a ghost – like a woman's hair. One has to enjoy with all fingertips – the slightest stimulation of the skin must be registered. In each single moment one would have to be excited and stirred in a different way – and to be conscious of it. […] Since I want to enjoy so many new things in every moment – I will always be a different man at any time. And I want something different every day.
>
> [[I]ch will nur genießen. Doch ich kann nie fein genug genießen. Ich möchte den Genuß so fein machen wie einen Geist – wie ein Frauenhaar. Man muß so mit allen Fingerspitzen genießen – die feinste Reizung der Haut muß empfunden werden. In jedem Augenblicke müßte man anders erregt und bewegt werden – und zwar bewußt. […] Da ich so viel Neues in jedem Augenblick genießen will – so bin ich auch immer ein Andrer. Jeden Tag will ich auch was Andres.] (p. 65)

Pater's theory of weaving and unweaving of identity in reaction to outward impressions correlates with Scheerbart's idea of being another person [*Anderssein*]. This idea establishes itself as a connecting transnational link between Decadent and Orientalised identies. The East is thus instrumental in the redrafting of Decadent selfhood and a reading of Decadence not only as decay but productive (cultural) renewal. As Pater turns to the Renaissance and Antiquity for his aesthetic aspiration to savour sensuality to the full, Scheerbart resorts to the Arabic Orient. For Scheerbart the East is therefore the ideal resource to satisfy the Decadent's consistent hunger for aesthetic sensations.

Beyond its acceptance of Paterian aesthetics, Scheerbart's *Tarub* comments on contemporary literary debates of the 1890s. Safur's Oriental Decadent dilemma is a veiled description of the literary rivalry between Realism and Decadence in 1892 Berlin.[16] The novel, set exactly a thousand years earlier than the

[16] Sprengel, *Literatur im Kaiserreich*, p. 205.

time of its genesis, echoes the artistic networks and literary debates of the Berlin Bohème and international Decadence. Scheerbart creates a link between nineteenth-century Decadence and the East by alluding to an intellectual club in the Baghdad of 892 called the 'The Brethren of Sincerity' [Bund der Treuen Brüder], a group of tenth-century Arabic intellectuals and scholars from Basra.[17] Thus Scheerbart forms a transnational and transhistorical Eastern genealogy of influence as the basis of his Decadent works. The East and its supposedly intensified awareness of tastes and smells are used once more as a commentary on late nineteenth-century cultural politics.

Anti-European 'Scentiments'

Unlike Pater and Wilde, Scheerbart neglects Decadence's Hellenic and Neo-Classical heritage. In his novel *I Love You! A Railroad Novel with Sixty-Six Intermezzi* [*Ich liebe Dich! Ein Eisenbahnroman mit 66 Intermezzos*] a character called 'Scheerbart', the obvious mouthpiece of the author, declares: 'I, the most radical representative of European Anti-Hellenism, who sees the salvation for the occidentals in the Orient, I […] am no more interested in Greek love than in any other form of eroticism' [Ich, der radikalste Vertreter des europäischen Antihellenismus, der das Heil der Occidentalen nur im Orientalen erblickt, ich […] will von der griechischen Liebe eben so wenig wissen wie von aller anderen Erotik].[18] While drawing on French Decadent models, Scheerbart is careful to distance himself from their emphasis on perverse pleasure and allusions to classical homoeroticism as associated with Pater's and Wilde's aestheticism. In Scheerbart's case, the East helps to formulate the author's anti-Modernism. Scheerbart uses the Decadent East to comment explicitly on a turn-of-the-century European identity crisis and to suggest practical ways to resolve it.

Not surprisingly, Friedrich Nietzsche's Orientalism and critique of Europe are theoretical models for Scheerbart's conflicted sense of modernity. Scheerbart mentions Nietzsche only twice in his correspondence, so it is hard to determine to what degree he was familiar with Nietzsche's work. In any case, Scheerbart's Decadent Orientalism and 'Anti-Europäertum' identify with Nietzsche's idea of decay as a progressive process of renewal. Nietzsche calls for Europe to 're-Orientalise itself', with Scheerbart following in his footsteps.[19] Those who

[17] Tjitze J. de Boer, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1901), pp. 78–79.
[18] Paul Scheerbart, *Ich liebe Dich! Ein Eisenbahnroman mit 66 Intermezzos*, in Paul Scheerbart, *Gesammelte Werke*, 10 vols (Linkenheim: Edition Phantasia, 1986–96), I (1986), *Romane 1*, ed. by Thomas Bürk, Joachim Körber and Ulrich Kohnle, 319–615 (p. 517).
[19] Duncan Large, 'Nietzsche's Orientalism', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 42 (2013), 178–203 (p. 194).

Nietzsche terms the 'good Europeans' need to undergo a 'self-de-Europeanisation',[20] a concept welcomed by Scheerbart. In Nietzsche's view 'the German soul is manifold, of different origins, more pieced together and piled on than actually built'.[21] As a result, for Scheerbart the Orient served as a projection screen for Decadent escapism as much as for a critique of nationalism as a justification of innate superiority. Even though Scheerbart's Orient becomes an instrument for the re-sensualisation of literature as seen in *Tarub*, it provides a platform for political satire directed at Europe. Accordingly, in 1929, Lothar Schreyer portrayed Scheerbart as the 'Anti-Europäer' par excellence:

> The home of the demon of mechanisation is Europe. The European of today is by definition hostile towards the arts. Therefore, Scheerbart is a fanatical anti-European. Europe, this ulcer on the giant body of Asia, has spoilt the whole of humanity. […] And the poet provides the panacea to cure Europe: not the war between nations, not the League of Nations, not a pan-Europe, but planetary patriotism.
>
> [Die Welt des Maschinendämons ist Europa. Der Europäer von heute ist der grundsätzlich kunstfeindliche Mensch. Daher ist Scheerbart fanatischer Antieuropäer. Europa, diese Beule am Riesenleibe Asiens, hat das Haus der Menschen gänzlich verdorben. […] Und der Dichter gibt das Wundermittel, Europa zu heilen: nicht den Völkerkrieg, nicht den Völkerbund, nicht Paneuropa, sondern: den planetaren Patriotismus.][22]

In taking the term 'universal' literally, Scheerbart's definition of universal cosmopolitanism transcends the European or global scale as it includes extraterrestrial planets. It upholds the East as an ideal, while Europe as a stinking 'ulcer' impedes healthy global communications through continuous warfare. Nietzsche's observation of a 'self-diminution'[23] of Europe is resumed in Scheerbart's 'Anti-Europäertum' and the celebration of the Orient in his literature. Parallels between Nietzschean thought and Scheerbart's political agenda become evident in the satire introduced into his Orientalised Decadent writing as, for example, in *The Death of the Barmecides*.[24] In this work the East is, in

[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. by Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large, 19 vols (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995–), VIII.I (2014), trans. by Adrian Del Caro, 1–207 (p. 145); Large, 'Nietzsche's Orientalism', p. 195.

[21] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 148.

[22] Lothar Schreyer, 'Die Wundermittel des Paul Scheerbart', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 2 (1926), 104–05; repr. in *Über Paul Scheerbart*, ed. by Schardt and Steffen, III, 696–700 (p. 699).

[23] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 180.

[24] Scheerbart, *Der Tod der Barmekiden: Arabischer Haremsroman*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch. All references are to this edition. Hereafter page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

Edward Said's words, a stage for European navel-gazing. In 1892 Scheerbart was one of the joint founders of the Publishers of German Fantasists [Verlag deutscher Phantasten] whose aim it was to centralise and publicise a new fantastical movement [neue[n] phantastische[n] Richtung].[25] In the advertising prospectus for the new press Scheerbart names a range of contemporary writers who depart from Naturalism towards a new aesthetic of *Phantastik*. The programme further announces the translation of the major French and Belgian Decadent and Symbolist authors Albert Giraud, Jules Laforgue, Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine.[26] In his letters Scheerbart views himself as an heir to the French Decadents, citing Baudelaire and Flaubert as particularly relevant to his own work, especially the latter's *Salammbô* (1862).[27]

Arthur Moeller van den Bruck championed Scheerbart in his book *The New Humour Vaudevillestyle* [*Der neue Humor Varietestil*] (1902) as the 'most promising contemporary aesthete' [potenziertesten Aestheten unserer Tage],[28] praising him for his innovative use of humour. Moeller van den Bruck recognises the subversive and political element of irony in aestheticised literature, popularised by Wilde's aphorisms and Aubrey Beardsley's mock interviews on art.[29] His review summarises Scheerbart's Decadent aesthetics:

> Naturally Scheerbart bears two sets of arms. In terms of aesthetics, that of pure imagination […]. With regard to ethics, those of irony and satire, of the investigation of the world, of illumination, contortion, dislocation – the grotesque. […] The saving grace of this idea is of course, that everything could be so beautiful, if only things were not so ugly.
>
> [Naturgemäss sind es zweierlei Waffen, die Scheerbart führt. Im ästhetischen Falle solche der reinen Phantasie […]. Und im ethischen Falle solche der Ironie und der Satire, der Erdbeleuchtung, Durchleuchtung, Verzerrung, Verschiebung – des Grotesken. […] Da ist der rettende Gedanke selbstverständlich, dass es doch Alles so schön wäre, wenn nicht Alles – so hässlich wäre.][30]

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[25] Paul Scheerbart, 'Die Ästhetik der Phantastik', in Paul Scheerbart, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Bürk, Körber and Kohnle, X.I (1995), *Theoretische Schriften, Teil 1*, 163–79.

[26] *Paul Scheerbart. Eine Biographie in Briefen 1889–1915: 70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Berlin: Argon, 1991), p. 481.

[27] Scheerbart to Max Bruns, 18 November 1901, and Scheerbart to Rosa Gerlach, 13 December 1904, in Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, pp. 156, 273–74.

[28] Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Der neue Humor Varietestil* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1902), p. 22.

[29] See Aubrey Beardsley, interview in the newspaper *To-Day*, 2 May 1894, pp. 28–29, quoted in Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (London: Pallas Athene, 2011), p. 200.

[30] van den Bruck, *Der neue Humor Varietestil*, pp. 23, 21.

In his essay 'The Ironic Aestheticism of Paul Scheerbart' [Der ironische Ästhetizismus Paul Scheerbarts] (1897), Julius Hart also comments on Scheerbart's innovative style, which he claims to be independent of influence: 'He did not follow Aestheticism because it was the fashion […] neither the English nor the French Archaists, Decadents and Symbolists had any influence on him' [Er machte nicht deshalb Ästhetizismus, weil die Mode so kam […]. Weder die englischen noch die französischen Archaisten, Dekadenten und Symbolisten übten irgendwelchen Einfluß auf ihn aus].[31] Hart and Moeller van den Bruck are only partly right in their interpretation, as Scheerbart's aesthetics are not isolated from foreign influence. As we have seen, Scheerbart drew on French concepts of Decadence and Symbolism to override the dominance of Naturalism. His *Phantastik* suggests a revival of Decadent olfactory sensualism and Oriental mysticism to open literature to the experience of modernity.

Oil and Battle: Scheerbart's Anti-War Satire

After *Tarub,* a text concerned with the aesthetic taste of the East, two short stories from Scheerbart's collection *The Ancient Orient: Cultural Novellas from Assyria, Palmyra and Babylon*, published as a collection in 1911, parade absurd scents and smells as means of satire. The first story pervaded by satirical smells is entitled 'Kidimuti: An Assyrian General's Novelletta' [Kidimuti: Assyrische Feldherren-Novellette].[32] It was first published in *Der Sturm* on 14 October 1911 under the title 'Battle-Pomade' [Schlachtpomade]. The story relates the unruly behaviour of general Zirutu, 'the most cunning rogue of the Assyrian army' [der gewandteste Gauner der ganzen assyrischen Armee] (p. 45). His uncle Asarhaddon, King of Assyria, was 'a man of the world and during his lifetime the authority on all matters of fashion in Niniveh' [ein grosser Weltmann und in Ninive zeit seines Lebens tonangebend in allen Modeangelegenheiten] (p. 45). In order to beat the Egyptian armies, who are rebelling against the King, Zirutu asks whether the king has acquired the latest trend in military circles, the battle-pomade:

[31] Julius Hart, 'Briefe über die Literatur der Gegenwart: Der ironische Ästhetizismus Paul Scheerbarts', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 5 August 1897; repr. in *Über Paul Scheerbart: 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden*, 3 vols (Paderborn: Igel, 1992–98), II (1996), *Analysen, Aufsätze, Forschungsbeiträge*, ed. by Michael M. Schardt and Hiltrud Steffen, pp. 38–45 (p. 39).

[32] Paul Scheerbart, 'Kidimuti: Assyrische Feldherren-Novellette', in Paul Scheerbart, *Der Alte Orient: Kulturnovelletten aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon (1910–1911)*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1999), pp. 45–49. All references are to this edition. Hereafter page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

> Have you now, dear uncle, taken with you the necessary battle-pomade? It will be necessary when we chase the enemy, because we will be drenched in sweat. And the traces of sweat need to be obliterated by our new battle-pomade, which we have invented here at Niniveh. It is incredibly expensive – this strongly scented pomade. Have you still got plenty enough of it?
>
> [Hast du nun auch, lieber Onkel, die nötige Schlachtpomade mitgenommen? Denn – bei dem Verfolgen der Feinde werden wir noch manchen Schweisstropfen vergiessen. Und die Spuren davon müssen verwischt werden durch unsere neue Schlachtpomade, die wir in Ninive erfunden haben. Sie ist mächtig teuer – diese stark duftende Pomade. Hast du noch genug davon?] (p. 46)

The King replies that the 'bad smell of the battlefields' calls for even stronger scents to cover up the olfactory reality of atrocities committed [dieser schlechte Geruch auf den Schlachtfeldern muss durch andere Wohlgerüche übertäubt werden] (p. 46). After the King has spoken, the Assyrians find themselves under attack by the Egyptians. Upon entering the battle, as in a spoof comedy, Scheerbart exposes the masculine vanity and commercial interest underlying military action: 'All the warlords and officers leapt to their feet, ran their hands through their curly hair to smooth it, chucked their golden goblets into their slaves' hands and reached out for their swords and lances' [Alle Feldherren und Offiziere sprangen auf, fuhren mit den Händen durch die gekräuselten Haare, schmissen die goldenen Trinkbecher den Sklaven zu und griffen nach Schwert und Lanze] (p. 46).

After the battle is fought, the story tells us, the remaining stench on the battlefield is so dreadful that the King has to cover his nose. This stench, of course, relates to the narrative reality of the story but also alludes to the German idiom 'bis zum Himmel stinken'. This idiom, which could be translated with 'to stink to high heaven', implies that the moral scandal of war offends the god(s) with its olfactory aftermath. Scent, in its double meaning of pleasant smell and horrid stench, reveals pride and unholiness as foundations of warfare. In the story, another general named Nergal takes the initiative to find a solution to the Assyrians' smelly problem and turns to his servant Kidimuti to ask whether she could produce 'a better, even stronger scented battle-pomade, which could in actual fact drown out the horrible stenches arising from a battleground' [eine bessere, stärker duftende Pomade […], die imstande sei, in Wahrheit die üblen Gerüche eines Schlachtfeldes zu übertäuben] (p. 47). Kidimuti tells the general that he will find endless supplies of the best battle-pomade on the banks of the Nile. If it is delivered, the King will make Nergal the Governor of Egypt. Nergal hurries immediately to Egypt to import the pomade:

> In short: Nergal needed yet another ten barges, to be able to transport all the Egyptian cans and containers. And as Asarhaddan had his hair done the next day − by twenty slaves − there came the officer Nergal with his caravan of battle-pomades and simply said: 'Here, my lord, the better one, which you asked for.' Then all of the ivory tubes and the kegs made of horn and the sachets made of crocodile skin and the tubs of alabaster and the colourful glass flasks were opened by expert hands and the scent was tested. And soon one found such exquisite preciosities, that the king grew happy and happier and showered his officer Nergal with more and more gold and jewels and other spoils of war.
>
> [Kurzum: Nergal brauchte noch zehn andere Kähne, um all die ägyptischen Büchsen und Dosen unterzubringen. Und als Asarhaddon sich am nächsten Tage frisieren ließ – von zwanzig Sklaven, da kam der Feldherr Nergal – mit seiner Schlachtpomaden-Karawane und sagte nur: 'Hier, Herr, das Bessere, das du wünschest.' Da wurden alle die Elfenbeintuben und die Hornfässerchen und die Säckchen aus der Haut des Krokodils und die Alabasterdosen und die bunten Glasflaschen – von kundiger Hand geöffnet – und der Geruch geprüft. Und man fand bald so köstliche Kostbarkeiten, daß der König immer heiterer wurde und seinem Feldherrn Nergal immer mehr Gold und Edelsteine und andere im Krieg erbeutete Sachen schenkte.] (p. 48)

Here Scheerbart's satire clearly targets the Wilhelmine rearmament and Germany's flourishing expansionary policies at the time. The fairy-tale quality constructed by the usage of polysyndeta and the wilful naivety of tone and staple Decadent tropes such as the accumulation of jewels and precious objects undercut the goriness of war portrayed in this story. The battle-pomade as a trading good, in itself a greasy and congealed substance, exposes the realities of war as 'slippery' business. While Said claims that Germany's interest in the East was of lesser economic urgency than that of England, Suzanne L. Marchand maintains that 'German-speaking polities have had a very long and important relationship with both the Holy Land and the Ottoman Empire, and the Wilhelmine Empire did have colonial interests, and even colonial territories […] in the East'.[33] A study of Scheerbart's journalism and prose fiction, in which he exposes the absurdity and futility of warfare as a foul vanity project, supports this reading of the story. As early as 1903 Scheerbart and his friend Erich Mühsam (1878–1934), a German-Jewish anarchist poet, endeavoured to publish an anti-militarist, satirical newspaper called *The Fatherland* [*Das Vater-*

[33] Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. xix.

land] in reaction against these developments. A letter to Herwarth Walden, editor of *Der Sturm*, evinces the ubiquitous irony that identifies Scheerbart's writing as oppositional:

> Honoured Sir! You will agree with us that things cannot continue the way they are. Enough is enough. It simply does not work. That is why we shall establish a new daily newspaper; it will be called 'The Fatherland'. […] With primeval German greetings straight from the heart.
>
> [Geehrter Herr! Sie werden mit uns der Meinung sein, dass es so nicht weiter geht. Was zu viel ist, ist zu viel. Es geht eben nicht. Deshalb werden wir eine neue Tages-Zeitung gründen, 'Das Vaterland' soll sie heissen. […] Mit urdeutschem Herzensgruss].[34]

Scheerbart's series of articles concerned with German militarisation prove a more serious engagement with questions of national identity in relation to other cultures and the necessity of future warfare. In his articles and a pamphlet of 1909 on the disintegration of European military tradition, he argues for the avoidance of a European war, which could be guaranteed by the collapse of national boundaries:

> Initially I wanted to 'treat' this whole tragedy of militarism in a yet-to-be-founded satirical paper. However – pondering over this fatal topic has caused me to lose my sense of humour – […]. I do not believe in the great Peace of the Nations. Yet I do believe that peace can be established within Europe […]. The United States of Europe has been regarded as a much-ridiculed utopia for centuries. Faced with a dynamite war, this utopia will find a much more realisable foundation – which will soon lose its comical side.
>
> [Anfänglich wollte ich die ganze Militaristentragödie in einem neu zu begründenden Witzblatt [*Das Vaterland*] 'bearbeiten'. Aber – mir ist bei eingehender Beschäftigung mit dem fatalen Gegenstande der Humor ausgegangen – […]. An den grossen Völkerfrieden glaube ich nicht. Wohl aber glaube ich daran, dass man in Europa Frieden herstellen kann […]. Die vereinigten Staaten von Europa bildeten Jahrhunderte hindurch eine vielbelächelte Utopie. Dem Dynamitkriege gegenüber bekommt diese Utopie einen durchaus realisierbaren Boden – dem die lächerliche Seite bald fehlen wird.][35]

[34] Paul Scheerbart and Erich Mühsam to Herwarth Walden, 25 August 1903, in Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 221.

[35] Paul Scheerbart, *Die Entwicklung des Luftmilitarismus und die Auflösung der europäischen Landheere, Festungen und Seeflotten* (Berlin: Osterheld, 1909), pp. 28, 37, 38.

The Rancid Taste of Western Decadence

While Scheerbart's satirical smells of the Orient contribute to an attack on German foreign policies as seen in 'Battle-Pomade', the second short story targets the conventions of Decadence as an obsolete aesthetic. Again, taste and smell play a key role in Scheerbart's critique in 'Of People who lost their Heads: A Palmyreian Novella by Torchlight' [Von Leuten, die den Kopf verloren: Palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novellette], which was published separately in *Die Aktion* in 1911.[36] The story's pathetic emphasis on exotic tastes rather than smells parodies iconic Oriental *femmes fatales* (the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Salammbô, Herodias and Salomé) in the figure of Queen Zenobia. According to Hugo von Winckler's Orientalist hallmark study, *The Intellectual Culture of Babylonia in its Relations to the Developments of Human Civilisation* [*Die babylonische Geisteskultur in ihren Beziehungen zur Kulturentwicklung der Menschheit*], which Scheerbart had read in 1907, Zenobia perceived herself as heiress to Cleopatra and Semiramis, both of whom represent Ischtar-Astarte, the Assyrian goddess of fertility. In Scheerbart's text she is a caricature of the capricious nymphet of nineteenth-century Oriental Decadence. The story opens with the Queen's executioner, doctor and chef overlooking a Flaubertian palace with a Mallarméan 'castle pond where the swans are' [Schlossteich, wo die Schwäne sind] (p. 59). They literally watch the sun set in the West, a clear allusion to Scheerbart's perspective on the decay of the West (p. 55). Zenobia reigns as Queen supreme, known for her love of jam and good pastries [Konfitüren und das gute Gebäck] (p. 55), which has earned her the title of 'Queen of Jams' [Konfitüren-Königin] (p. 56). In a reference to Wilde's Salomé, the narrator relates that the Queen loves men's heads even more than tasty pastries (p. 56), and hence she also is known as the 'Queen of Men's Heads' [Männerkopf-Königin] (p. 57). This juxtaposition of Zenobia's refined taste for exotic, yet banal breakfast items and violence is representative of Scheerbart's view on Decadence as a product of a 'civilization grown over-luxurious, over-inquiring', as Arthur Symons had put it in his article 'The Decadent Movement in Literature' (1893).[37]

Zenobia embodies Decadence in a comical crossover between periods and styles, East and West. Having just woken up at sunset in a very Decadent fashion, and 'with a sombre look' [mit finsterer Miene] (p. 56) resembling Salomé, she appears solemnly on the terrace, only to suddenly

[36] Paul Scheerbart, 'Von Leuten, die den Kopf verloren: Palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novellette', in Scheerbart, *Der Alte Orient*, ed. by Rausch, pp. 55–59. All references are to this edition. Hereafter page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

[37] Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (November 1893), pp. 858–67 (p. 859).

demand, 'all furious and fierce' [ganz wild und heftig] (p. 56), to have the chef beheaded: 'Just had zwieback from Damascus with Sidonian strawberry filling. And – damned be the chef – he used rancid oil. I spat out everything. Whoever baked this stuff? […] Off with his head!' [Eben Zwieback aus Damaskus gegessen mit sidonischer Erdbeerfüllung. Und – verfluchter Koch – ranziges Öl war drin. Ausgespuckt hab ich alles. Wer hat gebacken solches Zeug? […] Hau ihm den Kopf ab!] (p. 57). Decadence as an artistic dogma is rancid, out of date and, poignantly, is starting to smell of its own decay. While portrayed as cruel and unpredictable, Zenobia possesses hypersensitive taste and smell; she also faints on seeing blood. Thus, Scheerbart undermines the ideal of a bloodthirsty *femme fatale* embodied by the Oriental enchantress by parodying the Decadent overstimulation of the nerves and over-sensitivity to bodily sensations.

This Decadent queen's comical flaw is her sensitivity to violence and the scent of blood: '"I want to witness the beheading." […] During the procedure the queen Zenobia fainted yet again' ['"Ich will beim Kopfabhauen zusehen." […] Die Königin Zenobia fiel bei der Prozedur abermals in Ohnmacht'] (pp. 57–58). As a result, Scheerbart allegorically ridicules the supposedly innovative power of Decadent literature; its most famous icons are quite literally 'powerless like the queen' [ohnmächtig wie die Königin] (p. 58) and become fickle figures susceptible to parody. Regretting her hunger for violence, in the end the queen is taken captive and redelivered to the starting point of Western Decadence, 'in triumphal procession through the streets of Rome' [im Triumphzuge durch die Straßen Roms] (p. 59). The satirical revision of the 1890s aesthetics of Decadence is another step in Scheerbart's search for modern aesthetics in the East. The perversion of seductive Eastern smells and tastes into frivolity and ridiculousness through a European lens re-evaluates the term Decadent; no longer referring to the aesthetic category, Scheerbart seems to say that aesthetic literature is in danger of becoming a self-suffocating, overdone artifice [*Verkünstelung*]. Obstructed by too heavy a fragrance and excessive tastes, the essence of such literature is no longer identifiable.

In *Tarub*, Tarub's culinary worldliness interferes with the artistic reveries of her would-be-artist husband Safur. The novel ends in a typically Scheerbartian twist. As the protagonist commits suicide, the Decadent scents deliver an ironic comment on the futility of art: 'And with furious might he runs against the wall of clay, so that his house quakes and his head – cracks. With a shrill cry the poet collapses. The hyenas close in slowly. The white roses smell so wonderful' [Und mit fürchterlicher Kraft rennt er mit dem Kopf gegen die Lehmwand, daß sein Haus erzittert und daß sein Schädel – berstet. Mit gellendem Schrei bricht der Dichter zusammen. Die Hyänen kommen langsam näher. Wunderbar duften die weißen Rosen] (p. 145).

While reinforcing the ties between East and West, Scheerbart nevertheless employs a panoply of Orientalist clichés such as exotic scents and tastes to set the East apart from a complex and sophisticated analysis of Europe. In order to critique Europe's decadence and degeneration, Scheerbart praises the achievements of the East and emphasises Europe's indebtedness to Asia. However, a twofold focus on alienation through strange scents needs to be distinguished in Scheerbart's work. The satirised Orient of his later works presents the Western reader with a mirror in which the caricatured sensuality of this Orient, which is still a positive one, points to homegrown political problems. In contrast, the satirical Orient of Scheerbart's early works casts the reader back on their own alienation from the idea of sensual and aesthetic experience in modernity. In both cases the applications of olfactory literary motifs are set in a thrice-removed reality: namely that of a fictionalised, Eastern past. The literary scent trail distances yet guides the reader to read from past to present, from East to West, from personal to social realities. By quite literally defamiliarising the smells and tastes of the Orient, Scheerbart introduces a critical distance into his writing in order to provoke his European readership to self-reflection. At the same time the scents also smother the reader, clouding yet revealing political storms brewing over Europe. It comes as no surprise that Benjamin connected Scheerbart's hybridisation of art, satire, political and aesthetic criticism to Bertolt Brecht's literary techniques, namely the attempt to unveil truth through its estrangement. In his texts Scheerbart intentionally contaminates delicate Oriental scents with unpleasant and unwanted odours to express his social critique of Western politics. In that sense, Scheerbart anticipates the alienation effects [*Verfremdungseffekte*] practised from the 1920s onwards in Brecht's epic theatre, designed to provoke societal awareness in audiences and readerships. The latter was, in Benjamin's words, 'completing what Scheerbart started so well'.[38]

[38] Gershom Scholem quotes from an unpublished conversation he had with Benjamin in 1938; in Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, trans. by Harry Zorn (New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2001), p. 261; orig. *Walter Benjamin. Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975).

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Literary Halitosis: Bad breath and *Odol* in German Literature around 1900

Since Antiquity breathing has been tightly interlaced with the living, the soul, the divine, or even the spoken and written word. The most striking example is the Latin word *anima*, which means simultaneously 'breath', 'whiff', 'soul' or 'animate being'.[1] However, the Bible also knows the life-giving *odem* and Word of God as well as the sweet waft of seduction.[2] Hence, a fragrant breath 'was not simply a matter of aesthetics. To have a fragrant breath in antiquity was to exhale the sweetness of life and to attest to the purity of one's soul.'[3] These qualities of breath are highly present in European art and literature of modern times. On the one hand, they made it possible to conceptualise an affective connection between nature, the work of art and the recipient; on the other hand, scents, especially those of the breath, stood for seduction. The sheer ability to breathe has also been of rhetorical significance from Antiquity to modern times. Speaking without breathing is simply not possible. Pauses for breath structure speech, but also create – sometimes meaningful – pauses from speech. As Stefanie Heine has shown in several articles, the pause for breath becomes a poetological principle in modern texts from Robert Musil to Jack Kerouac.[4] In addition, the loss of breath can also symbolise the fragility of poetic language and transform breathing into a poetic life principle.[5]

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[1] *Langenscheidt Taschenwörterbuch Latein*, ed. by Hermann Menge (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 2002), p. 43.

[2] Genesis 2.7, John 1.1–3 and Song of Songs, 1–8.

[3] Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 44.

[4] Stefanie Heine, '*Animi velut respirant*: Rhythm and Breathing Pauses in Ancient Rhetoric, Virginia Woolf and Robert Musil', *Comparative Literature*, 4 (2017), 355–69; Stefanie Heine, 'Ebb and Flow: Breath-Writing from Ancient Rhetoric to Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg', in *Reading Breath in Literature*, ed. by Arthur Rose and others (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 91–112.

[5] Sunny Yudkoff, 'The Tubercular Soul: On the Poetic Breath of the Yiddish Writer Lune Mattes', conference paper, American Comparative Literature Association, Utrecht 2017: 'On Breath' (unpublished).

Instead of adding another contribution to this branch of research, my chapter aims to spotlight the less-loved opposite: bad breath in German literature around 1900. First of all, halitosis occurs much less frequently in literature than pleasant wafts of scent, but when bad breath appears it is much more significant. Where breath smells, there is a great deal at stake medically, socially and aesthetically. The following paper sketches how bad breath in two examples from German literature not only menaces human relationships but also beauty and civilisation. At the same time, the two texts under discussion, namely Robert Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* and Robert Walser's *Na also,* exemplify a crucial shift in attitude. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the deep affection and infection caused by bad breath becomes a surface phenomenon. The connection between the subject – as the depth of a human being – and breath loosens in modern times and vice versa: good and bad breath become arbitrary signs as soon as they become a matter of mass discipline. However, before discussing the literary description and reflection of this shift, I outline its origin in the middle of the nineteenth century, as the sciences of body and mind changed the readability of body odour, especially of bad breath.

Semiology of Body Odours in Modern Medicine

Bad breath is telling. Generally, the interpretation of body odours has a tradition in medicine which continues to this day. This practice is grounded in the theory of miasma. In the nineteenth century, physiology in France gave corporeal exhalations specific semiotic values. As Eugenie Briot shows, odours were initially systematised as signs of invisible diseases by the physiologist Ernest Monin. His reader Auguste Galopin expanded this diagnostic semiotics into an analysis of morality, a process which prepared it for transfer into other social discourses.[6] In comparison with the theory of miasma, a significant shift is noticeable: body odours are no longer the disease itself but the readable symptom of a corporeal or mental illness. The German-speaking areas followed this trend several years later. Psychoanalysis especially was interested in analyses of body odours in relation to mental illness, as the works of Wilhelm Fließ and Sigmund Freud show.[7]

[6] Eugénie Briot, 'Couleurs de peau, odeurs de peau: Le parfum de la femme et ses typologies au XIXième siècle', *Corps*, 3 (2007), 57–63.

[7] Wilhelm Fließ, *Neue Beiträge zur Klinik und Therapie der nasalen Reflexneurose* (Leipzig and Vienna: Deuticke, 1893); Wilhelm Fließ, *Über den ursächlichen Zusammenhang von Nase und Geschlechtsorgan: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Nervenphysiologie* (Halle: Marhold, 1910); Sigmund Freud, 'Zur Genese des Fetischismus', in *Aus dem Kreis um Sigmund Freud: Zu den Protokollen der Wiener Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung*, ed. by Ernst Federn and Gerhard Winterberger (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1992 [1909]), pp. 10–22.

It is well known that a close correlation between disease and hygiene has existed since the nineteenth century. This correlation is not restricted to the field of science. Rather, it is part of a highly ideological politics: science becomes a myth bound into everyday life.[8] To read lack of cleanliness as moral deficiency – especially with regard to women – is a comparatively harmless variation on this myth. The culmination lies in the racial theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which specifically identify smelly bodies with subhuman beings. The absolute nadir is anti-Semitism during National Socialism, in which the Jew smelling of garlic was one of the most common stereotypes.[9] However, for this chapter the identification of non-corporeal deficiencies is more important than eugenics. The crucial point is that, as in medicine, odour reveals an invisible, hidden moral dubiousness, a reading which occurs in works by Galopin. In particular, young bourgeois women had to follow a strict set of rules which determined which body odours should be avoided and which should be intensified.[10] This also means that the norm is not particularly distinctively marked: the healthy, moral man – in literature mostly white men from the upper class – does not smell, at most he gives off scent.[11]

Halitosis is one of the significant body odours in clinical diagnostics in the nineteenth century. The second and third chapters of Ernest Monin's *Les Odeurs du corps humain* discuss the analysis of breath in medical diagnostics.[12] Auguste Galopin not only associates good or bad breath with various diseases, such as stomach problems or bad teeth, and with health practices such as the Turkish steam bath or hammam,[13] but also warns pregnant women, for example, of the physical and mental troubles caused by acid breath: 'The normal physiological laws, obeying psychological disorders, no longer preside over the phenomena of general and particular secretions. The salivary glands produce saliva that is no longer alkaline, but rather acidic' [Les lois physiologiques normales, obéissant aux troubles psychologiques, ne président plus les phénomènes de sécrétions générales et particulières.

