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GRAIN DE MUSC

A PERFUME LOVER IN PARIS

JEUDI 26 JANVIER 2012

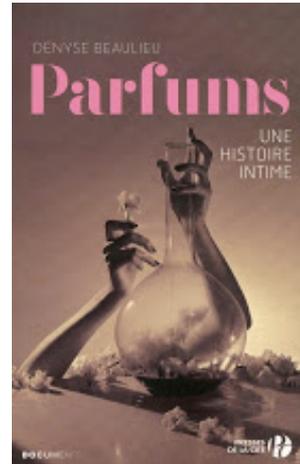
Putain des Palaces, by Nathalie Feisthauer for État Libre d'Orange: Lipstick magnifique



“Who in the world would want to wear a scent called Putain des Palaces?” moan industry pearl-clutchers. (The name, by the way, does not translate as “hotel slut” but as “hotel whore”: “slut” would be “salope”). Well, quite a few people it seems, since it’s État Libre d’Orange’s best-seller (cue pearls rolling on oak floors and a scramble for smelling salts).

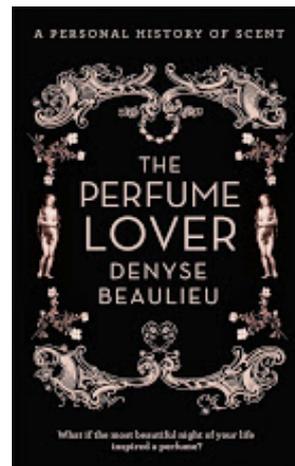
When Nathalie Feisthauer composed Putain des Palaces, she already knew the name, and had been asked by Étienne de Swardt to work around the idea of a woman’s mouth: hence the "I don't kiss" retro lipstick accord. That violet-rose accord, which popped up for the first time in Coty's Rose Jacqueminot in 1904, was radically revamped in Paris and Trésor by Sophia Grojsman, who Nathalie Feisthauer worked with during her

MON LIVRE



"Parfums, une histoire intime", aux Presses de la Cité. Pour commander sur Amazon.fr, cliquez sur l'image.

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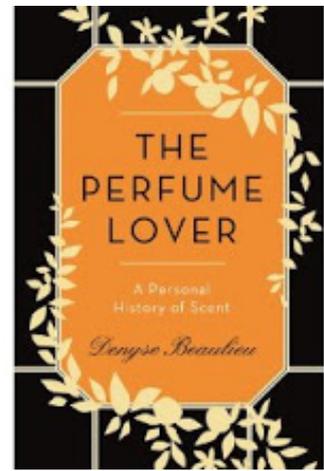
MY BOOK (U.S. EDITION)

stint in New York. Is the accord that seeped from Paris to Putain a tribute? At any rate, Feisthauer's treatment of the theme does feel like a woman's whispered message to another: "Yes, the word *putain* fires them up, but let's not take it too seriously: we know it's a game, not an identity, and we'll believe in it just enough to enjoy it." Perfume names are fragments of stories to be inserted in their wearer's story. And perfume notes are cultural objects and carry subconscious memories to be deciphered. To me, rose and violet resonate with the theme in other ways...

Rose? The lyrics of **Gainsbourg's *Ronsard 58*** from which the perfume's name is drawn were inspired by the Pierre de Ronsard sonnet that ends with "gather ye rosebuds while ye may". As for the mawkish violet, it symbolizes unspoken love, but it also the signature scent of Émile Zola's formidable courtesan Nana, "that Golden Creature, blind as brute force, whose very odour ruined the world". The very etymology of *putain* links whores to smells. The word comes from the Latin *putidus*, "rotten spoiled, stinking, fetid", a meaning that alludes to the whore's corrupted morals as well as to the *sécrétions magnifiques* of her johns festering inside her body and the strong scents she uses both to cover them up and to advertise her wares. Thus, Nana's candid scent and her beast-of-the-apocalypse stink meld perfume with whoredom.

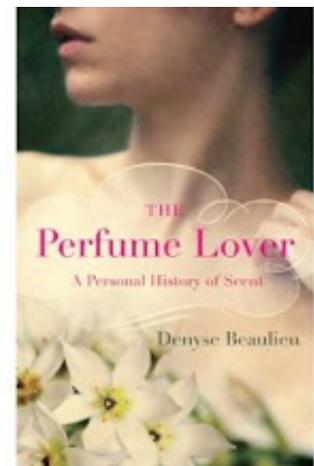
Though it is nowhere near as raunchy as vintage Schiaparelli Shocking or Bal à Versailles, the poster child of skank, Putain des Palaces does feature a delicate whiff of funk. The rose-violet accord, heated by ginger until it sweats raspberry jam, moistens a soft leather note which is more calfskin glove than BDSM. Its powdery facets blend with musk into a retro rice powder accord. Amber and animalic effects hint at pleasure-ripened flesh.

