

Olfactory Practices

From Deodorization to Reodorization



Augustina Banyte

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Gerrit Rietveld Academie
Thesis Advisor ∞ Will Pollard
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*“If everything were smoke,
all perception would be by smell”*

【Heraclitus】

Introduction

Every part of this planet smells. Every bit of living flesh has its way of being, feeling, communicating and moving. Each has its own taste, structure and form that spreads and exudes smells. Or this is the “*truth*” that our noses whisper to us.

Of all the senses, smell is the most intriguing to me, mainly due to its elusiveness. I often do not grasp smells entirely—it is hard to control and avoid being exposed to them, as opposed to the control we have over our senses of vision, hearing and touch¹. Odours mainly unfold as distant memories, which manifest as thousands of images in my head that lack concise, universal terms, unlike colours for example. Therefore we often struggle to name them all, especially in European languages².

I agree with the idea that our sense of smell is mainly based on subjective experience. So, I suggest that our often polarised responses to smells and the immediate

like or dislike reaction that we experience is a reflection of our experiences. For me, a smell can be pleasant or suffocating depending on my associations which are, of course, mainly personal. These perceptual and cognitive-behavioural responses to odours are a consequence of our associative learning. The like/dislike reaction is not inherent; rather it is learned. From an evolutionary perspective the advantage of this response mechanism is that the learned information provides us with the ability to determine what presents a danger to us—a gas leak, for example—and what to consume or avoid with regard to food. However, the like/dislike reaction can also be embedded in our sociocultural context, which determines the further categorisations of smells from appropriate to inappropriate, and the deodorization and reodorization practices available. In this research essay I will focus on the existing practices of reodorization and deodorization in the Western world. Firstly,

by presenting the concept of *deodorization* from its historical context, starting with the Age of Enlightenment, then moving on to the practice of *reodorization* and the role of perfume, supported by its visual representations. Later on, I will share my own understanding of and engagement in deodorization and reodorization practices. Both deodorization and reodorization are somewhat intertwined and nonlinear. They float like invisible bodies above the anecdotes, essays, historical prospects and scenarios that demonstrate both the decreasing and deactivating of smell and the reactivating, remodelling and reconstructing of it. The word ‘*odour*’ bears the meaning of a distinctive smell, often a pungent one. Deodorization offers the removal of socially disagreeable odours through such activities as washing, whereas reodorization is the practice of increasing or adding smell through the art of perfuming.

However,

in my definition of reodorization, as that which does not only provide an additional note or a scent but also challenges us to perceive the real smell that is being hidden, I will challenge you to think of an odour as a potential source of information, as a mediator and a knot-maker that connects all living organisms. As Sissel Tolaas once said: *“You might not like it, but there is a reason why that smell is here,*

*give it a chance”.*³

¹Sissel Tolaas. *An Alphabet for the Nose*. Journal for Artistic Research, 2001.

²"*The Serer Ndut of Senegal, for example, have four flavour terms: sen-sweet, sugary; kob-acidic; sob-insipid, cool, such as raw manioc or unseasoned grains; and hay-piquant, hot, including tastes of salt, pepper and bitterness. Odours, on the other hand, have a more extensive vocabulary. There are the five odour classes described earlier: sun-urinous; hot-rotten; hes- milky or fishy; pirik-acidic or acrid (of which pen, mildly acidic, is a sub-category); and hen, fragrant, flowery. Apart from these, there are also two general categories of kiili, human odours, and nget, non-human odours. These terms, with all of their connotations, can be used to classify and characterize all the different elements that make up the Serer Ndut world. The donkey, for example, is said to smell non-human (nget) and acidic (pirik), and to taste piquant (hay).*" Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott. *Aroma - The Cultural History of Smell*. Routledge, 1994, p. 110.

³Audi Senses: Smell-*Why an 'odour artist' wants us to smell the world* (ad), Published in November 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDyNpKWswUo&t=4s>.

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Making Sense
of the Senses

“All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason.”

