

To somebody who had never eaten one, its exterior would give little idea of what to expect within. The flagrant orange, never seen till the moment of opening, veering toward green. The abundant seeds lying in the central hollow, the colour of pale flames but wet, their placing and clustering defying any clear sense of order. And everywhere the glistening.

The taste of the melon included both darkness and sunshine. It miraculously united these opposites, which can otherwise never exist together.

Peach

Our peaches blackened in the sun. A crimson-black to be sure, but with more black in it than red: black like iron which has been heated red-hot and has been slaked and is cooling and gives no warning of the heat it still holds. The peach of the horseshoes.

The black seldom extended over the entire surface. There were parts which, when the fruit was on the tree, were in shadow, and these were whitish, although in the white there was a touch of green, as if the leaves that cast the shadow had just brushed the skin with a finger of their own colour.

In our time, rich European women took enormous pains to keep their faces and bodies as pale as that colour. But never the gypsies.

The size of the peaches varied considerably, from ones large enough to fill the hand, to small ones no bigger than billiard balls. The skin of the smaller ones, being finer, had a tendency to wrinkle very slightly when the fruit was bruised or overripe.

Those wrinkles often reminded us of warm skin in the fold of a dark arm.

In the centre you found a stone, with the texture of a dark bark and an aspect as sulphurous as a meteorite.

These wild peaches were the fruit made by God for thieves.

Greengages

We looked for greengages every year during the month of August. Frequently they disappointed. Either they were unripe, fibrous, almost dry, or else they were over-soft and mushy. Many were not worth biting into, for one could feel with one's finger that they did not have the right temperature: a temperature unfindable in Celsius or Fahrenheit: the temperature of a particular coolness surrounded by sunshine. The temperature of a small boy's fist.

The boy is somewhere between eight and ten-and-a-half years old, the age of independence, before the press of adolescence. The boy holds the greengage in his hand, brings it to his mouth, bites, and the fruit darts its tongue

against the back of his throat so that he swallows its promise.

A promise of what? Of something that has not yet been named and he will soon name. He tastes a sweetness which no longer has anything to do with sugar, but with a limb which goes on and on, and seems to have no end. The limb belongs to a body which he can only see with his eyes shut. The body has three more limbs and a neck and ankles and is like his own; except that it is inside out. Through the limb without end flows a sap – he can taste it between his teeth – the sap of a nameless pale wood, which he calls girl-tree.

It was enough that one greengage in a hundred reminded us of that.

Cherries

In cherries, there was the flavour of fermentation as in no other fruit. Picked straight from the tree, they tasted of enzymes laced with the sun and this taste was complementary with the special shiny polish of their skins.

Eat cherries – even one hour after they have been picked – and their taste blends with that of their own rottenness. In the gold or red of their colour there is always a hint of brown: the colour into which they will soften and disintegrate.

The cherry refreshes, not on account of its purity – as does the apple – but by slightly, almost imperceptibly, tickling the tongue with the effervescence of its fermenting.

Because of the small size of the cherry and the lightness of its flesh and the insubstantiality of its skin, the cherry stone was always incongruous. The eating of the cherry never quite prepared you for its stone. When you spat it out, it seemed to have little connection with the flesh that surrounded it. It felt more like a precipitate of your own body, a precipitate mysteriously produced by the act of eating cherries. After each cherry, you spat out a cherry tooth.

Lips, as distinct from the rest of the face, have the same gloss as cherries do and the same malleability. Both their skins are like the skin of a liquid. A question of their capillary surfaces. Make a test to see whether our memory is correct or whether the dead exaggerate. Put a cherry in your mouth, don't bite it yet, now for a split second remark how the density, the softness and the resilience of the fruit match perfectly the nature of your lips which hold it.

Quetsch

A dark, small, oval plum, not much longer than a human eye. When they are ripe in September on the tree, they glance between the leaves. Quetsches.