[8] Peter Utz, '"Odol" und andere literarische Quellen: Am Beispiel von Robert Walsers Prosastück *Na also*', in *Vom Umgang mit literarischen Quellen: Internationales Kolloquium vom 17.–19. Oktober 2001 in Bern/Schweiz*, ed. by Stéphanie Cudré-Mauroux, Annetta Ganzoni and Corinna Jäger-Trees (Geneva and Berne: Slatkine, 2002), pp. 159–81 (p. 162).

[9] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2010 [1947]), pp. 192–94.

[10] Alain Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social XVIIIe–XIXe siècles* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008 [1982]), pp. 259–93.

[11] Janice Carlisle, *Common Scents: Comparative Encounters in High-Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 29–36.

[12] Ernest Monin, *Les Odeurs du corps humain*, 3rd edn (Paris: Doin 1903), pp. 102–73.

[13] Auguste Galopin, *Le Parfum de femme* (Paris: Dentu, 1886), pp. 172–79, 241–43.

Les glandes salivaires produisent une salive qui n'est plus alcaline, mais bien acidulée].[14]

However, this scientific empiricism is intermingled with the cultural history of bad breath. In the myth of science, modern and premodern varieties of scientific, religious and everyday knowledge overlap. Since there is only a correlation but not a causality between smell and disease, even olfactive diagnostics in medicine in times of bacteriology remain rooted in the theory of miasma, which links bad breath with disease and the danger of infection. As mentioned above, breath is also not only the opposite of the divine *odem*, sweet waft or even poetic speech, but since Antiquity has been linked with disgust, social isolation and punishment. Because they disregarded rituals honouring her, Aphrodite punished the Lesbians with bad breath, which left the men of Lesbos discontented with their womenfolk. Job was also given bad breath by God which disgusted his wife and his brothers.[15] In the bad odour of the nineteenth century, disease, animality, savagery, blasphemy and disgust are united and together form the other side of the poetic waft of sweet scent, a union illustrated here with two literary examples.

As exemplified by Robert Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906), German literature around 1900 often combines mythology with medical discourse. In the case of *Törleß*, bad breath keeps its contagiosity but no longer transmits diseases; instead, it testifies to profound 'infection' by moral decline such as sexual libertinism and the decay of civilisation. Robert Walser's short prose piece *Na also* (1917), on the other hand, shows the superficiality and arbitrariness of reading breath as a sign of morality and civility. Furthermore, by imitating pseudo-scientific advertising language for the mouthwash *Odol*, the text reveals how profoundly the human breath that smells or gives off scent is part of capitalist and nationalist practices of power.

Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß: Smelling the hidden putrescence

Robert Musil's first novel tells the story of the mistreatment and sexual abuse of the man-child Basini committed by his three co-pupils Reiting, Beineberg and even Törleß in the former monastery of K. The depiction of these events is a criticism of educational institutions and images of virility in the late Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nevertheless, they are only the framework within which the narrator's voice reflects on the extraordinary perception of Törleß

[14] Galopin, *Le Parfum de femme*, p. 176. This and subsequent translations are my own.
[15] Job, 19.17–19.

and his development from an immature and insecure boy into an 'aesthetic-intellectual character' [ästhetisch-intellektuellen Natur].[16] The novel explores the possibility of a sensitive, even poetic gnosis in a time of empiricising psychology and philosophy. For this reason, Musil also revises the literary heritage of the late nineteenth century.

In view of Musil's intensive reception of Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Bahr, whose thinking is in specific ways olfactory, it is unsurprising that Musil's coming-of-age story is interwoven with odours and scents: bodies, interiors, even paper, effectively or metaphorically smell. The nose provides the crucial sense in Törleß's experience and development.[17] He perceives two of the boarding school pupils in specifically olfactory ways: the victim Basini and the uncanny Beineberg. While Törleß experiences the tantalised Basini in a primarily aesthetic perception as a 'bewitchingly warm breath' [ein betörender warmer Atem], Beineberg's breeze is less pleasant.[18] His breath – and the words transported with it – cause a dizziness which simultaneously attracts and repulses Törleß.

Each of the three abusive pupils has a specific approach to the torture of Basini. Reiting cultivates a sadistic Machiavellianism, Törleß is in search of aesthetic experiences and Beineberg has a crude metaphysical vision. The latter inherits an 'esoteric Buddhism' [esoterischen Buddhismus] from his father, which increases to the 'fantastic hope, […] to be able to secure dominion by means of unusual powers' [phantastischen Hoffnung, […] sich mittels ungewöhnlicher Kräfte eine Herrschaft sichern zu können].[19] In this sense he understands the mistreatment and abuse of Basini as an exercise for a higher mission and aims to show that the law of nature can be overcome by the spirit. More concretely, Beineberg wants Basini to levitate with the help of hypnosis and the threat of a weapon. The experiment certainly fails and only causes more mistreatment of Basini.[20]

Shortly before the beginning of Basini's mistreatment, Beineberg leads Törleß to the well-known red chamber, where he reveals his metaphysical vision of the torture of Basini. As usual, Törleß's feelings towards Beineberg's esoteric justification of violence are ambiguous. On the one hand, he cannot completely follow Beinberg's train of thought: 'Törleß did not understand

[16] Robert Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Adolf Frisé, 9 vols (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976–81), VI (1976), *Prosa und Stücke*, 7–140 (p. 111).

[17] Fragrances even have a poetological significance in the novel (Sergej Rickenbacher, *Wissen um Stimmung: Diskurs und Poetik in Robert Musils 'Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß' und 'Vereinigungen'* (Munich: Fink, 2015), pp. 237–80).

[18] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 98.

[19] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, pp. 19, 20.

[20] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, pp. 119–22.

everything' [Törleß verstand nicht alles].[21] On the other hand, these words affect him in a special, nearly corporeal way. In this moment, the smell of Beineberg's breath appears for the first time: Törleß 'felt Beineberg's breath carry across to him and sucked it in like an oppressive narcotic' [fühlte Beinebergs Atem zu sich herüberdringen und sog ihn wie ein beklemmendes Betäubungsmittel ein].[22] Beineberg's breath is far from neutral. It is physically and mentally invasive as well as intoxicating. In this respect, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* remains indebted to the thought patterns of miasma theory, which considers inhaling small pathogens to be the cause of illness. Nonetheless, the comparison of Beineberg's breath to a narcotic or poison shows that the literal persuasiveness of this pattern was already in decline at the beginning of the twentieth century. Instead, the little drop of poison associates Beineberg's bad breath with the concept of the aesthetic-intellectual character, more precisely, the poet. This comparison also occurs in other scenes of halitosis in the novel; and the adult Törleß retrospectively classifies the incidents in the monastery as 'that little drop of poison which is necessary to take away the all too safe and reassured health of the soul, and to give it in return a finer, sharpened, understanding one' [jene kleine Menge Giftes, die nötig ist, um der Seele die allzu sichere und beruhigte Gesundheit zu nehmen und ihr dafür eine feinere, zugeschärfte, verstehende zu geben].[23]

In this sense, Beineberg's breath in the red chamber provokes a series of images and words with which Törleß tries to grasp his extraordinary sensations in the face of art, women and even Basini. It is Beineberg who gives Törleß the provisional wording for the comparison of his confusing, homoerotic feelings towards his victim Basini with his higher interest in sensational perception: 'A mere mocking exteriority' [eine bloße äffende Äußerlichkeit].[24] One could say that Törleß's affective response to Beineberg's bad breath refers initially to the double sense of the Latin *anima*, which means both breath and soul. However, Beineberg's halitosis is not inspiring or simply harmless. It effectively deafens Törleß' mind and his metaphysical theories trouble his mind metaphorically. The esoteric illusions threaten to infect Törleß at the beginning of the novel, but he emancipates himself ever further from Beineberg's words and exhalations.

The second passage which deals with halitosis is, in a way, similar to the first. Again, Törleß explores the limits of rationality, but this time in the form of imaginary numbers. After a conversation on this topic with his teacher, he

[21] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 60.
[22] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 60.
[23] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 112.
[24] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 60.

meets Beineberg, who wants to know the results of this discussion. For this purpose, the two pupils withdraw to a window in front of which they have placed a clothes rack. In this isolated, intimate spot Beineberg starts a tirade against the meaning of science and promotes the forces of the spiritual realm. In contrast to the former passage, Törleß dislikes Beineberg's schematic critique, but these esoteric aberrances do not affect Törleß only in a confusing way: 'Törleß had long since leaned back again. Beineberg's hot breath got caught in the coats and heated up the corner. And as always in his state of excitement, Beineberg embarrassed Törleß' [Törleß hatte sich längst wieder zurückgelehnt. Beinebergs heißer Atem fing sich in den Mänteln und erhitzte den Winkel. Und wie immer in der Erregung, wirkte Beineberg peinlich auf Törleß].[25] Törleß's bodily reaction in the enclosed space indicates corporeal disgust towards Beineberg's breath, but there is also an emotional rejection of his co-pupil. Therefore, one could say that Beineberg's breath once again produces bodily, emotional and intellectual effects on Törleß, but this time with a slight, yet essential shift: Beineberg's words and breath no longer correspond to his own confusion. On the contrary, he resolutely rejects his irrational way of thinking: 'You don't understand me. […] Oh, leave me alone with your speculation' [Du verstehst mich nicht. […] ach, laß mich mit deiner Spekulation in Ruhe].[26]

Up to this point, Beineberg's breath is marked as peculiar, but not explicitly disqualified as bad breath. This classification occurs later in the novel. However, it is not Törleß who classifies Beineberg's breath, but the victim Basini. While Törleß interviews Basini about his relationship to Reiting and Beineberg during a secret meeting, the tormented pupil answers: 'Oh, Beineberg is ugly. Don't you think he smells from his mouth?' [Oh, Beineberg ist häßlich. Findest du nicht auch, daß er aus dem Munde riecht?].[27] Basini's judgement concentrates Törleß's feelings towards Beineberg in the latter's bad breath: his ugliness is corporeal as well as spiritual.[28] The fragrant pupil Basini seems to help Törleß to reinforce his position against Beineberg as well as against Reiting. Towards the end of the novel the two want to torture Basini again. Törleß rejects any further participation in these actions. Beineberg especially reacts in an enraged manner and 'drew breath; he looked as if he wanted to collect poison on his lips, then he came very close to Törleß' [schöpfte Atem; er sah aus, als wolle er Gift auf seinen Lippen sammeln, dann trat er ganz nahe an Törleß heran].[29] Again, Törleß is threatened by Beineberg's words and

[25] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 82.
[26] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 83.
[27] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 101.
[28] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, pp. 21, 82, 57.
[29] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 127.

odem, but this time Törleß is already immunised and even the attempts to blackmail him fail: 'You disgust me! Your vulgarity is pointless! That's what's disgusting about you' [Ihr ekelt mich an! Eure Gemeinheit ist ohne Sinn! Das ist das Widerwärtige an euch].[30] Evidently, Törleß is disgusted by the sadistic lust of his co-pupils, a lust which marks two poles of a spectrum: Beineberg's esoteric sadism shows a lack of reasoning, whilst Reiting's actions are led by cold rationality. It is no coincidence that Reiting has nearly no corporeal presence and especially no smelly breath. Odour stands for the corporeal or emotional aspect of perception. Törleß is heading towards an equilibrium which is linked to Musil's poetics of emotional-rational thought and developed in the novel through Basini's 'bewitchingly warm breath' [betörenden warmen Atem] and other pleasant fragrances, such as the perfume of his mother, which Törleß literally examines in the last sentence of the book by sniffing. Not only can his development towards an aesthetic-intellectual character be followed through the trail of his olfactory perceptions – perfumes and their perception are also a metaphor for the intended effect of Musil's novel: to transform instinctive drives into a desire that is both intellectual and physical but does not demand immediate satisfaction, as Törleß does in the end.

In comparison with this sweet waft of breath and the perfume, bad breath lacks any poetological importance. Nevertheless, it does not merely stand for the disgusting and therefore for the opposite of the aesthetic. Musil's differentiation is subtler. Beineberg nearly seduces Törleß physically and mentally. His attraction, which persists in spite of Beineberg's double ugliness, gives Törleß the opportunity to think and speak about his extraordinary perceptions for a certain period of his development. His emancipation towards an 'aesthetic-intellectual character' [ästhetisch-intellektuellen Natur] lies in his capacity to smell the decay in Beineberg's bad *odem*. This metaphor of the scented intellectual is strongly reminiscent of Friedrich Nietzsche's aphorisms and diaries, with which Musil was familiar.[31] However, the novel is not moralistic and does not denounce all corporeal, emotional and mental confusion, especially not in art. The question is always: what is the purpose of such aberrations?[32]

In light of this reading, three aspects of medical and hygienic discourse activate and inform Musil's first novel: first, one can perceive invisible truth through the smell of breath and words; second, the residue of miasma theory is supplemented by associations with narcotics and poison, indicating a weak-

[30] Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, p. 127.

[31] Cf. Mădălina Diaconu, *Tasten – Riechen – Schmecken: Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), pp. 195–200.

[32] Cf. Robert Musil, 'Über das Unanständige und Kranke in der Kunst', in Musil, *Gesammelte Werke*, VIII (1978), *Essays und Reden*, 977–83.

ening of the known thought pattern; and, third, there is always the danger of becoming infected or poisoned – not with disease, but with uncivilised behaviour. The fear of this spiritual 'infection' also occurs in late-Victorian novels, but there this menace is linked to social classes: it is the industrial bourgeosie which fears the smell of the working class.[33] Musil's novel breaks away from this tradition: Beineberg belongs to the upper class, who will rule the Dual Monarchy in the future. In Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, too, bad breath and dental problems are an expression of the creeping degeneration of the upper middle-classes. However, in *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* halitosis does not symbolise class inferiority or degeneration, but the interlacement of aesthetic appearance and ethical conduct: if breath smells, not only does beauty disappear, but humanity does, too. However, despite the slight shifts compared to the discourse of the nineteenth century, Musil's novel at least corresponds with the well-known narrative tradition that interweaves odour, illness and immorality. My second example, Robert Walser's short prose piece *Na also*, questions precisely this matrix.

Na also (1917): Combating Halitosis

Even though infection through miasma was no longer feared at the turn of the twentieth century, there still existed a specific commingling of medical considerations and the struggle against bad breath. On the one hand, there is still a widely shared desire to banish bad breath in Western society because this unpleasant body odour is synonymous with unattractiveness or social inferiority. On the other hand, a study by the American dentist Willoughby Dayton Miller in 1877 provoked increased production and sales of antibacterial mouthwash for prophylactic purposes.[34] The time frame for this process differed across Europe. While in anglophone countries the sales of mouthwash only increased in the 1920s due to the creation of the scientific term 'halitosis',

[33] Carlisle, *Common Scents*, pp. 29–44, 83–87. Bad breath is also excluded from the entanglement of divine odours and terrestrial stench in literary Aestheticism that erases the potential for differentiation through bad odours. To my knowledge, there is no mention of bad breath in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, although even odourless saints become stinky (Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Flacon', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), I, *Les Fleurs du mal* (1861), 46–48). Nor is there any reference to halitosis in Joris-Karl Huysmans's epochal novel *À rebours*, in which stench is sometimes equal to fragrance (Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Lucien Descaves, 18 vols in 9 (Geneva: Slatkine, 1972), VII, *À rebours* [1884], 184).

[34] Robert Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne: Von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace* (Munich: Beck, 2000), pp. 291–93.

the product *Odol* was already a standard fixture in a considerable number of German households at the end of the nineteenth century.[35] By linking fragrance with medically approved sanitariness, the producers of mouthwash employed the same myth of everyday life as perfumeries did in the early nineteenth century (until Napoleon forbade them to claim such a link in 1810).[36] Although the era of bacteriology had already begun, desinfection and deodorisation were still, incorrectly, amalgamated. However, as Thomas Wegmann has shown, the reference to former discursive elements such as the miasma, the moral value of bad breath, or even the divinity of the sweet waft of fragrance creates the acceptance of *Odol* among the product's target group. Even more, the commingling of sanitariness and wafts of sweet smells is one of the reasons for the success of antibacterial mouthwash.[37] The second part of this chapter will show that capitalist aims and advertising imagery have a fundamental impact on establishing and standardising breath odour. This process also works in the opposite direction: ever more discourses are interconnected, while at the same time a reduction in meaning and a concentration on the superficial occur.

Odol is not only a hygiene product but also the manifestation of a cultural self-image at the beginning of the twentieth century. This cultural significance can be found not least in mentions of the product in art, for example, in the poem *L' ode all' Odol* written by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini for Karl August Lingner, the producer of *Odol*; or in the parody of a modern intellectual by Kurt Tucholsky: 'Ink, red wine, and Odol | are apparently three liquids – | Man can live with these quite well' [Tinte, Rotwein und Odol | sind drei Flüssigkeiten wohl – | Damit kann der Mensch schon leben].[38] A third example will be discussed in greater depth, namely, the short prose piece *Na also* (1917) by Robert Walser.

As is characteristic for Walser's short prose, *Na also* is a metafictional narrative which discusses the process of poetry writing and performs this practice at the same time. An allegedly auctorial narrator/writer describes a paradoxical scenery at the beginning – moonshine inside, sunshine outside, in addition heavy rain – while a second voice, that of a listener or reader, complains about the absurdity of the story-telling and starts to doubt the mental capacity of the narrator. The writer assures us that he is 'absolutely normal and reliable

[35] Even today, around a quarter of Germans still use mouthwash every day, 70% of them *Odol* (Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne*, p. 290).

[36] Annick le Guérer, *Le Parfum: Des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Jacob, 2005), p. 178.

[37] Cf. Thomas Wegmann, *Dichtung und Warenzeichen: Reklame im literarischen Feld 1850–2000* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), pp. 155–62.

[38] Kurt Tucholsky, 'Sauflied, ganz allein', in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Mary Gerold-Tucholsky, 10 vols (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975), IX, *1931*, 206.

in every respect' [absolut normal und in jeder Hinsicht zuverlässig], as well as 'perfectly healthy' [ganz gesund] – just not in the mood for poetry: the 'Witz' for it is lacking today.[39] The German term 'Witz' means *esprit* and joke at the same time. Then, as a restart is necessary, the writer begins abruptly to speak about *Odol* after his auto-diagnosis: 'Odol should not be missing on any modern washstand' [Odol sollte auf keinem modernen Waschtisch fehlen].[40] The text continues in a similar style: 'He who does not appreciate Odol does not appreciate himself. Without Odol, no civilization is imaginable. […] Odol is a delicious composition and the result of a combination of the finest substances' [Wer Odol nicht schätzt, schätzt sich selber nicht. Ohne Odol ist keine Zivilisation denkbar. […] Odol ist die köstliche Zusammensetzung und die Folge einer Vereinigung feinster Substanzen].[41] Walser's writer is still lacking 'Witz' as he strings together sentences which come from advertising – or are derived from publicity. As Peter Utz clearly demonstrates, *Na also* not only imitates advertising language: certain sentences can be directly related to the marketing of *Odol*, which uses an economic self-constituting practice in the sense of perpetual self-optimisation and capitalisation and the opposition of civilisation and wildness in addition to scientificity.[42] *Odol*'s advertising is not free of racist and imperialist stereotypes: 'You have to bless Black Africa with "Odol" to keep the teeth of black people white' [Man muss das schwarze Afrika mit 'Odol' beglücken, um die Zähne der Schwarzen weiss zu erhalten].[43] In an advertisement which appeared as early as 1904, a German warship emits clouds of *Odol* smoke; *Odol* zeppelins hover over the Reichstag in 1934 and over the Olympic city of Berlin in 1936.[44] The deranged writer presents, via citation and montage, a norm which should be fulfilled in modern Western civilisation: hygiene, economic thinking and self-esteem as well as self-control, superiority, pleasure and quality.

The montage is not without ironic undertones. In the advertising part of the text, the tone becomes increasingly parodic. First, the narrator defines *Odol* as an inevitable criterion of civilisation: 'Those who do not want to be looked upon and judged as barbarians but as cultured people should see to it that they obtain Odol by the shortest route' [Wer nicht als Barbar sondern als kultivierter Mensch angeschaut und gewertet zu werden wünscht, sehe zu, daß

[39] Robert Walser, *Na also*, in *Sämtliche Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. by Jochen Greven, 20 vols (Zurich and Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985–86), v (1985), *Der Spaziergang: Prosastücke und kleine Prosa*, 171–75 (p. 172); this and subsequent translations of this text are my own.
[40] Walser, *Na also*, p. 172.
[41] Walser, *Na also*, p. 172.
[42] Cf. Utz, '"Odol"'.
[43] Utz, '"Odol"', p. 163.
[44] Utz, '"Odol"', pp. 164–65.

er sich auf kürzestem Weg Odol verschaffe].[45] Even more, *Odol* replaces 'all good human qualities in every respect' [alle guten menschlichen Eigenschaften in jeder Hinsicht].[46] Therefore, it is justified that 'individuals as well as whole peoples who reject Odol' [Einzelmenschen sowie ganze Völkerschaften, welche Odol ablehnen] are forced to use it.[47] Enough role models exist: aristocrats, pastors, 'food speculators, noble spies, railway and petroleum kings' [Lebensmittelspekulanten, vornehme Spione, Eisenbahn- und Petroleumkönige] etc.[48] In actual fact, as the writer concludes, a nation which uses *Odol* – and especially Germany in 1917 – possesses 'with historical necessity the right to dictate laws to all other peoples of the globe and to rule without limit over the entire globe' [mit historischer Notwendigkeit das Recht […], allen übrigen Völkern des Erdballs Gesetze zu diktieren und über den gesamten Kreis der Welt unumschränkt zu herrschen].[49]

The satiric tendencies of the *Odol* passage cannot be overlooked. After the abnormal writer has to leave the house of the decent readers because of his *Odol* parody and further provocations, he heads first for the Herrenfeld Theatre. This house was a celebrated Jewish theatre in Berlin after the turn of the century, where the Herrnfeld brothers performed burlesque plays.[50] The Herrnfeld brothers and their stereotypical Jewish figures were celebrated by intellectual critics in Berlin, among them Kurt Tucholsky. The writer thus enters an institution where his humorous cultural criticism, as practised with *Odol*, is cultivated. Furthermore, he enters a milieu that is itself discriminated against through olfactory stereotypes. Nonetheless, Walser is not just concerned with the joke, as the conclusion shows, but also with the *esprit*. In a coffee house on the Kurfürstendamm the writer meets the 'all-Germanic Wulff reminiscent of aurochs, primeval forests, the sound of swords and bearskin. His full beard reached down to the tips of his feet. On his arm he had a busty, luxuriant, strapping, juicy lady capitalist' [an Auerochsen, Urwälder, Schwerterklang und Bärenfell erinnernden Vollgermanen Wulff. Sein Vollbart reichte ihm bis zu den Fußspitzen herab. Am Arm hatte er eine busenstrotzende, üppige, stramme, saftige Kapitalistin].[51] Immediately following these sentences, the writer refers to his peculiar mood to explain and apologise for his mention

[45] Walser, *Na also*, p. 266.
[46] Walser, *Na also*, p. 172.
[47] Walser, *Na also*, p. 173.
[48] Walser, *Na also*, p. 173.
[49] Walser, *Na also*, p. 173.
[50] Peter Sprengel, *Populäres jüdisches Theater in Berlin von 1877 bis 1933* (Berlin: Haude and Spener, 1997), pp. 71–75.
[51] Walser, *Na also*, p. 175.

of the couple. Despite these relativisations, these sentences reveal another aspect of Walser's *Odol* story.

On the one hand, the female capitalist possesses the sexual attractiveness which the real *Odol* advertisement promises to every woman.[52] On the other hand, it is no longer the life free from *Odol* which counts as uncivilised in *Na also*, but the primitive ally of the capitalist. This combination of premodernity and modernity is a typical strategy in *Odol* advertising.[53] Walser's *Na also* seems to highlight this interplay. In any case, his prose does not give the reader an idea of how to imagine a human being, whether civilised or uncivilised. 'Spirit, progress, education of mind and heart' [Geist, Fortschritt, Verstandes- und Herzensbildung], culture, savagery, etc. remain empty terms which are only charged with meaning by being placed in opposition, i. e., by the system of signifiers.[54] This dynamic is already present at the beginning of *Na also* – with the difference that it does not link abstract terms but natural phenomena in a paradoxical way. The emptiness, however, produces a superficiality and directs the gaze to the surface of the signs. In a way, modern advertising radicalises the legibility of breath as conceived by medicine and psychology in the nineteenth century, but the meaning of breath is reduced to a dual scheme: *Odol* breath and bad breath.

The dual effect of destabilisation of meaning and surface accentuation also characterises some early avant-garde works of art which deal with the sweet waft of scent. In this context, Marcel Duchamp's art work *Belle Haleine* [*Scented Breath*] (1921) (Fig. 1) and Stuart Davis's *In Full Swing-Odol* (1924) and *Odol* (1924) should be mentioned. It is unlikely that Duchamp and Stuart read *Na also*, but the works of art mentioned above help to highlight an important poetic principle as well as the critical claim of Walser's short prose piece. *Belle Haleine* is regarded as the first assisted ready-made by Duchamp. He manipulated a perfume bottle of *Un air embaumé* [*An Embalmed Air*] from *Parfums Rigaud* with the help of Man Ray, replacing the label with his own imprint. He substitutes the brand name, the logo, the product name, and the product description: 'Rigaud' becomes 'Rrose Sélavy', the female alter ego of the artist; the new logo is a portrait of Duchamp as a woman; 'Un air embaumé' occurs as 'Belle Haleine'; and 'Eau de violette' [viola water] as 'Eau de Voilette' [veil water]. Duchamp's ready-made connects with Walser's short prose piece in two ways: first, through the product name; and, second, through the manipulated combination of signs that are – in Duchamp's case, literally – attached to the actual product. As mentioned above, in French 'Belle haleine' means

[52] Jütte, *Geschichte der Sinne*, p. 292.
[53] Wegmann, *Dichtung und Warenzeichen*, p. 158.
[54] Walser, *Na also*, p. 268.

Fig. 1: Marcel Duchamp (Rrose Selavy) and Man Ray, Belle Haleine, Eau de Voilette (1920–21). The photograph of a 'ready-made' of a Rigaud brand perfume bottle with a modified label was published on the cover of the April 1921 issue of *New York Dada* magazine (Source: Man Ray, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

'scented breath' or 'sweet waft'. This brand name, the portrait of the artist and his alter ago personalise the perfume, suggesting a relationship between the content and the artist that is both unique and material. Natural odours are in any case materially connected with their origin. This connection is further emphasised by the vital breath, but these authenticity effects are undermined by the constitution of the signs: Duchamp uses his female alter ego; he is dressed as a woman; and the label is placed onto an economic product that can be reproduced at will. Hence, the ready-made *Belle Haleine* constantly undermines the alleged relationship between subject and breath and exposes the illusory semiotic construction of individuality in a mass economy, which is a question of staging rather than substance. In a similar way, Walser's *Na also* plays with the advertising promise of an existence as a modern individual through the regular use of mouthwash and at the same time stages its purely semiotic character through the principle of montage. *Odol* promises deep cleaning, but above all it produces surfaces constructed from signs.[55]

Stuart Davis possibly knew of Duchamp's *Belle Haleine*. Both artists were working in New York in the early 1920s and there are several indications that they may have known of each other's works.[56] The affinity with Walser is even more obvious in the case of Davis than of Duchamp: *In Full Swing-Odol* and *Odol*, both painted in 1924, depict a bottle of the German mouthwash. The two paintings fall into Davis's Dada phase and testify to his work with advertising language at that time.[57] The style is quite realistic but reductionist: *Odol* perhaps shows a few more Cubist elements. With regard to Walser, the tendency towards highlighting the surface and the handling of the label is more important than an art-historical classification of Davis's paintings. Unlike Duchamp, Davis does not replace the original logo but creates a message by selecting specific design elements. In *Odol* he only adopts the brand name and slogan: 'It purifies'. *In Full Swing-Odol* shows several elements of the front and back label, but only a few words are legible: 'Odol', 'It purifies' and 'New York'. The American slogan, which does not exist on the German version of this product, can surely be interpreted as an aesthetic aspiration on the part of Davis. However, as Mariea Caudill Dennison argues, the slogan in these pictures should also be read in a broader economic and political context. The mouthwash was launched on the American market only four years before the beginning of the First World War. At this time, the advertisement worked with the German origin of the product, among other things. After the war, the reference to Ger-

[55] For the promise of deep cleaning, cf. Wegmann, *Dichtung und Warenzeichen*, p. 162.
[56] Mariea Caudill Dennison, 'Stuart Davis' Sources for "Egg Beater" and "Odol"', *The Burlington Magazine*, 1240 (2006), pp. 486–88.
[57] Caudill Dennison, 'Stuart Davis' Sources', p. 486.

many disappeared and New York was prominently mentioned. According to Caudill Dennison, these paintings deal with the usurpation of European advertising as well as art language and prefigure an American dominance in modern art.[58] From this perspective, the purification of the perceptible also means a nationalisation of perception.

The same thought pattern can be found in Walser's short prose piece. *Odol* not only separates the civilised from the barbarian: the people purified with *Odol* shall rule over the world. However, in contrast to Davis, Walser reflects this pattern critically. In *Na also* the plea to buy *Odol* consists mainly of threats, a comparison with authorities and platitudes that 'fragrances are undoubtedly preferable to bad smells and fumes' [Wohlgerüche üblen Dünsten und Gerüchen zweifellos […] vorzuziehen sind].[59] The short prose piece constructs a pointless fear of the uncivilised and of animality, as well as an arbitrary norm of civility and supremacy, purely for the purpose of presenting the product as an 'achievement of the very first order and as a blessing for humanity' [Errungenschaft allerersten Ranges und als eine Wohltat für die Menschheit].[60] However, it is these very empty, superficial keywords that open the space for the ostracism of abnormalities. Therefore, *Na also* not only unmasks the problematic verbal stigmatisation of halitosis in favour of profit maximisation, but also identifies this practice as the source of violent exclusion. The alliance between German myth (Wulff) and the allegory of modernity (the capitalist) points at the fatal union of nationalism und capitalism, the energy of which was discharged in 1917, the year in which *Na also* was published.

[58] Caudill Dennison, 'Stuart Davis' Sources', p. 488.
[59] Walser, *Na also*, p. 268.
[60] Walser, *Na also*, p. 173.

Jon Day

JAMES JOYCE AND THE LEGIBILITY OF ODOUR (OR, TOWARDS A 'SCRATCH 'N' SNIFF' *ULYSSES*)

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is not only, as Sara Danius characterises it, 'a modernist monument to the eye and ear', but a monument to the nose.[1] In the novel Leopold Bloom records, remembers and imagines a litany of odours: piss-reeking kidney, oniony bad breath, 'lobster and mayonnaise' and '[p]otted herrings gone stale'.[2] Though less explicit than his notorious letters to Nora Barnacle, in which Joyce describes the 'perfume of your drawers' and 'a bad smell slowly curling up out of your backside', *Ulysses* still managed to get up society's nose.[3] John Sutherland suggests:

> One reason why *Ulysses* remained banned for so long in the English-speaking world (and was finally cleared in the US on the bizarre grounds that it was 'emetic') was its incidental references to Bloom's breakfast of grilled mutton kidney, 'which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine', and his sitting asquat the cuckstool a few minutes later, 'calm above his own rising smell'.[4]

Joyce himself was well aware of the potential of smells to offend. His famous claim, made on behalf of *Dubliners*, that 'you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass' was accompanied by the caveat: 'It is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories.'[5] One might read the presence of descriptions of unpleasant

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1 Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception and Aesthetics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 149.
2 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 526.
3 James Joyce to Nora Barnacle Joyce, 6 December 1909, in James Joyce, *Selected Letters*, ed. by Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 184–85.
4 John Sutherland, 'French Air', *London Review of Books*, 9.20 (12 Nov 1987), pp. 12–13.
5 James Joyce to Grant Richards, 26 June 1906, in James Joyce, *Letters*, 3 vols (New York: Viking, 1966), I, ed. by Stuart Gilbert, pp. 63–64.

odours in *Ulysses* as just another manifestation of Joyce's encyclopaedic intent. He famously described his novel as an 'epic of the human body'; and in the various interpretative schema he produced no single sense modality was neglected.[6] However, smells do more than simply 'hang round' Joyce's work. They penetrate his writing in a more radical sense: evoking character and social context; and often seeming to be recorded almost for their own sake. In *Ulysses* they become both central agents in the plot and contributors to the aesthetic discussions to which Joyce's novel was, in part, a response. As Laura Frost has argued, in order to read Joyce with the nose it is necessary to engage with the wider material transformations which revolutionised olfactory chemistry and the consumption of odour during the Modernist moment; and it is certainly true that Joyce often used smells merely to thicken and enhance his fictional world, or to entice or disgust his readers.[7] However, he also employed written odours to ask more fundamental epistemological questions and to test the limits of literary evocations of sensory experience.