[Immanuel Kant]

Kant was right about knowledge beginning with the senses. While floating in our mother’s womb we become acquainted with touch, smell, taste, sight, and sound, which later on expands our awareness and knowledge of the world. However, the quote above points instead to a sensory hierarchy. It exalts the concept of reason as the most significant capacity of human beings, one that allows us to break from primitive and superstitious beliefs. Even the very idea of enlightenment—and here I use this quote from Kant as representative of its ideals—serves as a metaphor for our exposure to the light. When we are enlightened we

are finally able to see that which has been covered or hidden in the shadows.⁴

During the Age of Enlightenment this was evident in a visually oriented society that focused solely on visual symbolism, denying the functions of the other senses. The sight, accompanied by sound, took over and therefore excluded smell, touch, and taste, moving them to the bottom of the sensory order. This is evident in the increased literacy and scientific discourses of the time, as well as the growth of the printing press and the concept of mind-body dualism. This concept considered the mind to be more valuable than and distinct from the body, which was associated with carnal pleasures like eating, smelling, and sex. On the one hand I agree that increased literacy was important. However, due to an increased focus on the focus on the mind, where words and language were regarded as a fundamental expression of external reality, it also embodied the dic-

tatorial logocentric notion⁵ that the world has to be calculated and logically controlled.

Increasing levels of literacy and opportunities for education evolved alongside a growing interest in classical art and literature, which prompted a revival of classicism in the form of neoclassicism. Geometric shapes and ideal proportions dominated architectural styles, pointing to a more extreme example of the institutionalisation of visual hegemony. One of these extreme examples of this sight-focused hegemony was the birth of the *panopticon*, a type of institutional building designed by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. The panopticon served as a mechanism of social control that allowed those locked in institutions such as prisons to be observed and kept under constant surveillance.⁶

This mode of thinking and regulating not only prevented physical proximity and restricted the possi-

bility to touch, but also suggests to me a process of deodorization in a literal and non-literal sense.

Whereas the deodorization of the mind proceeded via the logocentric approach of Enlightenment thinking, the deodorization of the body and physical spaces happened as a result of the growing distress in response to foul smelling towns and cities in 18th century France. This vivid olfactory vertigo is very well conveyed in the book *The Foul and the Fragrant* (1986), which includes images of Paris' stinking markets and hospitals. It became evident that cities should follow the ideals of The Age of Enlightenment with regard to its precise aesthetic principles: clean, odourless streets, architecture pleasing to the eye, increased hygiene and good health. This type of model haunts our cities and bodies still today, manifesting in the ways that places and people are deodorized and artificially reodorized. From metro stations, hotels, beauty salons and perfumeries to human

bodies, odours are either muted or increased with, for example, the smell of artificial croissants, or ambient lavender scented notes. These processes reveal the problematic division of 'good' and 'bad' odours, where such divisions are often influenced by the social representations of smell.

⁴ Anne C. Villa. *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Enlightenment*, 2014; English Edition, p. 30.

⁵ "The word logocentrism first appeared in academic writing around 1929 as the German *Logozentrisch* in the work of philosopher and psychologist Ludwig Klages. It is a philosophy holding that all forms of thought are based on an external point of reference which is held to exist and given a certain degree of authority." (Merriam Webster dictionary and The Chicago School of Media Theory).

⁶ Constance Classen. *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures*, Routledge, 1993, p. 6.

Visual Representations of Perfume

When I pass through the museum district I end up in the realm of the bourgeois. The street with the face of the rich, its golden mouth relentlessly swallowing people thirsty for material goods and luxury. A middle-aged man goes by with huge Chanel and Gucci paper bags—giants in the world of luxury brands. The robust scent he wore immediately caught up with me. The strong smell of his perfume suppressed not only mine but all the odours present in that narrow street.

Parallel to this encounter I noticed a billboard with an advert for *Miss Dior (Blooming Bouquet 2014)* perfume. The famous actress in this advert embodies the divine, like a perfect replicant of a human in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), conveying her place in the gender binary through her pink pastel dress encrusted with Swarovski crystals. Her pose is euphoric and erotic and suggests the male gaze.⁷ In this sensual setting she conveys the encoded message of a tragic

love scene, igniting emotions in the viewer as our memories immediately respond to this suggestion. We know that scent, it's the scent of Eros. A romantic composition of patchouli and caramel notes which settle at the base, slightly overpowering the middle notes of rose, neroli, and gardenia. To finish the whole symphony of *Miss Dior* we smell the holy trinity of citrus, tangerine and bergamot on top, which provide lightness and freshness to this flowery palette.

This method of representing perfume through monetised advertisements generates a fantastical subject who is sexualised and gendered in the context of heterosexual reproductive life, reinforcing her desirability to the opposite sex. Here, perfume becomes an artificial pheromone⁹ used to maintain forms of chemical communication between humans⁹. It is hard to know whether these artificial pheromones, embodied as perfume, could awaken our deepest desires or help us to find a partner through our personal preference for

certain smells. But the advert does work to unleash the hedonic 'I'—if not through the perfume itself.

