
Homelessness, Restlessness and Diasporic Poetry

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ABSTRACT Can poetry be Diasporic? Can poetry free itself from the shackles of conformism? Can it be independent and divergent, and not seek a home? Is it capable of mustering its inner strengths and living without being enlisted by a collective that accords it power? This article argues that poetry is essentially dialectic. It has little vitality without the presence of the Other, without interaction with him. However, it also contains independent, personal elements and reaches its peak through the individual's anti-conformist activity and expression. Poetry, like language, enables us to view ourselves from outside, thereby fulfilling an important role, similar to language itself, and it is created by the individual's alienation even from himself. Poetry may provide one of the most creative potential tools of Diasporic philosophy, love and creativity being its cornerstones, but it can also be a destructive factor seeking to imprison the creative soul within a home with the solid walls of a rigid community.

The Diasporic individual, in exile from his 'home', any home, cannot escape by means of poetry from building one, but can use it to dismantle its confining walls, express solace, strive for creativity and discover love. Poetry may provide one of the most creative potential tools of Diasporic philosophy, love and creativity being its cornerstones (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005a, pp. 13-14), but it can also be a destructive factor seeking to imprison the creative soul within a home with the solid walls of a rigid community.

The Diasporic individual strives against the self-evident and thus does not seek a home, a permanent shelter. He turns against the existing order, does not cling to modernist or other truths. He recreates himself. He does not merely react or act on the spur of the moment, but, in the words of Wislawa Szymborska, he makes 'Something no nonbeing can hold' (Szymborska, 1998).

The Three Oddest Words

When I pronounce the word Future
the first syllable already belongs to the past.

When I pronounce the word Silence,
I destroy it.

When I pronounce the word Nothing
I make Something no nonbeing can hold.
(Szymborska, 2001)

Poetry has dialectic elements; it may become either committed or Diasporic. It enables the undermining of all-pervading conformism, and through its crises generates the need to abandon the habitual dwelling for a nomadic existence, essential to prevent being drawn into a confining home. And yet it may, in an instant, turn into a warm space, pleasant, protected and even cuddling, simulating a source of creativity, but permeated by a predetermined and restrictive ideology. In

such situations it may lead to commitment, sometimes political and ideological. Szymborska expresses this stance well in her poem, 'We Knew the World Backwards and Forwards ...':

We Knew The World Backwards and Forwards –
so small it fit in a handshake,
so easy it could be described in a smile,
as plain as the echoes of old truths in a prayer.

History did not greet us with triumph–
it flung dirty sand in our eyes.
Ahead of us were distant roads leading nowhere,
poisoned wells, bitter bread.

The spoils of war is our knowledge of the world –
so large it fits in a handshake,
so hard it could be described in a smile
as strange as the echoes of old truths in a prayer. (Szymborska, 2001, p. 35)

Diasporic philosophy is opposed to making an effort to build a home, to violating the home of the Other or to returning home, in the words of Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (2004, p. 180). Both Diasporic education and Diasporic philosophy aim first and foremost at an ethical-creative way of life, drawing on the idea of exile in Judaism, and leading to the birth of the improviser, actualizing the essence of Judaism in the cosmopolitan sense, as a possible life for all humans, not withdrawing to a territory, a collective or to Jewish tradition:

From the point of view of Diasporic philosophy, exile is a womb. Between the darkness of its infinity and the light of the principle of hope and only in the presence of the human, the self-evident meaning of thingness is born of the seeds of the 'totally Other' and being becomes gradually visible until it is transformed into the 'problematic of ascribing meaning'. (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005b, p. 202)

The Jewish essence is manifested here in the messianic struggle for the redemption of the world, no longer in the sense intended by Hess and Marx or Cohen and Leo Beck (Gur-Ze'ev, 2004, p. 193). It is manifested through its nomadic nature, as an ethical dimension of life that is neither relativist nor nihilist. It refuses to give up responsibility and insists on taking a stand. The Diasporic individual's responsibility lies above all in his acknowledgment of genuine exile, in confronting the existence of suffering and in becoming aware of the successful universal journey towards the dwarfing of humanity. Such responsibility is also directed towards the otherness of the Other and also towards the evasive otherness in the self as being-toward and constantly overcoming its normalization. Diasporic education cannot make moral consciousness or commitment obligatory or enforce it (Gur-Ze'ev, 2004, p. 194).