Many critics have commented on the preponderance of smell in Joyce's fiction, often finding that these odours stand as a tacit riposte to the dominance of the other senses in literature of the period. These critical interventions have generally focused on *Ulysses*, concentrating either on 'Nausicaa' exclusively, or on the incidental descriptions of smelled odours (that is, odours channelled through the noses of particular characters) that punctuate the novel. Bernard Benstock has done a comprehensive job of noting these instances, but his reliance on Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* as a structural corollary to his discussion of *Ulysses* inevitably shifts the focus from Modernism to the contemporary moment.[8] Hugh Davis has demonstrated the connections between descriptions of odour in *Ulysses* and the work of Havelock Ellis, contextual connections which will be important for my own discussion.

Others have concentrated their attention on the broader aesthetic questions raised by Joyce's treatment of odour. Margot Norris's 'Joyce's Heliotrope', for instance, focuses on Heliotrope as an olfactory metaphor which in Joyce's work 'functions as […] a figure of the movement of longing, reaching, turning, communicating, and dancing that signifies desire'.[9] Taking her cue

[6] Frank Budgen quotes from a conversation he had with Joyce in Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1960), p. 21.

[7] See Laura Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and its Discontents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 33–63.

[8] Bernard Benstock, 'James Joyce: The Olfactory Factor', in *Joycean Occasions: Essays from the Milwaukee James Joyce Conference*, ed. by Janet E. Dunleavy, Melvin J. Friedman and Michael Patrick Gillespie (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1991), pp. 139–56.

[9] Margot Norris, 'Joyce's Heliotrope', in *Coping with Joyce*, ed. by Morris Beja and Shari Benstock (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1989), pp. 3–24 (p. 3).

from Jacques Derrida's reading of Aristotle in 'White Mythologies – Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', in which he describes a dichotomy between sensory and rational knowledge that is, he says, most clearly manifested in the case of odour,[10] Norris argues that reading smells in Joyce is always a more bodily, sensorially immanent experience than reading descriptions of other sense modalities. 'Reading the language of perfume in *Finnegans Wake*' is, she argues:

> less a matter of decoding them according to some conventional archaic system, a scholarly foray into arcane flower symbolisms, than the exercise of an intuitive aesthetic response armed with a finely tuned sense memory for hues of color, redolence of perfume, delicacy of texture, and a gift for recapturing the pleasures they produce.[11]

On this reading, Joyce becomes a kind of sensory enchanter, able to stimulate the senses directly not through triggering a 'scholarly foray into arcane flower symbolisms', but through his exploitation of 'an intuitive aesthetic response' which seems, according to Norris, almost pre-literate.

For Norris, as for many others, Joyce's work therefore demonstrates the possibility of fully capturing the subjective experiences of olfactory sensation in language, yet the epistemological status of the 'pleasures' to which Norris refers here is left largely undefined. Though we may agree that reading *Finnegans Wake* is not aided by attempting to make it conform to 'some conventional archaic system' of signification, it is difficult to see how one can avoid relating it to *any* system of signification. No matter how 'finely tuned' one's sense-memory is, attempting to smell *Finnegans Wake* rather than reading it seems doomed to failure.

Readings like these seem, therefore, not to acknowledge readily enough the fundamentally *literary* status of Joyce's smells: the fact that smells are both consumed by and *represented as* textual objects within the novels in which they appear. Such readings reflect a more general uncertainty and anxiety over the status of sensation, one which has become relatively common within discussions of Modernist literature's attempts to describe or evoke sensory experiences within language. Despite the work of Frost, Davis, Danius and others, it is often assumed that literary Modernism represented a sensory 'turn inward' not just in terms of subject matter but in epistemic terms also: that Joyce and his peers managed, for the first time, to invent a language sufficient not just to describe sensations, but somehow to *cause* them to occur in the bodies of their readers.[12]

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[10] Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythologies: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', *New Literary History*, 6 (1974), 5–74; orig. 'La mythologie blanche', *Poetique*, 5 (1971).

[11] Norris, 'Joyce's Heliotrope', p. 8.

[12] See, e. g., David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel* (London: Secker & Warburg 2002), p. 55.

That it might be possible to convey what analytical philosophers have termed the 'qualia' of sensations – that is, their qualitive, phenomenological dimensions – without loss through the deployment of new literary aesthetic strategies is an example of what I have identified elsewhere as a longstanding critical fallacy,[13] for if such qualities of experience do indeed exist, then no degree of literary virtuosity will allow them to be conveyed to readers. They are, by definition, unshareable. In light of this such readings as Norris's are difficult to sustain. As Roland Barthes observes: 'In writing, shit does not smell' [Écrite, la merde ne sent pas].[14]

During the last few years sensory studies have displayed a pronounced turn towards materialist concerns, particularly in relation to the more neglected sense modalities of smell and taste. This turn has been driven largely by the rise of neuroaesthetic and cognitive approaches to narrative fiction which seek to use evidence derived from brain science to argue that imaginative fiction is a uniquely 'embodied' form of literary expression.[15] In *The Problem with Pleasure*, Laura Frost reads Joyce's literary representations of odour alongside developments in contemporary olfactory chemistry, finding that the 'scentual' nature of his writing was accompanied – and therefore perhaps even caused by – advances in the synthetic development of perfumery.[16] Frost's work makes an important contribution to our shifting understanding of the senses of Modernism represented by the work of Sara Danius and others, who have argued that many of the stylistic innovations associated with literary Modernism (in particular stream-of-consciousness narrative, subjective fragmentation and the use of synaesthetic metaphors) can best be characterised as a direct response to the rise of mnemonic technologies (gramophone, cinematography, photography) which threatened the unity of the human sensorium in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by promising to capture and recreate sense-data without loss.[17] For Frost, 'while the impact of cultural innovations in cinema, music, and the fine arts on modern literature has been carefully documented, the remarkable conceptual and material innovations in perfumery during the modern period have gone largely unnoticed'.[18]

[13] Jon Day, *Novel Sensations: Modernist Fiction and the Problem of Qualia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p. 27

[14] Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1971), p. 140 (my translation).

[15] Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 4.

[16] See Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure*, pp. 33–63.

[17] See Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 149.

[18] Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure*, p. 33.

However, one result of the materialist turn within sensory Modernist Studies has been to reinforce a hierarchy of the senses in which 'abstract' modalities such as sight and hearing have been understood to be more amenable to literary description – to translation into words – than the proximate senses. Largely following the work of Jonathan Crary and Martin Jay, such accounts have tended to endorse and extend a narrative of Western culture's post-Enlightenment 'ocularcentrism' by asserting that although 'theoretical' sight has historically been privileged over the 'bodily', 'intimate' and 'honest' proximate senses, given a sufficient vocabulary scent, too, could be tamed by language. To reject the possibility of writing the qualia of sensations in any immediate, phenomenologically veridical way is not, of course, to deny the importance of novel approaches to reading the senses within Modernism which have stressed their material underpinnings. It is merely to acknowledge that describing smells in a way which allows them somehow to be 'experienced' by readers is no more – but also no less – difficult than writing descriptions of any other sense modality. If qualia do exist, then it seems pretty clear that smells cannot be considered uniquely mute.

Following Frost, in this chapter I will argue that our understanding of the chemistry of olfaction underwent significant changes during the Modernist moment; and that these changes were themselves reflected in a profound philosophical and literary reappraisal of the nature of sensation and the 'consumability' of odour. Following Alain Corbin, it has become something of a truism that the deodorisation of the city as the result of sustained urban planning and advances in industrial perfumery created an olfactory environment in which designer scents were increasingly smelled on their own terms. As Frost shows, this process was accompanied – perhaps even brought about by – a wide-ranging and often quite radical reappraisal of the relationship between sensory experience, technology and the written word, manifested across psychiatry, phenomenology and within the burgeoning field of analytical philosophy. Odour, like sight and sound, therefore became to some degree commodified in the period. This had an impact not only on the kinds of smells people valued, but on what it meant – both conceptually and symbolically – to 'read' such smells.

In considering this transition I want to ask how we might go about reading odour back into Joyce, and into Modernist literature more generally, by attending to smells as they would have been present to the Modernist nose. In doing so I also seek to complicate critical narratives of Modernism's inward turn – most evident nowadays in 'neuroaesthetic' and 'cognitive' approaches to narrative – which endorse the view that literary language has some special capability to write sensations in ways that make those sensory experiences

uniquely accessible to readers.[19] The great shifts that occurred in public health and olfactory chemistry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a huge impact not just on how people smelled – and how they smelt – but on how smells were marketed, commodified and written about in the period. At the same time texts like *Ulysses* often tend to complicate rather than simplify our understanding of the role and epistemological status of written odours within Modernist thought and art. The central question which emerges from my enquiry is, then: what does it mean to smell smells rather than merely to read about them? What can *Ulysses* tell us about the legibility – or otherwise – of written smells?

That the predominance of olfactory description in Joyce's work, culminating in the miasmatic *Ulysses*, should offend the reader of sensitive nostril is unsurprising when viewed in its historical context. During the nineteenth century many novelists subscribed to a naturalist theory of olfaction in which written odours were generally employed as uncomplicated social signifiers. As Janice Carlisle suggests with reference to many Victorian novels:

> smell seems stubbornly material in both origin and effect. As such, it constitutes a basic – some might say, a negligible – form of physical experience; but it is the sense that Victorian novelists frequently invoke to depict what happens when one character encounters another.[20]

Such novels, Carlisle goes on to say, typically treat odours 'as simple matters of fact': as textual manifestations of the external characteristics of the individuals to whom they cling which could be profitably (and accurately) 'read' both by the other characters they encounter and by those novels' readers.[21]

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, as cities were deodorised and perfumery underwent a series of technological and aesthetic transformations, smell took on a new aesthetic status – as self-contained, autonomous and disconnected from its natural origins – a transition that soon registered in literature, particularly in France.[22] In novels such as J.-K. Huys-

[19] See, e. g., Kirsten Shepherd-Barr and Gordon M. Shepherd, 'Madeleines and Neuromodernism: Reassessing Mechanisms of Autobiographical Memory in Proust', *Auto/Biography Studies*, 13 (1998), 39–60.

[20] Janice Carlisle, *Common Scents: Comparative Encounters in High-Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

[21] Carlisle, *Common Scents*, p. 4.

[22] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel suggests that 'the sensual in art is limited to the two theoretical senses of vision and the ear whereas olfaction, taste, and touch are barred from aesthetic enjoyment' due to the fact that they are connected with 'the material and the unmediated sensual qualities of matter' (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. by Friedrich Bassenge, 2 vols (Berlin: Das europäische Buch, 1985), I, 48–49, quoted in and trans. by Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 18).

mans's *À rebours* and the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, odour was documented more meticulously, and more flamboyantly, than it previously had been. Such works suggest that smell could be enjoyed for its own sake, therefore: not merely as a social code, a signifier of character or environment, but as an isolated and enjoyable aesthetic experience. Art for art's sake led to smell for smell's sake.

This shift toward writing about smell on its own terms, as a subjective sensory phenomenon, arguably reached its peak in the English-speaking world with Modernism. In the work of Joyce, Virginia Woolf and many others, descriptions of smells often take centre stage, drifting through novels which often concern themselves with recording the atomistic minutiae of sensory experience without seeking to make these experiences significant in other ways. Thus, as Danuta Fjellestad suggests, '[i]t is in modernism that the olfactory first surfaces as an essential element of the plot in the novel'.[23] For Rindisbacher 'it is sufficient to define Modernism as […] the surfacing of the olfactory as an essential element in writing'.[24] Rindisbacher's identification of Modernism with 'the surfacing of the olfactory' is perhaps over-reductive, but the epistemologically fraught relationship he identifies between smell as sensory experience and as textual representation is clearly a fertile one. The notion that 'the linguistic grounding of smells […] regularly tears holes' in language, 'hinting at the primacy of perception' which 'clears the view for a reality beyond' is one that is certainly identifiable in Joyce's work.[25] However, whether that means that such smells become accessible in any primary, experiential sense in Joyce's writing remains contestable: indeed, this is an idea that seems to be challenged directly in much of his work. Though *Ulysses* in particular registers the transitions from open sewer to sophisticated late-Victorian plumbing, from mimetic fragrance to abstract designer perfume, from smell as the most 'honest' sense to its use as a form of advertisement as social phenomena, it always does so from within an aesthetic and philosophical framework which questions our ability ever to 'read' smell accurately.[26]

Ulysses, famously, is explicitly concerned with the status of perception and the possibilities of encoding it in language. When Stephen walks on Sandymount Strand pondering the true nature of the senses and the relationship between the ineluctable modality of the visible and the signs we reach for in

[23] Danuta Fjellestad, 'Towards an Aesthetics of Smell, or, The Foul and the Fragrant in Contemporary Literature', *CAUCE. Revista de Filología y su Didáctica*, 24 (2001), 637–51 (p. 641) <http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/cauce/pdf/cauce24/cauce24_37.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2020].

[24] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 146.

[25] Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books*, p. 147.

[26] Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, p. 21.

our attempts to render that modality readable, it is his scholastic pedantry that is really the subject of the scene and the target of Joyce's irony. Likewise, Leopold Bloom regularly engages in speculation about the sensory experiences of others, both human and non-human, in ways which make him appear to be a kind of amateur epistemologist. Frequently this speculation involves him in the creation of an environmentally mediated hierarchy of sensation in which the sense of smell is associated with more intimate, animalistic forms of knowledge than the other senses. As he speculates on the blind stripling in 'Lestrygonians':

> Sense of smell must be stronger too. Smells on all sides, bunched together. Each street a different smell. Each person too. Then the spring, the summer: smells. Tastes? They say you can't taste wine with your eyes shut or a cold in the head. Also smoke in the dark they say get no pleasure.[27]

Here the stripling navigates the city in a way which, Bloom thinks, must be more intimate than the sighted, or than we, readers of the text, can. In Bloom's understanding of the broader economy of smelling, odour often signifies things which the other sense modalities cannot.

In 'Calypso' Bloom speculates on his cat's sensory system, ascribing to the animal a high degree of intelligence and imagining himself through her consciousness:

> They call them stupid. They understand what we say better than we understand them. She understands all she wants to. Vindictive too. Wonder what I look like to her. Height of a tower? No, she can jump me. […] He watched the bristles shining wirily in the weak light as she tipped three times and licked lightly. Wonder is it true if you clip them they can't mouse after. Why? They shine in the dark, perhaps, the tips. Or kind of feelers in the dark, perhaps.[28]

As I have argued elsewhere, the philosophical implications of the novel form, as one primarily concerned to ask the Nagelian question of 'what it is like to be' another mind, is hinted at in these scenes, with Bloom presented as the clumsy potential author and interpreter of other minds.[29] However, as in so much in Joyce, they are also highly ironic, self-reflexive moments, seeming to demonstrate the impossibility of ever achieving true materialist correspondence between mind and body at the level of sensation, whilst maintaining the

[27] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 172.
[28] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 54.
[29] Day, *Novel Sensations*, p. 68.

illusion that here we really are being presented with a character's 'unmediated' thoughts.

Bloom's speculations therefore provide a neat analogy for the kinds of critical speculation to which Joyce's work is itself often subjected. Interpretations of what one might call Joyce's 'sensory realism' often seem to be founded on a paradoxical belief that odour is uniquely resistant to literary description, but, at the same time, that Joyce was uniquely able to write it. It is a commonplace of such criticism that smell is somehow innately less open to linguistic description than the other senses. As Hugh Davis argues:

> Part of the reason that olfaction has received comparatively little attention is that odors resist language: the sense of smell may be the most evocative of memory and emotion, but it is the least precise, lacking, as a certain Professor Zwaardemaker of Utrecht remarked in 1898, a 'grammatical discipline'.[30]

Bernard Benstock's response to the problems of how to read and write smell overcome by literary Modernism's formal innovations is similarly based on the apparent 'subjectivity' and resistance to language that odour possesses:

> The primacy of the two dominant senses, sight and sound, is an aspect of conventional narrative presentation that has rarely been challenged even by modernist and avant-garde writers, primarily because they are so much the property of all readers, whereas the tactile, gustatory, and olfactory are far more personal and subjective.[31]

However, of such special pleading on behalf of smell one might ask: how are visual and aural experiences any more objective or public than olfactory ones? Though it is true that visual metaphors dominate the English language, and we would seem to have a more sophisticated discriminative vocabulary to describe them (unless, perhaps, we are perfumers or wine tasters), this does not seem to provide a rigorous philosophical justification for establishing gradations of subjectivity within the literary sensorium.[32] Though most of us may

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[30] Hugh Davis, '"How Do You Sniff?": Havelock Ellis and Olfactory Representation in "Nausicaa"', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 41 (2004), 421–40 (p. 422).

[31] Benstock, 'James Joyce: The Olfactory Factor', p. 147.

[32] The dominant metaphor for understanding in English, 'do you see it', has its olfactory corollaries in some other languages. According to Constance Classen, the Ongee of the Andaman Islands ascertain another's understanding by asking, 'Is it in your nose?'. As Classen points out: 'The concern of the Ongees to maintain a healthy state of olfactory equilibrium is expressed in their forms of greeting. The Ongee equivalent of "how are you?" is "konyune? Onorange-tanka?", "how is your nose?"' (Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 127).

lack a ready host of words with which to discriminate olfactory experiences as opposed to visual ones, this clearly says more about cultural predilections than it does about any specific philosophical difficulty relating to literary descriptions of the sense of smell *per se*.[33] For, strictly speaking, it is obvious that, no matter how fluent, we are no more able to obtain a true visual experience from reading than an olfactory one.

One reason for this confusion might be that we are far more familiar with technological means of capturing and disseminating visual and auditory sense-data than we are with those which can reproduce olfactory sensory experience. Sensory readings of *Ulysses* have often correctly focussed on specific technological innovations which challenged conceptions of hearing and seeing in the period. Sara Danius argues:

> [A] great number of Joyce's most characteristic and innovative stylistic strategies, among them representations of the human sensorium and modes of sensory activity (including their objects), must be thought of in the light of late nineteenth-century technological configurations such as cinematography, phonography, and telephony.[34]

Yet despite the fact that odour was less directly impacted by individualised mnemonic technological innovations such as these, smell, as Laura Frost has shown, did undergo huge cultural transitions at the end of the nineteenth century. Dublin itself underwent an extensive sewerage and draining scheme from 1892 to 1906; and the cursory references to public lavatories which punctuate *Ulysses* register something of this transition. Similarly, *Ulysses* frequently presents us with a conception of odour as a form of commodity. Martha Clifford's question to Bloom in her letter – 'Do tell me what kind of perfume does your wife use. I want to know' – which echoes in his mind throughout the novel, hints at the way in which scent was becoming branded in the period.[35] By 1904, and certainly by 1922, 'What kind of perfume do you use?' was a question that could be answered with a brand name rather than with a vague olfactory metaphor. This intensification of the contextual basis of thinking about, consuming and describing odours naturally had an effect on the way in which writers and philosophers conceived of the role of scent, and the possibilities of describing it, in the period.

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[33] John Sutherland notes that '[i]n an article in *Muttersprache* (1984) Arthur Kutzelnigg calculates that since the Middle Ages the German lexicon of smell words has shrunk from 158 to 62, of which a large number survive only in dialect or the "little languages" used in adult-child discourse ('stinky-poo' words)' (Sutherland, 'French Air', p. 12).

[34] Danius, *The Senses of Modernism*, p. 152.

[35] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 75.

In much of Joyce's work incidental references to odour are accompanied by speculations on the limits of language and the epistemological status of sensory experience itself. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, for instance, Joyce describes moments of olfactory experience whilst at the same time questioning the psychological effects smell is capable of stimulating when mediated through language. Smells punctuate the novel, often triggering memories, as when, in the opening pages, Stephen Dedalus recalls the oilsheet with 'the queer smell' and the fact that '[h]is mother had a nicer smell than his father', or the 'cold night smell in the chapel'.[36] During the Ignation sermon he experiences as a schoolboy it is suggested that literary imaginings of olfactory experiences can have dramatic effects on the psyche, especially in childhood:

> The horror of this strait and dark prison is increased by its awful stench. All the filth of the world, all the offal and scum of the world, we are told, shall run there as to a vast reeking sewer when the terrible conflagration of the last day has purged the world. The brimstone too which burns there in such prodigious quantity fills all hell with its intolerable stench; and the bodies of the damned themselves exhale such a pestilential odour that as saint Bonaventure says, one of them alone would suffice to infect the whole world. The very air of this world, that pure element, becomes foul and unbreathable when it has been long enclosed. Consider then what must be the foulness of the air of hell. Imagine some foul and putrid corpse that has lain rotting and decomposing in a grave, a jellylike mass of liquid corruption. Imagine such a corpse a prey to flames, devoured by the fire of burning brimstone and giving off dense choking fumes of nauseous loathsome decomposition. And then imagine this sickening stench, multiplied a millionfold and a millionfold again from the millions upon millions of fetid carcasses massed together in the reeking darkness, a huge and rotting human fungus. Imagine all this and you will have some idea of the horror of the stench of hell.[37]

As in Stephen's speculations on the beach, however, and Bloom's pseudoscientific disquisitions on his cat's sensory faculties, this is a passage which seems slyly to enact something of the impossibility of what it describes. With its excessive listing, the rhetorical layering of images and motifs and multiplication of sensory disgust, the passage exposes the ritualistic power of odour enshrined in religious discourse. However, in its repetitive bombast the sermon also comes to feel in the end rather desperate, as though trying to overcome the phenomenological impossibility of conveying stench directly through lan-

[36] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 5, 18.
[37] Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 101.

guage simply by throwing more words at the problem. Here Joyce seems again to be ironically suggesting that the process of what Ignatius called 'the composition of place' depends on the literary imagination alone – on reading – rather than on any mystical, direct stimulation of the sensory faculties.

Nevertheless, the effects of the sermon on Stephen are dramatic, leading him to bring each of his senses under 'a rigorous discipline'. Though the mortification of sight, hearing, touch and taste seems to him relatively straightforward, he finds disciplining his sense of smell more difficult, as he has 'no instinctive repugnance to bad odours, whether they were the odours of the outdoor world such as those of dung or tar or the odours of his own person among which he had made many curious comparisons and experiments'.[38] Stephen can only offend his nose through 'a certain stale fishy stink like that of longstanding urine: and whenever it was possible he subjected himself to this unpleasant odour'.[39] Stephen's 'experiments' with odour are defiantly scriptural, therefore, conducted on a theological and devotional rather than a psychological level. Yet elsewhere in Joyce's work odours are treated in ways that owe more to early psychology than to Scripture.

As Davis argues, even before Freud, smell had become primarily associated with basic human processes: prefiguring sexual union or alerting the body to dangerous environmental conditions. Identifying the key evolutionary developments of the separation of the nose from the genitals as central to sexual urges and the taboos of scent, Freud proposed a conception of smell which pushed it to the margins of the cultural imagination. As he wrote in 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', the choice of a fetish object relies on 'a coprophilic pleasure in smelling which has disappeared owing to repression': a hidden satisfaction in noxious odour that registers in *Ulysses*.[40] Though not primarily sexual, when Bloom inhales 'the odour of the quick' of his lacerated toenail, he certainly derives pleasure from its associative (and regressive) Proustian mnemonics. The experience is enjoyable:

> Why with satisfaction?
>
> Because the odour inhaled corresponded to other odours inhaled of other unguial fragments, picked and lacerated by Master Bloom, pupil of Mrs Ellis's Juvenile school, patiently each night in the act of brief genuflection and nocturnal prayer and ambitious meditation.[41]

[38] Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 101.
[39] Joyce, *Portrait*, pp. 126–27.
[40] Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' [1910], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works by Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Stratchey and others, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), VII (1961), 125–245 (p. 155), quoted in Davis, 'Sniff', p. 8.
[41] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 665.

Elsewhere Bloom becomes a sort of crypto-Freudian, analysing human behaviours in biological terms that bristle with post-Darwinian determinism. He notes: 'Women buzz around it [the 'mansmell' of the celibate priest] like flies round treacle.'[42] In 'Circe' Bloom's entry into the brothel is described as an enchantment that is appropriate both to the Homeric underpinning of the episode and to the psychology of sex:

> He hesitates amid scents, music, temptations. She leads him towards the steps, drawing him by the odour of her armpits, the vice of her painted eyes, the rustle of her slip in whose sinuous folds lurks the lion reek of all the male brutes that have possessed her.[43]

Later on, the sadomasochistic games played in 'Circe' heighten the correspondence between *The Odyssey* and *Ulysses*, again associating smell with sex. 'Bello' forces Bloom to the floor, and Bloom, the temporary incarnation of a pig, proclaims 'Truffles!'[44]

The characterisation of the nose as an organ of intimacy, kinetic in action and consuming in its processes, is formally encoded in 'Nausicaa', associated in the Linati schema with the organs of the eye and the nose. However, here, too, smell functions predominantly not as an abstracted sensory phenomenon but as a social marker. After Gerty MacDowell hesitantly waves her handkerchief at him, wafting her scent across Sandymount Strand, Bloom is able to confirm his preconceived notion of her through her choice of perfume:

> Wait. Hm. Hm. Yes. That's her perfume. Why she waved her hand. I leave you this to think of me when I'm far away on the pillow. What is it? Heliotrope? No, Hyacinth? Hm. Roses, I think. She'd like scent of that kind. Sweet and cheap: soon sour.[45]

Like everything else about Gerty (at least as she is perceived by Bloom, or by Joyce), her choice of fragrance masks a superficial core with a sentimental and finally unpleasant – though affordable and disposable – smell. In channelling this odour through Bloom's nose, however, we are obliged to conceive of it as fundamentally removed from the body that emits it. Again Bloom's speculations on the nature of scent tell us more about his interpretation of Gerty's character than they do of the qualia of that odour itself. As Bloom goes on to speculate:

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[42] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 358. For reference to this passage, see also John Bishop, 'A Metaphysics of Coitus in "Nausicaa"', in *Ulysses: Engendered Perspectives*, ed. by Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 185–219 (p. 197).
[43] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 472.
[44] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 498.
[45] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 357.

> Mysterious thing too. Why did I smell it only now? Took its time in coming over like herself, slow but sure. Suppose it's ever so many millions of tiny grains blown across. Yes, it is. Because those spice islands, Cinghalese this morning, smell them leagues off. Tell you what it is. It's like a fine veil or web they have all over their skin, fine like what do you call it gossamer and they're always spinning it out of them, fine as anything, rainbow colours without knowing it. Clings to everything she takes off. Vamp of her stockings. Warm shoe. Stays. Drawers: little kick taking them off.[46]

Bloom thinks through 'what the smell is' through comparison, invoking a synaesthetic metaphor in which odour is exuded by women like 'rainbow colours'. Here, as elsewhere in *Ulysses*, his précis of the science of sensation, informed as much by folk-historical discourse as it is by pseudo-chemistry, tells us much more about Bloom's own cultural characterisation of women, and of the role of scent, than it does about those odours themselves.

Later in the episode Bloom expands on his understanding of fragrance as 'signature', as an essence of femininity. 'Wonder where it is really', he asks himself:

> There or the armpits or under the neck. Because you get it out of all holes and corners. Hyacinth perfume made of oil or ether or something. Muskrat. Bag under their tails one grain pour off odour for years. Dogs at each other behind. Good evening. Evening. How do you sniff? Hm. Hm. Very well, thank you. Animals go by that. Yes now, look at it that way. We're the same. Some women for instance warn you off when they have their period. Come near. Then get a hogo you could hang your hat on. Like what? Potted herrings gone stale or. Boof! Please keep off the grass.[47]

These emanations, rather than being chosen to project some sort of idealised conception of the self, are the product of the body and as such, Bloom believes, they reflect certain properties of their source. Earlier in the novel Bloom had conceived of the nose's role in evolutionary terms, not as a means of advertising the body but as a way of alerting it to environmental conditions and, in this case, potential meals:

> If you didn't know risky putting anything into your mouth. Poisonous berries. … Roundness you think good. Gaudy colour warns you off. One fellow told another and so on. Try it on the dog first. Led on by the smell or the look.[48]

[46] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 358.
[47] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 358.
[48] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 166.

In Bloom's extended musings on the role of odour, therefore, he often settles on a semiology of the senses, on a rational interpretation of what smells can tell us about the bodies from which they emanate. The odour of menstruation is a sign reading 'keep off the grass'; the smell of food can similarly warn us off, or induce us to eat. Perfumes tell us not what a person truly is like in their essence: they tell us what a person wants to be read as. It is this property of smell to which Bloom, the ad man, is particularly sensitive.

Moreover, it is perhaps this property of odour to which we, as readers of *Ulysses* and of the odours of Modernism more generally, should be most alert. Many of the fragrances mentioned in *Ulysses* are anonymous and unbranded. Though mass-produced scents were available in Dublin in the early twentieth century, the vast majority were still bought from local chemists, where bespoke products had to be 'made up' from individual recipes on spec. Thus Molly recalls insisting that Bloom 'get that [lotion] made up in the same place and don't forget it'.[49] The onus is on the chemist to replicate the product that Molly is used to and he is obliged to read in his book for the formula. As he is doing so, Bloom pictures him as an alchemist, the pre-scientific incarnation of the chemist who was soon to revolutionise the way fragrances were produced, advertised and consumed:

> The chemist turned back page after page. Sandy shrivelled smell he seems to have, Shrunken skull. And old. Quest for philosopher's stone. The alchemists. Drugs age you after mental excitement. Lethargy then. Why? Reaction. A lifetime in a night. Gradually changes your character. Living all the day among herbs, ointments, disinfectants. All his alabaster lily-pots. Mortar and pestle. Aq. Dist. Fol. Laur. Te Virid. Smell almost cure you like the dentist's doorbell.[50]

Rather than innovative yet generic products of mass-production, many of the smells for sale in *Ulysses* – like Bloom's lemon soap, the smell of which circulates through the novel as it makes its way around his body – are more the idiosyncratic products of craftsmen working among 'herbs, ointments, disinfectants'. Discovering how to mass-produce perfumes with enough consistency to establish a brand identity, so that a perfume bought in New York would smell the same as one purchased in London, was revolutionary for the ways smells were consumed and thought about in the period. Such processes worked both ways. Just as perfumes could now be advertised as representing consistent and repeatable sensory artefacts – as reproducible as gramophone records or photographs – so, too, could they come to signal more specific and

[49] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 702.
[50] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 81.

stable cultural pretentions or assumptions and so could come to *mean* more. By 1904 perfume was becoming a question of style: one of the easiest ways of projecting an idealised version of the self. Your choice of perfume did not denote the essence of your being, but how you wanted the world to see you.

Just as Gerty's perfume might tell us more about how Bloom views (or 'smells') her than anything about her essential character, therefore, Bloom's answer to the question 'What perfume does your wife wear?' might tell us more about his own constructed vision of Molly than it does about her own tastes. The answer to the question provided by Bloom, '*Peau d'Espagne*',[51] is itself a coded answer, one heavy with symbolic meaning and one directly contradicted by Molly later in the novel. Peau d'Espagne is an older perfume than Gerty's floral scent, one originally associated with leathercraft. As such it is representative of a type of scent that was itself becoming outdated in the early twentieth century, when perfume houses were beginning to apply new techniques to the production of fragrance in order to create smells unmatched in intensity and independent of the substances from which they were synthesised.

The transition from vegetable scents or those derived from other crafts, to those that were manufactured from synthetic chemicals allowed the development of more distinctive and 'unnatural' odours. A new wave of synthesised compounds, including 'Piperoval, an aldehyde closely allied to vanillin', and 'coumarine, the material to which tonka bean, sweet woodruff, and new-mown hay owe their characteristic odors', allowed for the creation of ever more esoteric and abstract fragrances.[52] Coumarine was particularly significant, being the first example of a synthetic perfume compound produced independently from the organic material in which it was discovered. It led to the development of the first truly artificial scent, Houbigant's Fougère Royale in 1882. The development of perfumes such as these, which severed the connection between smells and their traditional cultural or manufacturing origins, ushered in a new era of scent just as forcibly as photography influenced the visual arts, or recording technologies challenged understandings of sound in the period. Chanel's No. 5 – a number rather than an evocative name – was marketed as the world's first 'abstract' scent and was first released, like *Ulysses*, in 1922.

This was a cultural transition that registered on the fabric of society. As Alain Corbin has argued, in increasingly deodorised times strong musk or leather-based perfumes such as Peau d'Espagne, which aimed at masking

[51] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 81.

[52] Henry Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 7 vols (Philadelphia, PA: Davis, 1900–28), IV (1927), 112.

rather than accentuating odours, became less fashionable. People were able to accentuate their individuality through smell by using more subtle vegetable odours: floral extractions like Gerty's, or the designer scents of Fougère Royale and No. 5; and the strong assertive smells of Opoponax or Peau d'Espagne increasingly fell out of favour. This transition – from olfactory bombardment to the subtleties of vegetable harmony – led, argued Havelock Ellis, to a 'decline in the "primitive attractiveness" of sexual odours'.[53] Thus Molly's perfume, in Bloom's memory, is doubly symbolic. It is 'Spanish skin', thought at the time to be the most 'accurate' representation of woman's natural smell, but it is also something of a throwback. As Molly herself recalls at the end of the novel: '[T]here was no decent perfume to be got in that Gibraltar only that cheap peau dEspagne that faded and left a stink.'[54] What she truly wears – what she smells like off the page – remains a mystery.