The advert influences consumer behaviour by conveying symbolic messages of how one should act and live in order to achieve happiness and desirability. The subject of desire lures in thirsty consumers, it unleashes our deepest ardors and imprisons us in its false promise of an affluent and hedonistic life. The signs and symbols that represent desired objects constitute the consumerist language that our entire society uses to communicate. This type of language convinces us to seek pleasure in the objects it offers, revealing the problematic concepts of commodity capitalism. The symbolic messages presented in adverts work to accumulate ideas of hedonistic human desire, reproduction, exhaustive production, hierarchical order and gender classification.

This type of symbolism is well represented in perfume adverts. Since smell does not have its own body or gender it has to be created with the help of symbolic visuals. For instance, representations of masculinity and femininity are surrounded by objects carrying the appropriate sexual metaphors. With this in mind, I want to ask: why are visual representations of perfume often binary when it comes to gender? There are thousands of *Miss Dior*'s who perform in an excessively feminine way. She embodies the wife, the seducer, the psychopath. She is a fragile corporeal being wearing thousands of shiny dresses, whispering alluring phrases like "*Truth or Dare*" (Madonna, 2012) or "*She is always and never the same*" (Calvin Klein, 1997). "The scenario is always similar: 'Her'—a hyphenated being: visible-invisible, corporeal-spiritual, provocative-saint, base-sublime"¹⁰, able to reveal thousands of emotions, meets 'Him'—a suit-wearing Hugo Boss type, his clothing suggesting his corporate

job in the bank district. They meet under surreal circumstances: the diva comes straight from heaven, while he arrives on an elevator in a vitreous skyscraper. The two lovebirds demonstrate a desire so powerful that it becomes unbearable. His Hugo Boss smell is 50ml of patriarchal authority, and hers 50 ml of true, flowery, femininity.¹¹ This analysis reveals the prevailing attitudes in perfume adverts towards heterosexual men and women, excluding non-heterosexual and gender non-conforming people. So, what is the scent of the LGBTQIA+ narrative? If the perfume in the advert claims to bolster heterosexual desire, then the scents it uses will also be associated with typically masculine or feminine characteristics.¹² The scents attributed to women are always flowery, light and nauseatingly sweet, while the ones for men are more intense, often consisting of sandalwood, patchouli and black pepper. However, more perfumes are emerging in the contemporary world that are branded as unisex

and they blend these light and heavy notes. Recently perfume business rhetoric has shifted, and now some brands that acclaim the virtues of diversity argue that discrimination based on age, sex, race or gender is harmful to global capitalist production. To survive in the barbarous competitive market the perfume giants should be able to sell their goods to a diverse range of consumers who want to be recognised rather than ignored or exploited by corporate businesses.¹⁹ For instance, *CKOne* (1994) or *CKBe* (1997), one of the first uni-sex perfumes, aimed its adverts at a young white male or female who wished to be a modern citizen seeking freedom from gender norms. In the *CKBe* advert, the slogan of which is presented by supermodel Kate Moss, consumers are encouraged to be themselves and to be hot, no matter what. The apparently positive message rests, therefore, on some problematic silences around and assumptions about class, race, gender and the body.²⁰ This brings me to the

proposition that the current semi-otics used by the main perfume brands are there for the purposes of reodorization. However, this type of reodorization is accompanied by Western logic, where its visual representations favour social constructs of gender and its regulatory effects on the body.

⁸ A pheromone is a chemical produced by one animal that elicits a specific behaviour or physiological response in another animal of the same species.

⁹ According to scientists pheromones are used among ovulating females to attract males. This invisible communication is common among non-human species, nonetheless, according to D. Michael Stoddart, that the role of odours in the sexual physiology of human species could be very present as well.

¹⁰ Richard H. Stamelman, *The Eros and Thanatos of Scents*; Jim Drobnik, *The Smell Culture Reader*, Berg Press, 2006, p. 263.

¹¹ Mark Graham, *Queer Smells*; Jim Drobnik, *The Smell Culture Reader*, Berg Press, 2006, p. 308.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Mark Graham, *Queer Smells*, Jim Drobnik, *The Smell Culture Reader*, Berg Press, 2006, p. 312.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

Exam
d' 91067

My morning cleansing routine:

Step One : Take a shower

Step Two : Apply foam
gel to the body

Step Three : Exfoliate
the body with a loofah

Step Four : Apply shampoo
to the hair

Step Five: Dry the skin and hair
with a towel

Step Six: Apply body milk
to the skin

Step Seven: Apply moisturiser
to the face

Step Eight: Apply antiperspirant
to the armpits

Step Nine: Apply fragrance
to the body

I cannot recall the specific moment I became a ‘civilized’ person as it happened gradually.

