The Language of Home

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The Existential Paradigm of Exile

Exile is a fascinating mode of existence because it represents a style and view of life belonging to the other par excellence. Exiles stand out because they 'do not belong', whether according to their own judgement or that of the community they have adopted (as opposed to the nativist 'were born' and 'brought up into'). No matter how well so-called foreigners gradually blend into a new cultural setting, there will usually be at least a whiff of otherness about them, whether it be their slightly exotic looks, idiosyncratic use of words, or an accent that can't quite be placed. However, this does not necessarily always translate into neurotic self-awareness, as Theodor Adorno's harsh words may lead us to believe: '[e]very intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated' (Adorno, 1999, p.33). [1] It could also be mostly an observation of fact (i.e. of one's otherness), without any deprecating lamentations attached to it. Some exiles, depending on their disposition and outlook on life, could even learn to revel in their difference.

Traditionally as well as etymologically, exile has had highly negative connotations because it represents the ostracising and banishment (Latin *exilium*) of individuals from their familiar environment. The Latin poet Ovid is a classic case in point. He was expelled from his beloved Rome and forced to spend the rest of his life at 'the edge of the world' as he put it (Ovid, 1939, p.13) or, to be more precise, the western shores of the Black Sea. [2] He never ceased to lament in writing (*Tristia, Epistulae ex Ponto*). Indeed, the burden of exile was deemed to be so unbearable or undignified that Socrates chose death instead and, in so doing, he exercised ultimate control during and over his life. Centuries later, Dante was exiled from his native Florence. He never recovered and the venom kept depositing in his

[1] Adorno was himself an exile from Nazi Germany.
[2] '*Orbis ultimus'*, *Tristia*, Book TI.I:127-128.

wretched heart, giving us in the process *The Divine Comedy*, which draws on his personal experience of exile. Like Ovid and Dante, many others have lived and cursed the life of exile.

Stories of exile can leave a lasting impression. Robinson Crusoe was accidentally shipwrecked on a desert island, away from all traces of human civilisation, which he duly endeavoured to re-create; Gulliver allegorically travelled into the relative and pompous nature of human society, whose arbitrary norms and judgements he revealed through the lens of his satirical wit; Alice fell into the rabbit hole of unravelling language and reality and, in so doing, she was the precursor of the exiled Eugène Ionesco's theatre of the absurd; James Joyce decried Irish parochialism and willingly left his native country as a young artist in pursuit of his creative aspirations; Milan Kundera, who left his communist Czechoslovakia, devised the rich and ambivalent metaphor of the lightness of being; Salman Rushdie took the satanic plunge into rootlessness and cultural hybridisation; Albert Camus carried the Sisyphean rock of human alienation, while Samuel Beckett's clowns are still waiting for Godot.

This brief literary sample already illustrates the multifarious and complex nature of exile, all the more so in the hermeneutics of our *über*-modern present.[3] We can enter the realm of exile by different movements of will, fortune and circumstances. We are faced with the question: what is one exiled from? The examples above give us various clues: from human culture, society's self-perception and norms, native language, language and reality dialectically combined, a totalitarian political regime, textual authoritarianism, fellow human beings, or something neither concrete nor abstract but altogether ineffable – what the music of fado designates in

[3] I have devised the term '*über*-modern' as an equivalent to 'postmodern'. This is partly an attempt to denote the neurosis that seems to characterise our present condition (hence '*über*'), our hyper-awareness of the relative nature of the world we live in and the impossibility of escaping the contextual nature of our lives. It is also meant to be a somewhat tongue-in-cheek redress of balance, as 'postmodern' has become something of a term of abuse.

nostalgic Portuguese as *saudade*, that hard-to-translate word which can refer to an undefined yearning that will never be fulfilled.

There are no wrong or unique answers, no weak links in the chain. Note that exile does not necessarily mean a forced separation from something fundamentally good, as the classical definition of exile could be phrased. This definition also implies a unidirectional movement from the centre to the unfamiliar, imaginatively infinite margin ('the edge of the world'). This, in turn, allows for only one other unidirectional movement of reparation or return to centre. From this perspective, one can only return home, the latter being, in its ideal state, fixed, unchanged, and familiar. The self is ultimately always reflected in the glance cast back and *the raison d'être* of any journey and adventure is merely to come back (rather than arrive) home.