So, who would wear a perfume called Putain des Palaces? Well, me, for instance. I've long wanted, when asked "what's that perfume you're wearing", to be able to answer "Putain des Palaces", if only for the seriously cool Gainsbourg connection.



At St. Martin's Press. To order on Amazon.com, click on the cover.

CANADIAN EDITION



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ABOUT THE PERFUME LOVER, A PERSONAL HISTORY OF SCENT

To read an excerpt, [click here](#). To know a bit more, [click here](#). *The Perfume Lover* is, among other things, the story of the fragrance *Séville à l'aube* by Bertrand Duchaufour for L'Artisan Parfumeur, launched in September 2012.

LE TOP DE BLOGS STYLÉS

And since I got round to acquiring a bottle, I've been able to do it. People laugh. They say I smell lovely. No one's asked me for my rates yet.

Photo by Bettina Rheims

POSTED BY CARMENCANADA / GRAIN DE MUSC AT [01:24](#) 



29 COMMENTAIRES :



Carrie Meredith 26 janvier 2012 à 01:59

I really, really love Putain des Palaces, it's gorgeous. Definitely one of Feisthauer's best. It makes me scratch my head a little when some folks are offended by ELdO's sense of fun via thematics, I get it. The truth is, the boy that can make me laugh the hardest-- he's the one I'll go back to the hotel with at the end of the night.

[Répondre](#)



carmencanada /Grain de Musc 26 janvier 2012 à 09:35

Carrie, I'm with you on that! It seems that brand of humor doesn't really translate well culturally, but they must be doing something right since they're still around after 5 years... And I'm getting nothing but compliments on Putain des palaces.

[Répondre](#)

ggs 26 janvier 2012 à 13:59

Enjoyed your review! It's been a few years since I tried this, but I remember thinking-- such a pleasant rose. The name doesn't fit for me, but it's Etat Libre d'Orange, so that's par for the course.

[Répondre](#)



carmencanada /Grain de Musc 26 janvier 2012 à 14:02



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DENYSE BEAULIEU

I am a writer and translator based in Paris, as well as the perfume editor for *Citizen K*. My book *The Perfume Lover, A Personal History of Scent* is published by Harper Collins (UK), St. Martin's Press (USA) and Penguin (Canada). The perfume linked to the book, *Séville à l'aube*, was composed by Bertrand Duhaufour for L'Artisan

Ggs, to me it's got a lot more going for it than rose, which is a note I can seldom bear wearing. I suppose it's that jamminess and sensuous base. You should have another sniff! After all, you don't *have* to name your perfume when you're asked...

[Répondre](#)



civava 26 janvier 2012 à 14:49

That one suits me. Especially when wearing one of my animal print dresses ;-). The name is not really in place, because it is not so loud as it would like to be.

I liked it the first time I had tried it and I don't have ever a problem telling what I'm wearing. I have just one problem here, that I'm familiar with some french but I suck in pronouncing it so I guess nobody would understand what I'm saying. Which can be sometimes actually good ;-).

[Répondre](#)



carmencanada /Grain de Musc 26 janvier 2012 à 14:53

Civiva, what you say about the pronunciation of French perfume names makes me smile, because whenever I meet with a foreign perfume lover, we have problems understanding each other, since I say the names the correct way, and they say... however they've figured out. There's a site that helps with that called "Frag name of the day".

[Répondre](#)

Mals86 26 janvier 2012 à 15:24

I'm one of those people who doesn't like the ELd'O marketing angle - it seems designed not simply to offend pearl-clutching matrons, but to turn away business from anyone with a conventional mode of living, saying, "You're not cool enough to wear our stuff. Now go away." And since I'm the epitome of Soccer Mom, I feel unwanted as a customer.

However, a kind friend sent me some PdP, and it's very nice. It reminded me very much of Juliet Has a Gun Citizen Queen, though CQ struck me as being a more powerful iteration of this rose-violet-powder-bodymusk idea, and I much prefer CQ. Still, PdP is well-done and pleasant, much less raunchy than its name suggests.

[Répondre](#)

Parfumeur.

