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How to even define it?

A sort of inter-personal understanding

A sort of inter-language, inter-cultural, inter-human understanding

An *understanding* that is not under

But inter

An inter-standing

Înțelegere – Inter-legere [Understanding]

Getting lost in etymologies.

“The sound of the word is the meaning of the word.”

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During the several years living in different place where I would hear my language in random conglomerates around the city – or by spending time with my Romanian friend who lived in the same places as me – you begin to see yourself from the outside in

Not only how you perceive the other speakers of local or other languages, but also an acute awareness of how you are perceived, how your culture is perceived in this larger space. How *you* want it to be perceived, and, at some level, a responsibility to represent the country, the best there is from it – even at times to change perspectives of those too poorly acquainted or far removed from it or with an already existing opinion – to persuade, to gain partisans

And it becomes who you are, who you live as, a performance of sorts, if you will

And it doesn't bother you. It becomes like a mission. A little fire in the belly that maybe consumed you at first, but the baptism by fire is a marker of the irreversible, so now it's you

who ignites it. You live by it. It dances by your will, you modulate the flames with the slightest of gazes, the most economical of gestures. They listen to you (by now).

Take that away and you're stripped of your power. Because yes, there is power building from weakness. It's where you had forged it.

I was removed, or I removed myself – a necessary evil/misfortune – from the place where I had that web of my many different selves, my horizontally spread connections/receptacles of my different beings.

A vignette, “si nimic mai mult!” [And nothing more]

Back to the mother ship, the cradle

You ever notice how, whenever a problem is removed/resolved/no more, you have this moment where you are completely lost? You had made a home/ You had already made nest in the 'problem'. Sure, you were never going to solve it, but you had created your very own ecology/system of strategies, go-about, to-dos, to don'ts etcetera to exist in it. Without being bothered too much. / Fully aware of its shortcomings, but they didn't bother you by now.

Until you are forced to look at it from the outside. Until by outside intervention they remove you from your problem – how ever dare they?! – or by some stupefying impulse of the mind when you yourself implore/demand for some sort of change. Change that you're not even sure yourself will be better than what you had here. But you've willed it into existence, so you'd better come through /you'd better show up and get on with it.

And so you do.

And in the rush of things, before you can even shake your head off the dizzy spells you were automatically performing under, it is done. Gone. Your whole (former) living creation of how you existed and operated in ~~this~~ that! world.

And in this new position you find yourself disoriented, standing still in, or rather unable to move – you see it.

A whole new tapestry grows/saws itself in its place, ever-surrounding, ever-drowning you, like the walls of a leaf maze sucking you in.

Back to my own mother tongue. Where I would hear it by simply going into the kitchen, or opening up the window. It's easy going back into it. I hear it at every turn, so I respond. I wouldn't have to think about it. But I somehow do now. I never used to double guess intentions behind the words here. It's all pretty frank, not much room left for doubts or stress-inducing interpretations. You will read faces and voices and realise that it matches exactly/ Voice, words and paralingual comportments all will match with one another exactly, 99.9% of the time. Maybe the constancy of it is what strikes me, all of a sudden. And my own way of adjusting back to it, re-calibrating my own personality, self, level of energy, tone of voice, choice of words. It leaves me with a space where I try and calculate a middle ground between words and tone I would hear or use before – and now.

The motherland. Patria-mamă. [Mother-land]

It feeds you and it keeps giving. But somehow not the things that I need to be fed. Not the way I need to be fed.

So I / YOU can no longer make meanings with language the way I/YOU used to do.

Creating an identity out of making others aware. Of yourself, of your language, of your culture.

Selves lost.

And in the confines of only being able to commune with friends of places left behind through an internet connection and a screen, in questions and stories of where I situate myself in the present moment I see myself blanking out, opening the mouth to reply and getting lost in between thoughts of who I am even, now, in this new configuration. Stories of home recipes and what the city looks like, where the preferred grocery shop or piața is or some silly thing that one of my parents said to me the other day seems to keep alimentering the machinery. And my friends' eyes sparkle when they hear of it, and I feel this tingling joy sensation on the surface of my skin for creating that new awareness and for creating a map, parameters to better locate and understand who I am because of who *we* are.

'How do you say it in Romanian?'

'It's funny how your voice changes. It's like you sometimes question it in English, but when you speak in Romanian it's like mmmmm, like honey!'

It is not lost. It's how you keep it alive.

If only for moments at a time.

And it leaves me wondering ever so often if it even is genuine. Does it even come from me, or it all just put on, demonstrative to a certain degree?

But then I am in my grandparents' home, and it only takes knocking on their front door and stepping in, seeing either one of them, and I delve into my grandmother's original regional accent. "Ce mai făcurăți, mamaie?" [How have you been, nan?], "Mă gândii io că sunteți pe-afară de nu răspundeți!" [I figured you must be outside since you've not heard me ringing]

It is the sound of my childhood, growing up, and the sound of our very code and connection. Coding to exist as my full self in that identity, to be recognised, to feel that I am fully there, that I fully belong, at least in that instance, as that particular self. 'the granddaughter', the carer of the family, the confident, the mediator, the listener of stories and histories and ardent desire-er to participate to their history

That joy.

The same joy I have when my very good friend from the south of the country – also with connections in Oltenia – understands me when I refer to watermelon as 'lubenîță' and colloquially and ironically calling tomato 'părădaisă'

I recognise it in myself and I am recognised by and through someone alike.