I would like to suggest that, in a sense, we are all exiled – exiled from the utopian worlds that we conveniently imagine to have existed before or hopefully will exist in the future of our otherwise restless, dissatisfied present condition. We sway in a pendular *perpetuum mobile* between paradise lost and promised land. The self narrates itself in the exilic journey between the home we once/never had and the home we perhaps never will. This definition of exile can be further refined, given an extra edge, if we recognize our sense of home as functional, effective, but ultimately constructed. The observation and acceptance of this fact would lead to a much more elastic sense of self as it imaginatively journeys away from and in search of home.

By now we have strayed quite far from the classical view of exile as a necessarily unidirectional, forced move away from a unique point of reference, to which every banished soul would naturally wish to return. The fundamental co-ordinates of exile, both within the concrete and abstract, practical and poetic planes, allow for greater flexibility and a much more complex reality. Exile is an existential evolving triangle shaped on the axes

of self, journey and home. In this sense and with this image in mind, exile is the epitome of human condition as the three axes supply us with co-ordinates reflecting upon each other. Thus, our sense of self evolves, is not static. We are what we become. In other words, the self journeys into its deferred individuation. At the same time, our home is a reflection and extension of our selves (Jung, 1963; Marcus, 1995). Whilst the self and the home are concepts through which we aspire to an ultimate state of stability and familiarity, it is the journey (physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual) that shakes us back into reality and reminds us of the dynamic, evolutionary nature of our minds, bodies and souls.

Within the existential paradigm of exile I have proposed we can both return and arrive home. Even in the classical definition of exile, the return home is not, cannot be a return back in time to how things used to be, though that is precisely how it is romanticised. Indeed, those who hold an idyllic notion of return and go back are invariably treated to the rude awakening that the nostalgic images they held dear in their minds are just that: images, i.e. imaginary recreations of the past, which have bearing on but significantly clash with the present world they are experiencing. They as individuals have evolved and so have the places and communities they have returned to. Thus, Murid Barghouti, in his chronicle of return *I Saw Ramallah*, writes 'the stranger can never go back to what he was. Even if he returns. It is over. A person gets 'displacement' as he gets asthma, and there is no cure for either' (Barghouti, 2004, p.4).

The Classical View of Home as Sacred Space

When considering the nature of exile we have to ask the question: what are we exiled from? The short answer is that we are exiled from home. In keeping with the two paradigms of exile, home could classically be defined as a unique, fixed and familiar abode, the constant point of our departure and return to which we feel that we belong. There is a very practical

dimension to having a stable abode: it makes one's life easier than having to live in/out of a suitcase, so to speak. Legally speaking, it is our domicile, which grants us access to public services, a passport and thus freedom to travel, among other things. In short, it allows us to function in society. It is also a storage place, a place where we deposit our physical as well as emotional furniture and *bric-à-brac*. Constantly moving from one place to another can have a deep psychological effect on us. It can leave us feeling vulnerable, helpless and disorientated. Home is the answer to our deeply ingrained territorial needs, which require us to shape and order space in a way that accords with our personality, vision of the world, and basic need for security. If we do not like to speak of territoriality, which relies on a cold, clinical ethological perspective (Porteous, 1976), then we can opt for a more spiritual, metaphysical view. Simone Weil suggests 'to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define' (Weil, 1952, p.41).

Home is a place of nurturing and comfort with which we form a strong 'membrane-like' relationship (Marcus, 1995, p.66).[4] Indeed, we relate to it as we would to a person. In Yi-Fu Tuan's analysis, it is a type of *place*, 'a centre of meaning constructed by experience' (Tuan, 1975, p.152). We relate to it in a most peculiar, visceral way, which Tuan designates as *topophilia*, i.e. the love of place (Tuan, 1974).[5] Eva Hoffman, in her autobiographical chronicle of exile *Lost in Translation*, remembers leaving her native Krakow, 'which I loved as one loves a person' (Hoffman, 1989, p.4). On a grander scale, our patriotic imagination allows us to speak in quasi-anthropomorphic terms of the motherland or *Vaterland*. In literary rhetoric, Palestine has often been personified into a mother-figure or even a feminine object of erotic love – an image exclusively available, in a

[4] Marcus is talking in particular with reference to one's dwelling place and in keeping with the Jungian theory of the house as a symbol of the self.