In all these cases, therefore, odour is used by Joyce not primarily as a source of aesthetic pleasure in itself, nor as an abstract signifier to be consumed through 'an intuitive aesthetic response', but as simply one more sign, culturally coded and possessed of complex meanings. In Joyce's writing the nose often serves as a subtler judge of the external world than do the other senses. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* a youthful indiscretion is exposed through olfaction: '[T]hey drank that and it was found out by the smell.'[55] In *Ulysses* Stephen's nose makes class distinctions in the classroom as he 'reads' his students' odours: 'sweetened boy's breath. Welloff people'.[56] Molly herself is a fantastic smeller. In 'Penelope', she recalls locating a dishcloth by its smell, and smelling cigarette smoke on Milly's clothes as she fixes a button.[57] As she suggests, 'It comes out no matter what they say': the truth of odour will always expose itself, an observation that, as we know, indicts her own adulterous behaviour.[58] However, once transformed into a literary trope, odour appears to be a fickle guide to the world. It is in reading the odours of *Ulysses*, rather than in trying to 'experience' them, that Joyce's achievement is most recognisable. Critical interpretations of Joyce's smells which do not seek to understand them in their cultural and material contexts ignore much of the pleasure – but also much of the meaning – derived from decoding the odours, both foul and fragrant, that hang round his stories.

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[53] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, IV (1907), 99, quoted in Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille*, p. 74.
[54] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 713.
[55] Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 33.
[56] Benstock, 'James Joyce: The Olfactory Factor', p. 149.
[57] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 718.
[58] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 718.

Catherine Maxwell

'Bringing the perfume out of everything': Vernon Lee, Scent, and Memory

'"How strong it smells of roses!"', exclaims Vernon Lee on first viewing the ancient and neglected church of St Savinien in Sens, North-Central France. Recalling this impression in one of her essays on travel, Lee remembers her puzzlement as she can see no roses in the vases on the altars. The nun who is her guide laughs and tells her: 'I have been picking some which were overblown, and my fingers have kept the scent of them'. Lee continues: 'And trailing that scent of Persia and Bulbuls she drew my attention to the blood-stains left in the crypt by the martyrdom of St. Savinien.' The town of Sens itself did not impress Lee, but she reports that her remembrance of it was 'sweetened by that nun, as her own fingers by the damask roses which she had picked'.[1] Sens, the name of the town, also means 'sense'. Smell is not perhaps the first sense readers associate with the cosmopolitan aesthete Vernon Lee, noted for her art and music criticism, with sight and hearing more obvious candidates. Nonetheless, Lee's awareness of scent – here she even identifies the unseen flowers specifically as damask roses – suggests that there is good reason to place her among those aesthetic and Decadent writers who pride themselves on their olfactory sensitivity and whom I have elsewhere classed as *olfactifs* or individuals with an especially refined sense of smell.[2] 'Smells are often poetical', she writes with regard to 'an exquisite fragrance of cooking apples', recalled during a visit to the Hôtel-Dieu of Beaune. Arguably it is the *olfactif* who supplies the poetry; for Lee declares that 'only the very finest apples, handled in the daintiest manner and seethed in the clearest water, could have emitted a smell as sweet, as spicy, as flowery and amiable as that'.[3] During the First

[1] Vernon Lee, 'Sens and the Nun of the Bon Pasteur', in Vernon Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors and Other Essays on the Spirit of Places* (New York: John Lane; London: The Bodley Head, 1914), pp. 55–61 (pp. 60, 61).

[2] Catherine Maxwell, *Scents and Sensibility: Perfume in Victorian Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 4 and throughout.

[3] Vernon Lee, 'The Hôtel-Dieu of Beaune', in Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 33–41 (pp. 34–35).

World War, when she was marooned in England, we find Lee writing to her close friend Irene Forbes-Mosse in Germany, ending her letter with the injunction, 'My dearie, tell me all you do < see < smell', with this last word underlined.[4] As this essay will show, smell is everywhere apparent in Lee's considerable body of work and has an important role to play in her writings, being especially associated, as here, with close relationships, shared experiences, with memory, imagination, and with vividly communicating the essence or spirit of a place.

The author of over forty books and numerous articles on topics which include aesthetics, ethics, renaissance history and culture, and travel, Lee is still first encountered by most readers through her short fiction, in particular the four celebrated supernatural stories that comprise *Hauntings*, written during the 1880s and collected in 1890. Scent undoubtedly plays its part in creating the phantasmal atmosphere of these stories and its importance is signalled in Lee's Preface to *Hauntings*, where meditating on the nature of ghosts and ghost stories she spurns what she regards as the banal witness accounts gathered by the Society for Psychical Research. For her, ghosts are:

> things of imagination […] sprung from the strange confused heaps, half-rubbish, half-treasure, which lie in our fancy, heaps of half-faded recollections, of fragmentary vivid impressions, litter of multi-coloured tatters, and faded herbs and flowers, whence arises that odour (we all know it), musty and damp, but penetratingly sweet and intoxicatingly heady, which hangs in the air when the ghost has swept through the unopened door, and the flickering flame of candle and fire start up once more after warning.[5]

Here the ghost, born out of the fusion of memory, sensory experience, and fancy, is itself identified with a recognisable, evocative smell that stirs up uncanny feelings. According to Lee, authentic ghost stories which have true suggestive power, 'tingle through our additional sense, the sense of the supernatural'. Registered by this special imaginative faculty, they are associated with a diffusive scent, since 'those tales […] fill places, nay whole epochs, with their strange perfume of witchgarden flowers', these being flowers grown for spells and magic potions and thus synonymous with enchantment.[6]

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[4] Vernon Lee to Irene Forbes-Mosse, 23 April 1916, in *The Anglo-German Correspondence of Vernon Lee and Irene Forbes-Mosse: Women Writers' Friendship Transcending Enemy Lines*, ed. by Herward Sieberg and Christa Zorn (Lewiston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2014), pp. 346–51 (p. 350). In this transcription '<' signifies '&'.

[5] Vernon Lee, 'Preface', in Vernon Lee, *Hauntings and Other Fantastic Tales*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2006), pp. 37–40 (p. 39).

[6] Lee, 'Preface', p. 38.

Notably, each of the four *Hauntings* stories, narrated by a cultured male narrator sensitive to aesthetic and sensory impressions, uses smell to enhance its ghostly effects. In 'Dionea', a tale that hints at the disguised reincarnation of the goddess Venus in a small Ligurian village, the elderly Dr De Rosis alerts us to the bitter smell of myrtle, a plant strongly associated with the goddess, and then the overwhelming smell of ritual incense which pervades the dramatic climax of the story.[7] Spiridion Trepka, the young historian of 'Amour Dure', obsessed with Medea da Carpi, a Renaissance noblewoman, fancies that he can smell the scent of her hair clinging to her letters in the archive. This impression is revived after a ghostly encounter with her, when he also relishes the perfume of a rose she gives him only to find the flower crumbled to dust the next day.[8] The two remaining stories use perfume in a more elaborate way. In 'A Wicked Voice' – the story of Magnus, a Wagnerian composer haunted by the ghost of an eighteenth-century castrato singer – Lee artfully scores her tale like a Wagnerian opera so that a repeated cluster of sensory effects operates like a leitmotiv announcing the imminent appearance of the spectral Zaffirino. These effects include a heavy white flower scent which makes Magnus think of the taste of peaches. This scent almost certainly emanates from *olea fragrans* (also known as *osmanthus fragrans*), an evergreen shrub commonly grown in Italy whose small white flowers have a fruity smell often compared to peaches or apricots and a plant Lee mentions by name in other writings.[9] In this story a scent that suggests a taste, a flower that evokes a fruit, hint at the confusingly ambiguous nature of Zaffirino, whose arresting castrato voice melds masculine and feminine qualities.

In 'Oke of Okehurst' the haunting odour is 'a vague scent of rose-leaves and spices, put into the china bowls by the hands of ladies long since dead'. The unnamed artist-narrator, who is commissioned to paint the enigmatic Alice Oke at the country house she shares with her husband, specifically describes himself as 'susceptible' to atmospheric impressions. He lets:

> all these impressions of the past – which seemed faded like the figures in the arras, but still warm like the embers in the fireplace, still sweet and subtle like the perfume of the dead rose-leaves and broken spices in the china bowls – permeate me and go to my head.[10]

[7] Vernon Lee, 'Dionea', in Lee, *Hauntings*, pp. 77–104 (pp. 92, 101, 103–04).
[8] Vernon Lee, 'Amour Dure', in Lee, *Hauntings*, pp. 41–76 (pp. 58, 69–70).
[9] Vernon Lee, 'A Wicked Voice', in Lee, *Hauntings*, pp. 154–81 (pp. 164, 176, 177). See 'Lady Tal' (1889), in Vernon Lee, *Vanitas: Polite Stories* (London: John Lane; The Bodley Head, 1911 [1892]), pp. 59–144 (pp. 61, 110). See, too, Lee's letter to her mother of 18 August 1891, in *Vernon Lee's Letters*, ed. by Irene Cooper Willis (London: Privately printed, 1937), pp. 337–38 (p. 338).
[10] Vernon Lee, 'Oke of Okehurst', in Lee, *Hauntings*, pp. 105–53 (p. 112).

Alice's own favourite room is described as 'heavy, with an indescribable heady perfume, not that of any growing flower, but like that of old stuff that should have lain for years among spices'; and she herself is 'a delicate, morbid, exotic, hot-house creature, unable to walk or to do anything, who spent her days lying about on couches in the heavy atmosphere, redolent with strange scents and associations, of the yellow drawing-room'. The narrator indulges in the fancy that Alice is a reincarnation of her seventeenth-century ancestress, observing:

> At all events, it rather pleased me to think so; it fitted in so well with the woman's whole personality; it explained those hours and hours spent all alone in the yellow room, where the very air, with its scent of heady flowers and old perfumed stuffs, seemed redolent of ghosts.[11]

For him, Alice herself seems like a perfume: she is 'ethereal' and, unable to capture her complex charm in paint, he declares of her beauty: 'Something – and that the very essence – always escapes.' She is 'an exotic creature, whose charm you can no more describe than you could bring home the perfume of some newly discovered tropical flower by comparing it with the scent of a cabbage-rose or a lily'.[12] The story's climax occurs on:

> a warm, enervating, autumn afternoon: the kind of weather that brings the perfume out of everything, the damp ground and fallen leaves, the flowers in the jars, the old woodwork and stuffs; that seems to bring on to the surface of one's consciousness all manner of vague recollections and expectations, a something half pleasurable, half painful, that makes it impossible to do or to think.[13]

Yet 'haunting' is, for Lee, connected not just with ghost stories but, more generally, with past impressions and the work of memory. It is possible to be haunted by the familiar as well as the strange, although sometimes the one can masquerade or appear in the guise of the other. Much of Lee's writing is powerfully evocative; and in exploring these different kinds of hauntings, she arguably strives to 'bring the perfume out of everything' and thus determine the particular essence of a place or experience. As will become increasingly evident, smell plays a key role in this process both literally and figuratively. Moreover, smell itself haunts, is often uncanny, partaking of the strange and familiar and inducing nostalgia, a word that etymologically conveys the 'ache' or 'pain' of a longing for 'home'.[14]

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[11] Lee, 'Oke of Okehurst', pp. 126, 133, 142.
[12] Lee, 'Oke of Okehurst', pp. 143, 114–15, 115.
[13] Lee, 'Oke of Okehurst', p. 151.
[14] 'Nostalgia', from Ancient Greek *nostos* [return home] + *algos* [pain].

In 1918 Lee wrote to Irene Forbes-Mosse to tell her how reading archaeology books in wartime London helped her to escape the horrors of the present moment: '[T]he older, the further off from these foul days of ours – for instance prehistoric man and early Mediterranean civilization (it makes me smell the myrtle < dry herbs of our Italian hillsides!) the better.'[15] Opting out of the present and connecting with ancient Mediterranean culture brings Lee a consoling whiff of home that Forbes-Mosse, her former tenant, would also have known well. With that same smell in mind, she writes to their mutual friend Marie Waser two months later: 'I love thinking of the south, the rocky mountain ranges, of the scent of wild myrtles – you remember, dear Marie, our excursions in the quarries near Fiesole.'[16]

When in October 1919 Lee finally arrived home to her villa Il Palmerino, situated between Florence and Fiesole, she was, according to Herward Sieberg, relieved to find that 'nothing had changed at the Palmerino, and there was a fine scent of lavender in her house'.[17] This was a scent that Lee had celebrated in an essay of 1892, 'Midsummer Magic', as having a surprising yet comforting familiarity when she and a companion had unexpectedly come across it in the countryside around Siena:

> In a narrow valley we were met by a scent, warm, delicious, familiar, which seemed to lead us (as perfumes we cannot identify will usually do) to ideas very hazy, but clear enough to be utterly inappropriate: English cottage-gardens, linen presses of old houses, old-fashioned sitting-rooms full of pots of potpourri; and then, behold, in front of us a hill covered every inch of it with flowering lavender, growing as heather does on the hills outside fairyland.[18]

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[15] Vernon Lee to Forbes-Mosse, 18 April 1918, in *The Anglo-German Correspondence*, ed. by Sieberg and Zorn, pp. 401–04 (p. 403). Fond of herbal smells, Vernon Lee customarily scented her villa Il Palmerino with a traditional, pungent *pot pourri* still produced by the Florentine perfumery Santa Maria Novella, made from a mixture of buds, leaves and flower petals typical of the Tuscan hills. My source is Federica Parretti, one of the current owners of Il Palmerino, who still uses the same *pot pourri*. Lee's housekeeper Fortunata Mazzoli Terzani used it in her own home; and her son Francesco, who was born at Il Palmerino and knew Lee well, knew its origin and communicated this to his daughter (Fortunata's granddaughter) Laura Terzani. She mentions it in a short video about Il Palmerino which can be seen at <http://www.lauraterzani.net/vernon1.video.htm> [accessed 5 March 2021].

[16] Vernon Lee to Marie Waser, 10 June 1918, in *The Anglo-German Correspondence*, ed. by Sieberg and Zorn, pp. 407–10 (p. 410). Translation of Lee's French text on pp. 404–07 (p. 406).

[17] Herward Sieberg, 'Epilogue', in *The Anglo-German Correspondence*, ed. by Sieberg and Zorn, pp. 421–40 (p. 428), footnoting a letter by Lee to Waser, 9 October 1919.

[18] Vernon Lee, 'Midsummer Magic' (1892), repr. as 'Tuscan Midsummer Magic', in Vernon Lee, *Limbo and Other Essays* (London: Grant Richards, 1897). I use *Limbo*, to which is added *Ariadne in Mantua* (New York: John Lane; London: The Bodley Head, 1908), pp. 63–84 (p. 76).

In 1892 this familiar scent, appearing in the middle of the Tuscan countryside, had a strange and incongruous whiff of Englishness, but in post-war Italy, encountered in Lee's own home, it bestows a reassuring sense of domestic well-being.

The olfactory mix of the strange and the familiar haunts Lee's work. In the early twentieth century she was perhaps best-known for her essays on travel, specialising in short essays or vignettes which evoked what she termed the 'genius loci' or spirit of place. While these essays range across Europe, including locations in Britain, France, Switzerland, and Germany, unsurprisingly the largest number feature Italy, the country where Lee's peripatetic family made their home after 1873 when the illness of her half-brother, the poet Eugene Lee-Hamilton, forced them to settle in Florence. In her essay 'Castiglione d'Olona' Lee describes how she is suddenly stricken by a specific, nostalgic feeling which she calls:

> the *Emotion of Italy*. Or, rather, one, perhaps the most poignant and almost harrowing, of the emotions which Italy can give. For countries, like the people we love, have each a set of feelings (their own way of being lovable and hateful) which they awaken in us.[19]

She goes on to explain how this emotion suddenly takes hold of one:

> It is largely a matter of smells. Not merely because smells have that unrivalled power of evoking past states of feeling, but because smells seem to distil and volatilise so many undefinable peculiarities of season, of climate, and of civilisation. At Castiglione d'Olona it was all three. For after I had crossed the chief square of that village of escutcheoned, dismantled palaces, and was bruising my feet upon the hard uphill cobbles leading to the church, there rose to my nostrils in the autumn afternoon the mingled scents of long-neglected drains, of sun-dried filth, of mint crushed underfoot, and, purifying all with its sense of life and ripeness, the smell of leaves baked by a summer's heat and fresh from a frosty dew. That mingled scent meant what cannot be put into words, the faint thrill of hundreds of such impressions, long merged and forgotten; blurred memories of other solitary walks through other forlorn little places of the past, between dust-heaps and palaces, past little corners of garden and terrace, which might be that where Romeo's ladder had hung.[20]

Thus what Lee calls 'the *Emotion of Italy*' or 'one of the most poignant and almost harrowing, of the emotions which Italy can give' is directly conjured up by a smell that gives a particular edge or incisiveness to nostalgia. The

[19] Vernon Lee, 'Castiglione d'Olona', in Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 147–53 (p. 149).
[20] Lee, 'Castiglione d'Olona', p. 150.

word 'poignant', which Lee uses here, has an archaic sense meaning 'sharp in taste or smell' deriving from a Latin verb *pungere* meaning 'to prick' and is a variant of the more familiar word 'pungent'. What is emotionally 'poignant' or 'sharp' is felt like a stabbing pain and indeed the French verb *poindre* originally meant 'to prick or sting'. In 'Midsummer Magic' Lee also speaks of 'the charm of Italy', 'the charm which gives one a little stab now and again and makes one say – "This is Italy"'.[21] That charm is also connected with a smell, and she describes feeling 'that little stab' while spending the day at a Tuscan Benedictine monastery:

> It came to me as the revival of an impression long forgotten, that overpowering sense that 'This was Italy,' it recurred and recurred in those same three words, as I sat under the rose-hedge opposite the water-wheel shed, garlanded with drying pea-straw; and as I rambled through the chill vaults, redolent of old wine-vats, into the sudden sunshine and broad shadows of the cloistered yards.
>
> That smell was mysteriously connected with it; the smell of wine-vats mingled, I fancy (though I could not say why), with the sweet faint smell of decaying plaster and wood-work. One night, as we were driving through Bologna to wile away the hours between two trains, in the blue moon-mist and deep shadows of the black porticoed city, that same smell came to my nostrils as in a dream, and with it a whiff of bygone years, the years when first I had had this impression of Italian Magic.[22]

At the conclusion of this essay, she observes the special instances when the magic of early impressions of Italy revives:

> as on that day among the roses of those Benedictine cloisters, the cool shadow of the fig-trees in the yards, with the whiff of that queer smell, heavy with romance, of wine-saturated oak and crumbling plaster; and I know with a little stab of joy that this is Italy.[23]

For Lee, smell is an indispensable constituent in her sense of place, triggering memory and the accompanying poignant emotion which harrows or charms with a stab that confers the joy of recognition or the ache of nostalgia. Smells can also be understood as an affective shorthand, condensing or summarising the emotional significance or ambience of a place. The 'most thrilling moment', she confesses, of going to the theatre is not the actual performance, but the atmosphere of 'an old-fashioned playhouse':

[21] Lee, 'Tuscan Midsummer Magic', p. 81.
[22] Lee, 'Tuscan Midsummer Magic', pp. 81–82.
[23] Lee, 'Tuscan Midsummer Magic', p. 84.

> the tuning of the fiddles and the smell of gas, glue, heaven knows what glories of yester-year which, ever since one's babyhood, has come to mean 'the play.' People have expended much genius and more money to make theatrical representation transcend imagination; but they can never transcend that moment in the corridor, never transcend that smell.[24]

That olfactory affective shorthand is conspicuous in her essays on travel. Thus in her essay 'Petrarch's House at Arquà' she notes:

> For there is a kind of rock, white and friable, as if from steady generous heat, tufted with aromatic herbs and sunburnt grass, which, to anyone knowing the South's especial emotion […] means the South far more than any detail of vegetation.

Later, she observes: 'But as we walked down the steep stony street of Arquà there arose, summing up all that impression of southern simplicity and grace, the smell, the sweetest surely of nature's many kinds of incense, of burning olive-twigs.'[25]

Smells fuse the present with the past and thus can act as a kind of homecoming. For example, in her essay on Albi in the South of France, Lee reports that, entering the town by moonlight, she is charmed by the vision of the South she experiences, a vision that to her disappointment subsequently has evaporated by the following morning. Exploring the surrounding area, even taking in the smells of local orchards, 'a smell only the South knows', she declares: 'I recognized it all as Southern; yet it had nothing to do with my moonlight vision of the night before, and *I had no use for it*.'[26] However, a homely smell offers her a bridge from the familiar to the unfamiliar, allowing a rapprochement. As she sits on a grass bank:

> I saw some peppermint, growing in the grass within reach of my hand. I picked some. And as the stems were broken and the leaves and tiny lilac blossoms crushed, the well-known scent suddenly filled my nostrils and heart, making everything right, welcoming me to the South, and connecting this dull distant little corner of Languedoc with everything I care for most in the world.[27]

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[24] Vernon Lee, 'On Going to the Play', in Vernon Lee, *Hortus Vitae: Essays on the Gardening of Life* (London: John Lane; The Bodley Head, 1904), pp. 23–33 (pp. 26–27).

[25] Vernon Lee, 'Petrarch's House at Arquà', in Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 181–88 (pp. 184, 187). After completing this essay, I discovered that some of the quotations about Vernon Lee's perception of 'the South' also appear, though with a different set of emphases, in Leonie Wanitzek's fine essay '"The South! Something exclaims with me": Real and Imagined Spaces in Italy and the South in Vernon Lee's Travel Writing', *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens*, 83 (2016), 1–10.

[26] Vernon Lee, 'Albi', in Lee, *The Tower of the Mirrors*, pp. 49–54 (p. 51).

[27] Lee, 'Albi', p. 52.

The 'well-known scent' of the peppermint forges a connection to Lee's home in Italy, causing her to look more favourably on everything about her – 'the grace of things began to touch me'.[28] Initially comforted by perceived similarities – 'those Genoese-looking well-cranes and classic Columbaria (with pigeons frescoed on them, as in Italy)' – she eventually allows herself to embrace what is different, revisiting the view that had disappointed her that same morning: 'This was the South, I then understood, but not the Italian South, which is my reality. Rather the beginning of an unknown and imaginary Spain that I shall, perhaps, never see, but always henceforward dream of.'[29] Smell here acts like the old friend Lee describes in her essay on association, 'The Lake of Charlemagne', who helps to introduce a new acquaintance:

> Do you think that we perceive, much less remember, the totally unknown? Not a bit of it; we merely constantly recognize the already familiar; what we catch hold of with our mind is not that which is new, which belongs to to-day; but that which is old, and belongs to yesterday: the different, the new, we take in, tolerate, enjoy, only later. We wander, as it were, through a vast and populous city; those that we notice and speak to are our old acquaintance; but the old acquaintance introduce new ones, whom we admit for their sake.[30]

Sometimes, however, the desired new acquaintance turns out to be the old acquaintance all along. In her essay 'Et in Arcadia …' (1905), Lee describes how walking on the hillside near her Florentine home, 'the smell, very sweet and peculiar, of burning olive twigs' communicates 'a pang and vision of Sicily, Greece – the real South which I shall never go to'.[31] Actually Lee did travel to Greece in 1907 and toured Sicily in the spring of 1912, but in this essay she explains how the smell of burning olive wood, along with certain visual cues that for her connote 'the South' and 'Antiquity', create a 'homesickness for places I have never been to'. She longs to go to these new places but, as she freely admits, her idealised perception of them is based on suggestions provided by 'the familiar Tuscan landscape'. That landscape, mingled with 'vague recollections of the Odyssey or of Theocritus', becomes 'the sample, the beginning so to speak, of another part of the world' and so acquires 'a foreign

[28] Lee, 'Albi', p. 52.
[29] Lee, 'Albi', pp. 53–54.
[30] Vernon Lee, 'The Lake of Charlemagne', in Vernon Lee, *Juvenilia: Being a Second Series of Questions on Sundry Aesthetical Questions*, 2 vols (London: Fisher Unwin, 1887), I, 23–76 (p. 61).
[31] Vernon Lee, 'Et in Arcadia …', in Vernon Lee, *The Enchanted Woods and Other Essays on the Genius of Places* (New York: John Lane; London: The Bodley Head, 1905), pp. 311–21 (p. 313).

significance and the poignancy of the rarely seen'.[32] Crucially, the whole process of projection, with its attendant 'poignancy', is triggered by the olive-wood smoke, which produces the penetrating 'pang and vision' and later 'a little stab of envy and sadness' as Lee recalls that friends of hers are setting out for a trip 'to Greater Greece and Sicily'.[33] Thus Lee's yearning or 'homesickness for places I have never been to' depends on a pervasive, localised sense of home and a smell associated with the Italian South.[34] When she did finally visit Greece, she recorded waking after her first night to the familiar sound of goat bells: 'But I knew by that sound, that scent, that this Greece was the one I had loved for years, recognizing, I scarce know how, its every vestige in other places.'[35] Here the new is already known, endeared by familiar sensory impressions including smells. However, as we saw in the opening anecdote about Sens, an agreeable smell can also redeem an otherwise lacklustre, newly encountered place by 'sweetening' its remembrance and effectively priming that memory to be retriggered in the future by a similar odour.

Lee also suggests that the sensory stimuli we receive in certain places not only help to capture and print on our minds the thoughts and feelings we have about those locations, but they also contribute to the apparently quite separate intellectual thoughts and ideas we have while in them. As I have pointed out elsewhere, her philosophical or discursive dialogues collected in *Baldwin* (1886) and *Althea* (1894) are punctuated by paragraphs of lyrical description, anchoring her speakers in specific settings or landscapes.[36] Made vivid with sensory detail, these small interludes help to vary or slow the pace of the conversation, marking transitions, giving her interlocutors the opportunity to gather their thoughts and her reader time to absorb and digest the ideas presented. While predominantly visual, these transitional passages allude to the other senses including olfaction, as can be seen in her very first dialogue, 'A Dialogue on Poetic Morality', from her early essay collection *Belcaro* (1881). This exchange occurs between two young men, Baldwin and Cyril, who, at one point, break their journey through the countryside near the Pisan sea-

[32] Lee, 'Et in Arcadia …', pp. 314, 313.
[33] Lee, 'Et in Arcadia …', pp. 313, 318, 315.
[34] In her introduction to her friend Clementina Anstruther-Thomson's *Art and Man: Essays and Fragments* (London: John Lane; The Bodley Head, 1924), pp. 3–112, Lee recalls a walk with Kit (Clementina), taken just before her mother's death, when 'the soft, moist air was full of the delicious smoke of olive twigs, that indescribably southern scent which my mother fancifully identified with *cassia*' (p. 18). The connection with her mother reinforces the association between the scent, the Italian South and her home. Cassia is a spice made from the bark of the evergreen *Cinnamomum cassia*, the East Asian Chinese cinnamon tree.
[35] Vernon Lee, 'Greece at Last', *Westminster Gazette*, 1 January 1910, pp. 2–3 (p. 2).
[36] Catherine Maxwell, 'Vernon Lee's Handling of Words', in *Thinking Through Style: Non-Fiction Prose of the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Michael D. Hurley and Marcus Waithe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 282–97 (p. 286).

shore to discuss ideas and reflect beneath a cypress tree 'whose compact hairy trunk gave out a resinous scent, more precious and strange than that of the fir'.[37] In *Baldwin*, Lee's subsequent collection of dialogues, Baldwin and another interlocutor, Carlo, pause in their deliberations about the value of the ideal to watch a peasant play and then walk 'slowly homewards through the fields, while the rapid Italian twilight fell around them over the plantations of ripening corn and vines and serried fresh-scented hemp'. Back at the villa where they are staying, she writes: 'For a few minutes they leaned against the parapet in silence, looking out into the summer night, vibrating with the quavering notes of insects; vibrating, one might almost say, with the poignant scent of vague flowers and distant hayfields.'[38]

That 'poignant', penetrating floral scent surely impresses itself on the memory along with the exchange it accompanies. Such passages remind us that our intellectual conversations and private thoughts do not take place in a vacuum but in particular places at particular moments in time and are affected by sensory impressions, mood, emotion, and atmosphere, which add pattern and colour to our meditations. In the Introduction to *Baldwin*, Lee recounts a letter by her fictional protagonist (partly based on herself and her half-brother Eugene) supposedly written from the small Italian village where he spent his formative years. Now revisiting that village as an adult, Baldwin explains how his vivid early encounters with history have become inextricable from certain sensory impressions:

> A certain lane between the high-lying cornfield and vine trellises, [is] haunted, as with the smell of its wild rose and privet, by the thought of Charles the Bold and Louis XI, and Joan of Arc. […] And I remember the struggle in my mind of horror and reason on reading first of the wickedness of the Renaissance, as connected with the simmering, shimmering cornfields, the smell of the green standing hemp, the rush and flash of the river among the reeds.[39]

This recollection suggests that the ideas discussed by Baldwin and his friends in the subsequent dialogues might also retain something of the sensory or ambient imprint of the places where their conversations take place. Indeed, that smell of green hemp associated with the youthful Baldwin's imagining of the Renaissance recurs, as just seen, in his dialogue with Carlo about the ideal. This implies that the adult intellectual exchange might become similarly

[37] Vernon Lee, 'A Dialogue on Poetic Morality', in Vernon Lee, *Belcaro*: *Being Essays on Sundry Aesthetical Questions* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1881), pp. 230–74 (pp. 243–44).
[38] Vernon Lee, 'The Value of the Ideal', in Vernon Lee, *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1886), pp. 284, 303.
[39] Vernon Lee, 'Introduction', in Lee, *Baldwin*, pp. 1–14 (p. 12).

linked to or imbued with a scent, helping lodge it in the memory and making it susceptible to vivid recall if that same scent is re-encountered.

Rereading a text that made a significant first impression might also bring back the sensory perceptions, including scents, experienced when one first read it. In the Introduction to her *Juvenilia* (1887), Lee recalls reading in her late teens Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, his novel of first century Rome:

> I read it in the earliest days of our Florentine spring. The banks were full of fennel tufts, of sage, marigolds, and all manner of herbs that leave an aromatic, spring-like scent upon one's hands; between the leafless vines the paths were powdered with daisies; on the hillsides the peach and almond blossoms made a pinkish, whitish mist upon the silvery olives, the coppery sere oaks; and everywhere in the sprouting bright green wheat, flamed the scarlet and purple anemones, the light playing with them as with gems. The pale blue sky was washed by recent showers; the air of delicate cold crispness. With these impressions from without mingled the impressions of the book: sunny, serene, bracing, like those first spring days, with its background of the Latin country life of Virgil and Tibullus.[40]

The actual fragrance of Lee's vernal reading experience merges with the pastoral fragrance evoked by the novel's rural descriptions and its tonic contemplative atmosphere. However, along with this idyllic perfume Pater's novel also evokes for Lee a not unrelated but more abstract scent, the scent of her youthful intellectual idealism, which while rereading 'came home to me very keenly, like the taste or the scent of some fruit or flower not seen for years, the peculiar flavour, I would call it, of those aesthetic, classic, Goethian days'. She also comments:

> The book brought back to me, more vividly than the sunshine and daisies and scent of crushed herbs, the sense of a moral and intellectual spring; the poignant remembrance of long ago, when at eighteen or nineteen I too had read those descriptions of rustic life and rites, austere and serene, in Virgil and Tibullus; when I too had looked upon the world as a tract of spring.[41]

We notice again that word 'poignant' as through her reading Lee is penetrated by the memory of her intellectual springtime with its perfumed hint of ingenuous optimism.

Memory is inextricable from the processes of both writing and reading as Lee understands them. In her 1923 study *The Handling of Words*, she suggests

[40] Vernon Lee, 'Introduction', in Vernon Lee, *Juvenilia*, I, 1–22 (pp. 7–8).
[41] Lee, 'Introduction', in *Juvenilia*, I, 8.

that 'writing is the art which gives us the emotional essence of the world and of life […] distilled to the highest and most exquisite potency in the Writer', he or she being the one who has the 'faculty of feeling and expressing the essence of things'.[42] The writer communicates with the reader not through what Lee calls 'complete visions' but suggestive fragments:

> fragments, moreover, quite heterogeneous, called up by all the senses we know of, and often by more senses we can account for. These fragments contain the active essence, the taste, the perfume, *timbre*, the something provocative of the mood. And it is these that he selects when he wishes to pass on his mood to others, or preserve it for himself.[43]

The writer evidently has to draw on the memory of his or her own sensory and emotional experience to furnish such fragments. However, Lee, who has a complex understanding of the intricate cooperative relationship of Writer and Reader, later suggests that in the reading experience these fragments activate the reader's own associations and memories and combine with them. For her, memory is the very basis of literature, and memory is itself like a perfume or essence:

> But while memory fails to preserve separate experiences in all their vividness, it distils, in this very crushing together of the single facts of life, an essence such as no other art (no, not even music) has at disposal: an essence of which one drop, one whiff, can change, by its subtle directness, the whole of our being of the moment. It is to this essential quality of memory that is due, more than to anything else, the unrivalled wonder of literature.[44]

In an earlier essay 'Reading Books', collected in *Hortus Vitae* (1904), Lee also suggests that to appreciate literature fully one must be able to respond to a book's 'allusions and suggestions' with one's own associations and memories, these being themselves partly generated by prior reading:

> Literature, alas! is, so to speak, for the literate; and one has to have read a great, great deal in order to taste the special exquisiteness of books, their marvellous essence of long-stored up, oddly mixed, subtly selected and hundredfold distilled suggestion.[45]

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[42] Vernon Lee, 'On Literary Construction', in Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology* (London: John Lane; The Bodley Head, 1923), pp. 1–33 (pp. 31, 32).
[43] Vernon Lee, 'On Style', in Lee, *The Handling of Words*, pp. 34–65 (p. 37).
[44] Vernon Lee, 'The Nature of the Writer', in Lee, *The Handling of Words*, pp. 73–135 (p. 84).
[45] Vernon Lee, 'Reading Books', in Lee, *Hortus Vitae*, pp. 35–44 (pp. 39, 40).