Thus, a Diasporic way of life, the product of Diasporic education, will be that of an improviser, who does not seek a home or fulfillment through tradition in a collective that would serve as a fortified rampart; on the contrary, he will break through the fences and become a trailblazer who paves the way. Thus the exile will be a *person who is always paving new roads but not building homes*. His life's journey will be a constant dynamic search, while tearing down, branching off, setting out and not permitting entry. He will always be '*paving-the-way-toward*' in a *Godless world*.

Derrida invites his readers to think in travel or to 'think travel' (Malabou, 1999). Bauman explains 'that means to think that unique activity of departing' going away from *chez soi*, going far, towards the unknown, risking all the risks, pleasures and dangers 'that the "unknown" has in store (even the risk of not returning)' (Bauman, 2000, p. 206). The element of 'being away' in the eyes of Derrida is, according to Bauman, perpetual exile or statelessness: 'This did not mean, though, having no cultural homeland. Quite the contrary: being "culturally stateless" meant having more than one homeland, building a home of one's own on the crossroads between cultures ... His "home on the crossroads" was built of language' (Bauman, 2000, p. 206).

Can poetry be Diasporic? Can poetry free itself from the shackles of conformism? Can it be independent and divergent, and not seek a home? Is it capable of mustering its inner strengths and living without being enlisted by a collective that accords it power? Perceiving poetry as

information, seeking to connect to social energy in order to fulfill its potential, confines it within the boundaries of human collectives, even if they are not political or inspired by an ideology. Bending poetry to obtain support from people supplying it with energy, stemming from their biological being or social, spiritual and even religious essence, will confine it and prevent it from wandering in exile.

Poetry is essentially dialectic. It has little vitality without the presence of the Other, without interaction with him. However, it also contains independent, personal elements and reaches its peak through the individual's anti-conformist activity and expression. Poetry, like language, enables us to view ourselves from outside, thereby fulfilling an important role, similar to language itself, and it is created by the individual's alienation even from himself. Bauman describes it as 'the trick is to be at home in many homes, but to be in each inside and outside at the same time, to combine intimacy with the critical look of an outsider, involvement with detachment – a trick which sedentary people are unlikely to learn' (2000, p. 207).

Since the individual discovers the abstractness of language at an early stage, he turns it into a subservient tool and attempts to program it. Poetry, stemming from language, is yet another format of programming, like prayer, ritual, story, opera. Language appears as an ultimate alternative to death and it meets the constant need of pinning down the ephemeral about to disappear. Poetry is fundamentally affected by this need and so, apparently, it cannot exist except within a human environment, defined and confined, investing it with meaning.

However, even though the individual supplies the energy to the tools he creates and also to the words he utters, poetry need not be dependent on energies that are political or able to fetter him. The concreteness of the words, the liberating power stemming from their movement disrupting conventional rhythms, and the divergent structure of poetry do not depend only on its connection to a palpable object, as promulgated during the Middle Ages by the nominalist school. The Diasporic approach proffers an alternative. It does not seek the concreteness of a home, and therefore language – rejected by Plato because its creations were not permanent – when in the form of poetry, it makes divergence possible.

Even if poetry is ephemeral and not eternal, while it exists it enables divergence from the concreteness of the here and now and lives as a dynamic independent entity. Indeed, because language is the human's main tool and even though he turns his anger against the messengers of existence, i.e. language (Shechter, 2005, p. 215), poetry has the power to exist in its own right.