My first encounters with objects were experienced through all my senses—from sloppily grabbing toys and my mother’s hair to finally being able to put a spoon in my mouth. Since I have been able to function as an independent body, separate from my caregiver, I’ve been introduced to many social regulations and been shown how I should implement them on a daily basis. For instance how I should behave at the table, which utensils I should use for particular meals, the rules of basic hygiene and the taboos surrounding belching and farting.

I have shifted from a primitive to a civilized human by learning and internalizing these social demands. I became aware of my instincts, emotions and words which were fuelled by my senses. Trying to make sense of the senses, I, like you, accepted the sensory order presented to me, muting my own inner order. This order enhanced animalistic behaviour like smelling bodily fluids and touching dirt or germ-infested

objects and putting them in my mouth. This helped me build my own deodorization routine which probably does not differ from the one we have been socialized to carry out today.

It became clear to me which smells were considered inappropriate, foul or dangerous and the smell of gas or raw or spoilt food alerted me to what might be a danger to my health. Sewage and decaying bodies gave off unpleasant signals, while bodily odours uncovered people's personal routines and their relationship to their smells. The deodorization routine I adopted gave me a false idea of the '*proper*' citizen. I eliminated smelly bodily bacteria with shower foam wash then added body lotion and applied deodorant. Body odours become suppressed and are instead layered with lavender, rose and citrus smells, which are widely accepted in our so-called '*civilized*' society.

The odours I fear or dislike:

The smell of hospitals: bitter and acidic, ethanol and paracetamol.

The sterile environment of the hospital, with its cold pastel colours, bears the message of surveilled bodies. Bodies that are sick and unstable, that do not fit within the realm of production and reproduction. The smell of hospitals becomes fearsome due to its connotations with pathology. The fear of being sick embodies the smell of the sick. The paracetamol, antibiotics, xanax, codeine, morphine, clonazepam, zepam ...

The smell of a house mold: musty, earthy, meaty, wet wood.

The damp creates tiny water droplets on the windows in the old unventilated house. I've been there a few times, curiously opening the drawers of the oak wood commode. It was dotted with

tiny black spots—signs of fungus. It generates a smell that reminds me of loneliness and death, of something that has been forgotten and buried in the same dark spot as the fungus.

The corridor of Khrushchovka¹⁵: greasy and musky like cabbage and minced beef.

This apartment block is a brutal post-soviet construction, its cold interiors emitting the smell of pelmeni¹⁶ and grease. It is harsh and violent, testifying to the oppressive past of its surroundings.

The wet dog: sulfur, feces, egg white. My dog Tara was not so fond of water. Every time she got wet she would start shaking her body, trying to get rid of the tiny water droplets that had settled on her dark fur. Particularly after giving her a bath, which was a huge accomplishment that she would be rewarded for with treats. I would offer my help by wrapping her

in a dry towel and rubbing her, immersing my face in the velvety texture that released a repellent odour. It was an odour that does not go well with her velvety, glossy fur and it reminded me that she was the hostess of thousands of microorganisms, tiny critters made of yeast and bacteria that had set up residence on the surface of her skin.

Blood: iron, copper, pungent and acidic.

It comes in the form of a dark liquid flowing from the body, a warning of possible danger. When the sack that is our skin gets ripped it releases a stream, leaving its solid, dark red spots everywhere. I fear its suddenness and its abundance, generating a smell that induces pain and fright.

The odours I like:

The smell of black pepper: musty and sweet, resin-like.

I grab the mill and slowly turn its tip backwards and forwards, watching the bits of crushed pepper fall onto my plate and cover my food with a thin layer. The pungent molecules enter my nostrils which makes me sneeze. The aroma is strong but somehow sweet, musty and deep. It's like I am falling into a black hole, where its sharp, tiny needles tickle my body.

The smell of pine forest: sweet, sharp, refreshing, citrusy.

The vast area of lush forests in Neringa is the home of many living organisms: mustardy chanterelles, foxes, boars, elks and Roe deer. As I enter this lush micro-kingdom I have to respect its rules. The chestnuts and pines cover the soft ground. The trees shed them in order to grow new ones and so I silently pick up the ones that have been discarded

and put them in my pockets.

**Sandalwood: sweet, sweaty, earthy,
warm, spicy.**

It all happened when I was about six years old. On the seashore of Palanga I found a wooden ball with a polo horse engraved on it. It smelled sweet and warm, like gingerbread. "It's sandalwood, keep it" my mother said to me, and put it in my pocket. This sandalwood ball is still with me. It's the only thing I managed not to lose over the years (and now it is lying safely in a box). You know, it smells exactly the same as it did the first time I picked it up.

