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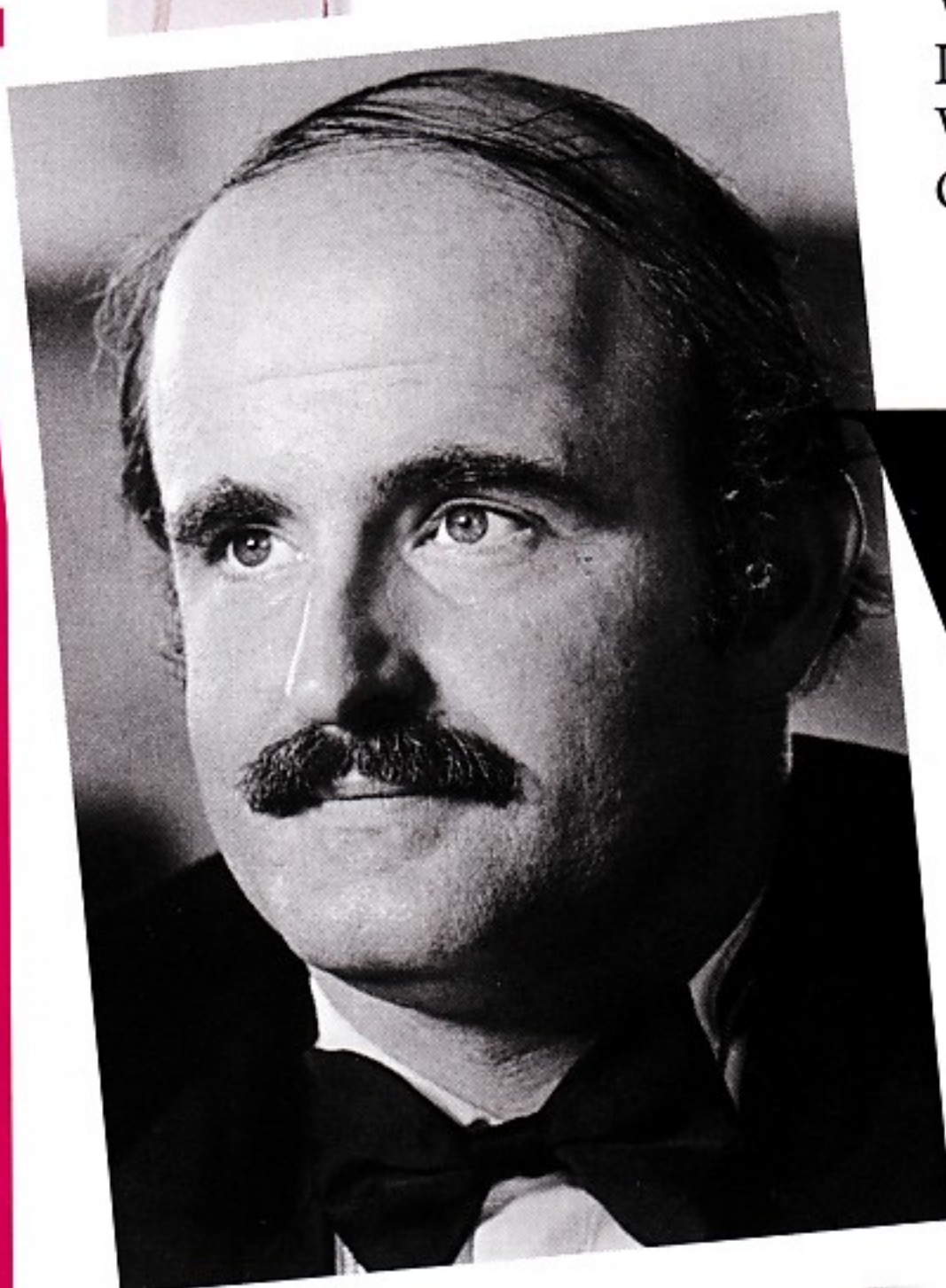


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# Aging Gracefully

WHEN IT COMES TO WRINKLES IN TIME, DAVID LIVINGSTONE WRITES, IT'S ALL IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Top to bottom: The new fragrance, Ageless Fantasy, with a note of grapefruit, claims to give the olfactory impression of youth; Peter Boyle demonstrates the classic comb-over; Canadian broadcaster Kate Aitken's 1951 advice pamphlet; Joan Rivers, who has taken cosmetic surgery to the max and is left with minimal movement and recognizability.



**W**hen it comes to looking good and growing old, expectations have not always been great. In *Lovely You*, published in 1951, Kate Aitken, a Canadian broadcaster/columnist often regarded as a forerunner of Martha Stewart, advised, "[a]s we pass middle age, our greatest appeal to our friends is scrupulous cleanliness."