The literate reader is like the skilled perfumer or wine connoisseur, who can evaluate and appreciate a fragrance or a vintage on the basis of a lifetime's experience. 'But', Lee remarks, 'once this state of things is reached, there is no need to read much'; and she adds:

> Since, the time has come, after planting and grafting and dragging watering-pots, for flowering and fruition; for books to do their best, to exert their full magic. This is the time when a verse, imperfectly remembered, will haunt the memory; and one takes down the book, reads it and what follows, judiciously breaking off, one's mind full of the flavour and scent.[46]

For such literate readers Lee declares, '[t]he greatest pleasures of reading consist in re-reading'; but she then qualifies this by adding: 'Sometimes almost in not reading at all, but just thinking or feeling what there is inside the book, or what has come out of it, long ago, and passed into one's mind and heart, as the case may be.' She recalls 'a happy week' spent in the Lower Apennines carrying round with her a beautiful copy of *Hippolytus* given her by a friend 'regardless of my ignorance of Greek', occasionally spelling out the odd word, 'but more often letting the volume repose by me on the grass and crushed mint of the cool yard under the fig tree, while the last belated cicala sawed, and the wild bees hummed in the ivy on the old villa wall.'

Lee knew Euripides' drama in English – her first partner, the poet Mary Robinson, had even published a verse translation of it – but she did not need to read it in the original Greek to enjoy it, re-experiencing instead the play or its effects at a remove, her thoughts enhanced by the grace of the beautiful gift and the fragrance and atmosphere of her surroundings:

> For once you know the spirit of a book, there is a process (known to Petrarch with reference to Homer, whom he was unable to understand) of taking in its charm by merely turning over the pages, or even, as I say, in carrying it about. The literary essence, which is uncommonly subtle, has various modes of acting on us; and this particular manner of absorbing a book's spirit stands to the material operation called *reading*, much in the same way that *smell*, the act of breathing invisible volatile particles, stands to the more obvious wholesale process of *taste*.[47]

If we recall smell's vivid link with memory, the olfactory analogy is again especially pertinent as the discriminating reader with a nose for books can either conjure up his recollection of a work's essence or, if he has not read it

[46] Lee, 'Reading Books', p. 40.
[47] Lee, 'Reading Books', pp. 42–43.

himself, can make a good approximation of it. Lee mischievously concludes this essay by recounting how, during a recent stay in a country house, she found that the library door was 'covered with real book-backs, or, more properly, backs of real books of which the inside was missing'. Listing some of the titles – works whose contents an educated Victorian reader like herself would know, if not personally, then by repute or by informed speculation – Lee comments: 'I felt acutely how true it is that a book (for the truly lettered) can do its work without being read.' The titles evoke the fragrant memories – either real or imagined – of the missing books, supplied by Lee, the literate reader. Thus, having relished 'this mixed literature's flavour', she pronounces: 'I recognized that those gutted-away insides were quite superfluous: they had yielded their essence and their virtue.'[48]

If, for Lee, smell can act as a mnemonic of reading, of places, of the conversations and ideas one had at certain moments in one's life, then it can also evoke certain key relationships. Throughout her life Lee seems to have used smell memories as a way of holding on to and evoking past friendships and romances, as indeed we saw in her appeal to Marie Waser to recall their Florentine rambles and the smell of wild myrtle. Smell memory is a feature of her romantic relationships, particularly with respect to her early alliance with the poet Mary Robinson, whom she appears to have first met in the autumn of 1880 in Florence. Robinson herself was passionate about flowers, especially scented flowers, which recur frequently in her work and are a notable feature of her first acclaimed volume, *A Handful of Honeysuckle*, published in 1878 before she met Lee. As is clear from Lee's letters to Robinson, archived in the Bibliothèque nationale, collecting flowers together in the places they visited, giving flowers to each other as keepsakes and sending them by post as love tokens were an important part of the way they marked their relationship.

The women became a couple after Robinson apparently declared her feelings for Lee sometime in late October or early November 1880; and after some weeks apart during which Robinson visited Rome they reunited in December and embarked on what was effectively an idyllic honeymoon tour of Siena and Pisa. In letters written shortly after that tour, omitted from Amanda Gagel's recent edition of Lee's correspondence, Lee later reflects on their precious time together, as captured by the flowers they had gathered at the places they visited. She writes to Robinson that:

[48] Lee, 'Reading Books', pp. 43–44. Lee uses the word 'virtue' here in its archaic sense, as Pater does in his Preface to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), to mean the unique occult efficacious power or property of a thing. In 'About Leisure' in *Limbo*, Lee writes of how over time people can degenerate and lose their 'charm', 'their individual shape, perfume, savour, and, in the sense of herbals, their individual *virtue*' (Vernon Lee, 'About Leisure', in Lee, *Limbo*, pp. 133–55 (p. 149)).

> the little faded crumpled love flowers which you have given me will remain and cast a perfume through my life when they shall long have been broken & discoloured, & you have given others to other folk, & forgotten that I ever had any. (21 December 1880)

In a letter written just after parting from Robinson at Pisa (17 December), Lee discloses what some of those flowers were, declaring that she has 'put by with great care the little broken, jammed violets from S Eugenio, & the ilex twigs from Belcaro & the crunched jonquils from the Campo Santo'.[49] The following March (5 March 1881) she writes to Robinson about gathering early spring flowers on Bellosguardo:

> I found by the little water trickle through the podere a single white narcissus: the smell of it makes all that day & evening at Pisa come back as if it were present, on account of the narcissus in the Campo Santo.[50]

Commemorating that narcissus, Robinson's short poem 'A Jonquil in the Pisan Campo Santo', presumably written after the women's excursion, was subsequently published in her second collection, *The Crowned Hippolytus*, the following year in April 1881.

In the poem the white fragrant flower is seen growing out of the historic Pisan cemetery known as the Campo Santo (literally 'holy field'), so-called because it was built around a shipload of sacred soil imported from Golgotha in the twelfth century. Pater, a friend of both women, had recounted in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) how a new anemone had grown out of the imported soil, symbolic of the mythology of the Italian Renaissance.[51] However, as they come towards the end of their honeymoon tour, Lee and Robinson discover their own special symbolic flower. At the time of their visit in 1880 the grass-covered central quadrangle in the Campo Santo featured a garden with an old cypress tree at each corner. There the women found the narcissus in bloom. While to the casual reader Robinson's poem looks like a generic lyric about love overcoming death, it has an important private meaning for Lee and Robinson, celebrating their mutual newfound love which becomes an inspiring source of strength 'in a world of doubt':

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[49] Vernon Lee to Mary Robinson, 21 and 17 December 1880, Manuscrits, Anglais 244, fols 45v; 44v, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Quoted with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale. Warm thanks to Hilary Fraser and Carlene Adamson for help with the transcription of Lee's letter of 17 December.

[50] Vernon Lee to Mary Robinson, 5 March 1881, Manuscrits, Anglais 244, fols 127v–128r, BnF, Paris. Quoted with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale.

[51] Walter Pater, 'Pico della Mirandola', in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 18–28 (p. 27).

Out of the place of death,
  Out of the cypress shadow,
Out of sepulchral earth,
  Dust that Calvary gave,
Sprang, as fragrant of breath
  As any flower of the meadow,
This, with death in its birth,
  Sent like speech from the grave.

So, in a world of doubt,
  Love – like a flower –
Blossoms suddenly white,
  Suddenly sweet and pure,
Shedding a breath about
  Of new mysterious power,
Lifting a hope in the night,
  Not to be told, but sure.[52]

The scented white jonquil, most likely *Narcissus tazetta* ('Paperwhite'), which in Mediterranean countries can flower from December into February, becomes the emblem of that shared love and, as we know from Lee's letters, was gathered and preserved as a memento and love-token. As already seen, Lee declares that the flowers given to her by Robinson have a lasting ideal fragrance as well as an actual, transient one – they 'will remain and cast a perfume through my life when they shall long have been broken & discoloured'. However, the advantage of flowers as mementoes is that the natural cycle of renewal means that the fragrance and beauty of subsequent blooms will revive and reinvigorate the memories of those first tokens. A later, published letter from Lee to Robinson dated 2 January 1884 suggests that she made an effort to mark the anniversary of their honeymoon experience with their own scented flower: 'I am waiting for the first narcissus to send you my love.'[53] Traditionally a poet's poems are his flowers – *anthoi* – and in a different way Robinson's Pisan poem revives the memory of the flower scent and its significance every time it is read by Lee.

Lee and Robinson continued to exchange flowers throughout their romantic relationship; and scented flowers and leaves are also associated with other of Lee's significant female relationships. Famously, on the day Lee learnt of

[52] A. Mary F. Robinson, *The Crowned Hippolytus. Translated from Euripides with New Poems* (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), p. 186.

[53] Vernon Lee to Mary Robinson, 2 January 1884, in *Selected Letters of Vernon Lee, 1856–1935*, ed. by Amanda Gagel, 3 vols (London: The Pickering Masters London, 2016–), I (2016), *1865–1884*, 490–92 (p. 491).

Mary Robinson's engagement to James Darmesteter (24 August 1887), Kit Anstruther-Thomson, with whom she was staying, left a white rosebud on her pillow. Lee preserved the rosebud for the rest of her life in an envelope inscribed with the title of a famous poem by Goethe, 'Neue Liebe, neues Leben' [New Love, New Life]; and four days later she wrote in her commonplace book: 'It was a rose, scarcely more than a bud, lying very gently, white on whiteness. The scent of that rose will cling, I believe, as long as I live, in the corners of my soul.'[54] Years later, after she and Kit had amicably parted, they remained close enough for Lee to send her fragrant gifts, as can be seen from Kit's delighted response in 1912 after Lee sent her 'bay & violets & thyme': 'My Beloved Vernon, Your charming scented things made my room smell like a mountain side.'[55] Elsewhere, in the dedicatory letter to Madame Blanc-Bentzon which prefaces *Hortus Vitae*, Lee recalls their mutual affection for Gabrielle Delzant, who had died eight months previously; and remembers how she and Delzant had spent their last afternoon reading together at the latter's Gascon home:

> she bade the dear Southern maids light a fine blaze of vine stumps, and fill all the jars with fresh roses – china roses, so vivid, surely none have ever smelt so sweet and poignant. We amused ourselves, a little sadly, burning some olive and myrtle branches I had brought for her from Corsica, and watching their frail silver twigs and leaves turn to embers and fall in fireworks of sparks and a smoke of incense.[56]

Later that afternoon, when Lee's carriage arrived:

> We closed the books, marking the place, and I broke a rose from the nosegay on the fireplace. And we said farewell.
>
> Thus have we remained, she and I. With the mild autumn day drawing to an end outside; and within, the fresh roses, the bright fire she had asked for; remained reading our books, watching those dried leaves turn to showers of sparks and smoke of incense. She and I, united beyond all

[54] Vineta Colby, *Vernon Lee: A Literary Biography* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), p. 123; Phyllis Mannocchi, 'Vernon Lee and Kit Anstruther-Thomson: A Study of Love and Collaboration between Romantic Friends', *Women's Studies*, 12 (1986), 129–48 (p. 132); Entry 'Charleton Aug 28 1887', Commonplace Book: New series III–XIV 1887–1900, edited 1920, Vernon Lee Collection, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, cited in 'Introduction', *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1–20 (p. 4).

[55] Kit Anstruther-Thomson to Vernon Lee, 15 February 1912, SC/LY/SP/VL 225, letter 225, Box 14, Vernon Lee Correspondence, Somerville College Library Archive, by kind permission of the Principal and Fellows of Somerville College, Oxford. The current copyright holder for Clementina Anstruther-Thomson is unknown.

[56] Vernon Lee, 'Dedication', in Lee, *Hortus Vitae*, pp. v–xvi (p. xv).

> power of death to part, in the loving belief that, even like that afternoon of packing up and bidding adieu, and rain and early twilight, life also should be made serene and leisurely, and simple and sweet, and akin to eternity.[57]

Lee's adieu to Delzant, made without the knowledge that it was a final farewell, is now preserved as a precious memory, charged with the poignant scent of Delzant's roses and the incense of Lee's offering of dried burnt leaves. This touching elegiac episode occurs on an autumn day like the one in 'Oke of Okehurst' which 'brings the perfume out of everything', here bringing out the consoling, remembered sweetness of the women's friendship. Seasoned by Lee's acute olfactory sensibility, the recollection of this last encounter, though tinged with melancholy, is destined to become a lasting solace and what Lee elsewhere calls 'one of those rare pleasures which, like lavender, send out a whiff of sweetness, whenever one opens certain compartments of one's memory'.[58]

[57] Lee, 'Dedication', p. xvi.

[58] Vernon Lee to Edmund Gosse, 12 February 1906, in 'Selected Letters of Vernon Lee (1856–1935)', ed. by Mandy Gagel (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Boston, 2008), pp. 632–33 (p. 632).

Érika Wicky

A Good Eye, Taste and Flair: The Sensory Skills of the *Fin-de-Siècle* Collector[1]

> *The next morning, on the 17th, Count JACQUES DE LA BÉRAUDIERE, an eminent connoisseur whose unfailing taste was authoritative, died suddenly of a violent apoplexy in his hotel in the rue de Poitiers. In matters of art, the delicacy of his judgement was unparalleled; he combined real erudition with the unsurpassable flair which is the hallmark of the true collector.*[2]
>
> [*Le lendemain matin 17, un curieux éminent, dont le goût d'une rare sûreté faisait autorité, M. le comte JACQUES DE LA BÉRAUDIÈRE succombait dans son hôtel de la rue de Poitiers, frappé d'apoplexie foudroyante. C'était, en matière d'art, un raffiné comme pas un; à un très sérieux savoir, il unissait au suprême degré le flair, cette qualité maitresse du collectionneur.*]
>
> Eugène Véron, *Courrier de l'art*, 23 January 1885

Linked to the enthusiasm roused by ancient and exotic artefacts,[3] the passion for collecting grew considerably in the second half of the nineteenth century, to such an extent that it occupied a prominent place in writings on art, in the press and in literature of this period.[4] In the fields of art and history, its advent was accompanied by the appearance of the archetypal figure of the collector,[5] whom

[1] This text is an expanded translation of my article 'L'Oeil, le gout, le flair: Les compétences sensorielles du collectionneur fin-de-siècle', published in *Société & Représentations*, 44 (2017), 152–62; it forms part of the work conducted for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project *PaintOdor* (845788).

[2] Translations are by the author throughout.

[3] For reference to ancient artefacts, see Emmanuel Charpy, 'Amateurs, collectionneurs et chineurs parisiens du XIXe siècle: Le commerce des apparences du passé, entre centre et périphérie', in *Paraître et apparence en Europe occidentale*, ed. by Isabelle Paresys (Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2008), pp. 369–89.

[4] Dominique Pety, *Poétique de la collection: Du document de l'historien au bibelot de l'esthète* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris ouest, 2010).

[5] Bernard Vouilloux, 'Le Collectionnisme vu du XIXe siècle', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 109 (2009), 403–17.

we encounter in many iconographic representations but who is also detectable as a leading character in works of fiction, as well as in funeral eulogies and in the guides and catalogues designed for collectors' use. While the collector is initially presented as an eccentric and mocked for an unhealthy devotion to his obsession, he comes into his own at the beginning of the Third Republic.[6] At that point the figure of the ideal collector emerges: he is a true paragon, invariably endowed with impressive erudition and unfailing taste, but also, and above all, he has *flair*. This word, which enjoys a common etymology with Latin *fragrare* [to emit a pleasant smell], has, since medieval times, designated a dog's sense of smell in French, but when it comes to the collector *flair* is used as a metaphor for intuition.

By making flair a commonplace quality required by a collector, writers endorsed a new meaning of the term, reported for the first time by Littré in 1874 and exemplified by this assertion: 'There are antiquarians who have flair' [Il y a des antiquaires qui ont du flair].[7] The figurative meaning of the term, which links the dog's sense of smell with finesse (highly developed senses) and intuition, paradoxically brings a sense which in its most animal dimension was considered base into the field of arts and antique objects by conferring on it the appearance of a quality. Although the lexicalised metaphor of flair has now lost its strangeness in French, in the nineteenth century the novelty and magnitude of this intrusion of the sense of smell into an area traditionally dominated by sight and taste raise interesting questions. Flair, which became an accepted term describing the skills of the *fin-de-siècle* collector,[8] offers an unusual perspective on this figure, as well as on the specificity of his knowledge in the domain of arts and history, but it also reveals the changes at work in the nineteenth-century intersensory model.[9]

Art, the eye and flair

In the nineteenth century it seems that neither smell nor flair could serve as a basis for aesthetic judgment and objective knowledge. This double disregard for the sense of smell has a long history;[10] the place of olfaction in theories of

[6] Dominique Pety, 'Le Personnage du collectionneur au XIXe siècle: De l'excentrique à l'amateur distingué', *Romantisme*, 112 (2001), 71–81 (p. 74).

[7] Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 4 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1872–77), II (1874), 1688; cf. *Dictionnaire de l'académie française*, ed. by Institut de France, 2 vols (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1878), I, 756.

[8] See Eugène Müntz, *Les Précurseurs de la Renaissance* (Paris: Librairie de l'art, 1882), p. 115.

[9] Constance Classen, 'Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses', *International Social Science Journal*, 49 (1997), 401–12.

[10] Chantal Jaquet, *Philosophie de l'odorat* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010).

knowledge is still modest despite a philosophical tradition that values intuition.[11] Moreover, many shared Antelme Édouard Chaignet's conception of the sense of smell as 'the most alien to the concept of Beauty' [le sens le plus étranger au Beau] and affirmed like him that there were 'only two senses through which aesthetic pleasures are transmitted to the soul: sight and hearing' [que deux sens par lesquels se transmettent à l'âme les plaisirs esthétiques: la vue et l'ouïe].[12] As a sense which is dependent on proximity, the sense of smell disrupted the distance necessary for the appreciation of artistic works; as a sense which is internal and within us, it did not allow us go beyond the self sufficiently to acquire objective knowledge. While these preconceptions would persist for quite some time, they were nevertheless increasingly called into question in a period when appreciation for collectors' flair was beginning to emerge (and also in an era which saw the growth of the modern perfume industry).[13]

I shall dwell on the social issues raised by the sense of smell, highlighted and analysed by Alain Corbin, only to point out the extent to which perceiving smells was a source of social awareness in the context of nineteenth-century social hygiene.[14] Literature which claimed to be realistic or naturalistic overused the device of informing the reader about the *mores*, personal history and morality of a character by commenting on the smells emanating from his person and his environment. These texts also often allude to smells in order to give the story the value of testimony by highlighting lived experience in the narrative. Moreover, the sense of smell attracted the full attention of literary critics and of physicians such as Édouard Toulouse when they sought to explain the intellectual superiority of Zola and observed that his sense of smell was highly developed.[15]

In the field of aesthetics, the response to this – very relative – literary rehabilitation of the knowledge acquired by the sense of smell constituted a

[11] Temenuzhka Dimova, Martial Guédron and Mylène Mistre-Schaal, *L'Emprise des sens* (Paris: Hazan, 2016), p. 265.

[12] Antelme Édourd Chaignet, *Les Principes de la science du beau* (Paris: Durand, 1860), pp. 326, 84.

[13] Eugénie Briot, *La Fabrique des parfums: Naissance d'une industrie de luxe* (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2015).

[14] Alain Corbin, *Le Miasme et la jonquille: L'odorat et l'imaginaire social XVIIIe–XIXe siècle* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982).

[15] Édouard Toulouse, *Enquête médico-psychologique sur les rapports de la supériorité intellectuelle avec la névropathie* (Paris: Sociétés d'éditions scientifiques, 1896), quoted in Sophie-Valentine Borloz, *'Les femmes qui se parfument doivent être admirées de loin': Les odeurs féminines dans 'Nana' de Zola, 'Notre cœur' de Maupassant et 'L'Ève future' de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam* (Lausanne: Archipel, 2015), p. 24. For an example of critics' concerns with smell, see Léopold Bernard, *Les Odeurs dans les romans de Zola: Conférence faire au cercle artistique* (Montpellier: Coulet, 1902).

new appreciation of the emotional potential of olfactory memory. Long before Proust put olfaction at the centre of his aesthetics,[16] Jean-Marie Guyau, citing literary examples taken from Hugo and Flaubert, identifies the following trend:

> By contrast, Oriental and Romantic literature, instead of emphasising objective perception, stresses the inner emotion that accompanies it and seeks to revive this emotion in us; instead of relying on the over-intellectual sense of sight, it takes its images from touch, smell and from the inner sense: it thus manages to elicit much more precise, though less formal, representations.
>
> [Au contraire, la littérature orientale et romantique, au lieu d'insister sur la perception objective, insiste sur l'émotion intérieure qui l'accompagne, et elle cherche à ranimer en nous cette émotion; au lieu de s'appuyer sur le sens trop intellectuel de la vue, elle emprunte aussi bien ses images à ceux du tact, de l'odorat, du sens interne: elle arrive ainsi à susciter des représentations beaucoup plus précises quoique moins formelles.][17]

Finally, the role of the sense of smell in aesthetic experience benefitted from Symbolist artists' interest in synaesthesia and their desire to create an all-encompassing work of art.[18] Some of them placed perfumes at the heart of their artistic experiences, like Des Esseintes, J.-K. Huysmans's aesthete;[19] or Paul-Napoléon Roinard, who planned to diffuse perfumes during the performance of the *Song of Songs* [*Cantique des Cantiques*] by the Théâtre d'art.[20]

If, in line with the concepts of the time, the sense of smell was not completely alien to artistic experience and had proved to be a means of acquiring knowledge, nothing seemed to preclude its deliberate use (smelling) from being included among the practices of the collector. However, this was not enough to allow flair to take pride of place among the latter's skills when, traditionally, art-lovers were supposed to rely primarily on sight to appreciate, experience and assess works of art and decorative artefacts. It would seem that, for the collector, the connection between sight and smell depended first and foremost on his anatomical make-up: anxious to observe an object as closely as possible, he comes so close that he almost pushes his nose up against it. While the *true* art-lover, as Daumier points out with a touch of irony, ob-

[16] Chantal Jaquet, *Philosophie de l'odorat*, pp. 151–97.
[17] Jean-Marie Guyau, *L'Art du point de vue sociologique* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889), p. 109.
[18] George Vanor, *L'Art symboliste* (Paris: Vanier, 1889), p. 37.
[19] Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À rebours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1884), pp. 149–58.
[20] Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, '"Mise en Scent": The Théâtre d'Art's *Cantique des cantiques* and the Use of Smell as a Theatrical Device', *Theatre Research International*, 24 (1999), 152–59.

serves from a distance using a magnifying glass, the collector comes so close to the coveted object that the verb 'to sniff out' [flairer] was used as a synonym for observing by one of Balzac's characters when he reassures Pons, the eponymous hero of *The Poor Relations: Cousin Pons* [*Les parents pauvres: Le cousin Pons*]: 'I can see that you will be walking about the boulevards in a week or two, hunting up pretty little curiosities again. You are not ill; I never saw your eyes look so bright' [Je te vois dans quinze jours d'ici te promenant sur le boulevard et flairant de jolies petites curiosités, car tu n'es pas malade, tu as les yeux plus vifs que je ne te les ai jamais vus].[21]

Arising from the protruding nature of the nose and the capacity of the sense of smell to detect also what is concealed from view, the concept of flair evolved to include the ability to probe depths hidden from a sight which cannot go beyond the surface of things,[22] notwithstanding the efforts of the collector who 'scrutinises, and peers shamelessly into the most private interiors of huts, kitchens and even stables' [scrute, il plonge son regard, si terriblement indiscret dans l'intérieur le plus intime des cabanes, des cuisines, des étables même].[23] In his novel *The Faience Violin* [*Le Violon de faïence*], Champfleury, who poked fun at collectors all the more gleefully because he was one of the most passionate of them himself, describes a frenetic collector: 'In spite of this violent course, Gardilanne scrutinized the interiors of the houses, and sniffed at every old building, moving his nostrils in a way which disturbed his friend' [Malgré cette course ardente, Gardilanne n'en scrutait pas moins l'intérieur des maisons et flairait chaque vieille bâtisse avec des mouvements de narines qui faisaient frémir son ami].[24] This character was able to detect the smell of a coveted object among other scents: 'Gardilanne hunted out some fragments of antique tapestries from under a heap of rabbit skins and bones of all sorts giving forth nauseous odours' [Gardilanne flaira des fragments d'anciennes tapisseries sous des entassements de peaux de lapin, d'os de toute sorte, dont l'accumulation provoquait de nauséabondes odeurs].[25] The collector, sniffing everywhere and careering from place to place, preferably in the countryside, in an attempt to track down a rare object, is reminiscent of the hunting dog, from which he derives his main characteristic. The comparison was so common that Edmond Bonnaffé did not hesitate to ask his readers: 'Do you have

[21] Honoré de Balzac, *Cousin Pons*, trans. by Ellen Marriage (London: Privately printed for members of the Society of English Bibliophilists, 1901), p. 244; Honoré de Balzac, *Les Parents pauvres: Le cousin Pons* (Paris: Marescq et Cie, 1851–53), p. 148.

[22] Pety, *Poétique de la collection*, p. 135.

[23] Auguste Demmin, *Souvenirs de voyage et causeries d'un collectionneur* (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1864), pp. 34–35.

[24] Champfleury, *The Faience Violin*, trans. by Helen B. Dole (New York: Crowell, 1895), p. 130; Champfleury, *Le Violon de faïence* (Paris: Dentu, 1877 [1862]), p. 105.

[25] Champfleury, *The Faience Violin*, p. 17; Champfleury, *Le Violon de faïence*, p. 12.

the flair of the hunting dog so that you can "point" a masterpiece as he points a partridge?' [Avez-vous le flair du chien de chasse pour arrêter un chef d'œuvre comme il arrête un perdreau?].[26]

However, as Carlo Ginzburg shows so well, the cynegetic model forms the starting point for the evidential paradigm which became dominant in the Humanities between 1870 and 1880.[27] Based on a desire for social control, this epistemological model governed the investigations conducted by the police, whose inspectors had been nicknamed 'bloodhounds' from the beginning of the century.[28] It is, therefore, from the adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle that Ginzburg borrows one of his examples, before drawing analogies with Giovanni Morelli's method of connoisseurship and Freudian psychoanalysis when considering the status of the clue. In attempting to track down forgeries and discover whether he was dealing with a 'recividist' copy of the master, Morelli used a method similar to that of the criminologist Alphonse Bertillon,[29] one based entirely on visual observation and leaving no room for the intuition of those who believed they could 'catch the scent of a Raphael emanating' [sentir un parfum Raphaëlesque s'exhaler] from a canvas.[30] However, as Ginzburg points out, while it is claimed that this method is objective, the reliability of a knowledge wholly dependent on visual clues remains relative: 'With this type of knowledge there are factors in play which cannot be measured: a whiff, a glance, an intuition.'[31] The interaction between intuition owed to flair and an analysis of visual or written clues which reconstruct the chain of cause and consequence is at the heart of detective stories such as *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* [*Le Parfum de la dame en noir*] by Gaston Leroux: 'But he had to be certain! … certain beyond any doubt, and he knew how to place himself in the presence of his memories of the Lady in Black, *just as the dog is sure of finding his master*' [Mais il lui fallait être sûr! … sûr au-delà

[26] Edmond Bonnaffé, *Les Collectionneurs de l'ancienne France* (Paris: Aubry, 1873), p. 86.

[27] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method', trans. by Anna Davin, *History Workshop*, 9 (1980), 5–36.

[28] The use of the word 'limier' [bloodhound] to describe a perceptive detective became widespread as early as the 1840s.

[29] Martial Guédron, *Peaux d'âmes: L'interprétation physiognomonique des œuvres d'art* (Paris: Kimé, 2001).

[30] Giovanni Morelli, 'Principes et méthode', *De la peinture italienne: Les fondements de la théorie de l'attribution en peinture: à propos de la collection des galeries Borghèse et Doria-Pamphili*, trans. by Nadine Blamontier (Paris: Lagune, 1994 [1890]), p. 137. In her English translation Constance Ffoulkes translates the Italian 'sentir spirare un profumo raffaellesco' in terms of feeling rather than smelling, contrary to what the word 'profumo' [perfume] suggests: 'The picture seemed to me pervaded by a breath of Raphael' (Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Painters*, trans. by Constance Ffoulkes (London: John Murray, 1892), p. 39). See also François Sauvagnat, 'Du miasme à l'indice: La métaphore ophrésiologique chez Morelli', in *Odeurs du monde*, ed. by Diana Rey-Hulman and Michel Boccara (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), pp. 261–87.

[31] Ginzburg, 'Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes', p. 28.

de la raison, sûr de se trouver en face de la Dame en noir *comme le chien est sûr de respirer son maître*].[32] However, on another level it is also at the heart of a certain concept of history, described by Bonnaffé as the most profitable and practised by those who, combining different approaches, 'wanted to understand both the document and the monument, and to complete and control reasoning through flair, science and curiosity; in short, to link the collector and the scholar' [ont voulu connaître à la fois le document et le monument, compléter et contrôler le raisonnement par le flair, la science, par la curiosité; en somme, doubler le collectionneur par l'érudit].[33] Becoming a metaphor for abstract intuition, the flair of the collector can then be seen as the intuitive counterpart of the analytical knowledge produced by sight. When the evidential paradigm became dominant, the intuition which is put to practical use in the action of 'smelling out' (the history of the verb *flairer* is paralleled by that of the word *subodorer* [to guess]) would become an aptitude, designating a specific mode of judgment.

'The sense of smell extends that of taste'[34]

Since flair allows us to track down and identify 'without concepts', as Kant puts it, precious objects which deserve to be shown to contemporaries and handed down to subsequent generations, flair would seem to resemble taste, another sensory metaphor evoking the ability to discern the beautiful.[35] Nevertheless, *fin-de-siècle* authors rigorously differentiated between aesthetic taste and the collector's flair. While both skills were sought after by the novice collector – in Émile Cardon's words, 'it just takes a little taste and a little flair' [il suffit d'un peu de goût et d'un peu de flair] – flair remained the key characteristic of the accomplished collector.[36] In addition, flair was an independent faculty, as the narrator of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* [*À la Recherche du temps perdu*] points out in relation to physicians' flair:

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[32] Gaston Leroux, *The Perfume of the Lady in Black* (translator unknown) (New York: Brentano, 1909); Gaston Leroux, *Le Parfum de la dame en noir* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 2015 [1908]), p. 46. Italics in original. The English translation alters the meaning of the third phrase; however, the comparison with the dog's ability to sniff things out remains unaffected.

[33] Edmond Bonnaffé, *Études sur l'art et la curiosité* (Paris: Société française d'éditions d'art, 1902), p. 234.

[34] Antony Puistienne, *Éléments d'anatomie, de physiologie et d'hygiène* (Paris: Delagrave, 1884), p. 123.

[35] For Kant's notion of being 'without concepts', see Immanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, trans. by Alexis Philonenko (Paris: Vrin, 1993), p. 86; orig. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin & Libau: Lagarde und Friedrich, 1790).

[36] Émile Cardon, *L'Art au foyer domestique* (Paris: Loones, 1884), p. 111.

> This mysterious gift does not imply any superiority in other departments of the intellect; and a creature of the utmost vulgarity, who admires the worst pictures, the worst music, in whose mind there is nothing out of the common, may perfectly well possess it.
>
> [Ce don mystérieux n'implique pas de supériorité dans les autres parties de l'intelligence, et un être d'une grande vulgarité, aimant la plus mauvaise peinture, la plus mauvaise musique, n'ayant aucune curiosité d'esprit, peut parfaitement le posséder.][37]

How did flair distinguish the *fin-de-siècle* collector from the common run of mortals and art-lovers with very good taste who were heirs to the *Ancien Regime*? As we have seen, flair made it possible to acquire intuitive knowledge beyond that gained by observation. Guy de Maupassant, in a tribute to the Goncourt Brothers, describes the nature of this knowledge:

> How many men would have been able, like the Goncourt brothers, to have purchased these wonders when they were new! If they did not, it is because they did not have that flair, that ability to sense their worth, the flair of the real collector. Others are knowledgeable about things that are admired, but not about things that are unknown.
>
> [Combien d'hommes auraient pu, comme les Goncourt, acheter ces merveilles aux jours de leur nouveauté! S'ils ne l'ont pas fait, c'est qu'ils ne possédaient point ce flair qui devine, ce vrai flair du collectionneur. Les autres s'y connaissent en choses admirées, mais non pas en choses inconnues.][38]

The flair that distinguished the Goncourt Brothers lay, therefore, in their ability to 'find unnamed, unofficial beauty' [trouver le beau non désigné, non officiel].[39] As Maupassant wrote later in one of his chronicles, they have to pick and choose, 'to skim the cream off the past, as it were, to discover and reveal the only beautiful things among those disregarded or unknown' [pour ainsi dire, d'écrémer le passé, de découvrir et de révéler les seules belles choses ignorées ou méconnues].[40] The task of collectors was, therefore, to choose from amongst neglected objects those which should be admired and therefore those

[37] Marcel Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, trans. by C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New Heaven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2015 [1927]), p. 77; Marcel Proust, *À l'Ombre des jeunes filles en Fleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1919), p. 89.