¹⁵ Khrushchyovka is a low-cost, concrete-panelled apartment building, which emerged in Soviet Union during the 1950s under soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

¹⁶ Pelmeni are a kind of Russian dumpling. They consist of a filling of minced raw meat, mushrooms, potatoes and fish, wrapped in a thin dough.

Tara's
Magical
Smiff

*“Ms Cayenne Pepper continues to colonize all my cells—a sure case of what the biologist Lynn Margulis calls **symbiogenesis**. I bet if you were to check our DNA, you’d find some potent transfections between us. Her saliva must have the viral vectors. Surely, her darter–tongue kisses have been irresistible. Even though we share placement in the phylum of vertebrates, we inhabit not just different genera and divergent families but altogether different orders.”¹⁷*

In *When Species Meet* (2008), Donna Haraway challenges us to see ourselves as another knot in the web of interspecies dependency. There are only 10 percent of human genomes in all the cells that occupy our bodies, whereas the other 90 percent are filled with the genomes from fungi, bacteria and protists. Haraway offers us the term “*companion species*”¹⁸ which infers all beings in the world, including human and non-human animals and their close-knit cooperation.

Haraway draws particular attention to dogs and their relationship with us humans, and how we are bonded in our “*significant otherness*”.¹⁹

I encountered this bond by observing the relationship between my dog and I as a child. I would dress her in dresses and try to become her. Once I played being her and tried to read her gaze and communicate in her language by sniffing and barking. When I did this Tara would look at me in a concerned way, wiggling her head and tail. I wondered what she saw or how she understood me if we didn't speak the same language? Through analysing both of our behaviour I have accepted our interdependence, and see myself as another critter of symbiogenesis.²⁰ Indeed, we did not speak the same language but there were methods and similarities in our modes of communication. The most common was the visual: communicating with our eyes and bodies, followed by the auditory: making sounds like barking or words. I would

mimic her and Tara would stare, disappointed, as she could not say a word. And lastly, olfactory: a communication without words or eyes, in which she was a champion, defeating me in every aspect. I would take her for a walk and observe her smelling everything around her in a sort of hypnosis, too focused to react to my high-pitched, praising voice. She had work to do, reading an entire copy of *Volkskrant* whose letters came in the form of molecules, scattered everywhere on the ground. She picked them up with her nose, leaving some of her own smell by urinating on the newly bare spot. If a furry fellow passenger crossed Tara's path they would greet each other by putting their snouts together, then sniff each other's bottoms, reading the pheromones from their secretions to check if they had met before. I was fascinated by this superpower of hers. She could read anything: my mood, what I ate, who I met, who I am. And this made me experience the Derridian flashback²¹ of being watched by an animal.

In my case, unlike Derrida's, I wasn't naked or intimidated when I encountered my dog's gaze, but I did feel undressed by her piercing, x-ray gaze, her sniffing of my flesh, my mind, my everything...

Tara made me realise the importance of communication that goes beyond words and vision. She made me aware that there are ways to obtain information that are more inclusive and intimate. These other ways of communication further press the assumption that our species are relatively good smellers. Are we able to perceive smell as an important component that delivers information and helps us to understand our surroundings and one another? Here I am offering a new definition of the word reodorization as a moment where our sweat, skin and hair carry information about our health, sexual preferences or mood. You just need to find the right moment to smell these smells, while they still '*stink*'.

¹⁷ Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 15.

¹⁸ A term invented by philosopher Donna Haraway. 'Companion species' refers to all beings of the world, including humans, non human animals and other organisms.

¹⁹ In the book *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (2003), Haraway argues that a human's relationship with a dog can show a deep insight of the importance of recognizing the difference and how to engage with "significant otherness". https://researchgate.net/publication/249820611_Book_Review_The_companion_species_manifesto_dogs_people_and_significant_otherness

²⁰ "Symbiogenesis is a term in evolution that relates to the cooperation between species in order to increase their survival. The crux of the theory of natural selection, as laid out by the 'Father of Evolution' Charles Darwin, is competition." <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-symbiogenesis-1224708>

²¹ I refer here to a paragraph from Haraway's book, *When Species Meet*, where she analyses Jaques Derrida's book *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2002), where he writes about himself being watched by his cat. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*. Published by the University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 19-21

I Sweat,
Therefore I am

As a teenager I was ashamed of my so-called pheromones, emitting from apocrine glands located in the axilla and pubic region and sending out rather shameful, animalistic signals of puberty. My body, like yours, began its revolution when oestrogen and testosterone reached their culmination.