[5] At least chronologically speaking, Bachelard (1978 [1957], p.30) used the term topophilia (*topophilie*) well before Tuan (1974). Tuan successfully employed it in his eponymous treatise on the human construction and sense of place.

traditional context, to male writers, as Barbara Parmenter rightly points out (Parmenter, 1994, p.84).

Home is our main point of reference, from which we know and create the world. It is that space where reality is at its most honest, indeed, real (hence the expression 'home truths'). In other words, home is a type of sacred space and it is no surprise that, traditionally, people would ritually consecrate their houses in order to meaningfully dwell in them. Mircea Eliade defines sacred space as that unique plane where authentic reality is revealed. It represents 'the central axis for all future orientation' (Eliade, 1959, p.21) and allows us to find consistency and structure in an otherwise amorphous, chaotic world. It transports us from profane into significant reality. Similarly, our home is our privileged refuge from the mundane or, in Gaston Bachelard's poetic phrasing, it 'shelters our daydreaming' (*la maison abrite la rêverie*) (Bachelard, 1978, pp.25-26). Notably, sacred space has an existential value, something which brings it even closer to home. It is not just a designated area of the sacred: just as a house is not only a shelter, they both deeply affect our being (Parmenter, 1994, p.68).

Just as sacred space is a unique ontological plane, so is home in its classical form. When two claims for the sacred co-exist, they inevitably lead to conflict. Eliade gives the apt example of the clash surrounding the sacred Temple Mount/ Haram ash-Sharif respectively. This can be extrapolated into the problematic, often violent, encounter between the competing Zionist and Palestinian visions of homeland on the one and same territory: *ha-aretz* and *al-watan* are imagined in mainstream discourse as mutually invalidating. The two cannot co-exist, at most they can lie side by side, divided by the pre-1967 war border, in necessary compromise with the constructed shape of the once British Mandate of Palestine and the Promised Land. It seems that the best we can hope for is, in Amos Oz's words, an amicable divorce (Solana, 2001).

Home as an Ambivalent Idiosyncratic Construct

It will have become apparent from the above analysis that home can contract and expand in relation to space or to self: it can be one's house or one's country, one's family, or one's nation. Home is a rich, elastic concept amenable to many possible definitions, none of which can be comprehensive. Ultimately, home is very much an idiosyncratic reality or, as Stefan Brink aptly expresses it, '[o]ne can only go to oneself and ask for the meaning of home' (Brink, 1995, p.17). Generally speaking, we could visualise home geometrically defined by co-ordinates situated on two main axes: time-space and private-public.[6] This will help us not only to determine its characteristics but also realise that, ultimately, home is very much an ambivalent reality. Classically, it is associated with positive values, as illustrated in the expressions 'there is no place like home' or 'homemade'. In actual fact, home brings the positive and the negative together and, in that sense, home could be defined as the ideal space where opposites do not necessarily coincide but at least are reconciled. In reality, they often clash and we continually find ourselves in a position where we have to negotiate between them and therefore we continually have to negotiate our place in the world.

Home is the locus of negotiation between ourselves and society. Some are of a more individualistic disposition than others and place themselves differently on the public (social) axis. For many, home and family are very strongly linked and this relationship is often romanticised, especially if we find ourselves away from family and its unconditional support. However, this romantic image is more often than not dispelled when we return to the domestic fold. Home may be the place of our nurturance but it can also stultify us. It pulls us back and pushes us away. It fascinates and repels us. It is very much ambivalent and ambiguous.

[6] This model partly relies on and is a continuation of the idea of home as a space-group-time complex suggested by Porteous 1976, with further insight from Lawrence 1995.

Home is a matter of perspective. On a smaller scale, it can be our dwelling abode (a house, a flat, a boat). On an even smaller physical scale, our bodies can be seen as our home and, as Vivian Sobchack (1999, p.46) points out, they can be either our temples or prisons, depending on how well they allow us to function or how comfortable we feel in our skin, so to speak. Entering the realm of the metaphysical, the constructs of mind and soul can also be dwelling units of the basic, primary sort. In the opposite direction, the area of home can expand into the town, region, or country we inhabit, and our imagination, if we feel so inclined, can go as far as the universe itself. Thus, young Stephen Dedalus, James Joyce's protagonist in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, writes: 'Stephen Dedalus/ Class of Elements/ Clongowes Wood College/ Sallins/ County Kildare/ Ireland/ Europe/ The World/ The Universe' (Joyce, 2000, p.12).