[38] Guy de Maupassant, 'Bibelots', *Le Gaulois*, 22 March 1883, pp. 1–2 (p. 2).

[39] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. by Robert Ricatte, 3 vols (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1989), I, 911, quoted in Dominique Pety, *Les Goncourt et la collection: De l'objet d'art à l'art d'écrire* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), p. 103.

[40] Maupassant, 'Bibelots', p. 2.

that would, thanks to them and their collections, be admired in the future. The objects thus revealed would then fall into the domain of the admirable, where taste could be exercised by those whom Maupassant calls 'the others' and whom Georges Duplessis, in a preface to a collectors' catalogue, describes as 'superficial art-lovers, more desirous of possessing objects of renown than intent on acquiring treasures, the undiscovered merit and interest of which had yet to be revealed or intuited' [amateurs superficiels, plus désireux de posséder des objets d'une célébrité reconnue que curieux d'acquérir des trésors dont il était nécessaire de découvrir le mérite non révélé ou de deviner l'intérêt].[41] In that light, the practice of collecting enhanced by flair serves a useful public purpose as a souce of material for developing the taste of future generations.

In an age when originality, novelty and even progress were among the primary artistic values, collectors needed to be at the forefront, a necessity stressed by the Goncourt Brothers when they described their own collecting practices.[42] Urging their readers to acknowledge that they had flair, they wrote: 'No really, the authors undeniably have a certain flair for sensing what is in the air in terms of how tastes will evolve in the mind and spirit of the French' [Non vraiment, on ne peut nier aux auteurs un certain flair des goûts futurs de la pensée et de l'esprit français en incubation dans l'air].[43] Because they could recognise objects, either from the past or among contempory artefacts, which would suit future tastes, collectors who had flair ensured recognition outside the artistic establishment, and an afterlife, for the objects and works they accumulated. The difference between taste and flair therefore lies in the prospective nature of the latter.[44]

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41 Georges Duplessis, 'Notice sur M. Hippolyte Destailleur', in *Catalogue de livres et estampes (relatifs aux beaux-arts, architecture, peinture, gravure, ornementation, etc.) provenant de la collection de feu Hippolyte Destailleur* (Paris: Morgand, 1895), p. x.

42 For these 'primary artistic values' see Linda Nochlin, 'The Invention of the Avant-Garde: France 1830–1880', in *Avant-Garde Art*, ed. by Thomas B. Hess and John Ashbery (London: Collier, 1967), pp. 1–24.

43 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *En 18 …* (Paris: Dumineray, 1851), p. xi.

44 In the piece he devoted to engraving, Henri Béraldi gives an example of how the interest of collectors in certain objects could anticipate their future formalisation: 'In 1886 we indicated (in the *Chéret* article) the coming of the a new kind of connoisseur, then few and interesting, who had the spontaneous flair of discovering and saving posters. For six years things have gone smoothly, the collector of posters has become widespread; he follows a fashion, he does not choose, he runs after everything on the walls. […] Now, following the formidable and justifiable success of Chéret, the poster has a following of gentlemen who pay; a listing with fluctuations, a stock exchange, a retail price and a wholesale price, with correspondences in the regions; current prices, periodic bulletins, manuals and exhibitions' [En 1886 nous indiquions (à l'article *Chéret*) la venue de la nouvelle espèce de curieux, alors peu nombreux et intéressants, qui avaient spontanément le flair de découvrir et de sauver les affiches. Depuis six ans les choses ont marché, le collectionneur d'affiches

The anticipatory quality of the collector's flair corresponds with the physiology of olfaction. In addition to taking over from sight, as we noted earlier, the nose, since it is above the mouth, perceives what one is about to taste. The sense of smell, Maurice Maeterlinck explains, 'is the hygienist and chemist who watches carefully over the quality of the proffered foodstuffs, every unpleasant emanation revealing the presence of suspect or dangerous germs' [est l'hygiéniste et le chimiste qui veille soigneusement à la qualité des aliments offerts, toute émanation désagréable décelant la présence de germes suspects ou dangereux].[45] If, however, the physiological relationship between these two senses parallels the connection between their metaphorical meanings for the collector, the comparison between the figurative meaning of flair and that of taste remains to be clarified in future studies, as the latter had a much more complex history dating back to the Renaissance.[46] Unlike taste, flair is still tinged with connotations linked to those senses regarded as base. The sense of smell, which, according to Anatole France, was possessed by the primitive beast,[47] was often denigrated because of its animal nature. It was then presented as a feminine characteristic (we speak of 'le *flair* d'une femme jalouse' when a jealous woman scents infidelity; or 'le *flair* d'une mère' to describe a mother's instinct); or in purely sensual terms, providing pleasures that 'do not go beyond themselves' [se limitent à elles-mêmes].[48] Moreover, the gift of flair was not necessarily accompanied by moral virtues and can be seen as either good or bad. Thus, Émile Zola contrasts the slovenly art dealer Père Malgras 'with taste and a flair for good painting' [qui avait le goût et le flair de la bonne peinture] with another dealer, Naudet. Naudet's hair is carefully slicked down, but he is:

est devenu légion; il suit une mode, il ne choisit pas, il court après tout ce qui s'appose sur les murs. […] Maintenant, à la suite du formidable et justifié succès obtenu par Chéret, l'affiche a un public de messieurs qui paient; une côte avec des fluctuations, une Bourse, une vente au détail et en gros, avec correspondance en Province; des prix-courants, des bulletins périodiques, des manuels, des expositions] (Henri Béraldi, *Les Graveurs au XIXe siècle: Guide de l'amateur d'estampes modernes*, 12 vols in 4 (Paris: Conquet, 1885–92), XI (1891), 248–49).

45 Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Intelligence of Flowers*, trans. by Philip Mosley (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 64; Maurice Maeterlinck, *L'Intelligence des fleurs* (Paris: Charpentier, 1907), p. 110.

46 Viktoria von Hoffmann, *Goûter le monde: Une histoire culturelle du goût à l'époque* (Brussels: Lang, 2013).

47 This view by France was recorded by the Goncourt brothers in their collaborative diary; see Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt: Mémoires de la vie littéraire* [mercredi 4 décembre 1895], ed. by Robert Ricatte (Monaco: les éditions de l'imprimerie nationale de Monaco, 1956–58), IV (1956), 877.

48 Eugène Véron, *L'Esthétique* (Paris: Reinwald, 1878), p. 61.

> heartily indifferent to good painting. He had a flair for spotting success, that was all; he could divine the artist it would pay him to boost, not the one who showed promise of becoming a great and much-debated painter, but the one whose deceptive talent, plus a certain amount of superficial daring was soon going to be a premium in the collector's market.
>
> [qui se moquait radicalement de la bonne peinture. Il apportait l'unique flair du succès, il devinait l'artiste à lancer, non pas celui qui promettait le génie discuté d'un grand peintre, mais celui dont le talent menteur, enflé de fausses hardiesses, allait faire prime sur le marché bourgeois.][49]

For Naudet, as for Saccart, the main character in *Money* [*L'Argent*], flair is primarily useful for commercial gain and another sensory skill – touch – is an additional asset in that respect.[50]

Despite the lack of self-interest among collectors who, like Balzac's Pons, were completely devoted to their passion and indifferent to their finances, collecting, provided it was practised with flair, could offer an opportunity for economic gain.[51] Since a collector's flair allowed him to identify objects or works which were not yet sought after by anyone else, but would soon be wanted by everyone, he could certainly increase his fortune if, after selling off his collection, he gave up being a collector. However, most importantly, his flair could allow him to indulge his passion without investing beyond his means.[52] In that period, as George Duplessis remembers with nostalgia, 'provided one had a keen eye, a certain flair and a solid education, one could put together, at a relatively modest cost, a very interesting collection that could be of great service to its owners' [on pouvait encore à condition d'avoir un œil exercé, un certain flair et une éducation solide, réunir, sans de trop grands frais, une collection très intéressante qui pouvait rendre de grands services à ses possesseurs].[53] The disparity between the initial investment and the return

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[49] Émile Zola, *The Masterpiece*, trans. by Thomas Walton (London: Elek, 1886), pp. 56, 187; Émile Zola, *L'Œuvre* (Paris: Charpentier, 1886), pp. 61, 283.

[50] Émile Zola, *L'Argent* (Paris: Charpentier, 1891).

[51] As Cousin Pons notes: 'It is a collector's business to be ahead of the fashion. Why, in five years' time the Frankenthal ware, which I have been collecting for twenty years, will fetch twice the price of Sèvres pata tendre' [Le mérite du collectionneur est de devancer la mode. Tenez! d'ici à cinq ans, on payera à Paris les porcelaines de Frankenthal, que je collectionne depuis vingt ans, deux fois plus cher que la pâte tendre de Sèvres] (Balzac, *Cousin Pons*, p. 33; Balzac, *Les parents pauvres: Le cousin Pons*, p. 103).

[52] See Paul Pelckmans, *Concurrences au monde: Propositions pour une poétique du collectionneur moderne* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1990).

[53] Duplessis, 'Notice sur M. Hippolyte Destailleur', p. x. The idea of a golden age of collecting was often the subject of comparisons between past and present. The historian Augustin Challamel, for example, wrote: 'For the collector, the era was good. There were pearls in manure: it was only a matter of having flair, taste and patience. […] Today, it takes

on it makes collecting, which gives value to objects and works of art, an ideal bourgeois activity and one that is accessible to almost everyone, if one is to believe the exemplary case of Madame Guizet, who was 'a woman of the people, completely illiterate, but won over by love of the arts. She had flair and, guided by instinct alone, she started, first with one then another, to buy paintings' [[une] Femme du peuple, complètement illettrée, l'amour des arts la gagna. Elle avait du flair et, guidée par l'instinct seul, elle acheta, d'abord un à un, des tableaux].[54] Whether it was an innate talent, a mere predisposition, or could be acquired, flair democratised access to art, by contrast with taste, which remained an aristocratic skill.

Robert de Montesquiou, for example, reminds us how many 'highly refined skills' [délicates capacités] and 'weighty points of reference' [sérieuses références] are needed to claim the title of a man of taste.[55] In this respect, he regrets that '[m]any people confuse the collector with the man of taste. It is a rather infantile error' [Beaucoup de gens confondent le collectionneur avec l'homme de goût. C'est une erreur assez enfantine]. Montesquiou was also careful to distance himself from a connoisseur [*curieux*] who relies on flair:

> And I became a *curieux* […], but not in the sense of a seeker of curiosities, with more flair than taste, who thinks of lavish sales to swell his purse; but a *curieux* who dreams of turning to the material past as a means of broadening his mind and expanding his imagination.
>
> [Et je devins un 'curieux' […], mais non dans l'acception du chercheur, moins de goût que de flair, qui songe aux enchères fastueuses, pour l'accroissement de sa bourse; plutôt celui qui rêve de s'adjoindre le concours du passé matériel, pour l'élargissement de son esprit et l'amplification de sa fantaisie.][56]

The difference between the flair needed to search for objects or works of art and the taste which seeks how best to put them on display thus appears to be a class difference. Flair seemed to be all the more democratic because it was founded less on elitist erudition than on knowledge of the society whose tastes one aims to anticipate. It was part of a movement democratising access to art

impatience and money to be a collector' [Pour collectionner, l'époque était bonne. On trouvait des perles dans du fumier: il ne s'agissait que d'avoir du flair, du goût, de la patience. […] Aujourd'hui, il faut de l'impatience et de l'argent pour collectionner] (Augustin Challamel, *Souvenirs d'un hugolâtre: La génération de 1830* (Paris: Lévy, 1885), p. 147).

54 Ch. Ginoux, 'Les Artistes de Toulon', *Nouvelles archives de l'art français*, 3.11 (1894), 18.

55 'Lettre de Montesquiou-Fezenzac', *Le Journal des Artistes*, 20. October 1894, pp. 768–69, quoted in Antoine Bertrand, *Les Curiosités esthétiques de Montesquiou*, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1996), I, 104.

56 Robert de Montesquiou, *Les Pas effacés*, 3 vols (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1923), II, 91–92.

and history, as a counterpart to the prerogatives still defended by the advocates of the aristocracy during the *fin-de-siècle* period.

The appearance, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the noun 'flair' to evoke a skill which the collector shared with the investigator subverted the established concept of aesthetic judgment and contributed to the undermining of two earlier hierarchies: the social hierarchy and that of the senses. This evolution of the intersensory model, which places greater value on the sense of smell, did not simply help to challenge the dominant social model: it also came about as part of a developing olfactory culture likely to counterbalance the primacy of the visual.

Andreas Kramer

'Dada smells like nothing': Sniffing out the Dada Corpus

One of the more striking examples of Dada's persistent references to olfaction and smells can be found in Francis Picabia's 'Dada Cannibal Manifesto' [Manifeste Cannibale Dada] (1920), a typically confrontational text intended to offend the readership. Picabia's assertion that all you serious people 'you will smell worse than cow shit' [vous sentirez plus mauvais que la merde de vache] forms part of a strategic escalation of insult. As well as challenging cultural solemnity, that assertion jolts the readership into an awareness of their own base materiality and, by comparing the smell of decomposing human bodies to the bodily waste of farm animals, seeks to debase human values and culture. The manifesto goes on to declare: 'DADA smells like nothing, it is nothing, nothing, nothing' [DADA lui ne sent rien, il n'est rien, rien, rien].[1] Building on the trope of smell, Picabia pits Dada, as an odourless thing, against a readership which will be malodorous, thus enabling Dada to denounce people's cultural and political ideals as worthless, meaningless, and 'nothing'.

Taking its cue from Picabia's manifesto, this chapter will look at Dada's textual and visual rhetoric of smell and olfaction. That rhetoric – flexible and contrary, directed at the public and intent on subverting conventional meanings – forms part of Dada's overall aims. Active in Zurich, Berlin, Paris and New York during and after the First World War, Dada was a voice of artistic, cultural and political protest, vitality and revolt, using satire, parody, hyperbole and the grotesque to point to tensions and contradictions in the ideological, socio-political and artistic situation across Europe at the time. Its proponents were vehemently opposed to bourgeois culture and society and the ideology sustaining it; to conventional forms of art and literature (even those of contemporary avant-garde movements like Cubism and Expressionism); and – as Picabia's manifesto demonstrates – to idealist conceptions of the

[1] Francis Picabia, 'Dada Cannibal Manifesto', in Francis Picabia, *I am a Beautiful Monster: Poetry, Prose, and Provocation*, trans. by Marc Lowenthal (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2007), p. 204; 'Manifeste Cannibale Dada', *Dada*, 7 (Dadaphone) (March 1920), 3.

human body as a harmonious, seamless whole which traditionally implied the privileging of mind and the intellect over bodily matter. In its persistent attempts to question, erode and subvert social and cultural convention, the Dadaists frequently appealed to the 'lower' senses of smell, taste, touch and sound and used collage and montage to degrade and fragment images and ideas of the human form. While the Italian Futurists had also turned their attention to the olfactory, this had been part of a modernising, synaesthetic approach to artistic representation that sought to encompass the entire spectrum of human sensibility.[2] In stark contrast, Dada's rhetoric of the olfactory is one of the movement's range of subversive counter-discourses.

Dada's deployment and recoding of some of the cultural meanings of smells takes place in the broader context of discourses and imaginations shaping social modernity and seeks to expose the pernicious effects of modernity's discursive and bodily regimes. According to Zygmunt Bauman, modernity regarded natural smells and scents as something to be controlled and eliminated, casting them as the 'sinister Other of everything modernity stood for'. As a result, modernity's discursive regimes in the cultural, social and political spheres ensured that bad odours, whether attributable to individuals or entire social groups, came to be seen as a vestige of animality and barbarity, a sign of disorder, unpredictability and lack of (self-)control.[3] The replacement of natural body odours by artificial scents functioned, and was discursively justified, as 'the means of personal redemption from the state of nature and personal elevation to the civilized state'; and, conversely, tropes of bad smell and foul odours were frequently mobilised to produce and justify social division, with inferior status assigned to those who continued to smell 'bad' and were thus seen to be unwilling to submit to the modern disciplining of the individual and social body.[4] Alain Corbin and Hans J. Rindisbacher provide much historical and cultural evidence to corroborate Bauman's broad-brush analysis, but they also show how references to natural smells had the potential to resist and ridicule the pretence

[2] See, e. g., F. T. Marinetti, 'Technical Manifesto of Literature' (1912), in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 119–25; Carlo Carrà, 'The Painting of Sounds, Noises, and Smells' [1913], in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. by Rainey, Poggi and Wittman, pp. 155–59. Marinetti produced a range of Futurist texts that conform to the precepts of the 'Technical Manifesto' and are collected in F. T. Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb* (Milan: Edizoni Futuriste di 'Poesia', 1914); some of these, such as 'Battle Weight + Smell', are suffused with references to smell (Marinetti, *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. by Luce Marinetti (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 55–82).

[3] Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Sweet Scent of Decomposition', in *Forget Baudrillard*, ed. by Chris Rojek and Brian S. Turner (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 22–46 (p. 25).

[4] Bauman, 'The Sweet Scent of Decomposition', p. 25.

of individual mastery and social order and they pinpoint some of the tensions inherent in the modernising process.[5]

Dada's rhetoric of smell and olfaction is, in its manifest contrariness, a form of vital protest and revolt against modernity's sensory and discursive regimes. As glimpsed in Picabia's manifesto, the perception and (re-)coding of smell questions and erodes social and cultural order and subverts, degrades and de-sublimates artistic and humanist values. Looking at examples of Dada's rhetoric of smell, this chapter examines how smell functions (1) as a tool for the wider critique of modern art, culture and society; (2) as part of a specifically Dadaist aesthetics of disgust; and (3) as a vital feature of the dehumanised, often grotesque, bodies that pervade the Dada imagination.

Contrary to Picabia's rhetorical claim for Dada's odourlessness, Dada frequently associated itself with contemporary body-care products. The very name 'Dada' may, in fact, derive from the brand name of not one, but two such products: a hair-care tonic and a soap, both manufactured by the Bergmann company in Zurich. In the 1910s, Bergmann produced and widely advertised a 'haarstärkendes Kopfwasser', a hair tonic intended to invigorate the skin and combat hair loss, which it marketed under the name 'Dada'.[6] When Hugo Ball, in a public declaration of 14 July 1916, states that 'Dada is the world's best lily-milk soap', his audience would probably have linked that absurd definition to another Bergmann product, namely 'Lilienmilchseife', which was marketed as 'Steckenpferd-Seife' [hobby-horse soap] in German and 'Savon Dada' in French.[7] A contemporary photograph showing a view of Zurich's Rämistraße towards the lakefront shows a poster advertising 'Bergmann's Lilienmilch Seife'.[8] Such playful references, while surely underlining Dada's resistance to being defined in acceptable intellectual terms, do point to Dada's interest in the language and imagery of international advertising. We find multiple mentions of 'Savon Dada' and other trademarked personal care and beauty products such as *Odol* or *Sunlight* in Dada texts and visual work by

[5] Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (New York: Berg, 1986); orig. *Le Miasme et la jonquille* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982); Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

[6] See the newspaper advert, *c*. 1914, in *Dada global*, ed. by Raimund Meyer and others (Zurich: Kunsthaus, 1994), p. 282. Bergmann's main shop was at Bahnhofstrasse 51, the major thoroughfare from the central station to the lakefront.

[7] Hugo Ball, 'Erklaerung', in *Dada total: Manifeste, Aktionen, Texte, Bilder*, ed. by Karl Riha and Jörgen Schäfer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), p. 34. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

[8] *Dada Zürich: Dichtungen, Bilder, Texte*, ed. by Raimund Meyer (Zurich: Arche, 1998), pp. 108–09.

Paul Citroën, Clément Pansaers, Picabia, Kurt Schwitters, Tristan Tzara and Melchior Vischer, among others. The Dadaists shared a widespread fascination with 'Savon Cadum', whose advertising campaign, with its photo of a baby attached to a picture of the globe surrounded by Cadum's strapline, provided them with an intriguing image which they used or to which they referred repeatedly.[9] These playful references, as well as serving as handy tools for Dada's communication across linguistic and national borders, are significant in our context because they demonstrate Dada's interest in images and ideals of the clean human body and its attendant good smells for their wider project of questioning existing social and cultural order.

The flipside of Dada's playful association with contemporary cosmetics and beauty products is its persistent depiction of the contemporary social world as rotting and decaying. If the extermination of bodily odours through the application of such products is necessary for the disciplining of the human body as well as the creation and preservation of civilisation and order, then Dada's rhetoric of foul smells signals the precariousness of the civilising process in general and functions specifically as cultural, social and political critique in the context of the First World War and its aftermath. Hugo Ball uses satirical inversion as well as the tropes of ingestion and olfaction to criticise the way nationalist propaganda during war time camouflages the human costs with its rhetoric of human civilisation and heroism: 'One cannot demand of us to swallow with delight this vile pastry of human flesh they present us with. One cannot demand of our trembling nostrils to inhale with admiration the stench of corpses' [Man kann nicht verlangen, daß wir die üble Pastete von Menschenfleisch, die man uns präsentiert, mit Behagen verschlucken. Man kann nicht verlangen, daß unsere zitternden Nüstern den Leichendunst mit Bewunderung einsaugen].[10] If Ball refers to the foul smell of decomposing corpses, his cofounder of the Cabaret Voltaire, Richard Huelsenbeck, refers to bad odour as deriving from outmodedness: European culture as experienced in Zurich in the mid-1910s was not just 'outmoded' [überholt] but 'stank to heaven' [stank zum Himmel].[11] In his manifesto essay 'Things and People' [Dinge und Menschen] (1917), Huelsenbeck similarly characterises contemporary culture at home and on the battle-front by foul smells of decomposition, physical and psychological ill health and decay – 'the whiff of the decom-

[9] E.g., *Dada global*, ed. by Meyer and others, p. 33.

[10] Hugo Ball, Diary Entry, 16 June 1916, in *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* [1927], ed. by Bernhard Echte (Zurich: Limmat Verlag, 1992), p. 101, quoted in *Dada total*, ed. by Riha and Schäfer, pp. 16–32 (p. 25).

[11] Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Zürich 1916, wie es wirklich war' (1926), in *Wozu Dada: Texte 1916–1936*, ed. by Herbert Kapfer (Gießen: Anabas, 1994), pp. 65–71 (p. 70).

posed, the pest-ridden and those sick in the soul' [der Hauch der Verwesten, der Pestilenzer und Seelenkranken] – before apparently embracing sensory contamination as at least a change to the status quo: '[A]ll the brothels have opened and the poison is streaming all over us already' [[A]lle Freudenhäuser sind geöffnet und schon dringt der Strom des Giftes über uns hin].[12] The toxic smells of decomposition and decay speak powerfully of a dehumanised and dehumanising world in which 'Menschen' have been reduced to 'Dinge', material objects or perceptions with a powerful appeal to the lower senses.

As in Huelsenbeck's manifesto-essay, foul smell and contamination imply a critique of cultural evolution as based on progress or amelioration and hint at a more disruptive temporality. Hugo Ball's sonnet 'This is the Time' [Das ist die Zeit] presents a more radical version of Expressionist apocalypse by foregrounding foul smells as part of a hellish vision of the end of times, with olfactory identification as Behemoth's 'nose' emanating from the floods to devour humanity.[13] Huelsenbeck, in a clear parody of Judgement Day, features a 'Dadasoph' rising from his 'Dada mega-toilet seat' [Dada-Riesen-Abtritt] to announce the day of reckoning. While the latter may have controlled the release of bodily fluid before embarking on his speech, the speech itself reveals the progressive loss of control over his body which affects the production of sense and meaning: 'Letters are dancing out of my ears and my belly makes waves to the beat of the Hohenfriedberger March' [Die Buchstaben tanzen zu meinen Ohren heraus und mein Bauch schlägt Wellen nach dem Takt des Hohenfriedberger Marschs]. Individual identity and vocal production are displaced: 'Behold the white steam emanating from my nostrils and spreading across the Earth' [Sehet den weißen Dampf der sich aus meinen Nüstern über die Erde verbreitet].[14] Such absurd versions of Dada's human body are tied to the imagination of the dehumanised, grotesque body (to which I shall return later), in which a proliferation of the senses, and an indulgence in the 'lower' senses, indicate a multiplication of identities.

If Dada's rhetoric of foul smells questions fundamental assumptions about culture as progress, as brought into sharp relief by the experience of war, it also extends to specific cultural institutions such as art, religion and educa-

[12] Huelsenbeck, 'Zürich 1916', pp. 5–6.

[13] Hugo Ball, 'Das ist die Zeit', in *sankt ziegensack springt aus dem ei: Dadaismus in Zürich, Berlin, Köln und Hannover*, ed. by Klaus Schuhmann (Leipzig and Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1991), p. 122.

[14] Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Der Zylindergiebel: Für John Heartfield', in *Phantastische Gebete* (Zurich: Arche, 1960 [1920]), p. 26. For a brief discussion of Huelsenbeck's text, see Elza Adamowicz, *Dada Bodies: Between Battlefield and Fairground* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 97–98.

tion. Dada's fierce attacks on contemporary art movements such as Cubism and Expressionism[15] and on individual writers such as Gide[16] and its denunciations of fine art in general all deploy the rhetoric of bad odour and indulge in scatology.[17] As well as being a tool for degrading the value of culture, olfaction in Dada can become a critical tool for insight into the functions of culture and education. In a section beginning with an appeal to the 'beard of Wotan, the senior teacher' [Bart des Oberlehrers Wotan], Grosz's long poem 'Song to the World' [Gesang an die Welt] (1918) attacks formal education as an exercise in producing false cultural values, represented as a set of contradictory olfactory sensations ('embellished cloaca | painted-over rottenness | perfumed stench' [verbrämte Kloaken | überpinselte Fäulnis | Parfümierter Gestank]), of which the poem's speaker literally gets wind – 'Grosz is smelling it' [Grosz wittert's]. The poem then uses striking images of aggression and violence to puncture the façade of culture and civilisation.[18] Dada's rhetoric of bad smell attacks not just the producers and propagandists of culture for peddling deception, but can be deployed to attack that false culture's reliance on the centrality of spirit, logic and intellect. Turning the trope of the diseased and foul-smelling body against official culture, Theo van Doesburg describes reason as a 'small moulded excrescence'; decries the reliance on logic and intellect as a 'CARNIVAL of coloured slime, shit, tin and inflamed brains'; and denounces the prevailing 'art-and-logic diarrhoea'.[19] The rhetoric of foul smell combines here with the tropes of decomposition and bodily waste to produce satirical and grotesque hyperbole which seeks to degrade the pretensions of Western intellectual culture and its insidious reliance on a dualism of mind and body.

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[15] Cf. Picabia: 'Cubism is a cathedral of shit', from *La Pomme de Pins* (February 1922), in Picabia, *I am a Beautiful Monster*, p. 28. Cf. also Raoul Hausmann's use of bad smell to attack both Prussian militarism and German literature from Goethe to Expressionists such as Werfel (Raoul Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, ed. by Karl Riha and Günter Kämpf (Gießen: Anabas, 1992), pp. 56, 115–17).

[16] Cf. Picabia's aphorism: 'If you read André Gide aloud for ten minutes, your breath will stink' (first published in *Z*, 2 March 1920, p. 3); repr. in Picabia, *I am a Beautiful Monster*, p. 197.

[17] Cf. Kurt Schwitters: 'Do you know what Art is? **A TERRACED SHIT-HOUSE**, that's what ART is' [Wissen Sie, was Kunst ist? **EIN REIHENSCHEISSHAUS**, das ist KUNST], in 'Banalitäten (I)' (first published in *Merz*, 4 (1923), 34–35 (p. 35)), in Kurt Schwitters, *Das literarische Werk*, ed. by Friedhelm Lach, 5 vols (Munich: dtv, 2005), I, *Lyrik*, 172–73 (p. 173). For Tzara, 'Art is a pretension warmed by the timidity of the urinary basin' [L'art est une prétention chauffée à la timidité du bassin urinaire] (Tristan Tzara, 'Proclamation sans prétention' (1919), in *sankt ziegensack*, ed. by Schuhmann, p. 96).

[18] First published in *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung* 1.7 (1918), 154–56; repr. in *sankt ziegensack*, ed. by Klaus Schuhmann, pp. 223–24.

[19] I. K. Bonset, 'Antiartandpurereasonmanifesto' (first published in *Mécano* (February 1922)), in *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Dawn Ades (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), p. 264.

Raoul Hausmann uses the language and imagery of bodily waste to give his satirical attacks on idealist culture a socially critical edge. Seeing contemporary culture as the product of a pernicious tradition of cultural idealism and social illiberalism, his target is an amalgamation of an artistic and a social type, the poet and the petit-bourgeois; and so he attacks the 'petit-bourgeois poet' [Spießerdichter] as a 'fabricator of ideals that were merely his own excrement' [Verfertiger der Ideale, die nur seine Exkremente waren].[20] Alfred Vagts uses bodily imagery to satirise contemporary politics in a poem entitled 'political landscape' [paysage politique], which states 'The Entente is the all too weak sphincter of Dadaism' [Die Entente ist der allzu schwache Schließmuskel des Dadaismus].[21] The historical context of the poem is the post-war re-organisation of Europe under the plans drawn up by the American President Woodrow Wilson and the resurgence of European nationalisms, which Vagts denounces as an 'artificial' enhancement of the face of the European body politic: 'Finally: the grand cosmetic: | Everyman his own mountain people!' [Enfin: das große Kosmetikum: | Jedermann sein eigenes Bergvolk!].[22] In addition, Dada's rhetoric of smell can become a tool for a more focused social critique. Dada's ambivalent relationship with popular entertainment culture is the subject of Clément Pansaers's collage-novel *I, Gonorrhea* [*Je Blennorrhagie*], a title which plays on the trope of the infected self. A section of the novel ends with a scatological moment, with the urban attraction figured as a place of liberation; and constraint becomes a metonymy for the history of the world.[23] Smell can also be coded in terms of gender and power structures. References to perfume, to the application of man-made fragrance to impart a pleasant smell to the body, can be used to decry and belittle an audience unable or unwilling to abandon its bourgeois preconceptions of culture,[24] or to cast doubt on the masculine identification of the feminine with metropolitan culture and, with it, the historical and discursive basis for gender hierarchy which assigns and perpetuates male power over the female.[25]

[20] Raoul Hausmann, 'Der deutsche Spießer ärgert sich' (1919), in Raoul Hausmann, *Texte bis 1933*, ed. by Michael Erlhoff, 2 vols (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1982), I, *Bilanz der Feierlichkeit*, 82–84 (p. 84).

[21] In *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, ed. by Adrian Sudhalter (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), p. 39.

[22] *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, p. 39. The 'Jedermann' phrase alludes to Wieland Herzfelde's journal *Jedermann sein eigner Fussball* (1919), which was equally concerned with post-war peace negotiations and the relation between individuals and their nation.

[23] Clément Pansears, *I, Gonorrhea*, in *Vive Dada! Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. by Marc Dachy and Holger Fock, trans. by Holger Fock (Berlin: Tiamat, 1989), pp. 123–60 (pp. 149–51).

[24] See the reference to 'Kölnisch Wasser' in Tzara, 'Proclamation sans prétention', pp. 95–96.

[25] André Breton, 'Parfums d'Orsay', *Projecteur*, 1 (May 1920), 3.

If Dada rhetoric operates the trope of foul smell for the perception of social decay and the pernicious effects of cultural solemnity and moralising idealism, elsewhere it can become a critical tool for unmasking humanist anthropocentrism. Walter Serner's long-form manifesto *Last Loosening* [*Letzte Lockerung*] (1921) develops this trope, pairing desublimation with debasement: 'And we would much prefer to regard ourselves as dung and laugh at ourselves than worry about the development of a world which conceals pestilence and laziness and stench behind a solemn tragedy it doesn't believe in' [Und wir wollen uns lieber als Dung betrachten und über uns lachen, als um die Entwicklung einer Welt besorgt sein, die Pest und Faulheit und Gestank verbirgt hinter einer feierlichen Tragik, an die sie selbst nicht glaubt].[26] Like Ball and Huelsenbeck before him, Serner uses Biblical rhetoric to hint at the disruptive arrival of olfactory contamination: 'And lo', stench enters the world and becomes ever thicker' [Und siehe, Gestank kommt in die Welt und wird immer dicker].[27] In this text, though, dense, pervasive 'Gestank' becomes a transformative sensation as Serner exhorts the reader always to question what they are being persuaded to take for granted: what is being taken for granted ceases to be so and the critical habit is to adopt and disseminate ideas that undermine the status quo. For Serner, then, being Dada involves base corporeality coupled with the ability to 'smell' culture's bad odour in order to see through the fabrication of social ideals. As well as its imminent pervasiveness, it is that stench's primitivist 'wildness', its intense ferocity, that make it a critical tool, for, while Serner offers much the same diagnosis as Ball and Huelsenbeck, he dismisses notions of heroism in granting purpose to events and human agency: 'This whole wild stench is not the result of human heroics only, but of any: the meaningless cascades from the meaningless' [Dieser ganze wilde Gestank ist nun doch nicht das Ergebnis menschlicher Heldentaten allein, sondern das aller: aus Sinnlosem stürzt Sinnloses].[28] In moments like this, Dada's rhetoric of bad smell, more than being superficially nihilistic, exposes some of modernity's internal contradictions: the suppression of base matter and sense and the appeal to anthropocentric fictions cannot result in the production of meaningful purpose, or 'Sinn'.

