

ATOMIZER

Elizabeth A. I. Powell

1. TOP NOTES

Is it right to write about love during the new fascism?

I hold my atomizer like a light-saber. I am learning the Kung Fu of demure. I have mastered the koan of coy.

Once upon a time, Yahweh required the incense of burning fore-skins, and it calmed his divinity. First scent, one G-d.

Now top notes introduce scent as an idea, as an initial impression, as a molecular structure that evaporates quickly, as a memory, as a cover of a book about online dating and the “end of love.”

My atomizer, a DeVilbiss Art Deco, made of opalescent glass, inherited from my flapper great aunt, my namesake, sprays the world out atom by atom.

(Memory): Like me she feasted on Lorna Doones and linden tea and strange men.

Fragrance summons angels. I desire Proustian angels, different from Episcopalian ones.

How to find love? A square space for an uploaded photo, a flirty introduction, age, height, wants children? *Yes? No?* – Then compulsive gorging on profiles: “Well traveled. Good kisser. Puts phone away at table. Likes to cook. Techno not disco. Baseball not football. If you voted for Trump swipe left.”

Love has many scents. He used scent to confound, to throw me off the trail of who he really was, which may be just another word for emptiness. How he found the scent that described my memory to my desire, and it smelled so good I had no choice but to love him when his cheek slipped next to mine.

When I smell roses I see hues of blue. Citrus – only yellow. And when my sweeties make love to me, each petit mal is a different Rothko painting. Who knew color could smell like rain and the smell of the rain was apple-green?

Then there's the dating site that matches you by your "smell signature": Wear the same shirt for three days, send it to us, we distribute to possible matches! Voila! Holy pheromone.

For all angels are drawn to the one who studies scent like a Rabbi studies the Torah.

Poetry, like argon gas, preserves, stabilizes the attar at a faithful temperature.

Come angels. Olfaction is the evocation of memory. Come angels.

Let the atomizer release the top notes of my story — that which evaporates most quickly. Let the atomizer do what it does best: Release the distance between autobiography and critical analysis.

I have lost time, and I want it back.

Come angels.

2. HEART NOTES

And whosoever shall bring me back to the child inside the child, my matryoshka girl daemon inside me, lure her with whiffs of potions, will lead me anywhere. Trance state.

I am one with the atomizer. We behave differently with different odors: Note the limbic system is where memory is utilized, the past inside the whiff and scent of the present.

O, olfactory neurons. Sensory pathway through space and time. Heart notes hold the scent just before the top notes evaporate.

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the trail of who he really was, which may be just another word for emptiness. How he found the scent that described my memory to my desire, and it smelled so good I had no choice but to love him when his cheek slipped next to mine.

(Memory): Back on the farm, grandmother supposed the smell of skunk wondrous. I loved the leather smell of cowhide, the salt lick, the watery smells, the lavender and hay rot. This is when she gave me her sister's atomizer.

The cows were in heat some days. I was prepubescent.

(Memory): Back home near the city, the bouquet of concrete and locust trees, away from the farm, my mother vanished like top notes of an extinct civet-laced perfume. I roamed our village, locating myself in the perfume shop, gazing in the store mirror for an answer. *"How may I help you?"*

(Memory): The smell of clove, cocoa, and cardamom, the most recognizable. Warm, comforting. Enter Astrid, the shopkeeper, who looked like Ingrid Bergman.

Her perfume store of glass and mirrors and quietude was a kind of church and she was the priestess. I could smell the potions of vetiver and candle wax and iris root.

My apprenticeship: She let me pour the strong galbanums on my wrist to neutralize my fleetingness. I organized the perfume bottles.

I ate squares of cookies, sugar on my fingertips. I felt at home, safe inside the scent of glass. My bubble, my glass case.

I carried an invisible crown on my head. And whosoever shall bring me back here to this memory will lead me anywhere.

(Memory): "You smell the same, that's how I know it's really you."

Imprinted by musks, sniffs of Chanel, I thought the perfume was a prescription they filled for human ailments like loneliness.

Now, the world's best and extinct perfumes are warehoused in the Osmotheque in France, a library for fragrances. It is a kind of Eden.

We lock Eden away because we know we will destroy it. Come angels.

I search for Adam online. To become consumers of smells we must make associations. But we don't have to know a pine cone intimately if we are always smelling Glad pinecone spray for bathrooms.

Indeed, our desire to smell pleasant things is from our lost garden.

The heart of the scent: I have loved men who have hated women.

(Memory): Their misogyny smelled of lily of the valley.

Come angels.

3. BASE NOTES

Sometimes we are having a simple chat in the blue stench of ocean breeze.

Base notes are the subtext.

Base notes are the heavy molecules of scent that stay the longest. They are rich and deep.

Scent is how mates choose. Our immunities lie in our smells. We disperse, for that is our purpose.

(Memory): The smell of clinic – heart notes of antiseptic and latex, street clothes and fear, blood musky, rancid and sweet, the stench of scraped cave, of uterus. I have loved men who have wanted me to abort their children.

Fresh lime juice and tequila, a hot D.C. July day. Republicans I have loved, how they canvassed for losers they'd known in frats.

The main body: The smell of oranges and cloves cooked with ham

for Christmas. Other seasons, the scent of bay rum, and the pheromones licked from skin: I have loved men who have loved me. Cold water running over warm hands. *Splash*.

In that garden I found I was unclothed. I found I was made from a bone. I was forlorn with snakes. In short, I was afraid. The romance of smell overcame me, scent meant love, and like poetry produced spells.

How to find a taxonomy of smells? See Henning's Smell Prism (spicy, resinous, burnt, floral, fruity, foul) or Linnaeus's Seven Categories (aromatic, fragrant, ambrosiac, alliaceous, hircine, foul, nauseous).

A formula means to build a form that contains interplays that exist within sense.

(*Memory*): Sometimes we argued under the hot sun of coriander and citrus, or an orchard of pomegranates that tries to set us free from algorithms that market us.

The base notes bring depth, solidity to a scent, an associative connection.

History: Modernity is obsessed with commodifying smell.

Sociology: Culture is obsessed with commodifying mating.

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Whatever dissipates, this is what will be left. All top notes now evaporated.

But before there was taxonomy there was good and there was evil.

This is what I found.

Come angels.