Some people's sense of home can be more provincial than that of others. The spectrum ranges from obtuse tribalism to 'suspicious' cosmopolitanism. Geographically as well culturally, one's home moves up and down the two axes, and it does so idiosyncratically as well as diachronically, i.e. the way one individual conceptualises home will change as he or she goes through different stages in life (Marcus, 1995; Horwitz & Tognoli, 1982). Culture can be placed primarily, though not exclusively, on the private-public axis because it is the result of the dynamics between individual minds and collective norms. Language is a very good case in point. It plays a crucial role in defining one's sense of home and reflects the continual negotiation of an individual's place in one's community. These are two important points which I will explain as we now turn to language as a 'domestic' paradigm.

The Language of Home

> I come from There and remember…
> I have learned and dismantled all the words

to construct a single one: Home
Mahmoud Darwish[7]

Eva Hoffman's autobiography *Lost in Translation* is a moving, often heart-rending narrative re-creation of her transition from one country to another (she and her Jewish family, after having survived the Holocaust, left native post-war Poland for Canada and subsequently the USA). Primarily, it is a chronicle of a very difficult, ultimately impossible, translation[8] from her native Polish to the English language, which she had to learn from scratch from the age of 13. To her, English words felt alien, unable to reflect her sense of self and place. Indeed, meaning, or rather the lack of it, is at the very centre of Hoffman's experience of cultural and geographical dislocation: the secondary language could not be as meaningful as her native one. There would always be an unbridgeable gap between the signifier and the signified. Not so with her native language, which existed in seeming identification with reality itself. Young Eva Hoffman found that she could not replicate the visceral relationship that she had with her native language when trying to relate to the new, foreign one. It is not until the very end of her story that she finds her peace, though not quite complete, with English semantics:

> 'Azalea, hyacinth, forsythia, delphinium', Miriam says, pointing at the flowers with a mock-didactic gesture. 'I am going to make you feel at home in the New World'. […] 'Azalea', I repeat. 'Forsythia, delphinium'. The names are beautiful, and they fit the flowers perfectly. They are the flowers, these particular flowers in this Cambridge garden. *For now*, there are no Platonic azaleas, no Polish hyacinths against which these are compared. […] The language of this is sufficient. I am here now. (Hoffman, 1989, p.280, my emphasis)

[7] Quoted in Saith, 2005.
[8] Not least in the original etymological sense of the Latin *transferre* meaning 'to transfer', 'to carry across'.

Hoffman wrote her autobiography in English and it should be obvious that linguistic competence is not the point here, but rather the relationship that exists between us and the language that we speak. Her sense of language, at least when she emigrated to 'the New World' as a teenager, was more akin to an essentialist view which places a quasi-equal sign between native language and reality. All languages, primary or secondary, are acquired. However, because the primary, native language is initially learned in a seemingly effortless unconscious way as we grow up, we develop a strong attachment to and particular feel for it. Thus, most of us will feel that our mother-tongue is most akin to reality.

Having myself journeyed from one *pre*-dominant language to another, I hold a less 'authoritarian' or nostalgic view of languages.[9] To my mind, they are all acquired and fundamentally a matter of habit, though they also require a lot of time and application. The feeling of self-consciousness, gradually receding in intensity and frequency over the years, cannot completely disappear when I speak English. It is mostly gone but it is there, resurfacing once in a while. However, the reverse process has also happened, whereby linguistic paranoia has insidiously crept into my use of my native idiom. Thus, I subscribe to a view of language, and therefore reality, that can be nicely summed up by René Magritte's well-known painting of a tobacco pipe entitled *ceci n'est pas un pipe* ('this is not a pipe').[10] It allows for as deep a reflection into the nature of reality as we like, but it also helps us keep our sense of humour and therefore our wits about us.

Ultimately, just like home, our relationship with language is idiosyncratic. Emile Habiby, an Israeli-Arab writer, once a member of the Israeli Knesset and fluent in modern Hebrew, wrote his famous *Said the Pessoptimist* in Arabic, which was subsequently translated into Hebrew.

[9] This discussion, though taking place in a bilingual context, is also relevant to monolinguals for accents and dialects within one and the same language can perform similar delineating roles.
[10] Its actual title is *The Treason of Images*.