A presentation of the contemporary urban world as a 'smellscape' can be found in George Grosz's poem, 'Berlin, Spring 1917' [Berlin, Frühjahr 1917], which, in using the paratactic Dada style of juxtaposing contradictory elements, including inserts from contemporary advertising slogans and news-

[26] Raoul Hausmann, 'Bilanz der Feierlichkeit' (1919), in Hausmann, *Bilanz der Feierlichkeit*, pp. 69–70 (p. 70).
[27] Walter Serner, *Die letzte Lockerung: Ein Handbrevier für Hochstapler und solche die es werden wollen* (Munich: Renner, 1981), p. 24.
[28] Serner, *Die letzte Lockerung*, p. 51.

papers, offers olfactory sensations which both attract and repulse the poem's speaker. The speaker is a visual artist, yet the visual impressions of a disjointed city during a time of war gradually give way to the olfactory perceptions and render the city grotesque and absurd. Earth 'smells of nature' [riecht nach Natur]; the bar-girl, Emma, evokes the smell of antiseptic 'chlorinated flowers' [Chlorblumen], while also being addressed as 'carrion, my little swine' [Aas, mein kleines Schwein], which splices together an anticipatory image of the woman's decomposition and sexual desire, perversion even; the final part of the poem depicts the nocturnal world of amusement as a world of greed and excess, pervaded by 'evil smells' [böse Gerüche] emanating from a range of human and non-human sources: 'It smells of musty trousers and wartime bread | of soldiers, wet leather' [Es stinkt nach muffiger Hose und Kriegsbrot | Nach Soldaten, nassem Leder]. Food and drink smell foul and are associated with bodily functions; yet unlike in other, more expansive Dada poems, here the speaker remains situated 'in the midst of evil smells' [inmitten böser Gerüche] and imagines a situation in which his physical response would find an artistic equivalent: 'The smell's enough to make you sick – I would squeeze some burnt siena onto the palette' [Es riecht zum Kotzen – ich würde gebrannte Sienna auf die Palette drücken].[29] The poem establishes a material similarity, and even narrative logic, between the physiological and the artistic which feed into Grosz's broader conception of the modern artist.

While the artist in Grosz's poem finds a response of sorts, other Dadaists use the 'foul-smell' diagnosis of contemporary art and culture to ponder violent death, destruction and regeneration. Hausmann decries the 'rotting pestilence' [faulende Pest] of moralising art, its products 'foul-smelling, lukewarm platitudes' [übelriechende Lauheiten] bobbing in the 'swamp' [Sumpf] of bourgeois culture; and its producers, 'these drips of bubbling mucus indicating a disgusting ability to metamorphose' [diese schleimblasentreibende Tröpfe einer ekelhaften Verwandlungsfähigkeit], who should be drowned 'in the faeculence of their dreadfully serious sixty-volume works' [im Unflat ihrer so gräßlich ernsthaften sechzigbändigen Werke!].[30] Bad smell, then, is to the Dadaists the primary sensory perception of a decaying, devitalised culture, triggering its condemnation; but it carries within it the possibility for the rise of a newly vital culture. Dada's rhetoric of foul smells thus becomes part of a critique of culture that collapses the conventional distinction between death and rebirth: culture's death is figured as its rebirth. An example of this can be found in Huelsenbeck's

[29] George Grosz, 'Berlin, Frühjahr 1917', in *sankt ziegensack*, ed. by Schuhmann, pp. 224–31 (pp. 228, 230).

[30] Raoul Hausmann, 'Pamphlet gegen die Weimarische Lebensauffassung', in Hausmann, *Bilanz der Feierlichkeit*, pp. 39–42 (p. 40).

'Preface to the History of Our Times' [Vorwort zur Geschichte der Zeit] (1920), in which images of physical injury, leprosy and death lead to the hope that 'life exits from the cloaca' [das Leben entsteigt der Kloake].[31] Huelsenbeck's poem 'The Indian Sea and the Quite Red Sun' [Das indianische Meer und die ganz rote Sonne] provides another. Its suggestion of a primitive landscape and nature, transcending individual experience, is initially suffused with images of destruction and decomposition: '[A]rmies of young manatees were crawling from the cloacas' [aus den Kloaken krochen die Heere der jungen Seekühe]; 'sulphurous steam is rising from the cadavers drifting down the rivers' [schweflige Dämpfe steigen aus den Kadavern die die Flüsse hinab schwimmen]. It then suggests a kind of Nietzschean transformation in the form of the violent and ecstatic disintegration of the speaker's body, the skyward yearning of language and sounds and the emergence of an 'embryo' in the shape of Tristan Tzara, who is hailed as a 'Haupt voll Blut und Wunden' [head replete with blood and wounds], turning the lament from the well-known Protestant church hymn about Christ's dead body on its head to celebrate a newly emerging Dada figurehead.[32] In a Tzara manifesto of 1918 Dada literally emerges from the swamps. Here, Tzara seeks to debunk the idea of moral and cultural progress and attempts by humanity to impose beauty, order and perfection onto the natural world through art, religion and philosophical ideas, the result being described as the 'stagnant idea of a gilded swamp, a relative human product' and an attempt to bring 'shit, animals, days' under one false umbrella.[33] Elsewhere, Tzara came to imagine Dada as a virgin microbe, going viral in spreading infection, death and rebirth.[34]

While Dada's representations of bad smell are a major tool for voicing social and cultural critique, they sometimes point to an aesthetics of disgust.[35] This aesthetics was anti-idealist and resolutely challenged the conventional mind/body dualism which privileged sight and vision as epitomes of the rational at the expense of the other senses, which were confined to the baseness of corporeal matter. Dada's aesthetics of disgust tends to explore the interaction or integration of the senses, particularly the lower ones. Moreover, it

[31] Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Vorwort zur Geschichte der Zeit' [1918], in *Wozu Dada: Texte 1916–1936*, ed. by Herbert Kapfer (Gießen: Anabas, 1994), pp. 12–21 (pp. 18–20).

[32] Richard Huelsenbeck, 'Das indianische Meer und die ganz rote Sonne', in *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, p. 77.

[33] Tristan Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto 1918', in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, pp. 36–42 (p. 37). Cf. also Tzara's gnomic, anti-syntactical statement about the 'birth' of Dada: 'Shit was born for the first time Zurich in cheese' (from *Dada*, 4–5 (May 1919), repr. in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, p. 46).

[34] Tristan Tzara, 'Manifeste sur l'amour faible et l'amour amer' (December 1920), *La Vie des lettres*, 4 (1921), 434–43.

[35] For a broader discussion of 'disgust' in the context of modern literature and aesthetics, see Winfried Menninghaus, *Ekel: Theorie und Geschichte einer starken Empfindung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999).

aims to go beyond individual or involuntary responses to sociocultural bad smell and uses 'disgusting' feelings and emotions triggered by bad smell to engender different modes of aesthetic perception and production. Dada's aesthetic of disgust, vitally informed by olfaction but encompassing versions of the other senses as well, seeks to erode the duality of subject and object and to bridge the conceptual and imaginative gap between the material or corporeal and the affective-emotional. This aesthetic is less about the potential for cultural rebirth out of the foul-smelling foundations and more about a fundamental but productive otherness made possible by the sense of smell. Olfaction's transgressive potential for the self under the regime of modernity has been intimated by Adorno and Horkheimer: 'When we see we remain who we are; when we smell, we are absorbed entirely.'[36] Olfactory absorption and a transformed self are the premises for Dada's aesthetics of disgust.

Tzara's 1918 manifesto and 1922 speech are key texts on the aesthetics of disgust.[37] According to Tzara, Dada originates in the experience of disgust – such as disgust with art, philosophy, power, money – from which an insight into the discursive construction of society and culture is possible. The fictions of binarism ensure the perpetuation of power before, in a final step, Dadaist disgust can become a creative force. That creativity is based on an understanding of social and cultural dynamics, not as progress, but as a cycle of permanent destruction and generativity which is located in the material sphere and perceivable via the senses rather than the intellect. On the basis of that understanding, Dada disgust will appeal to and mobilise sensory and material forces that work on the level of the individual and the social collective, altering both in the process. Dada disgust suggests, ultimately, new relations between sensory-material 'Dinge' and debased 'Menschen' stripped of their fictitious significance, relations which further collapse the mind/body dualism and level cultural and social hierarchies. It achieves this through the formal arrangement or juxtaposition of heterogeneous materials and images. Deploying the aesthetics of disgust, and foul smell within it, Dada manifestos, creative texts and images suggest new interactions between body and mind, the individual and the social; and reconfigure both 'Dinge' and 'Menschen' in terms of these new material-affective relationships.

[36] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London and New York: Verso, 1979), p. 151; orig. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947).

[37] Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto 1918', in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, pp. 36–41; Tristan Tzara, 'Speech Given to the Dada Congress, Weimar 1922', published in German in *Merz*, 7 (1924); repr. in Tristan Tzara, *Sieben Dada Manifeste*, trans. by Pierre Gallisaires, 4th edn (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1998), pp. 7–21.

Tzara's manifesto 'Tristan Tzara' (1920) sets out the production of disgust in its ferocious verbal attacks on the audience, while also revealing disgust's rootedness in personal experience and insight.[38] The social or public body of the audience becomes a grotesque, wounded body, additionally gendered as feminine; the manifesto turns on the trope 'you view things with your navel' [vous voyez avec votre nombril], in a deliberate lowering of the visual sense. Tzara returns the audience's gaze to lower the visual onto the olfactory; the audience's gaze produces 'fly shit' [caca de mouche]; its 'eyes of the belly' [yeux de votre ventre] produce 'gonorrhoeal discharge' [d'écoulement blennhoragique] and a subsequent allusion to the *vagina dentata* suggests a dissolution of corporeal bodies and the order of the senses, which correspond to the Dada proscription 'NO MORE LOOKING. | NO MORE SPEAKING' [PLUS DE REGARDS. | PLUS DE PAROLES].[39] The production of disgust leads from such displacements to a more strategic dismemberment, as in Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes's address 'Au Public' (1920), which verbally assaults the audience through rhetorical acts of violence inflicted on the audience's grotesquely fragmented and diseased body. These range from pulling out their 'decayed teeth' [dents gâtées], 'scabby ears' [oreilles gourmeuses] and 'chancre-ridden tongues' [langue pleine de chancres] to breaking their 'rotting bones' [os pourris] and 'opening your bilious stomach and removing, for livestock feed, your swollen liver, your filthy spleen and your diabetic kidneys' [D'ouvrir votre ventre cholérique, et d'en retirer, à l'usage des engrais pour l'agriculture, votre foie trop gras, votre rate ignoble et vos rognons à diabète] and 'ripping off your vile sex, incontinent and slimy' [d'arracher votre vilain sexe incontinent et glaireux].[40] The barrage of images of the swollen, rotten, decaying and putrid body undercuts idealist humanism; the sensory perceptions thus evoked are meant to lead to creative destruction.

The rhetorical violence involved in the production of disgust sometimes leads to a more fluid exchange between, and merging of, the individual and social bodies, as is suggested in Melchior Vischer's poem 'OHO!'. Sharply critical of religion and conventional morality, it disgustingly elevates 'Gestank' to a rhetorical medium for transformation: 'Stench is our prayer | our hope | our destination | oh stench!' [Gestank ist unser Gebet | unsere Hoffnung, | unser Ziel | o Gestank!]. Provocatively substituting religion for stench, the poem celebrates transgression in the form of sexual deviance and fantasies of vio-

[38] Tristan Tzara, 'Tristan Tzara', *Littérature*, 2.13 (May 1920), 2–4; trans. in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, p. 182.
[39] Tzara, 'Tristan Tzara', 3; trans. in *The Dada Reader*, p. 182.
[40] Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, 'Au Public', *Littérature*, 2.13 (May 1920), 18. For a brief discussion of this text in the context of Dada's assault on the audience, see Adamowicz, *Dada Bodies*, p. 133.

lence, involving a boy, a girl, a truncheon-wielding policeman and a general. 'Gestank' derives from various bodily matters and effluents expended in these acts and fantasies, which seem to be acted out publicly; as in much Dada poetry, the formally transgressive language of Vischer's poem is matched by its content as it deconstructs, inverts and multiplies the individual and social bodies as excessive and decomposed.[41]

In addition, Dada's aesthetics of disgust frequently associates itself with the animal world and the non-human. A performance poem in German and French, written by Huelsenbeck and Tzara, features birds, horses, crocodiles and a hippopotamus, which act as counterweights to human voices and anthropocentric conceptions. Huelsenbeck's claim that Dada emerged from the body of the horse as a bouquet of flowers plays on the familiar association of Dada and the hobby-horse. Huelsenbeck's vision of Dada just 'as the embryo of the purple crocodiles flew his cinnabar tail' [als Embryo der violetten Krokodile flog Zinnoberschwanz] is matched by Tzara's response, 'This smells so bad' [Ça sent mauvais].[42] Hugo Ball's Rabelaisian novel *Tenderenda the Fantast* [*Tenderenda der Phantast*] features a 'Verwesungsdirektor' [Director of Decay], who presides over the death of bourgeois culture and the complicated birth of the carousel horse that is Dada.

Dada's aesthetics of disgust produces new relationships between human and non-human things and events; it also extends more overtly into temporal and spatial relationships and narrative form in Melchior Vischer's *Second through Brain* [*Sekunde durch Hirn*] (1921). This 'uncannily fast-rotating novel' [unheimlich schnell rotierender Roman], as the subtitle has it, sends its picarotype protagonist on a dizzying array of improbable adventures and encounters across the continents; the title refers to the time that elapses as the protagonist falls to his death from a high scaffold. The fantastic, whirlwind narrative frequently installs smells – both good and bad – as a driving force which propels the protagonist from place to place and episode to episode; references to *Odol* mouthwash and a *Sunlight* soap bar, for instance, function in the political context of the post-1918 peace negotiations. In concluding the episode of the protagonist's affair with the daughter of an American oil magnate, the narrator sums up: 'smell procures colonies' [Geruch erzeugt Kolonien], the colonies in question being both the American oil magnate's global corporate empire, and – given the episodic, fragmented form of the novel – the multiple spaces all-too-briefly inhabited by the protagonist. Smell further gives the novel a

[41] Melchior Vischer, 'OHO!', in Sudhalter, *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, p. 155.

[42] Richard Huelsenbeck and Tristan Tzara, 'Dialogue entre un cocher et une alouette', in *Cabaret Voltaire*, ed. by Hugo Ball (Zurich, 1916), p. 33; repr. in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, p. 28.

metafictional twist: only at the very end does Vischer feel obliged to narrate the protagonist's death, so that the book 'may halfway stink of a dispositional narrative' [halbwegs nach dispositionaler Erzählung stinke].[43] A product of the narrator's disgust with conventional narrative, this 'smelly' kind of Dada fiction uses the trope of smell to hurl its living/dying protagonist across hyper-concentrated, yet expanded, time and space, to illustrate new relationships between this 'Mensch' and the spatiotemporal social 'Dinge' around him.

A by-product of Dada's aesthetics of disgust is a range of dehumanised bodies that differs radically from classical-idealist concepts of human figuration, as its bodily limits and sensory perception are as fluid as its components and appendages are heterogeneous. That body is often grotesque, open and frequently pictured as a leaky container for base matter uncontrollably passing through it. Dada's newly dehumanised, hybridised body, with its grotesque features, becomes a site of resistance to the normative, controlled body required by social and cultural modernity. The hybrid, disjunctive materiality of the Dada body comes through in Tzara's statement: 'Dada is a new type: a mixture of man, naphthaline, sponge, animal, made of ebonite and beefsteak, prepared with soap for cleansing the brain.'[44] As an ever proliferating organic or hybrid form, the grotesque body is, according to Mikhail Bakhtin 'a body in the act of becoming', 'never finished, never completed; it is continually built and created, and builds and creates another body'.[45] Bakhtin envisages the grotesque body not merely as a site of resistance against the normative, controlled body of modernity, but also as an instrument of revolution which comes about through the idea of degradation leading to renewal.[46] It is telling that one of the anorganic ingredients in Tzara's composite Dada body is naphthaline, a volatile white crystalline compound used in chemical manufacture and found, for example, in mothballs, suggesting an analogy between the materiality of the Dada body and stored clothes.

Where the aethetics of disgust, and its olfactory component, sought to envisage new relations between 'Dinge' and 'Menschen' across sociocultural time and space, Dada texts and images featuring the grotesquely dehumanised body and its sense of smell tend to foreground formal relationships. Such

[43] Melchior Vischer, *Sekunde durch Hirn: Ein unheimlich schnell rotierender Roman* (1921), in Melchior Vischer, *Sekunde durch Hirn, Der Teemeister, Der Hase und andere Prosa*, ed. by Hartmut Geerken, 2nd edn (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1983), pp. 31–79 (pp. 53, 62, 71–72, 79).

[44] Tristan Tzara, 'Eye Cover, Art-Cover, Corset-Cover Authorization', *New York Dada* (1921), unpag., in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, p. 159.

[45] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by H. Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 317.

[46] Cf. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 48. For a productive reading of Dada's grotesque bodies, see Adamowicz, *Dada Bodies*, pp. 92–113, 141–63.

relationships are, first, internal to the dissected and dissolved body, as in texts or manifestos by Gabrielle Buffet and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes which foreground that body as the material form which conveys Dada ideas. References to internal organs, subcutaneous and chemical processes, the ingestion and digestion of food, the production of human waste and the cleaning of human waste channels are all bound up with olfaction and foul smell; yet the relentless disintegration of bodily unity in these texts paradoxically engenders a productive kind of putrefaction.[47] The limits of the human body, and of language, are rendered fluid in an assemblage text produced jointly by Picabia and Tzara. Casting the 'empty belly' as the centre of the self, the text switches between images of fusion of self and nature, or self-as-nature, and images of internal bodily processes or organic functions that materialise the production and perception of sensory impressions, including smell.[48]

Dada work featuring the grotesquely disjunctive body-cum-olfaction can picture such new formal relationships beyond bodily limits to propose an interface between the limits of the grotesque body and the resulting or emerging textual or visual product. Based on collage and montage, such images of olfaction are in the abstract or geometric mode and foreground bodily materialism in relation to a non- or trans-human dimension, which suggests a mechanically regularised world of 'Dinge' and relations. Raoul Hausmann's 'Manifesto about the Regularity of Sound' [Manifest von der Gesetzmäßigkeit des Lautes] (1922) is an example of this: although it begins with the shaped letter A, it is less a manifesto about how speech or sound is produced by the human body than a fluid, experimental text charting the increasing decomposition of acts of rational thinking and the notion of a coherent self into a series of bodily sensations around breathing, smoking, washing and cleaning and the various olfactory sensations and meanings emanating from these. The text tracks how these activities and sensations feed back into the composition of an alternate self not equipped to face a world of mechanisation.[49] Kurt Schwitters's Merz collage of 1921, *Mz. 317. Lenox* – also known as *Lenoxbild* – is another example.[50] It does not feature a human body but juxtaposes the fragments of a Lenox soap-wrapper

[47] Gabrielle Buffet, 'Little Manifesto', *391*, 8 (February 1919), unpag.; Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, 'Manifesto according to Saint-Jean Clysopompe', *391*, 13 (July 1920), unpag.; both in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, pp. 117–18 and 130–32.

[48] Francis Picabia and Tristan Tzara, 'Automatic Text', *391*, 8 (February 1919), unpag.; repr. in *The Dada Reader*, ed. by Ades, p. 119.

[49] Raoul Hausmann, 'Manifest von der Gesetzmäßigkeit des Lautes', in Raoul Hausmann, *Sieg Triumph Tabak mit Bohnen: Texte bis 1933*, II, ed. by Michael Erlhoff (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1982), 69–70.

[50] Reproduced in *Dada Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New Paris*, ed. by Leah Dickerman (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2006), fig. 159. Lenox was an American soap brand developed by James Norris Gamble in the late nineteenth century.

and a cigar-band, each cut up, overlaid, facing one another and glued onto decorative wallpaper. This abstract, elliptic image is based on two material traces of human activities which have strong sensory resonance, with these traces taking on meaning precisely because human figuration is absent or denied. This *Merzbild* may be read as an olfactory image of domesticity (smoking a cigar; washing hands), with the balanced form of the collage suggesting the interaction and equilibrium of these implied activities and sensations and perhaps of their male and female equivalents.

Transgressing not just bodily limits but those of gender and sexuality, as well as boundaries between the body and the work of art, can be found in Marcel Duchamp's *Belle Haleine/Eau de Voilette* (1921), a work which also plays on the Dada body in relation to scent, if in a different mode.[51] Very different from his well-known *Fontaine* (1917), an upturned urinal to which he added a signature and which he entered for an art exhibition, *Belle Haleine* is an 'assisted ready-made'. The artist used a greenish flacon of the well-known and popular Rigaud perfume brand, but altered the label, using a Man Ray photograph showing a fashionable, demure Rrose Sélavy (i. e., Marcel Duchamp in disguise, performing his famous alter ego); the new brand name is RS, with the letter R reversed. Rigaud's product was called 'un air embaumé', both 'perfumed' and 'embalmed'. Duchamp, however, named his work 'beautiful breath'; and instead of the expected 'eau de toilette' or 'eau de violette' we have 'eau de voilette' [veil water]. The ready-made was photographed for the cover of *New York Dada*, whose title was printed upside down, adding another kind of inversion to Duchamp's work. As well as inversion, the work may display sublimation, especially when compared to the 1917 *Fontaine*; the logic of sublimation elevating piss to perfume, masculine to feminine, vulgar to refined, obvious to enigmatic.[52] According to Hal Foster, *Belle Haleine* suggests that for all the egalitarian pretence of other ready-mades and references to mass-produced beauty items, the art work will remain, in the capitalist economy, associated with the aura of the artist and can play its role only when veiled. Duchamp's visual and textual play here produces an image that nods to conventional ideas about art and gender and (un)veils the 'grotesque' body as deceptively human but associated with an image of artificial scent. In a series of olfactory bodies, Dada regards the body as a social or discursive construct, inscribed by knowledge and powers, yet would propose that it be reconstructed to make visible the repression of the lower senses in modernity.

[51] Duchamp's piece was reproduced on the cover of the sole issue of the magazine *New York Dada* (1921). For contexts and tradition, see *Belle Haleine: Der Duft der Kunst*, exh. cat., ed. by Museum Tinguely Basel (Basel: Museum Tinguely, 2015).

[52] See Hal Foster, 'Close-Up: A Rrose in Berlin', *Art Forum*, 49.8 (2011), 168–71.

As the examples of Schwitters and Duchamp show, Dada's olfactory counter-images involve a radical reconfiguring of the idea of the work of art, making the art work a vehicle for Bakhtinian becoming.

Having read across a range of Dada texts and images, I have outlined how Dada writers and artists deploy the olfactory to criticise bourgeois art, society and the centrality of reason in Western thought and culture; and then deploy elements of that larger critique, via an aesthetics of disgust, to hint at a different kind of sensory-perceptive apparatus (and the machine metaphor is entirely appropriate in the case of Dada), an aesthetics in which, to quote Huelsenbeck again, 'Dinge' precede 'Menschen', who Dada imagines as being porous to both inside and outside and more changeable, more mutable, than conventionally conceived. This exploration and re-imagination of the olfactory lead Dada, finally, to imagine and reconceptualise the human body in a range of modes from the grotesquely dehumanised to the composite and the geometrically-abstract, but always as a sensate body, a dynamic space of becoming, a site for creative transgression which may translate into new social relations. Dada's olfactory discourses and ideas of the unfinished, grotesque body necessarily challenge the traditional hierarchy between the 'higher' and the 'lower' senses and mobilise the repressed sense of smell. While claiming to smell of nothing, and acting like a cleanser in a corrupt and rotten civilisation, its rhetoric of the olfactory, as outlined here, seeks to go beyond reactive critique. While it is necessary to see Dada's rhetoric and semantics of smell in their historical and political situation during and after the First World War, this rhetoric offers pointers which go beyond context. This essay, in attempting to sniff out the Dada corpus – or should that be the Dada corpse, given the emphasis on death within the corpus and the metaphorical death of the historical avant-garde? – necessarily involves the conventional critical practice of looking at, and reading, images and texts in their contexts. For Carl Einstein, Dada was 'a wordplay that has farted too long!' [un calembour qui pette trop longtemps!].[53] Nonetheless, the whiff Dada has left behind lingers on. It may be that strategic confusion and mismatching of approaches when it comes to the olfactory are in fact a necessary corollary of Dada's multi-sensory project – a project, that is, which keeps drawing our attention to the very material and affective conditions within which we seek to describe, represent and categorise the senses in their historical manifestations.

[53] Letter from Carl Einstein to Clément Pansaers (no date provided), cited in Clément Pansears, 'Dada et moi', *Ca ira!*, 16 (November 1921); repr. in *Bar Nicanor et autres textes Dada*, ed. by Marc Dachy (Paris: Lebovici, 1986), pp. 199–205 (p. 203). Cf. Pansaers, *Vive Dada!*, p. 210.

Tag Gronberg

Scents of the Mother

Perfume's potent relationship to memory is often cited, as is its role as seductive enticement in the realm of romantic love.[1] Similarly, the idea of wearing a 'signature' scent to proclaim an individual identity (whether in terms of physical type and colouring or personality) has been a well-established marketing trope of the perfume industry.[2] This essay explores perfume's connections to memory and subjecthood on a rather different terrain to that of romantic love: adult recollections of the mother in terms of a distinctive scent. I focus on two case studies: one in the visual arts, the other in literature, in both cases by women. In 1991 the Franco-American sculptor Louise Bourgeois (1911, Paris – 2010, New York) exhibited her installation 'Cell II' as part of a series of Cells at the Pittsburgh Carnegie International.[3] Conceived as the physical manifestation of psychic space, this hauntingly poetic piece included nine empty bottles of Shalimar perfume (apparently Bourgeois's favourite scent), displayed

[1] On perfume, see, e. g., Elisabeth Barillé and Catherine Laroze, *The Book of Perfume* (Paris; New York: Flammarion, 1995); Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (New York: Berg, 1986); orig. *Le Miasme et la jonquille* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1982); Roja Dove, *The Essence of Perfume* (London: Black Dog, 2008); Michael Edwards, *Perfume Legends: French Feminine Fragrances* (Levallois: Michael Edwards in association with HM Editions, 1996); Lizzie Ostrom, *Perfume: A Century of Scents* (London: Hutchinson, 2015); and Jonathan Reinarz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

[2] Women's temperament and personality – and hence the 'appropriate' choice of scent – were often (stereotypically) identified with hair colour and complexion. See L. Ostrom, 'Amour Amour/Que Sais-Je?/Adieu Sagesse by Jean Patou 1925. The Hair Colour Perfumes', in *Perfume: A Century of Scents* (London: Hutchinson, 2015), pp. 97–99.

[3] On Bourgeois's Cells, see Rainer Crone and Petrus Graf-Schaesberg, *Louise Bourgeois: The Secret of the Cells* (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2011); and Julienne Lorz, *Louise Bourgeois: Structures of Existence: The Cells* (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2016). I am indebted to the now extensive scholarly literature on Bourgeois, including the *Louise Bourgeois* special issue of the *Oxford Art Journal*, 22.2 [Special issue edited by Lisa G. Corrin] (1999); Mieke Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider: The Architecture of Art-Writing* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001); *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Frances Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007); *Louise Bourgeois: Maman*, ed. by Marika Wachtmeister (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2007); Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2008). See also footnote 13 below.

Fig. 1: Louise Bourgeois, *Cell II*, 1991. Detail showing Shalimar perfume bottles, painted wood, marble, steel, glass, mirror, 210.8 x 152.4 x 152.4 cm. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. © The Easton Foundation/VAGA at ARS, NY and DACS, London 2021.

on a mirrored surface (Fig. 1).[4] Shalimar recurred as part of the iconography elaborated by Bourgeois's 'Spider' (1997), in which a gigantic spider bestrides a large wire mesh cage, housing a number of found and made objects, including Shalimar bottles dangling enticingly from delicate chains (Fig. 2). The personal significance of the spider motif, which had featured for many decades in Bourgeois's work (across a range of media), was made explicit through the title assigned to a sequence of monumental spiders appearing from the mid-1990s: 'Maman'.[5]

[4] 'The perfume bottles are not random; they are Shalimar, a scent that Bourgeois herself used and her mother wore throughout her childhood' ('Cell II Louise Bourgeois. Structures of Existence: The Cells' <https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/learn/schools/teachers-guides/cell-ii> [accessed 7 March 2021]). See also the claim 'Shalimar perfume (Bourgeois's favourite)' by Vincent Honoré recorded in Marie-Laure Bernadac, *Louise Bourgeois: Recent Work* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1998), p. 38, cited in a compilation of quotes published under the title 'Spider' in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Frances Morris, pp. 272–79 (p. 279).

[5] E. g., in 1995 Bourgeois had published the illustrated book *Ode to My Mother* [*Ode à Ma Mère*], her text accompanied by nine drypoint etchings on the theme of the spider. The publisher, Éditions du Solstice (founded 1901), is a Parisian illustrated-book society aimed at promoting book collecting.

A similar, ostensibly autobiographical note is struck by the work of poet Pascale Petit (b. 1953, Paris) in her collection *The Huntress* (2005).[6] References to 'mother' (and 'Maman') recur throughout *The Huntress*, in which Shalimar makes a prominent appearance in 'My Mother's Perfume':

> Strange how her perfume used to arrive long before she did,
> a jade cloud that sent me hurrying
> first to the loo, then to an upstairs window to watch for her taxi,
> I'd prepare myself
> by trying to remember her face, without feeling afraid. As she drew
> nearer I'd get braver
> until her scent got so strong I could taste the coins in the bottom
> of her handbag.
> And here I am forty years on, still half-expecting her. Though now
> I just have to open
> The stopper of an expensive French bottle, daring only a whiff of
> Shalimar
> which Jacques Guerlain created from the vanilla orchid vine. (p. 31)

There are certain analogies here in the representation of Shalimar as part of the mother-daughter dyad. Both authors explicitly reference their mothers as distantly past (Bourgeois's mother died in 1932 and was regularly cited in Bourgeois's many subsequent diary entries, interviews and published statements).[7] In both we might infer that encounter with the mother somehow involves fear ('feeling afraid'), not least given the towering, nightmarish scale of Bourgeois's spider 'Maman'. There is also the issue of authorial voice. Art historian Griselda Pollock has convincingly claimed that the title 'Maman' is not simply descriptive, but invocatory, a calling out by the child to its mother.[8] Tellingly, 'At the Gate of Secrets', the longest poem

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[6] Pascale Petit, *The Huntress* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005). All in-text page numbers relate to poems in this collection: 'Mother's Perfume', p. 31; 'The Den', p. 10; 'At the Gate of Secrets', pp. 43–48; 'Her Mouse Daughter', p. 14; 'The Mantis Mother', p. 23; 'The Mineral Mother', p. 24; 'Portrait of My Mother', p. 11; 'My Mother's Mirror', pp. 15–16.

[7] E. g., 'When my mother died in 1932, this rage to understand took over me. I simply could not make out the why of her disappearance' (Louise Bourgeois, 'MacDowell Medal Acceptance Speech' (1990), in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Robert Storr and others (London and New York: Phaidon, 2003), pp. 130–32 (p. 132). Asked in an interview, 'What were the biggest losses of your life?', Bourgeois replied that they were the deaths of her husband and mother, in 1973 and 1932 (Paulo Herkenhoff, 'Interview, in conversation with Louise Bourgeois', in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Storr and others, pp. 6–25 (p. 9)).

[8] '[T]he sculpture's title itself calling out: *Maman!* […] *Maman* is, I suggest, an invocation and thus is spoken in the voice of the child calling to its maternal other' (Griselda Pollock, 'Maman! Invoking the m/Other in the web of the Spider', in *Louise Bourgeois: Maman*, ed. by Marika Wachtmeister (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2007), pp. 65–66).

featured in Petit's *The Huntress* (to which I return below), is structured through an exchange of voices between mother and daughter. This leaves us with the question, why perfume? What is the significance of scent, and of Shalimar in particular, in these intricate and suggestive invocations of the mother-daughter relationship?

I begin with a note on Shalimar.[9] Conceived early in the 1920s by the prestigious Parisian perfume house Guerlain, the launch of the perfume was deferred by company head Jacques Guerlain to the 1925 Paris Exhibition, where the design of the distinctive bottle won a prize.[10] Perfume was by this date a major French industry, aimed at an international clientele targeted through complex advertising campaigns. A high-profile launch at a world exhibition (as with Shalimar in 1925) was not unusual, constituting an opportunity to differentiate the product through its naming and increasingly through a narrative associated with the perfume. Categorised as 'Oriental', Guerlain's scent formed part of the period vogue for Orientalising perfume names.[11] Shalimar, it was claimed, had been inspired by the tragic love story commemorated by the Taj Mahal, the death of Shah Jahan's favourite wife Mumtaz Mahal in 1631. The name Shalimar refers to the gardens laid out earlier in the seventeenth century by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahangir, with water features including pools, fountains and waterfalls, a private retreat often used by Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal. Not only the name but also the bottle's design, it has more recently been claimed, evoke the perfume's back story:

> The stopper symbolised the night sky under which Jehan and Mahal made love, the neck and the shoulder are the neck and shoulder of Mahal, the body of the bottle symbolising the drapes of one of her cloaks spilling down her back, and the base reflecting one of the pools from the garden of Shalimar.[12]

[9] Shalimar's scent was composed by Jacques Guerlain, the bottle designed by Raymond Guerlain. The ingredients included synthetic vanilla and bergamot. It is widely recognised as striking a subtle balance between the creamy softness of the vanilla and the citric, more refreshing tones of the bergamot (Dove, *The Essence of Perfume*, pp. 107–09; Edwards, *Perfume Legends*, pp. 55–59).