Je suis Parisienne, écrivain, traductrice, journaliste parfums à *Citizen K* et auteur de *Parfums, une histoire intime* (Presses de la Cité). Le parfum qui l'accompagne, *Séville à l'aube*, a été composé par Bertrand Duchaufour pour L'Artisan Parfumeur.

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carmencanada /Grain de Musc 26 janvier 2012 à 15:35

Mals, I hope you don't think I intended the "pearl-clutching" reference to be dismissive! I was thinking of some people I'd been speaking to, who are nowhere near pearl-and-mink matrons, but acted so shocked it was funny.

And I don't imagine the marketing angle of ELO is meant to be dismissive either. Of course we don't all find the same things funny (it would be a dull world if we did), and some types of humor don't translate very well: this one has certainly gone over badly in the States, and your explanation makes excellent sense.

I've seen the comparison to Citizen Queen. Personally I'm boycotting Juliette has a Gun since they put out a one-molecule perfume as though they'd invented the concept, when it already existed (Escentric Molecules). No reflection on the quality of their other stuff, but it really put me off the brand. We've all got our breaking point!

[Répondre](#)

Tommasina 26 janvier 2012 à 19:41

I love this one. I wore it to accompany my husband to a Methodist ministers' conference, and was dying for someone to ask me what I was wearing, but nobody did. Another time I wore it to meet a fellow perfumista for the first time, and had the uncomfortable feeling that she thought I had poor 'feminine hygiene' habits (admittedly, it was a very hot day). We've met several times since, and I've not yet had the courage to ask her what she really thought was going on, that day...

[Répondre](#)



carmencanada /Grain de Musc 26 janvier 2012 à 21:33

Tommasina, that would have been a pure moment of comedy! I don't get anything really...whiffy for PdP, but then I haven't worn it in the heat. You should pop the question though!

[Répondre](#)

cociolph 27 janvier 2012 à 00:50

Amusing choice of photos for the English and French versions: maja vestida y desnuda.

► mai (23)

► avril (22)

► mars (22)

► février (22)

▼ janvier (14)

L'Eau Froide: La gagnante/
The Winner

L'Eau Froide by Serge
Lutens: Turning smoke
into w...

L'Eau Froide de Serge
Lutens : Transformer la
fumé...

The French Ministry of
Culture acknowledges
perfum...

Cinq parfumeurs adoubés
Chevaliers des Arts et
des...

Putain des Palaces, by
Nathalie Feisthauer for
Éta...

Putain des Palaces, de
Nathalie Feisthauer pour
Ét...

Turtle Vetiver: The Winner
of the draw

Turtle Vetiver Front by
Isabelle Doyen: The
Essenc...

Turtle Vetiver Front
d'Isabelle Doyen :
L'essence ...

Dune in the Nude: A
Revival of Dior's
Underground ...

[Répondre](#)**carmencanada /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 00:54

Cociolph: true, I hadn't thought of that! I thought of Bettina Rheims because she's been working for years around the "Chambre close" (closed room) theme in hotels, and because she brings a tough, kinky woman's approach to erotic themes. I thought it suited a perfume composed by a woman on the theme of prostitution.

[Répondre](#)**Henrique/Rick** 27 janvier 2012 à 01:54

This can be a whore, but not a common one. I remember this as the first État that i tried, and i was surprised with it. It seemed sophisticated, with a face powder aroma and a delicate flowery accord that morphed deliciously into a leathery base. Delicate and a little bit fetishist, very well done. I used to call it for my sell as Geisha de Palaces, not Putain. Something on the delicacy and the face powder accord of this one always reminded me of Geishas

[Répondre](#)**carmencanada /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 02:24

Henrique, I've never sniffed a geisha, or indeed a high-class hooker, so I wouldn't know... But there is certainly, in these lovely cosmetic accords, an idea of refinement and delicacy. Love, even the paid kind, can be an art.

[Répondre](#)**Henrique/Rick** 27 janvier 2012 à 02:48

Me neither Carmen lol But the smell evokes me the qualities you see of Geishas in films... The delicacy and the refinement, and a discreet sensual aspect floating over the almost innocent aspect.

[Répondre](#)**carmencanada /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 09:09

Henrique, as I say, the wearer adds his story to the scent, that's what makes perfume *become* perfume and not just a product.

Dune mis à nu : revival d'un classique underground...

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Serge Lutens Oct. 2014 3ème partie (fr)

Serge Lutens Oct. 2014 2ème partie (fr)

[Répondre](#)**Elisa** 27 janvier 2012 à 22:25

I've seen this mentioned a few times in the past week -- I think I'll wear it today. I find the perfume itself, and not just the name, funny: it starts off so sweet and the base is really quite raunchy on me.