All the humans' illusions are born of the language given them; it is language that enables them to play about in this way: to exploit it and to renounce it. Information, language, enables the human to create places of refuge for himself – the next world. But there are also other places of refuge – dreams. Surely information about the universe, the universal language itself, plays a kind of hide-and-seek, appearing and disappearing, creating and dismantling. (Shechter, 2005, p. 215)

The Diasporic poet will move constantly towards the all-pervading outer world, paving the divergent road. He does not destroy the homes of others, but he persuades them to set out with him along paths that sometimes prove new. The new path involves, through its very essence, the danger of becoming another home, and therefore the Diasporic trailblazer will remain a constant traveler, a philosophical nomad, the essence of his daily life consisting of search and exertion as an organic inner aspect of his creative life and its fulfillment in the love of humanity.

The Diasporic poet, living in a 'floating territory', as Michel Maffesoli (1996) describes, will always be asking questions, investigating and seeking a path and not always finding it. He will not lament that he has not found the final goal, since his life's purpose will be creativity and improvisation through love, not the violent conquest of a target through instrumental means. He will be digging without unearthing the sought-for objective, for the final aim is a home that he does not strive for. He will continue to confront the next obstacle, the next mountain, from which he will contemplate creativity, liberated from the shackles of a home and the restful but deceptive warmth of the family-collective-religious hammock. He will be homeless but also restless. The Diasporic poet's basic approach to reality will be a questioning one – wonder and investigation. In her poem 'Some Love Poetry', Szymborska expresses it well and asks about the essence of poetry. She gives 'a shaky answer' to that question, trying to cling to it to save her, but actually without succeeding:

Some –
not all, that is.
Not even the majority of all, but the minority.
Not counting school, where one must,
or the poets themselves,
there'd be maybe two such people in a thousand.
one likes to pet a dog.

Poetry –
but what sort of thing is poetry?
Many a shaky answer
has been given to this question.
But I do not know and do not know and hold on to it,
as to a saving banister. (Szyborska, 2001, p. 139)

Poetry may be hitched to ethnicity. Moshe Benarroch, writer, poet and translator, perceives himself as an exile. The Zionist home, the Israeli one, the existential situation at that particular historical moment and also the one preceding it, does not enable Benarroch to fulfill his destiny and to express the significance in its modern sense, and this makes him a poet of eastern exile in a country where the eastern narrative is already mainstream. He appreciates exile as a source of great cultural wealth: 'On the way to the Zionist revolution we lost many positive features pertaining to our exile, because Zionism considered any such characteristics as negative. When they tell me that I am an exile, I do not feel offended. I am not at ease in Israeli society and therefore I also consider myself as Diasporic'.[1]

Benarroch would surely have accepted the opinion of Amnon Raz-Karkochkin, that the idea of negation of the Diaspora means negation of the memory of entire traditions perceived as Diasporic within the Israeli context (Raz-Karkochkin, 1993, p. 24). And in the poem 'I am a Moroccan poet' he expresses it very well:

Tamazgha, my lost country

Tamazgha, land of the free people,
Kahena El Dahyan, my queen mother
jew and woman
who fought the arab invasion
in the eighth century
My Amazigh name, Arous, Benarrous, Benarroch
lost in centuries of wars
intolerance
in my country
where christians, jews and pagans
lived and believed by each other

Rise my Amazigh people
from the ruins of Rome
the intolerance of Islam
the decay of Europe
Rise my Amazigh people
and teach tolerance to this world
where the forgotten are the right
where the lost stone
leads the light

Rise Kahena, Queen of jews and Amazighs
Raise for your memory
this new world in this new millennium
demands justice for all that is called past.[2]

Benarroch's exile is also exile from himself, not only in opposition to a specific political agenda, a narrative he rejects. It is an exile not characterized by comfort and well-being. It does not involve striving for a non-Diasporic existence, attempts to shake off the imprint of exile. It is homelessness, but a genuine human existence. And yet it is not a Diasporic life, since exile has become a safe home, facilitating the forging of a well-constructed, confining ideology. Benarroch calls it 'the deepest exile'. He does not bemoan exile, as does Bialik. He does not glorify the homeland like Uri Zvi Greenberg. He does not perceive himself, like Avigdor Hameiri, as a person with a national identity, whose rapport to the People of Israel and its fate constitutes the central pivot of his writing. Benarroch's poetry enables him to leave the home he finds menacing, preying on him and ensnaring him. In his poetry he expresses unwillingness to withdraw behind the protective walls of ethnocentricity, he wants to break out of their tendentious confinement.