Anton Shammas, another Israeli-Arab writer, wrote his well-known *Arabesques* in Hebrew, which was subsequently translated into Arabic. So far, he has published in Arabic, Hebrew and English and he is currently living in the USA. Jabra I. Jabra, a prolific translator of English literature and partly educated in England, chose to write his quasi-autobiographical novel of estrangement from Palestine, *Hunters in a Narrow Street*, in English. Aharon Appelfeld recounts in his autobiography *The Story of a Life* how excruciating it was for him, a teenager newly arrived in Israel, to learn and connect with modern Hebrew (itself a language consciously revived and constructed). Just like Hoffman, he is now a writer and a master of his adopted language. His experience recalls that of his Jewish counterpart because, by the end of the Second World War, still very young, he spoke several languages badly and felt grounded in none of them.

The relationship between language and ourselves is far from a straightforward affair. There is the classical, quasi-essentialistic model of home as a cosy little place where we nostalgically retreat and nothing has changed since childhood. We dwell in our own native language and thus unconsciously assert territoriality. The very concept of nativeness (and everything that it qualifies) is shot through with our basic instinct of territoriality, the need to mark the space, to name and claim it. Home, the original place or 'centre of meaning', gives us our roots and the language with which we imagine the world. We dwell in our language. But what if the language were to dwell in us? Derrida states:

> I only have one language; it is not mine […] I am monolingual. My monolingualism dwells, and I call it my dwelling; it feels like one to me, and I remain in it and inhabit it. It inhabits me. […] Yet it will never be mine, this language, the only one I am thus destined to speak, as long as speech is possible for me in life and in death; you see, never will this language be mine. And, truth to tell, it never was. […] When I said that the only language I speak is *not mine*, I did

> not say it was foreign to me. There is a difference.
> (Derrida, 1998, pp.1-5)

In the to and fro between paradise lost and promised land, birth and death, the home we never quite had and the home we will perhaps never have, language will reflect and instigate our uprootedness. We speak language and language speaks us. Language is a game we are taught and learn to play, it is one of the many possible *Sprachspielen* or language-games Wittgenstein talks about. In *Monolingualism of the Other*, from which I have just quoted, Derrida does write from the point of view of his personal background: Franco-Maghrebian who settled in France, the colonial *métropole*. He speaks the language of the colonial, the latter being a territorial archetype. But we do not have to experience colonialism in its concrete political form to realise or to feel that one's language does not entirely belong to us because it is something learned, acquired, imposed and whose authority lies in the omnipresent but rather elusive other. I qualify it as elusive for too often we seem to forget that the ego is also the other in the continuous interplay between the two. My self may be shaped by others but, equally, they will be shaped by my presence in an interaction which blurs the dichotomy – not necessarily to the point of mystical identification (though, certainly, it is a philosophical option) but to that of recognising the common (democratic as well as autocratic) cultural space in which we all dwell. Linguistically, in the strict as well as wider discursive sense, we continually negotiate our place in the world, i.e. home.

Home both fascinates and repels us and as such reminds us of Rudolf Otto's idea of the holy (Alles, 2005) or the Arabic root *hrm* which can refer to something either 'prohibited', 'taboo', or 'holy', 'sacrosanct' (Wehr, 1980). This further confirms home as sacred space, though in a somewhat unexpected way because it tampers with the distinction between the two models of home I have suggested. The sacred is ideally equated with an epiphany of the absolute, whilst ambivalence is placed very much within the

realm of the all-too-human discourse. In actual fact, if there is such a thing as the sacred, the latter can only be experienced and designated through language. Home/sacred space *is* language. The sacred, though endowed with transcendental autonomy, initially and ultimately dwells in language – that unique space where semantic opposites can attract, clash and coincide.

Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939*: Home is the Death Camp

This is potently illustrated in the metaphor of home as the death camp which emerges from Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939*. This quasi-allegorical novella, taking place in the early stages of the Shoah, is set in a fictitious Austrian spa where middle-class assimilated European Jews regularly come to spend their summer holidays. In a Kafkaesque movement, the Sanitation Department (a blood-curdling symbol for the Nazi policy of achieving 'racial purity') is suddenly and inexplicably put in charge of the registration of the Jewish population. The actions of the Sanitation Department are meant to lead up to the horrors of the concentration camps but the 'modest announcements' do not inform the public of that. Instead, the journey into death is disguised as an illusionary return home. The department devises a propagandistic idyllic vision of Poland and the 'transfer' of the Jewish population is cynically presented as a trip of a lifetime toward better pastures:

> The Sanitation Department now resembled a travel agency festooned with posters: LABOUR IS OUR LIFE … THE AIR IN POLAND IS FRESHER… SAIL ON THE VISTULA… THE DEVELOPMENT AREAS NEED YOU… GET TO KNOW THE SLAVIC CULTURE. These and other slogans adorned the walls. (Appelfeld, 1997, pp.29-30)
> The Sanitation Department was open at night too. Its doors were framed with lights; inside there were journals, posters, and leaflets about agriculture and industry, art and entertainment scattered about on the low tables. You could sit in an armchair, listen to music, leaf through a journal, and dream of Poland.

> The remote, alien Poland began to seem an idyllic, pastoral place. (Appelfeld, 1997, p.31)

Poland had long ceased to be the home of the Jews in Badenheim. They or their ancestors had moved on, actively creating their own homes in Austria and other parts of Europe, whilst also pursuing the ideal of 'assimilation' which appealed to so many of the Jewish community who wanted to break out of centuries of cultural, social and political isolation. Nevertheless, the response of many of the characters is to buy into this latest insidious vision and construct illusions of their own about the native home they left a long time ago or have never actually inhabited. They start talking more and more of the need and duty of an individual to return to one's roots: 'in the last analysis, a man has to return to his origins' (Appelfeld, 1997, p.89). This is regardless of the fact that for many of them those roots, at an individual level at least, do not belong to that 'remote, alien' place. Their idyllic images of the Polish homeland lie in a sadly ironic parallel with the image depicted by the propaganda of the Sanitation Department (Shacham, 2004). They too start talking of the Polish air being purer, fresher, and slowly but surely Poland does begin 'to seem an idyllic, pastoral place'. 'Martin asked many questions. "Are the rivers in Poland beautiful?" And Trude spared no details. There was no country as beautiful as Poland, no air as pure as Polish air' (Appelfeld, 1997, p.95). This reverberates, in tragic irony, the cynically farcical propaganda of the Sanitation Department: 'THE AIR IN POLAND IS FRESHER… SAIL ON THE VISTULA…' (Appelfeld, 1997, p.29).

Some start to remember words from forgotten languages and speak broken Polish and Yiddish. Others set about to learn these languages in expectation of their 'emigration' to their new home. They develop habits reminiscent of their ancestors, in a contrived bid to do away with their present lives and return to an illusionary home:

> The headwaiter was learning Yiddish. Samitzky wrote long lists of words down in his notebook and sat and studied them. He had started to walk with a stoop and stare into space. His Austrian accent clung to him like a leech but he tried his best to overcome this obstacle too. Salo consoled him, saying that in Poland it would be easy to learn. Everyone spoke Yiddish there. 'I find the language very interesting', said the headwaiter. (Appelfeld, 1997, pp.106-107)

The leitmotifs of 'transfer', 'transition' and 'emigration' (to a mythical Poland), present throughout the novel, stand incongruously alongside the equally pervasive ideas of home and homecoming. The willed artificiality of the one conflicts with the presumed essentialism of the other. Always in the background of attempts to define their *axis mundi* and sense of belonging, lies the cynical propaganda about the idyllic place awaiting their 'return'. This hypocritical discourse, sadly reflected in the individuals' own recreations of home, raises the reader's awareness of the contrived and illusory nature of what we call home. On the other hand, it also presents us with the unarticulated metaphor of homecoming as a journey into the inhumane suffering and death that awaits the unsuspecting European Jews. The romantic abode of old transforms itself into the Nazi concentration camp. Home is very much an ambivalent existential space. The space between birth and death equally attracts us and repels us, nurtures and destroys us. It is the sacred space of our origin and annihilation.

On a factual level we would not dream of equating home with the death camp, quite the contrary (the Shoah is normally equated with displacement and the opposite of home). Language allows us to do just that. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*: it is and it is not. Language fundamentally shapes our sense of reality. It is not just a tool we use to describe what we mean and how we feel about home but it plays an active, crucial role in constructing it. To put it more bluntly, would we ponder on the nature and meaning of home

if we did not have the word in the first place? The answer, at least on a logical level, is quite simply no.

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