But even that modest hope has recently been shaken by talk of a particular odour they say comes with age. To negate it, some outfit in New York has come up with Ageless Fantasy, a fragrance that is billed as the world's first anti-age perfume, which will be available at Sephora across Canada this month. To explain the need for it, its makers cite research that suggests that people over 40, compared to those under 40, produce twice as much 2-nonenal, a chemical said to be responsible for an unpleasant greasy scent.

It's enough to make you wonder just how many indignities the years hold in store. Collagen breaks down; elastic fibres go to hell; you arise from your slumbers with the thread count of your sheets imprinted on your person; and, now, on top of other malodorous possibilities, word of some pong you never knew existed.

The good news is that with age comes an impatience with foolishness. Last year, around the time *Women's Wear Daily* was writing about the launch of Ageless Fantasy, *International Cosmetic News* was reporting that the over-40 consumer of beauty products is harder to hoodwink and inclined to be cynical.

It's not easy to maintain cynicism when confronted by the sort of scientific claims that beauty companies like to throw around. But, even if you were to accept that the smell of senior spirit exists, you might not choose to offset it with Ageless Fantasy's blend of vanilla, musk, jasmine, pomegranate, mango and grapefruit.

They say it will knock off years. But the grapefruit note can be a tricky proposition. It's found in Baby Doll Paris (from Yves Saint Laurent)



*past tense*



where, according to *Perfumes: The Guide*, published last year by Luca Turin and Tania Sanchez, it yields “a harsh, ammoniac feel, as if the wearer needed a diaper change.”

Grapefruit is also an ingredient of OS Signature, a rejuvenation of Old Spice that was introduced in 2006 and targeted to the Axe Generation of young men who grew up on exuberant body wash. Just as the tween market in women’s fragrance has fostered fruity-florals, the trend in men’s fragrance has been toward zip and zest, all so puppy-dogs’-tails that perhaps a touch of 2-nonenal might be just the ticket for achieving a mature distinction. So what if it’s generated by degrading fat? After all, indole is an aromatic chemical shared by putrefaction and jasmine blossoms. In my reading, I’ve encountered the word nonenal in connection to the smell of buckwheat, old books and stale beer. I think I could work with that.

After a certain age, beautification boils down to determining how much you’re willing to accept and how much you figure you can do anything about. On the one hand, brown-spotted and proud, there is the ideal of the juicy crone, so enviably at peace with herself. On the other, slathered with Porcelana, there is the cougar, with her Botoxed face as smooth and swollen as a Tupperware salad crisper.

You see guys on the prowl too, with impossibly unlined, bulging foreheads, a feature not much prized since the 15th century when the high, plucked brow was popular in portraits of females painted by the Flemish masters.

The comedy of anti-aging procedures has promoted new kinds of clownish faces and provoked all kinds of jokes. Still, some of the freaky effects are difficult to laugh off. Where once there was smeared lipstick, you might now see smeared lips. You can run into people you know and not recognize them immediately, not till they open their mouths and the voices of their former selves emerge like the voices of actors inhabiting cartoon characters.

Battle-the-clock efforts of yore, in retro-

spect, appear naive. You could grow nostalgic for those days when drug-store beauty counters were staffed by beauticians clinging to the *maquillage* of heydays long gone. Even the comb-over, the classic response to male pattern baldness, which used to seem flagrant, delusional, ridiculous, so who-do-you-think-you’re fooling, assumes the innocence of folk art no longer practised.

Or is this the lipstick of the mind feathering, thoughts disintegrating and finding new gutters to run in? Feathering — whereby colour applied to the mouth ends up irrigating all neighbouring canals and exaggerating that legendary “appearance of fine lines” — has been but one of several prospects that women have been taught to dread.

To allay fear — at the same time, keep it stoked — there has been the long tradition of beauty tips, hints, how-tos and how-not-tos. The “How Not to Be Your Age” chapter of *Designing Women: The Art, Technique, and Cost of Being Beautiful*, published in 1938, barks several orders: never wear hard, tight waves, a bun on top of the head or rouge over hollows, but do “put on powder without moving the puff” since dragging it across wrinkles might result in visible streaks.

These days, beauty advice is more likely to delve into the invisible and puts us all at the mercy of the folks with the microscopes who stand by our skin cells with stopwatches tracking their comings and goings. We’re familiar with every move of our innards, alert to all impact on our outtards.

Again, wasn’t it better when she could take it all on with lipstick and a little Noxzema, when he could get by with razor and comb? But just because some of us are happy to fall apart in the good old-fashioned way is no reason to belittle anybody’s belief in research and remedial measures. Maybe they want more than “the same charm as a muted October day,” which all that Kate Aitken would promise for 60-year-old skin. **Z**

Elegant Vanessa Redgrave, at ease with aging

present perfect



Yoko Ono prefers not to mask her age.



Robert Redford, getting more ruggedly handsome