According to Benarroch, a home is a factor stifling his spontaneity and his instincts, his creativity, and above all his love. In his poem 'Coming out of the Closet' he conveys domesticity not only in its technical, architectural sense, but also as an idea. This poem expresses the liberating element in writing poetry, creative language making it possible to abandon the self-evident and also any specific territory. Benarroch gives expression to exile from a critical stance towards Zionism. He displays his Diasporic nature best in his poem 'The Enlightened Ones', expressing overall criticism of Zionism, though merely by implication – his opinion that it is oppressing the members of his ethnic group.

Since language, by dint of its essence, functions within transient situations, organizes energy and turns it into entities and then abandons them (Shechter, 2005, p. 32), it does not inherently contain the permanence of a home. Discourse between individuals is indispensable not only for the purpose of communication, but to produce tools and institutions; thus language itself is a creation, a group creation and its abstract nature 'enables the human to take possession of an ever widening sphere of existence, but it also causes great anxiety and engenders the wish to return to more tangible entities (Shechter, 2005, p. p. 34).

Poetry enables the individual to diverge from this path in that it does not seek to cling to the concrete world, but tries to speculate about its components and reshape them. Poetry is not egalitarian, and in a certain sense it enables the actualization of counter-education, on which Diasporic philosophy is based. Not being egalitarian enables poetry – through its rhythms, structure, the way it is written – to depart from the familiar mainstream fabrications of poetic culture and from the existing cultural institutions, confining it to a home, classifying it under categories in symbolically violent ways.

Thus poetry enables the person, not wishing to belong to a collective or to become some kind of recluse, to assert his individuality. Diasporic poetry enables him to create in a totally private and personal way, preserving his fundamental stance against being enlisted, even at the price of renouncing becoming a celebrity. To give up cultural and social legitimization is not a simple matter, and the Diasporic poet is likely to suffer from anxiety, fearing extreme loneliness; however, at the same time, he benefits from the power gained, enabling him to enjoy the freedom he needs in order to live poetry.

Poetry can invite responsiveness, open up the possibility of free choice, inevitably countered dialectically by a desire for the enriching experience of a nomadic life, worthy of the eternal improviser. Poets are indeed unique individuals, as in the words of Szyborska 'there'd be maybe two such people in a thousand'. They are not supposed to be raised above the people, aloof and detached, but – if Diasporic – they must be rooted in exile. These are individuals insisting on their independent path by dint of an existential choice, while demonstrating solidarity with humankind. But these writers sense a constant danger of being driven into the reality of the historical moment. Then they will turn poetry into a home, will turn themselves into an instrument in the hands of the forces of the state, of society, the regime, the ideology, in the service of the wish for power, of the self-pity of the victimized individual. Their test will come during a political or national crisis.

The steadfastness of an independent stance will also be tested when confronted by the need of social institutions to enlist poetry in the service of collective memory. This memory is preserved by myths and rituals greatly enhanced by committed poetry; they are the formal 'tools' of civil religion. Collective memory serves to define ideological groups, each fostering a different memory; therefore in the historical and political arena of power struggles, poetry is enlisted by the

competing memories. Poets will be granted a superior status and thereby also various personal and other benefits by elected and non-elected institutions.

Poetry contributes greatly to the building up of a collective memory, since, through its structure, it excels in lending the status of myths to violent practices and turning them into negotiable social property. Poetry has the power to enlist the young generation, in particular through building 'the memory of a shared past, preserved by the members of a small or large group who had experienced the past' (Schuman & Scott, 1989, pp. 259-381). It is a transformative tool facilitating the sifting through facts and reshaping the memory even to the extent of rewriting history. In joining in, poetry becomes negotiable and easily reproduced by the young through the media, highlighting its rallying power.