[Répondre](#)**Austenfan** 27 janvier 2012 à 22:40

I actually quite like a couple of Etat Libre d'Orange's offerings. Rien, Rossy de Palma and Like This. I have yet to smell this one but I definitely will. I like roses with a twist and have always adored Paris, YSL. And your review makes this one sound very tempting. My favourite name of theirs is Rien. It's such a powerhouse and then to have that name. I want one day to spray myself liberally with it just so people will have to ask me what I am indeed wearing.

[Répondre](#)**carmenacana /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 22:44

Elisa, I wasn't aware it was popping up in discussions online -- something in the zeitgeist perhaps? You're right, there **is** something playful in that contrast between the top and base notes.

[Répondre](#)**carmenacana /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 22:46

Austenfan, if you look up my interview of Antoine Lie in the sidebar, you'll see that if Rien packs such a punch, it was precisely so that people **had** to ask the wearer about his/her fragrance.

[Répondre](#)**Elisa** 27 janvier 2012 à 22:46

Whoops, sorry -- I meant Putain de Palaces was popping up a lot, rather than your post. Hope you're not disappointed!

Austenfan, I am a huge fan of Rossy de Palma. I think it's rather underrated.

Serge Lutens Oct. 2014 1ère partie (fr)

Serge Lutens II (eng)

Serge Lutens II (fr)

Antoine Lie (eng)

Antoine Lie (fr)

Serge Lutens (eng)

Serge Lutens (fr)

Bertrand Duchaufour II (eng)

Bertrand Duchaufour II (fr)

Bertrand Duchaufour I (eng)

Bertrand Duchaufour I (fr)

Isabelle Doyen (eng)

Isabelle Doyen (fr)

Pierre Guillaume (eng)

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PARIS PERFUME PILGRIMAGE

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Right Bank

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White Suede

*Il y a 1 semaine***Musque-Moi !**

L'eau d'Issey Pure, Issey

Miyaké – L'eau à la source

[Répondre](#)*Il y a 1 an***carmencanada /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 22:50

Elisa, no worries, that's what I'd understood.
And yes, Rossy de Palma Eau de Protection is a very interesting, original scent, I agree.

[Répondre](#)**Austenfan** 27 janvier 2012 à 23:45

I read that interview when you first put it on your blog. That and Bois de Jasmin's glowing review prompted me to get a bunch of samples from ELd'O. I am saving up for a bottle of Rien, it's my favourite of this house so far. It's a pity so few people in Holland speak or understand French so I fear the joke will be wasted here anyway.

[Répondre](#)**carmencanada /Grain de Musc** 27 janvier 2012 à 23:53

Austefan, I agree the joke loses a lot of its edge when you have to explain it!

[Répondre](#)**Anonyme** 29 janvier 2012 à 16:14

Ce commentaire a été supprimé par un administrateur du blog.

[Répondre](#)**Anonyme** 29 janvier 2012 à 16:14

Ce commentaire a été supprimé par un administrateur du blog.

[Répondre](#)**carmencanada /Grain de Musc** 29 janvier 2012 à 16:19

Chinese spam attack!

[Répondre](#)**Anonyme** 3 juillet 2015 à 17:24**Perfume Posse**

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Il y a 1 an

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Hello, Grain de Musc... I enjoyed your review, I just bought a FB of P... de P..., after being on the fence for about two years. I am happy with it, and I am intrigued to see how many different opinions are about this perfume... It really is a complex juice, with many facets, me I already smelled it very different ... Two years ago I found it as the loveliest powdery rose+ violet, with a hint of leather and fruits....Yesterday it was mainly violets + leather, slightly powdery, and today is high-pitched citrusy and spicy violet... In my opinion, this is a very smart "putain", who can be very elusive, persuasive, manipulative... Never showing what she really thinks, oe how she really is... Soft and nice as she has to reach her goals, hitting your head with the stiletto as she is angry on you.... :)... Although I dont like her today, I dont regret for buying her... And, of course, my colleagues and clients never will know what is the name of my perfume... I have a serious job... fconsidered too serious and tough for a woman... :)

Gentiana

[Répondre](#)

Réponses



carmenca Canada /Grain de Musc 4 juillet
2015 à 11:53

Hello Gentiana. Indeed, you seem to catch the fragrance in a lot of different moods! I'm sure it's kind of fun to keep its name a secret in your serious, tough job!

[Répondre](#)

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