



by Hanns Hatt, Regine Dee  
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## The Lily-of-the-Valley Phenomenon *Das Maiglöckchen-Phänomen*

### review

Apart from the effect that the length and shape of Cleopatra's may or may not have had on history, what's in a nose? Well, according to Hanns Hatt, a member of the University of Bochum where important and groundbreaking research on the subject is at present taking place, and journalist Regine Dee, a very great deal.

Do we all smell different? Yes. Our own body odours are totally individual and may betray us. But we can't smell our own scents. Nor can we recall scents, in the way that we can recall melodies, but thinking of them brings back associated memories. The sense of smell was one of the earliest to develop, long before hearing or sight. The eyeless hagfish, with its ten types of smell receptors, could pick up chemical substances. Then, when life moved from the seas to the land, a specialist organ developed to receive smells through the air.

This fascinating book carries us through from the ancient to the modern (up to 2007, in fact). Here are advanced findings into the use of sniffer dogs to detect illnesses as well as villains, the ways in which the scent of wolves and bears is spread alongside motorways in Germany to deter wild animals from crossing, the fact that a male silk spider has an antenna that can smell the scent of a female at a distance of several kilometres. A crucial area of recent research has been into the reception of smell receptors, which were first confirmed in the gene family in 1991, and led to the award of a Nobel prize for medicine in 2004, but still leaves plenty to be done. Smells and memories, smells and commercial marketing both come within the

book's scope. There are notes on Helen Keller, who was blind and deaf from infancy and relied on her sense of smell, and new information on the existence of smell receptors in the reproductive organs which are unlikely so far to have reached the women's magazines.

And these are only some of the more obviously eye-catching points. The bulk of the book's information will be new even to experts, but its clarity of style will appeal to the layman as well. An obvious candidate for translation on every count.

## about the authors

**Hanns Hatt** was born in 1947. His doctoral subjects were zoology, human psychology and medicine and now, as Professor of Cell Biology at the Ruhr University of Bochum, he is regarded internationally as a leading expert in the research on the subject of smell. It was he and his team who discovered that it is the scent of lily of the valley that attracts sperm to an egg cell.

**Regine Dee** is a journalist with a background in English and sociology. She lives in Hamburg and writes for a number of scientific magazines.

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the founder's son and grandson. After 1945 the programme expanded to include philosophy and non-fiction. Piper Verlag now includes the imprints Malik, Nordiska and Piper Fantasy, and has been part of the Swedish group Bonnier since 1995. Authors include Ingeborg Bachmann, Hape Kerkeling, Annette Pehnt, Gaby Hauptmann, Jakob Hein, Walter Moers, Claudia Schreiber and Robert Löhr.