According to Yael Zrubavel, collective memory is not a mere collection of facts; it mediates between the existing historical material and the current agenda, and the social and political order of priorities. In contrast, history limits the inventiveness of collective memory. Thus, collective memory may improvise, emphasize certain elements, suppress others and shed a light into dark corners, and in other cases relegate important events to obscurity (Kizel, 2008, pp. 153-170). While the framework is laid down by historical sources or any type of knowledge about the past, it is not necessarily the existence of knowledge or its lack that determines the memory's components. Zrubavel therefore maintains that, when political debates about the nature of the memory intensify, history is enlisted in order to challenge the memory (Zrubavel, 1995). Poetry plays a central role in this context and may facilitate the sidestepping of historical and political facts.

Gur-Ze'ev, on his part, points out that poetry can also expose the horrifying truth, that all the philosophical, existential, political possibilities, as well as evading them can be defended and refuted by means that are also contingent on manipulation or self-forgetfulness, ending with a reconfirmation of the self-evident, of a vagueness determined by logical, existential, infinite and omnipotent inevitability (Gur Ze'ev, 2004, p. 194).

Nevertheless, poetry has the power to create and to love. Indeed, it is because it sometimes seeks to avoid using the tools of political rhetoric – motivated by the paradigm of temporary power relations or a clash of identities in the era of multiculturalism – and is multifaceted; it is responsive to the linguistic richness of life and its representation and has the potential to break out of boundaries. Poetry is destined to confront 'aggressive, national totality, dispersed into endless dimensions of life, levels of existence and metaphysical compulsion' (Gur Ze'ev, 2004, p. 194).

The poet, if he fulfills his destiny as an exile, as Berthold Brecht did in *The Exile of Poets*, is not a committed person; he is subversive, unwilling to speak for established authorities, even though there is always the possibility that he may be swallowed up by them, as happened at certain historical moments to other poets, who were enlisted by the sources of power, drew upon it and extolled it.

Poetry has additional Diasporic elements. It is a way of life expressing profound faith. It enables the poet – and also the reader – to overcome the limitations of his normative language that he absorbed in his home, the language that normalizes his perceptions and encloses him in the warmth of the familiar and the well known, causing him to submit to them. It enables the poet to distance himself from mere reproduction and express unparalleled beauty, as well as scathing criticism of the social manifestations of injustice and of fallacious political consciousness.

Language seeks to restrain the energy residing in the physical body that rebels constantly against the intentionality of language, but creative poetry serves as a means of revolt against the aggressiveness of language through its anti-hegemonic nature. Language becomes a substitute for territory, just as wars for abstract values come to replace it. Therefore Diasporic poetry does not seek to elevate values, such as that of birthright in the story of Cain and Abel. It does not wish to win in a struggle for flags, symbols and lands. It becomes the foundation of human creation, being an activity inspired by divergent energy, not by energy molding an identity; thus it is not motivated by human loneliness.

Descartes wished that, in order to be certain of his identity and verify his existence, a person should not be dependent on interacting with another; in the same way Diasporic poetry seeks to become an alternative to informative language. Diasporic poetry seeks to turn words and language, external in essence, into an internal phenomenon, and thus devoid of magic power, nor serving as a tool in the hands of rulers; their role is to be anti-instrumental, reflecting desire.

Heidegger perceived creative work and also poetry as establishing historical periods. He believed that poets are the true philosophers, but he distinguishes between the creation and the creator. According to Heidegger, the creator does not turn into a hero at the moment of completing his work; it is the creation that becomes a masterpiece establishing a period, and only after a certain time has passed (Mansbach, 1998, p. 92).