My body at this time was one in flux: my skin became oily and hairy, spreading the odour of sweat and alarmed by labels of perversion. What is natural and normal became stigmatized and obscene: my new reeking odour was layered with artificial peppermint antiperspirant, while my bodily hair was shaved with a razor blade that I took from my father's shelf. My finest consumer object—my body²²—is a hostage of consumer culture. This culture offers me a diverse range of products including those that are intended for my own protection, sanitisation, sexual liberation and well-being, all supported by the pharmaco-pornographic regime. The *pharmacopornographic*²³ regime is the reinvention of

a subject and its global reproduction. In further explanation, Paul B Preciado writes: *"We are being confronted with a new kind of hot, psychotropic, punk capitalism. Such recent transformations are imposing an ensemble of new microprosthetic mechanisms of control of subjectivity by means of biomolecular and multimedia technical protocols. Our world economy is dependent on the production and circulation of hundreds of tons of synthetic steroids and technically transformed organs, fluids, cells (techno-blood, techno-sperm, techno-ovum, etc.), on the global diffusion of a flood of pornographic images, on the elaboration and distribution of new varieties of legal and illegal synthetic psychotropic drugs (e.g., bromazepam, Special K, Viagra, speed, crystal, Prozac, ecstasy, poppers, heroin), on the flood of signs and circuits of the digital transmission of information, on the extension of a form of diffuse urban architecture to the*

entire planet in which megacities of misery are knotted into high concentrations of sex-capital."²⁴

For Preciado, the pharmacopornographic regime provides apparatuses that modify and normalise sexuality within the context of biopolitical and capitalist strategies. He suggests that the emergence of various hygiene products and the contraceptive pill signalled the climax of capitalism, captured by a muted, odourless humanity whose bodies are both internally and externally regulated. I once was trapped in the loop of pharma when I started taking contraceptive pills and began to notice some changes in my body and its emotional responses. I bore an invisible, rigid body, a consequence of the pharmacopornographic era with no mercy. It barely smelled or reacted to anything. It was numb. My alleged pheromones were erased, as was my libido. My body was under the surveillance of the chemical panopticon.

For Preciado the pills intake

and the pill dispensers' structure correlate with the visual surveillance apparatus of the panopticon. But here the panopticon becomes chemical and internal, its external structure and symbolic power is reflected in the round pill, the package, the dispenser, the production, and its testing.²⁵ This embodies the shift from the disciplinary regime to pharmacopornographic regime, where bodies swallow power. In giving the authority to the pill to emancipate the human body it also encloses the body. In the model of the panopticon it regulates our hormones and 'bad' smells.

After I stopped taking the pill my body became visible again. Maybe visible is not the right word, I should say it became sweaty again. It bore a distinct odour and this made me a better smeller as well. The pleasure of smelling my partner's bodily emanations encapsulated the intimacy and bond between us. The information of his odour was engraved in my hippocampus, as were my friends'

odours. I could close my eyes and imagine their smells, which made up a portrait of them and their emotions. Images began to manifest of them in the form of smell: propionic acid, trimethylamine, androstenedione z- methyl acetic acid, and so on. The following portraits of them I formed according to my associations:

Tadas' smell: cinnamon, black pepper, waxes, pig's gelatine

Giedre's smell: cucumber, biscuits, young cheese

Inga's smell: pica, lemon, milk

Justas' smell: cedarwood, leather, cottage cheese

Gustas' smell: fresh laundry, hops

A distinct bodily odour is a passport that allows us to identify each other, to build relationships, to find mates, soulmates, to sniff each other out. It allows us to find a space where our biases construct-

ed through speech and sight do not apply. A distinct bodily odour is an effect of the outside world: our place of origin, the food we eat, the chemical panopticons we consume, the perfume we wear. It all mixes with bacteria which metabolises sweat, the sweat that carries many molecules, the molecules that shape one's identity.

"We live in a biological world completely surrounded by rich communities of micro-organisms, but also in a cultural world that emphasizes total antisepsis. "Sanitized and pasteurised for your protection" is the antiseptic slogan of our times that slowly leads us to sensory death. Although it goes without saying that not all smells and bacteria can be pleasant, the consequences of our hyper-sanitation could be that we eventually engage with none at all. Smells, bacteria, and bacteria that produce smells, surround us all the time. Chemical detection is an ancient biological communication tool used

by bacteria and animals alike. Smells and bacteria are a crucial component in defining, understanding, and orienting ourselves within any given environment.”²⁶

[Sissel Tolaas]

²²Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, Sage Publications Ltd; 1998, p. 366.

