

► of fragrances Les Parfums de Rosine, in honour of his daughter. There are thought to have been about 18 in total, including *Nuit de Chine* (1913), created by Maurice Shaller, who later worked as the nose for *Carnet de Bal* (1937) by the fur house Revillon. Many of Poiret's fragrances were dreamt up by the famous nose Henri Alméras, who went on to create *Joy* by Jean Patou (1930).

Sadly, most of the Rosines have been lost and forgotten. Except one. In 1991, Marie-Hélène Rogeon, a former employee of Givenchy and a scion of one of the most famous perfume-making families in France (her great-grandfather, Louis Panafieu, made eau de cologne for Napoleon III), decided to relaunch *Les Parfums de Rosine* and revive Poiret's *La Rose de Rosine* (1912). And what gentle quietude this plissé of petals has: it is lost innocence in a bottle, pinkly redolent of another age, when women were as pale as lilies and as luminous of complexion as an *Alma-Tadema* tableau. I spray it, and a canopy of flowers falls like confetti through the air: it's the olfactory equivalent of the spring/summer 2007 catwalk confections of Alexander McQueen and Peter Jensen, which were a three-dimensional tumbling tumult of blooms. "I am absolutely passionate about roses," says Rogeon, whose fans include Donatella Versace, Arielle Dombasle and Naomi Campbell. "As a consequence, all our perfumes are devoted to the rose."

Poiret and his roses lead me on a journey to find other lost couturier-perfumery greats. Several years ago, there was a lot of talk about a renewal of interest in the vintage classics: *Joy* by Patou, *Chanel No 5*, *Shalimar* by Guerlain, *L'Air du Temps* by Nini Ricci, *Miss Dior* and *Femme* by Rochas. But what about those perfumes outside the canon of greatness? Those antiquities languishing on the margins, less eulogised, but all the more jewel-like to discover. Poiret sent me skiing off-piste, if you like, skulking on the outskirts of the grand perfumery narratives to find vintage couturier scents that had been forgotten, sidelined or left gathering dust in museums. Take the



1 Balmain de Balmain, \$46 for 100ml, from Selective Beauty; 0845 688 3343. 2 Cabotine, by Madame Grès, \$43 for 100ml, from Selective Beauty, as before. 3 Jolie Madame, by Balmain, \$46 for 100ml, from Selective Beauty, as before. 4 Je Reviens, by Worth, \$55 per 100ml, from Fortnum & Mason; 020 7734 8040. 5 Vent Vert, by Balmain, \$46 for 100ml, from Selective Beauty, as before. 6 La Rose de Rosine, by Parfums de Rosine, \$62 for 100ml, from Liberty; 020 7734 1234. 7 Ma Griffe, by Carven, \$45 for 50ml, from Harrods; 020 7730 1234

fragrances of Vionnet, a label freshly invigorated by the recent appointment of the designer Sophia Kokosalaki. Haute Couture was launched in 1996 and MV in 1998, but there are older, more arcane legends in the Vionnet archive: four mysterious limited-edition fragrances named A, B, C and D, brought out in 1925, and *Temptation*, launched in 1929. If the formulas smell nice and have endured, the house would do well to revive them in their original packaging.

Ma Griffe by Carven (1946), another lost couturier caprice and unavailable in the UK for the past decade, has been relaunched in its original peppermint-green and white stripey box. Carven trumpeted its initial launch by flying a small plane over Paris that rained thousands of tiny green and white parachutes from the sky, each carrying a small bottle of *Ma Griffe*. Created by Jean Carles, the nose behind *Miss Dior*, the smell – gardenia, jasmine and rose, underscored by aldehydes and bergamot – is quick, sharp and guileless. Carven wanted to capture the younger market, pre-empting the youthquake of the 1950s and 1960s in a masterstroke of prescience.

Tracing a path through the buried greats of couture uncovers some truly titivating fragrances. *Je Reviens* by Worth (1932), created by Maurice Blanchet, a remarkably crisp and hesperidic, quixotic and electric smell, has been relaunched in its original lapis-lazuli bottle. *Vent Vert* (1947), *Jolie Madame* (1953) and *Miss Balmain* (1967) are Balmain's trio of forgotten delights: *Vent Vert* is, of course, the original acidic, vivid-green fragrance created by the iconoclastic nose Germaine Cellier. And don't forget *Cabocharde* (1959) by Madame Grès, a twinkling, chimerical gem of neat, spritely feminine charm.

But the fragrance that the perfume experts Roja Dove and James Craven both feel is the unsung revelation of lost couturier perfumery is *Le Dix* by Balenciaga (1947), which Dove describes as "a woman's skin through a cashmere sweater". It's an orchestra of gentleness, a suite of quiet romance: swooping from the sherbet rush of bergamot, down through armfuls of ylang-ylang, rose and lily of the valley and ending in a narcoleptic, somnambulist plateau of iris, civet, musk and vanilla, seamed with sandalwood and vetiver. Craven recounts how Marlene Dietrich was buried wearing a black velvet trouser suit and doused in it. *Le Dix* as a final flourish – now that's a beauty myth I don't want to dismiss. □