In his book *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Heidegger also asserts that language dominates Man's life and he lives within it. He also does not see language as creating value systems and institutions, i.e. a potential for connecting to physical existence; he perceives language as poetry. In his opinion masterpieces exist in their own right, and he emphasizes that the spontaneity of the artist and the intensity of his emotions are secondary to the role of the artistic creation as creating a world and truth. The significance of the existence of the artist, i.e. of the individual artist or philosopher, manifests itself after his creation is accepted in the course of time (Mansbach, 1998, p. 93). Thus Heidegger considers it possible for poetry to transcend the limits of the time when it was written and to be exposed during a later period. Diasporic poetry contains within it an element of 'disclosure', i.e. it is exposed after being hidden (Heidegger, 1999, p. 184).

Heidegger perceives language as a hiding place and a means of escape, and therefore it becomes a home. In contrast, the role of disclosure that he ascribes to poetry has an element of exile, since disclosure enables a divergence from the original purpose or the control of thought or the historical moment. This is how Heidegger distinguishes between language and poetry. Mansbach maintains that, according to Heidegger, language as the tool making poetry possible, is the essence of history, and therefore:

the fundamental components that had once created a new world are inscribed in the linguistic creations of a nation, such as legends, sagas and traditions. In view of the new interpretation of these creative works, in turning them into a legacy through which they project their light into the future, nations can make a fresh start and discover the truth that bestows on them their distinctive place in history, both in the present time and in future. (Mansbach, 1998, p. 98)

However, Diasporic poetry does not contain historical elements and it does not seek to become part of a legacy or enlisted for historical purposes. In his *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger points out that there is a danger in replacing a humanist subject by an aesthetic one (that will turn into a home, yearning for a home) and this will lead to surrender to subjectivism. He asks what it is that enables art to create truth and what enables works of art, among them poetry, to convey meaning and create a world, and thus preserve the continuity of authenticity.

In his discussion of the essence of art and its products in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger uses the concept of poetry or Poesie in the sense of the usual rhythmic poetic work, and the concept 'Urpoesie', 'Urdichtung' in the sense of the element found in any work of art, the foundation of all art' (Mansbach, 1998, p. 93). According to Mansbach's analysis, 'Urpoesie' enables works of art to create a space where the entities disclose themselves. It is 'das Offene' where they exist. Poesie makes it possible to incorporate them into the world, creating new connections with the other entities, thus producing a web of meaning.

Poesie is produced through the process of creation, but since the only connection with the artist preserved in the artistic work is his *intention* that the work should exist in its own right, the poem is no longer dependent on its creator (Mansbach, 1998, p. 93). The poem belongs entirely to creation itself. It is an occurrence of truth as disclosure, and thus every masterpiece lets truth appear. Heidegger also calls 'Urpoesie' 'Ursprache', and asserts that 'language itself is poetry in its essential meaning', i.e. 'Poesie' (Mansbach, 1998, p. 24).

Heidegger was very interested in the nineteenth-century poet Friedrich Hölderlin, whom he called 'the poet of poets'. He also dealt extensively with poems by Rilke, Mörike and others. In his book *The Way to Language* he asserts that words create the human world. According to Heidegger, the contribution of poetry lies in its being 'an act produced by the power of words and within it', and as for its preservation of the disclosure, Heidegger adopts Hölderlin's view, who concluded from the poem 'Recall' that 'what was preserved was founded by poets', meaning that the poet's language and its authentic nature preserve the entities as such. Hölderlin called it 'the poet's state of mind'.

Not only mere objects are substantiated by language, so is Man. Therefore 'the words of poets create the basis ... in the sense of providing a stable foundation to Man's being', as expressed by Heidegger. And thus, he too perceives language as a home. Even though it is the poets who create the meaning, and they establish the firm foundation to Man's being, he also does not believe there is hope for human thought to diverge through poetry. In this respect he does not provide an unambiguous answer about the essence of poetry as an active Diasporic existence.

