

## The Taste of Language and Home

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I feed on language.

Early on, I grew fascinated with the different sensations words create, when they roll off my tongue or onto paper. I adored the diversity of effects I could achieve with every bite full of meaning. But it was not until later that I realized how different every language tastes. It was only logical that, after this discovery, I developed a new hunger. A hunger, somewhat less urgent than that for food, community, or intimacy, but present without pause.

Spanish was the first flavour I actively sought out. It smelled of sun and velvet, a scent that gave me a tugging sensation, which I followed. However, the sounds would not fit in my mouth. I could chew and taste them, but not swallow them. Too full. Too soft. They melted on my tongue. I could not spit them out either. They clotted my mouth... and finally, muted me.

That is when I learned to taste English.

I had known this language for some time but I had never chosen it. English was first to bite me and tore out a good piece of flesh. When I bit back, my mouth was filled with sand. It crunched between my teeth, but I swallowed it anyway. Naturally, my whole throat started itching. The sand crumbled. Grained. And sanded.

I rinsed my inside with water. In the process, the sand became mud and the mud found its way into my stomach. Inside of me, the loads of clag piled up until, slowly, a sand castle grew. Each new bite of English sand was another tower and on its way down, every bite continued to mould my throat. My interior became as smooth as one of those round stones on the beach. More suitable for swallowing sand. The language no longer scratched and grated. It began to taste.

To me, English is round and blue. Like the small globe that I put on the windowsill in my student dorm. Or like the blueberries sold at Tesco. The ones I would buy downhill after my walk through the botanic garden. An addictive taste of freedom and discovery.

I ate it again and again. Blueberries became my favourite food, my only food. I refused to eat anything else and believed that nothing could fulfil me better. Unfortunately, I was eating them too long and too much. The blue lost its flavour. It became a chewy gruel that nourished, but did not satisfy or even please me. Not anymore. While I was living in England, I was drowning in thick blueberry jelly like I was trapped in a swamp. Until my sister visited and brought a feast with her.

For the first time, I actually tasted the German in my mouth. I had not previously realised that German had a taste. I had grown up with it, had always perceived it as pure neutrality. Rich in nutrients, but a little bland.

After the endless blueberries, that had changed.

German is my sister's warm pastry. My mother's orange hug. Chocolate, apple, and salt. Most of the time, German is liquid. I cannot chew it but I can let it wash through my mouth and warm up my insides.

Today I am swimming in this language again. I am full and sated, I feel at home.

Nevertheless, I know that one day German will lose its flavour again. One day, this language too will turn into jelly that sticks to me and in which I slowly drown. But I know what to do then. I will eat blueberries. Or maybe I will try to bite into sun and velvet again. Maybe I will follow another scent and find a new language that fulfils me. For a while. Because my home is not what is familiar. My home is what satisfies my hunger.

*My home is what satisfies my hunger.*