

Autumn Rauchwerk

General Honors

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Eating Semmi: What Sprouts from Emptiness

Abstract

This study combines a memoir interspersed with original poetry, an analysis of the evolution of human beings' relationships with food, and personal case studies to depict issues with consumption through the lens of personal experiences, weaving different elements together with the concept of "semmi," the Hungarian word for "nothing." The author utilized the following to complete the work: transcription of an audio memoir of the author's grandfather's experience during the Holocaust, the author's experience living in American Samoa, the author's personal experiences with food, and academic research. The piece considers food or the lack thereof as a potential weapon leading to starvation or obesity in different environments and also expresses the potential of food to bring people together, demonstrate a sense of humanity and offer a source of comfort. The study finds that a reconnection with the source of food, an appreciation for its value, and an understanding of its power must be attained in order for people to address unhealthy dietary and lifestyle habits. However, human beings will continue to struggle to find balance in the current environment of excess with ingrained genetic motivation to consume to an unrestrained degree.