Heidegger deals with the role of poets as capable of transforming, exposing things as they are, and perceives poetry as a home. He even uses the expression 'Gegend', neighborhood, to describe the place inhabited by poetry and thought. He writes that poetry and thought are directed to the logos, and therefore they can be perceived as residing in the same neighbourhood: 'Their being neighbors means that they live opposite each other, that is how they have come to dwell, each seeking the other's company' (Mansbach, 1998, p. 127). According to Mansbach, the concept 'neighborhood' represents a place involving movement, an inn, providing a possibility for development (p. 128).

Heidegger relates to poets as though they were standing on the peaks of distant mountains and speaking above an abyss. He assigns them the role of preserving the 'Ursprache' and the home of Being. He grants poetry the power that does not pertain to a home, but is above it, a power expressing boundless mystery, the power of the creative destiny. In his own words: 'The poet names the gods and all things ... poetry creates an entity by means of words ... when the gods are named and the essence of words is named, when the things are illuminated for the first time, human existence is firmly welded and founded' (Mansbach, 1998, p. 150).

Walter Benjamin in his essay 'About Language in General and about the Language of Man', relates to the subject of poetry, but first discusses language. His approach is spiritual and he distinguishes between the language of God, the pure language of naming, and the language of the Garden of Eden: Man plays a limited role in the Divine Tongue, and in the language born with original sin there is no innocence; it becomes instrumental, a tool. Benjamin asserts that the meaning of language is that of a principle intended for conveying spiritual contents:

Language does not manifest itself completely in the objects themselves. This sentence has a double meaning, owing to its borrowed and concrete significance: Objects do not have a perfect way of expressing themselves, they are voiceless. They are devoid of pure linguistic essence – they do not possess sound. They are able to communicate with each other only by means of a little or a great deal of physical interconnection. This interconnection is unmediated and infinite like all linguistic communication: It is magical (for there is also magic in matter). Human language is unique in that its association with objects is not physical, it is purely spiritual, symbolized by sound. This symbolism is expressed in the Bible in saying that God breathed the breath of life into man: life, spirit and language, all at the same time. (Benjamin, 1996, p. 289)

Here Benjamin goes back to the Bible and maintains that he does not base his philosophy on the Bible as a source of empirical revelation, but tries to discover what can be understood from the biblical text about language itself, including the language of poetry. He asserts that for this purpose the Bible is unrivalled as a source, since it perceives itself as a revelation and thus must disclose the basic facts about language. Benjamin follows the second version of the Creation that tells how God breathed life into Man and also that Man was created of the dust of the ground. In the whole story of the Creation, this is the only place where God expresses his will through matter, creating the world spontaneously.

God created Man in his own image. He created conscious Man in the image of the Creator. His spiritual essence is language, through which Creation occurs. The world was created by the Word, and God's linguistic essence is the Word. Human language is merely the reflection of that Word ... The seemingly endless possibilities of any human language are always limited and analytical in essence, in contrast to the endless, unlimited and creative possibilities of the Word of God. (Benjamin, 1996, p. 290)

According to Benjamin, Man cannot transcend the limits of language, the limits of poetry as a home. Human language, and also that of poetry, is constrained and analytical, and therefore no transcendental option exists, in particular not after the original sin:

The original sin is the moment when human language was born, within which naming no longer lives unblemished ... Words are supposed to convey something. That is indeed the original sin of the spirit of language: The words that convey from outside, a kind of parody of the Word, mediating explicitly, a parody of the explicitly spontaneous that is the Word of God the Creator, and the decline of the blessed language, Man's language, standing between them. There is indeed a basic identity between the Word that knows, as promised by the snake, for good or evil, and the Word that conveys from outside. Getting to know the world stems from the naming, but getting to know good and evil is, in the profound sense in which Kierkegaard perceives the word 'chatter', and it knows only one purification and one sublimation that has now also included the chattering, sinful Man: the sentence.
(pp. 292-293)

Benjamin distinguishes between the language of sculpture, of painting and that of poetry and maintains that 'since the language of poetry is based not only on the human language of names but certainly also on it, so we may presume that the language of sculpture or of painting is based on certain types of languages of objects and involves the translation of the language of objects into an immensely higher language' (pp. 294-295).

