

Columns

Ice Cream In The Sun: The Solar Lactonic Thrust

10/19/18 13:32:22 (3 comments)

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There is a solar lactonic thrust taking place. Both adjectives often materialise hand in hand in contemporary fragrance, but their appearances weren't simultaneous. First came a trend for milky accords. Then solar followed as an adjective receiving attention and registration in fragrance vernacular. However, I consider that both of these strands of contemporary scent direction can be understood as an industry leaning towards novel effects on existing profiles, in contrast to the creation of entirely new perfumery categories. Particularly in the commercial sphere, we see a propensity to update tried-and-tested accords with surprising twists, accents, and inflections, rather than rewrite the rule book and modulate to new territory.



The feeling of milkiness is not hard to understand in perfumery. Similar to the experience of smelling a milk carton to check it's still in date, it is achieved in fragrance with naturals such as sandalwood, vanilla, heliotrope, and of course the synthetic lactones themselves. A lactonic accord constructs the impression of thick dense smoothness, rich creaminess, and a slight muted acidic edge pierced by sweetness, just before curdling. It is an effect, not a single note per say, often revealing itself in material overdose such as the buttery facet of concentrated vetiver in *Vetiver Extraordinaire* or *Vetiver Veritas*. Sandalwood is distinguished over other woods by its pronounced lactonic impression, as exemplified in *By Kilian Sacred Wood*, *Zadig & Voltaire This Is Him*, and *Bois Farine*. Iris, famous for its buttery qualities, could qualify as milky in *Jour de Fête* and *Calaluna*; and the character and story of tea scents like *Chai* and *32 Venenum* work beautifully with their creamy aspects. Milk clearly lends itself to progressive perfumery.



Solar is another story, and has no objective olfactive. It is a concept. That said, it has taken on increasing relevance and usage as of late in scent language and is becoming accepted as a reasonable device to communicate a reliable olfactory code. Take **Orchid Soleil** (dusty, dry tuberose with spiky lily) and its cousin **Soleil Blanc** (bright light ylang ylang, fleshy coconut, creamy tuberose). Solar is listed as a description for **Mon Exclusif**, denoting how its buttery base is perforated with a small cheerful fougère accord, and its reference in **Aurore Nomade** points to the tropical fruits given a rough texture and effervescent spice through nutmeg, immortelle, and ylang ylang. Whilst by no means unanimous, there are clear points of intersection between these fragrances. Solar normally means an accord that opens with airy freshness, resting on grainy textural florals with pinched sweetness – caramelised and hot. They always feel open and punctured with fresh movement.



Solar shares properties with the lactonic in sweetness, butteriness, creaminess. They work well together and are taking the fore in the search for innovation in sweetness, encouraging calculated olfactory risks through highlighted special effects and embellishments whilst still being on safe ground. Consider *Angel Muse* versus *Musc Maori*. Closely related in terms of intention, the latter could be considered a niche variant of Muse's skeleton. Whilst *Musc Maori* unashamedly signifies creamy sweet chocolate, pushing the accord to its limit, Muse utilises the lactonic as a special effect to undulate Angel's familiar DNA. Most innovation right now is being achieved through new effects like ice and salt, rather than entirely new profiles.

We've covered why effects in general, but why lactonic and solar accords in particular? The primary flowers that convey the solar effect such as tuberose and gardenia can greatly enhance a perfume's trail and impact, and 'good performance' is selling right now, further encouraging a fresh look at powerful blossoms. Also applicable to the rejuvenation of materials that exacerbate projection, longevity, and impact are the rich musks and woods integral to the lactonic experience. It is arguably easier and quicker to construct social olfactory messages with effects rather than individual materials. It takes time plus significant cultural repetition for the smell of bergamot to gain currency to mean this or that to most people. However, performance properties such as projection inherent in the solar tend to hold more stable and consistent messaging across cultures, such as signifying confidence and sensuality.



And while we wait to see what happens, let's just sit back and enjoy some ice cream in the sun.