[10] Perfumes appeared in the 'Parure' section of the 1925 Exhibition, in the context of the fashion and haute couture industries.

[11] Other Orientalising perfumes of the period include Paul Poiret's 'Le Minaret', 'Aladin' and 'Maharadjah' and d'Orsay's 'Ganika'. Women's perfumery is traditionally divided into three harmonies: fougère, chypré and Oriental. All three denote a spectrum of scent. The Oriental structure is usually based on ingredients such as vanilla (considered an aphrodisiac), gum resin, patchouli, sandalwood, coumarin and orris. It is considered to be the most sensual harmony with the softest odour (Dove, *The Essence of Perfume*, pp. 70–74).

[12] Dove, *The Essence of Perfume*, p. 109.

Shalimar thus drew on an Orientalising discourse of erotic abandon along with stories of love and loss. Here the lure of romantic love and the inevitability of death coexist in close proximity. The appeal of Shalimar (as with other perfumes) was carefully contrived as an interplay between the formulation of the scent, its name and the associated narrative. In the case of Shalimar, there is, too, the implied juxtaposition of ephemerality (the scent, human love) with something more sustained and tangible, even permanent (as with the Taj Mahal and indeed the perfume bottle itself). My two case studies allow us to assess the role of Shalimar imagery in the contexts of written word and visual arts. What is the nature of the reading and viewing experiences offered?

Petit's opening line addresses the uncanny sense of encountering a person through an associated smell as opposed to a physical presence. Taken over by an enveloping cloud, physicality is located in the author, through a synaesthesic vocabulary of sight (jade) and taste (coins). Perfume allows for the complication of linear narrative: a childhood past (waiting for the mother's taxi, the preliminary whiff of perfume on arrival) intertwines with the present, when opening a bottle of Shalimar 'forty years on' provokes a sense of expectancy. Bourgeois's art installation 'Cell II' (1991) is housed at the Carnegie Institute of Art. The titling is explicitly ambiguous. Numerals indicate that the work forms part of a larger grouping (as is the case also with a biological cell), but the composition of the piece, its exterior perimeter composed of what appear to be old doors, suggests a lived interior (whether prison or monk's cell).[13] Bourgeois has described the Cells series in terms of wishing to define her own space – a space-within-the-space of the art gallery or museum.[14] Like 'Mother's Perfume', 'Cell II' conveys a sense of the past, in part through its appearance of having been constructed from used and discarded components taken (perhaps) from a reclamation yard (the doors) and junk shop (the mirror featured inside the Cell). As with reading a poem, an encounter with the art installation takes place over time through walking around the Cell. In common with others in the series however, engaging with 'Cell II' in the gallery space is far from straightforward. No one vantage point gives a complete overview of the piece. Equally, the profusion of doors, while on the one hand constituting an invitation to 'come inside', does not allow the museum visitor actually to enter the interior. Physical movement on the part of the viewer is both invited and blocked, visual enticement combined with a certain opacity.

[13] On Bourgeois's Cells, see Crone and Graf-Schaesberg, *Louise Bourgeois: The Secret of the Cells* and Lorz, *Louise Bourgeois: Structures of Existence: The Cells*.

[14] See Bourgeois's summarizing statement about a compilation of quotes published under the title 'Cells' in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Morris, p. 71.

The viewer of 'Cell II' is allowed a glimpse of the carefully arranged still life housed in its interior: nine empty Shalimar flacons arranged on a glass mirror (laid flat), alongside two clasped marble hands (Fig. 1).[15] The bottles, of different sizes, shimmer emptily atop the gleaming tray. Along with the multiplicity of doors, the grouped bottles take the form of assemblage, an accumulation of used objects, now defunct, the debris of memories. How are we to read the juxtaposition of perfume bottles, mirror and hands? There is the suggestion of the *mise-en-scène* of the vanity table, the daily ritual of making up. Throughout her career, Bourgeois offered a proliferation of verbal (written and spoken) cues to her visual work, including evidence of her penchant for Shalimar. These indications were sometimes performed in conversation or in photographs. A published interview with the artist, for example, mentions that 'Louise reaches for the tiny bottle of Shalimar perfume that she always keeps at her desk and opens it to enjoy the perfume'.[16] Bourgeois's perfume imagery has been interpreted in relation to the maternal, with some commentators deducing that Shalimar was quite possibly also a favourite of Josephine, the artist's mother. Others, meanwhile, speculate that Bourgeois already wore the scent as a young girl.[17] As with Petit's verse, therefore, Shalimar marks a potential point of intersection between past and present. More allusively, we might infer hints of mortality, the clasped marble hands in 'Cell II' implying prayer, the seried ranks of perfume bottles an echo of the kneeling family figures on a tomb monument. The presence of Shalimar in Bourgeois's subsequent 1997 'Spider' installation takes place in a more minor key. With 'Spider' (a kind of transition piece between the Cells series and the monumental permutations on 'Maman'), we find a similar viewing experience, although (by contrast with the wooden doors of 'Cell II') the steel-wire mesh cage allows a somewhat clearer view of the interior (Fig. 2).[18] At the same time, this version of a Cell is presented within the eight-legged embrace of 'Spider', which

[15] See Mieke Bal's evocative discussion of the Shalimar bottles as still life (Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider*, pp. 53–60).

[16] Herkenhoff, 'Interview, in conversation with Louise Bourgeois', p. 14.

[17] Mieke Bal pictures the youthful Bourgeois in her mother's tapestry restoration studio: 'As an antidote to dust, the young girl's perfume bottles are refreshing' (Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider*, p. 36). The claim of the Guggenheim Bilbao that Shalimar was also the favourite scent of the artist's mother (cf. 'Cell II Louise Bourgeois. Structures of Existence) is somewhat more nuanced in Katherine Chan's claim that 'Shalimar could be the scent her mother wore throughout Bourgeois' childhood', a statement which bears evidence of the perfume's cross-generational appeal (K. Chan, 'An Empty Bottle of Shalimar: The Art of Louise Bourgeois', *Mad Perfumista*, 10 April 2012 <https://girlwholikesboyswholikegirlswholikeperfumes.wordpress.com/2012/04/10/an-empty-bottle-of-shalimar-the-art-of-louise-bourgeois/> [accessed 7 March 2021]).

[18] See Mieke Bal's detailed discursive and photographic account of viewing 'Spider' (Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider*, pp. 10–25).

Fig. 2: Louise Bourgeois, *Spider*, 1997. Steel, tapestry, wood, glass, fabric, rubber, silver, gold, bone, 449.6 x 665.5 x 518.2 cm. The Easton Foundation, New York. © The Easton Foundation/ VAGA at ARS, NY and DACS, London 2021.

stands guard over the delineated space. Like the Cells, 'Spider' (1997) is composed of a combination of found and made objects, a sense of past and present. Inside the cage it is possible to see small-scale trinkets, for example a locket, coins and Shalimar bottles, suspended from small chains. These dainty ornaments evoke festive Christmas tree decorations, although, given the arachnoid setting, also something more sinister: the spider's lure, dangling shiny objects to entice the viewer into the creature's lair.

In both poem and art installations, Shalimar appears as part of a larger dynamic – the powerful ambivalence shaping and shaped by the mother-daughter relationship. Petit's 'My Mother's Perfume' conveys expressions of excited albeit anxious anticipation of the maternal return, whether recounted as in childhood (the need to rush to 'the loo'), or in the present, when 'daring only a whiff' from the Shalimar bottle, which like Aladdin's lamp brings forth the maternal aura (p. 31). The written word is able to evoke these tensions through evocations of smell, dwelling on the associations of present-day inhalations of Shalimar: 'Even now, the scent of vanilla stings like a cane' (p. 31). Against this, however, 'I can also smell roses and jasmine in the bottle's top notes, my legs wading through the fragrant path' (p. 31). Bourgeois's imagery of dressing table mirror and perfume bottles similarly conjures up the juxtaposition of a mundane everyday, family environment – reassuring in its familiarity – with something more threatening: the entrapment of the Cells, along with the nightmarish scale of the looming Spider. As conveyed by the term 'cell', a sense of togetherness and a feeling of isolation co-exist. Petit's verse reveals how the Orientalising Shalimar scent conveys the comfortingly domestic (the vanilla smells of baking, the floral odours of the garden) along with the spectre of a threatening other (the pain of caning). How do these poetic, contrasting, sensory allusions compare to Bourgeois's imagery of the nine empty Shalimar bottles? On one level the quintessential luxury commodity, upmarket perfumes relied heavily on their exquisite packaging in order to seduce the customer. Companies vied with each other in producing ever more spectacular flacon designs in expensive materials (that for Shalimar was produced by Baccarat Crystal). Whereas Petit describes unstopping a bottle to sniff the perfume, those presented by Bourgeois are conspicuously empty. Like Walter Benjamin's descriptions of the faded goods on show in the by then outdated 1920s Parisian arcades, these representatives of Shalimar have lost something of their newly packaged allure and glamour.[19] Used up, subject to

[19] In his Arcades Project, Walter Benjamin produced an extended meditation on contemporary consumer society, taking as his motif the outdated Parisian arcades, along with the dusty goods on show in their shop windows, which co-existed with more up-to-date manifestations of commerce such as department stores. His critique of capitalism and modernity, unfinished at the time of his death, is available in English translation as Walter Ben-

gathering dust, their spotlit glitter is now more that of a memento mori than an attractive shop display. In both poem and art installation we are made aware that maternal presence as comfort is constantly undermined by a corresponding unease and apprehension.

These compelling associations of Shalimar with mother/*maman* mark out a complex emotional and psychic terrain which merits further investigation. References by Bourgeois and Petit to their own mothers transcend a narrowly autobiographical account and are more fruitfully considered as rhetorical devices to address the wider significance of the daughter's perspective on the maternal relationship. As we have seen, in neither case is mother/*maman* located only in the past. Similarly, the maternal figure is not entirely other to the daughter whose work we witness as readers and viewers. At this point it is worth pausing to consider how these Shalimar images, along with the wider context for that imagery, are both evidence of, and coping mechanisms for, the daughter's confrontation with the mother. It is revealing, for example, that if opening a bottle of Shalimar is to some degree posited as a nerve-wracking experience, there is always (we hope) the reassuring option of replacing the stopper. Fear of the maternal presence as overwhelming is thereby contained, controllable. How exactly is that fear characterised with these two case studies? We have noted claims that in Bourgeois's work Shalimar somehow forms a link to the mother. Where marketing campaigns encourage consumers to stake out their own personalised scented identity, here perfume seems to function as a means of identification as well as differentiation. The concept is amusingly elaborated in Angela Carter's comic novel *Wise Children* (1991), where throughout their long lives identical twin sister showgirls identify themselves through the choice of two Orientalising Guerlain perfumes: Shalimar for Leonora, Mitsouko for Nora: 'Identical, but never symmetrical', pronounces the elderly Leonora, who supplies the novel's narrating voice.[20] The twist here is that on occasion the raffish twins had enjoyed swapping identities by exchanging their Guerlain perfumes, a cunning ruse which remains unsuspected even in the intimacy of love-making. Perfume lies at the heart of

jamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); orig. *Das Passagen-Werk*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1982).

[20] Angela Carter, *Wise Children* (London: Vintage Books, 2006 [1991]), p. 5. Mitsouko, which appeared in 1919 (again formulated by Jacques Guerlain), has been described as 'the pride of Guerlain' and is recognised for its balance: 'the first perfect liaison between a natural and synthetic material'. It belongs to the category of chypre (a woody, moss accord). Like Shalimar, the name refers to a tragic love story, based (according to many accounts) on Claude Ferrère's novel *The Battle* (1919) set at the time of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 to 1905. The book recounts the passionate (but unrealised) love between the wife of a Japanese admiral and a young British naval attaché (Edwards, *Perfume Legends*, pp. 33–34).

Carter's sardonic depiction of the twins' mischievous delight in deception and control. The perfume iconography deployed by Petit and Bourgeois to elaborate on the play between self and other in the case of mother and daughter, on the other hand, involves rather more disturbing scenarios.

This is evident in the imagery of looking glass and hands in Bourgeois's 'Cell II' and features also in 'My Mother's Perfume': 'I used to practise kissing her cheek by kissing the glass' (p. 31). Lips touching the cold inanimate surface of the looking glass, an intimate encounter with her own reflection, forms the counterpoint to the young girl's anxious anticipation of the mother's embrace. Here the mirror does not signal the traditional trope of female vanity, but rather suggests visual and tactile reassurance of the daughter's sustained sense of self in the face of an enveloping maternal presence. Perfume allows Petit and Bourgeois to work with a palimpsest of imagery, an interplay, as we have noted, between past and present and also (in the case of Petit) across the senses: '[H]er scent got so strong I could taste the coins in the bottom of her handbag' (p. 31). As the intensifying smell of Shalimar announces mother drawing near, the young daughter is jolted back to earliest infancy, when maternal contact was experienced orally, through taste. The poem continues with mother's appearance from the cloud of perfume:

> the gloved hand emerging
> from a black taxi at the gate of Grandmother's garden. And for a moment I think I am safe.
> Then Maman turns to me with a smile like a dropped perfume bottle, her essence spilt. (p. 31)

This is a meeting where hope of safety is momentarily triggered by mother's smile, but immediately shattered by the shock of disintegration, the imagery of a dropped perfume bottle revealing a 'spilt essence'. A coherent entity, the contained maternal body indicated by the black-gloved hand is replaced by something alarmingly amorphous and threatening. Here mother and daughter are bound up in an unsettling relationship where the selfhood of both appears precarious, in a state of perpetual flux.

For Bourgeois, perfume's role in the delineation of the mother-daughter dyad became more explicit with the large-scale 1997 'Spider' (Fig. 2). The artist claimed that the Cells series enabled her 'to create my own architecture', a real space which could both be entered and walked around.[21] As we have seen, it is not possible for the viewer physically to enter the interior space of 'Cell II'

[21] Louise Bourgeois, 'Red Rooms', in *Louise Bourgeois: Recent Work,* ed. by Marie-Laure Bernadac, exh. cat. (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1998), p. 38, cited in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Morris, p. 71.

with its Shalimar still life grouping; what seems to be on offer to the viewer is a voyeuristic experience of looking at the carefully staged scene. With the Cells, entry is enabled at a psychic level. Bourgeois described a relation between physicality and mind, conscious and unconscious: 'The Cells represent different types of pain: the physical, the emotional, the psychological; the mental and the intellectual.'[22] The series is interestingly complicated with the 1997 work, in which the towering Spider's eight legs in effect create another, second cell structure around the circular wire cage. This configuration means that it is possible physically to penetrate the cell marked out by the spider, through standing between its legs (for example). The viewer's gaze is enticed from different angles both by the contents of the cage (a battered armchair, the dangling trinkets mentioned above, including Shalimar bottles) and by the wire egg sac suspended from Spider's belly, bulging with glass eggs partially covered with nylon tights. Architecture is doubled, appearing simultaneously as nature (the spider) and culture (artefacts associated with family, domesticity and home).

As nature's 'weaver' the spider allows Bourgeois to represent the maternal as an agent of reparation, a consoling idea of motherhood as sustaining and making whole. Bourgeois's identification of the recurring spider imagery with her own mother, who had worked as a textiles restorer, was long-standing: 'The friend (the spider – why the spider?) because my best friend was my mother and she was deliberate, clever, patient, soothing, dainty, subtle, indispensable, neat, and useful as a spider.'[23] Suggestions of maternal protection are rendered all the more powerful by the mighty scale of the artist's subsequent huge 'Maman' spiders. As with Petit's poetic references to mother/*maman*, however, authorial statements should not be taken as 'explanations' of the work, whether of poetry or sculptures. Invocations of mother function rather as an invitation to the reader or viewer, offering a point of entry to the works in question. Analogous to the dainty dangling trinkets displayed by Bourgeois's 'Spider', mentions of 'mother' lure us in through their familiarity.

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[22] Louise Bourgeois, 'On Cells', in Lynne Cooke and Mark Francis, *Carnegie International* 21, exh. cat. (Pennsylvania, PA: Carnegie Museum of Art, 1991), p. 60, cited in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Morris, p. 71.

[23] Louise Bourgeois, *Ode to My Mother*, in *Louise Bourgeois. Destruction of the Father/Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews, 1923–1997*, ed. by Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist (London: Violette, 1998), pp. 326–29 (p. 326). Bourgeois also says, 'I came from a family of repairers. The spider is a repairer. If you bash into the web of a spider, she doesn't get mad. She weaves and repairs it' (Louise Bourgeois in a Radio Interview for Sveriges Radio with Cecilia Blomberg on 16 Oct. 1998; the passage is cited in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Morris, p. 272). A recording of the Swedish radio reportage which includes the interview conducted in English is available at https://sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/806288; the relevant passage starts at 14 mins 38 sec.

We all have (or have had) mothers, of course, and as a maternal accoutrement Shalimar will be widely recognised, since the scent had international appeal from its inception. These artistic maternal cues are insidiously reassuring: we are dealing with someone else's mother/daughter relationship (not our own) and much of what is depicted seems to be presented in a retrospective mode. Once drawn in, however, far from constituting a safe space, we discover the maternal presence to be unpredictable and threatening, triggering echoes of own experiences and fears. In its oscillations between pleasure and pain, hope and terror, Petit's 'My Mother's Perfume' offers a vivid case in point.

Similarly with Bourgeois's 1997 'Spider', where lack of familiarity with the artist's chosen symbolism (regarding her own mother) is no bar to appreciating the work as a complex of interlocking spaces mysteriously conjuring up notions of domesticity and home. Indeed the maternal theme is clearly established by the spider's pendulous egg sac which dangles over the arm chair positioned inside the wire mesh Cell. The *mise-en-scène* of this elaborate installation with its empty room has echoes of the horror film. The interior circumscribed by the cage is suggestive of the home as refuge, a comfy chair set in an environment apparently decorated with family memorabilia. At the same time, these now uninhabited props are battered relics of the passage of time. Are we perhaps looking at remains of a scene of violence? The enactment of a crime? The door to the cage stands ajar, beckoning inwards, but dare one enter? For all Bourgeois's statements regarding the positive role of spiders ('[T]he female spider has a bad reputation – a stinger, a killer. I rehabilitate her') the monstrous scale of the encircling Spider is as easily taken as a dramatic visualisation of the scene's potential for horror as a recognition of maternal protection.[24] Given this Spider's size, its predatory instincts might well be associated with a human as opposed to an insect scale. As with Petit's poem, the desire for comforting closeness and safety coexists with anxiety and deep-seated fear. Here too we glimpse mother/*maman* as dangerously overwhelming, a presence that provokes dimly recollected memories and sensations. Significantly, Bourgeois's Cells tend to be displayed spotlit, in a darkened gallery space. Uncertainty reigns: is the Spider protecting this ostensibly homey space, or has it subsumed the state of home in a mindless, voracious embrace?

The cross-generational mother-daughter relationship is obviously different to that of twin sisters as recounted in Carter's novel, but mothers and daughters also constitute a coupling of female personae in which the processes of identification and differentiation play a crucial role. Something of this is alluded to in Petit's poem, where the young daughter's kissing herself

[24] 'Statements from Conversations with Robert Storr (extracts) 1980s–90s', in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Robert Storr and others, pp. 138–44 (p. 140).

in the mirror is connected to kissing her mother. Shalimar is an interesting, and indeed historically pertinent, choice of perfume in this context. Given its creation in the 1920s, it is a scent that clearly belongs to 'the past', to an older generation. (The pejorative phrase 'old lady's perfume' springs to mind.) At the same time, the perfume has remained in continuous production since that time, albeit in slightly revised formulations; and a sequence of more recent advertising campaigns has aimed at updating its glamour and appeal for a younger generation.[25] Although the perfume's explicit Orientalism risks appearing somewhat dated, the concept of undying romantic love clearly retains its purchase. Permutations on the joke that 'daughters inevitably grow into being their mothers', while irritating in their misogyny, also point to processes of the daughter's maternal identification. It is indicative that 'Spider' and the 'Maman' sequence are late works, produced when Bourgeois had entered 'old age', having become a mother herself. None of this is to advocate simplistic biographical explanations of the artist's famous and much acclaimed spiders, but rather to acknowledge that the daughter's potential for motherhood, even if in a literal sense unrealised, is one aspect of possible identification with the mother *imago*. In this sense, far from simply constituting a threat, the looming pregnant spider can also figure something more positive, the promise of exhilarating strength and might.

I conclude these observations on the poetic and artistic association of perfume with mother/*maman* by speculating on what that pairing might indicate more broadly about my chosen case studies. With Bourgeois's spider motif it is obvious that viewing an installation or sculpture is different from reading a poem, not least in the art work's visuality. At the same time, through publications and interviews over a period of many years Bourgeois established a dynamic dialogue between word and image, forging a personal mythology based on her arachnoid imagery. When the artist's spiders were exhibited in solitary splendour as 'Maman', their monumentality proved an assertive presence on the international art scene (Fig. 3). Versions of 'Maman' hover – a bit like the scent of perfume, one might venture – inside art museums (for example Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in 2000, as part of the Gallery's inaugural exhibition displays), outdoors at the Hermitage in Russia in 2001, in the 2007 winter landscape at Wanas in Sweden, to name just a few of the prestigious host venues. In its guise as maternal architecture, the grotesque aspect of the spider writ large becomes something more positive. A paeon to female fecundity and creativity, the looming arachnoid form confidently appropriates

[25] More recent Shalimar campaigns include photographs by Helmut Newton (1997), the introduction of Shalimar Light (available 2004–2008) and reformulations of the Eau de Toilette and Eau de Parfum versions by Jade Jagger.

Fig. 3: Louise Bourgeois, *Maman*, 1999. Bronze, stainless steel, marble, 927.1 x 891.5 x 1023.6 cm. Tate Modern, London, exhibited 2007.

different display environments. Nor are temporary 'Maman' installations time-limited; they live on, through publications, installation photographs and films. Bourgeois's prestigious posthumous reputation is inextricably bound up with these mythic maternal spiders, which have become a kind of trademark for her practice. 'Maman' was again exhibited, this time outdoors, at Tate Modern in 2007; dramatically sited next to the Thames it acted as a gateway to views across the river to St. Paul's cathedral.[26] The pain and unease alluded to by the artist in speaking of her Cells have not proved, it would seem, a simple case of being rendered overwhelmed and powerless. Works such as 'Spider' and 'Maman' stand as proud evidence of how the daughter's identification with the maternal (both engaged in forms of artistic practice, for example) has proved a means of asserting control and selfhood.

The conclusion to Petit's poem 'My Mother's Perfume' would seem to offer a rather bleaker picture: 'Then Maman turns to me with a smile like a dropped perfume bottle, her essence spilt' (p. 31). In the case of Bourgeois, Shalimar

[26] The outdoor installation of 'Maman' at Tate Modern in 2007 was on the occasion of a major Bourgeois retrospective exhibition.

imagery forms part of an oeuvre proclaiming the mother-daughter relationship as a bond which transcends death (the artist's own indeed, as well as that of her mother). A number of poems in Petit's collection *The Huntress* similarly refer to the mother figure as deceased. There is mention, for example, of 'your scent, three years after your death' ('The Den', p. 10). As with Bourgeois's work on the maternal theme, this retrospective mode does not relegate Maman to the 'past'. Mother is present not only in memory, but through the very being of the daughter herself. Petit's images suggest a merging, her language taking on a physical aspect:

> Sometimes your voice is so faint
> I forget I am your daughter. And your voice
> dips into the whirlpool
> at the centre of my brain,
> is sucked in and down my spine,
> into my bowels
> and out with my stools. ('At the Gate of Secrets', p. 48)

Such visceral imagery powerfully conveys the impossibility of escaping an encroaching maternal presence. Tellingly, for Petit, as for Bourgeois, the metamorphosis of human to animal forms a powerful mechanism in the artistic negotiation between self and other figured through the mother-daughter relationship.

The viewer's encounter with Bourgeois's arachnoid Maman series is most probably ambivalent, encompassing both horror at the nightmarish scale of her huge spiders along with the hope of reassurance solicited by the artist's claims for the comforting similarities between spiders and her own mother's role as a textiles restorer. The maternal shape-shifting described in 'My Mother's Perfume', on the other hand, would seem to indicate that it is not only the imagery but the very process of transformation itself which proves terrifying, provoking continuous uncertainty as to the guise under which mother would appear. Mother (along with 'Maman') forms the sustained theme of *The Huntress*. As indicated by the collection's title, Petit regularly resorts to characterisations of the maternal as predatory: 'I even try to be what she says I am – a mouse fed live into her cage' ('Her Mouse Daughter', p. 14). Reading through the poems we find mother metamorphosed into frightening creatures: a snake, 'her pupils narrow to vertical slits' (p. 14); praying mantis 'hypnotising her prey' ('The Mantis Mother', p. 23); and falcon ('The Mineral Mother', p. 24). The snake and rattlesnake imagery recurs, provoking in the daughter the desire to 'uncoil her power' (p. 9). On other occasions, as in 'Portrait of My Mother as Xipe Totec' (p. 11), the mother's ferocious attacks on the daughter are represented as ritualistic sacrifice, a matter of culture as much as

savage nature. 'I wondered whether the people passing saw how she possessed me' (p. 11). In 'My Mother's Mirror' maternal sacrifice of the daughter initiates in the mundane domestic sphere:

> I know it's just a small round make-up mirror
> […]
> But when you tip its magnifying-side up –
> Jaws unlock
> Like a snake swallowing our house.
> Into your mirror I fall. (p. 15)

In these cases metamorphosis affords the means of representing maternal consuming power, threats of annihilation, at the very heart of home and society.

With 'At the Gate of Secrets' (pp. 43–48, the longest poem in the collection), however, metamorphosis takes on a different role. This is Petit's reconception of Hungarian poet Ferenc Juhász's (1928, Bia – 2015, Budapest) magisterial 'The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secrets' (1955). Interestingly, given Pollock's identification of the invocatory 'Maman!' in relation to Bourgeois's spiders, Juhász's 'The Boy Changed into a Stag' takes the form of two voices calling out to each other, a plaintive dialogue between mother and absent son. It begins: 'The mother called to her own son, | cried from far away.'[27] In Petit's version, the son has become a daughter: 'A mother calls out to her daughter. Her cry climbs into a spiral' (p. 43). Somewhat shorter in length than the original, Petit's 'At the Gate of Secrets' presents a close focus on the exchange between mother and daughter. It is in this poem that mother is identified as 'my huntress' (p. 48), but unlike the other shorter poems discussed above, here it is the daughter who has metamorphosed from human to stag. In classical metamorphosis narratives, as in Ovid for example, the change to animal form is often represented as a form of punishment inflicted on humans by the gods. This is the case of course with Arachne, the bold young woman weaver, transformed into a spider by a wrathful Athena.[28] Occasionally however (as with the story of Apollo in amorous pursuit of the river nymph Daphne), metamorphosis becomes a means of escape.[29] So, too, for the daughter in Petit's 'At the Gate':

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[27] Ferenc Juhász, 'A szarvassá változott királyfi' (1955), translated by David Wevill, 'The Boy Changed into a Stag Clamors at the Gate of Secrets', *Arion*, 8 (1969), 572–84 (p. 572).

[28] Ovid recounts the story of Actaeon, the hunter, whom Diana turns into a stag and who is subsequently attacked and killed by his own dogs, in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), I, *Books 1–8*, 134–42 (III.138–252).

[29] Daphne escapes the advances of Apollo when, responding to his daughter's desperate pleas, her river god father transforms her into a laurel tree; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 34–42 (I.452–567).

My mind has sprouted a bone forest
and every bone-leaf is a shield
to protect me from your gaze. (p. 46)

The girl stag responds to her desperately insisting mother, 'I cannot go back' (p. 46), claiming that a return would inevitably entail destruction of the mother. The poem concludes with the assertion that reunion can take place only at the end of the daughter's life: 'When I return, Mother, it will be to join you in the grave' (p. 48). A proclaimed distance is the prerequisite for sustained life.

In this essay I have followed trajectories suggested by the artistic and literary imagery of Shalimar perfume, on the one hand as a point of closeness and similarity in the fraught relationship between mother and daughter; on the other, the apprehension inspired by an unstable, threatening maternal figure. Like Bourgeois with her monumental 'Mamans', Petit's 'At the Gate of Secrets' has mobilised aspects of the mother-daughter encounter to make a bold artistic intervention. Her compelling reformulation of Juhász's verse (the original lauded by Auden as one of the greatest poems to appear during his lifetime) through acclaimed translations by Kenneth McRobbie and Ted Hughes is clear evidence of literary prowess and ambition.[30] In the cases of Petit and Bourgeois we discover that confrontation with the potentially terrifying aspects of mother/*maman* has formed a means, as opposed to an impediment, to the daughter's assertion of selfhood and agency. However, is there more to say about the significance of perfume in this regard? Is the appearance of Shalimar in each case study anything more than coincidental, the fortuitous consequence of auto-biographical anecdote? By way of answer, I offer a few speculative observations. The first concerns the inherent (and necessary) ambivalence of perfume as a substance, often composed from a selection of materials, some of which are alluring, others repellent.[31] The parfumeur's skill, and the

[30] Petit credits the translations by Kenneth McRobbie and Ted Hughes in *Boy Changed into a Stag: Selected Poems 1949–1967*, trans. by Kenneth McRobbie and Illona Duczynska (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); Ted Hughes, *Selected Translations*, ed. by Daniel Weissbort (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), pp. 25–37. Hughes's translation was first published in *Modern Poetry in Translation* (2003). Hughes had seen the poem in an anthology from 1963, *The Plough and the Pen: Writings from Hungary 1930–1956*, ed. by Ilona Duczynska; intro. by W. H. Auden (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1963), pp. 207–18. Auden's praise of Juhász appears on p. 11.

[31] At the time of Shalimar's creation in the 1920s perfumes were regularly composed using animal products (often as fixatives). These included extracts such as civet, castoreum (beavers), ambergris (sperm whales) and musk (deer). In an undeveloped, early state such ingredients smelled unpleasant (the faecal odour of civet, for example). Now either banned or prohibitively expensive, these have largely been replaced by synthetic versions (Roja Dove, 'The Natural Raw Materials', in *The Essence of Perfume*, pp. 46–60; Edwards, *Perfume Legends*, p. 57).

success of the perfume, lie in the careful balancing of seductive and repulsive smells in order to produce a distinctive, compellingly desirable scent.

Second, there is Bourgeois's and Petit's recurring use of 'Maman'.[32] As a reference to growing up with two languages, the French form signifies the cross-cultural aspects of these two daughters' relationships with their respective mothers. More fundamentally, though, we might take the term 'mother tongue' to direct our attention to a prelinguistic state of daughterhood. Petit's 'My Mother's Perfume' links the smell (and by implication sight) of the mother to taste. Similarly, the maternal architecture of Bourgeois' 'Maman' conjures up a time when mother was experienced physically, as nurturing enclosure, through smell, taste and touch. With Bourgeois's 1997 Spider, dangling Shalimar bottles echo the shiny glass eggs suspended above the viewer's head. The egg sac suggests an architectural boss, holding together the architectonic structure of the spider ('gothic' in its own way, in terms of potential horror). Similarly on a psychic level we might conclude, the perfume flacons mark the intersection between forces of threatened annihilation and potential self-realisation. It is revealing that in the 2003 interview, when Bourgeois was recorded as reaching for the Shalimar bottle, she was talking about ambivalence and ambiguity.[33] In the work of Petit and Bourgeois Shalimar perfume, as container and as implied scent, functions metonymically, resonating with the ambivalences inherent in the mother-daughter dyad. Bal argues in connection with 'Spider': 'The bottles are tiny versions of the work as a whole.'[34] Bourgeois referred to the sense of smell as having 'the great power of evocation' but also of 'healing'.[35] The ever-present flacon on the artist's desk was apparently a conduit of memory and also (somewhat like old-fashioned smelling salts) a restorative recourse, a duality that recalls Petit's tentative sniff at the bottle. In these artistic and literary reclamations of perfume from the dressing table to the desk, from the sphere of 'vanity' to that of women's work, we encounter Shalimar – albeit not at first glance on the grand scale of the Taj Mahal – as a provocative memorial.

[32] In Petit's *The Huntress* 'Maman' occurs in, e. g., 'A Hornet's Nest' (p. 37), 'The Spell' (p. 38), 'The Dragonfly Daughter' (p. 39) and 'The Grass Snake' (p. 41).

[33] Louise Bourgeois, 'Ambivalence is for the emotions. Ambiguity is for the brains. Interview', in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Robert Storr and others, pp. 6–26 (p. 14); Bourgeois, 'MacDowell Medal Acceptance Speech', p. 132.

[34] Bal, *Louise Bourgeois' Spider*, p. 55. Bal presents an extended argument concerning the significance of the flacons' metonymic and metaphoric role in 'Spider' (pp. 58–59).

[35] Louise Bourgeois, 'On Cells' [1991], in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. by Robert Storr and others, pp. 132–37 (p. 132).

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