²³*Pharmacopornographic - the word coined by Paul B. Preciado, which refers to the processes of a biomolecular (pharmaco) and semiotic - technical (pornographic) government of sexual subjectivity.* Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie*, The Feminist Press, 2013, p. 33-34.

²⁴*ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁵*Preciado describes the shocking procedures implemented on women—specifically women of colour—to test the contraceptive pill’s effectiveness. In the 1960s, the pill was administered to various communities of women in Puerto Rico to carry out the eugenic desires of white American doctors. Controlling the reproduction rates of the ‘racialized other’ was the endgame. The trials succeeded; reproduction rates sharply declined in record time. A few years later the contraceptive pill was available in the United States and marketed as a way for women to control their own bodies, not have them controlled by others.* <https://www.lambdaliterary.org/2013/09/testo-junkie-sex-drugs-and-biopolitics-in-the-pharmacopornographic-era-by-beatriz-preciado/>

²⁶ Sissel Tolaas, *An Alphabet for the Nose*, Journal for Artistic Research, 2001. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/7344/7350/40/40>

7 - Conclusion

This research started with my fascination with the sense of smell. Through this whole writing process I was struggling to choose just one aspect of odour to discuss as I think that every part of how we perceive smell is important: the memories it triggers, the emotions it stirs, the historical and sociological perspectives it offers. My biggest question was how do I make sense of something that is intangible, constantly transforming and evaporating? While continuously looking at a bright computer screen, reading various sources, analysing them and generating my own sentences, I realised that this whole writing process was an attempt to understand my thoughts. These arose from my perception of smell and came to represent a sort of deodorization, supported by the logocentric notions of The Age of Enlightenment where writing and speech are constructed by thought which is itself centred on reason. However, writing about the ambiguity and elusiveness of smell contradicted this process of


deodorization, which was then confronted by reodorization. I wanted to give the term reodorization a fresh meaning; fluid and more raw, where the abstract molecules that entered my nostrils came in-between words, generating completely new and unexpected meanings. I have often encountered the processes of deodorization and reodorization in my creative practice. When I dive into any subject I need to get a grip of it, crack its code, understand it and control it. The more I immerse myself in the theory the more questions pop up that I am not able to answer. My response to this is to generate ideas and metaphors which manifest as distant speculative images that are constantly in transition, yet they are so fuzzy and intangible that I am not able to control them. Out of frustration I try to suppress these intuitive visions, but they still slip into the light and I often fail to prove my point.

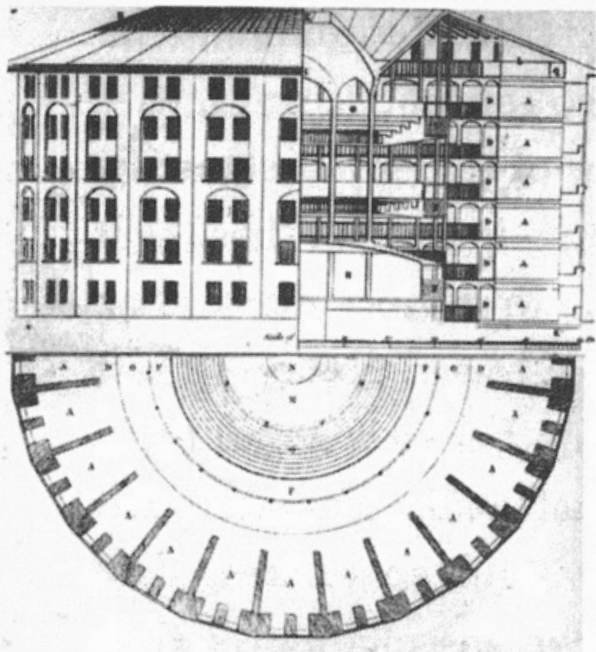
Perhaps I was not able to reodorize myself and accept the gesture of intuition and ambiguity that

it offered. Only recently did the sense of smell become a powerful tool of ambiguity and imagination for me, generating ongoing and intangible images. Smell can be both superstitious and, on the contrary, rational, carrying invisible yet profound information. I see smell as a metaphor in my practice, a blurry image that offers room for interpretation. It was like attending the perfume workshop at *Mediamatic*, smelling various abstract molecules and perfumed notes and guessing what they could be. I often guessed wrong, but the interesting part was that when finding out the right answer my brain was able to switch and recognise this right smell anew. Lastly, I hope that the practices of deodorization and reodorization I have offered will open new perspectives on odours and challenge you, reader, to observe your surroundings and smell differently, questioning where all your prejudices, constructed in favour of sight and speech, rest.