According to Benjamin, the language of poetry is spiritual and it enables Man to express himself without any connection to a home, to a framework. He grants poetic language the status of a stream of consciousness, when consciousness transfers itself from the lowest being up to Man and from Man to God.

Love is one of the main elements of Diasporic philosophy (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005a, p. 24). The language of poetry contains elements of the explicit revelation of Love, as it is manifested in the Song of Songs or in the Gospel according to John:

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ... These things I command you, that ye love one another. (John, chapter 15, verses 11-14 and 17)

Poetry may save man from solipsism and it fosters anthropomorphism of the whole world (Meir, 2004). Since it has such qualities, it contains elements of love and it is a significant, fundamental component of exile and one of the components of creativity. Gur-Ze'ev sees in Diasporic education a deeply religious way of life:

Profound faith with a male and female pole, God and Shekhinah (Divine Presence), 'reality' and utopia – as an impetus, as life space, and as an object to overcome. Diasporic education is counter education and becomes education for the love of life. It draws upon love for the joy and happiness arising from creativity, when life itself is a work of art, constantly reopening the gates of Being and the bolts of consciousness with all their wealth, levels and dimensions. The art of living involving suffering, compassion, love, joy and creativity, turns into religious belief, the message intended by Spinoza as the third, highest level of consciousness. The intuitive and spontaneous consciousness in the Diasporic ethic leads the eternal improviser to combat any manifestation of injustice, falsehood and ugliness. This consciousness is accompanied by the ethical stand of self-love stemming from the love of life and responsibility for the Other in a world where wisdom, justice, beauty and love are not all-pervading, but rather the means to overcome their denial and defilement. That is where we find mature, ironic joy, the close companion of the happy Diasporic man. (Gur-Ze'ev, 2004, p. 195)

Poetry can serve to extol Man's ruthlessness, be confined, draw boundaries; it can contain, in its Diasporic manifestations, a call for revolt. It may, however, serve those who wish to avoid revolt, as Camus states in *The Rebel*:

We can also say about these poets, who took off to conquer the sky, that in their desire to overthrow everything, they declared their desperate longing for order. By way of a total contradiction, they sought to derive wisdom from the irrational, turn the irrational into a method. These great heirs of romanticism claimed to make poetry the masterpiece and reveal authentic life in its most exhilarating aspects. They admired the sacrilegious and

turned poetry into an attempt and means of action. And indeed, whoever claimed to influence events and people prematurely, at least in the west, acted on a rational basis. (Camus, 1999, p. 69)

Poetry is trapped between two dimensions. On the one hand, when displaying responsibility, it can be of a Diasporic nature, divergent, revealing, subversive, creative and loving. It can serve as a tool helping Man to overcome the longing 'to return home' and the apparent nirvana of the existing social-cultural conventions. It enhances the tension between the unbridled urge and the creative reaction, empowering the potential for taking an ethical stance. On the other hand, it can turn into a tool enlisted and trampled on in the service of collectivism and ideology. Under the seeming protection of its structured gentleness it may empower human ruthlessness and inhumanity to Man. If it is committed, relaxed, instrumental, as a tool in the hands of the regime or a home or homes (the building of a nation or a state, of nationhood or any other project), it contains the potential for a creative return home, involving compromises and the making of definitive and restrictive statements, drawing it into the historical moment to serve collective and individual power struggles. As Brecht wrote in his poem 'The Exile of Poets':

Homer had no homeland,
And Dante had to leave his own ...
Lucretius went into exile,
Like Heine, and so lies
Brecht under a Danish roof of straw.
(Brecht, 1978, p. 123)

Notes

[1] <http://www.notes.co.il/benarroch/>

[2] *Amazigh* means Berbers, who are the majority of people in Morocco and in the Maghreb. They are more than 50% of the Moroccan population (some say 70%); yet their language is forbidden.

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