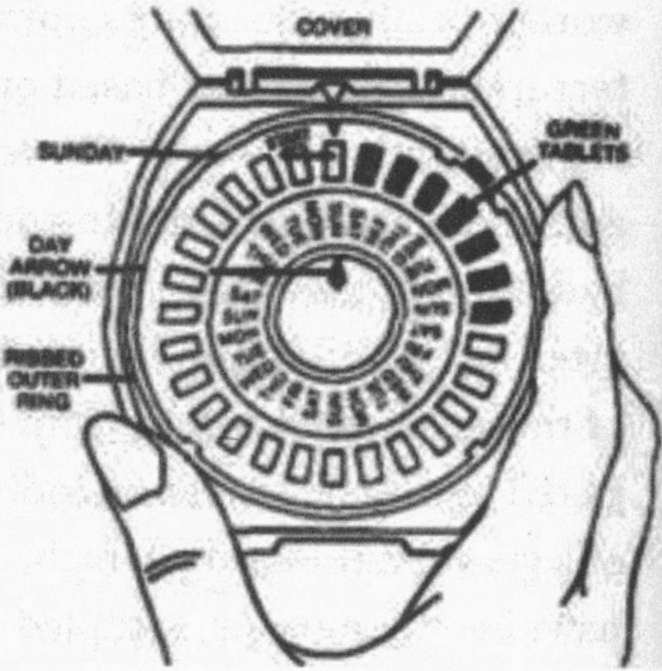
Good luck, and remember that images may say more than thousand

words, but smells can say more
than a thousand images.²⁷

 ²⁷Caro Verbeek, *The Historical Significance of Smell*, TEDxGroningen, April 2016. https://www.ted.com/talks/caro_verbeek_the_historical_significance_of_smell

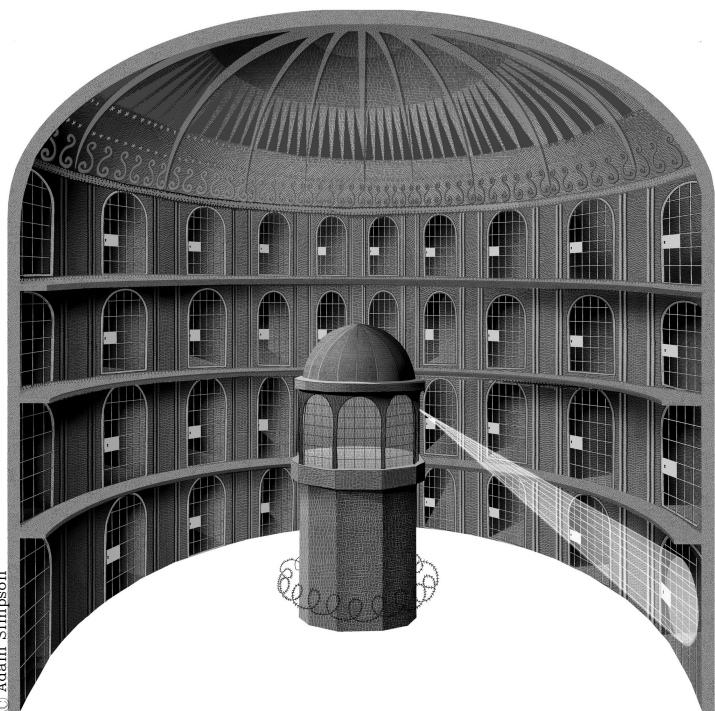


Left: Elevation, section, and plan of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, designed by architect Willey Reveley in 1791. Right: First floor plan of the Panopticon.



Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, drawn by
The First dispenser for the Pill, 1963.

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It is easy to understand and to use. Each pill is sealed for maximum protection. A completely automatic record is kept of your cycle and of your pill days.

HOW TO USE YOUR COMPACK



1. With your pills facing you, position the Compack Refill so that the arrow points to the day your period starts.

Snap the Refill into locked position by pressing down around the button catch. The Refill should be flat in the Compack. To remove it, lift up at any day and pull off.



2. Your first pill is to be taken five days after your period starts. It is marked with a circle around it.



3. To remove a pill, push the pill down through the bottom opening of the Compack. The pill pops out.



4. The pills should be taken consecutively: The pills in the outer row one each day of the first 7 days, the middle row the second 7 days, and the inner row the last 6 days.

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