

MATERIAL VISIONS: THE POETRY AND COLLAGE OF LEAH GOLDBERG'S NATIVE LANDSCAPES

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In a diary entry from 1937, Leah Goldberg, living in Tel Aviv, and generally basking in the warm critical reception afforded upon her arrival in the city two years earlier, makes this offhand speculation: "By the way," she writes, "why have I recently stopped loving Jesus?"¹ Goldberg, a Lithuanian native, was a leading figure of the *moderna*, the first wave of Hebrew modernist poetry in Palestine, and also a prolific translator from Russian, German, French, and Italian; in addition to nine volumes of poetry, she published several novels, a number of plays, volumes of literary scholarship, journalistic essays, and a series of books for children which have become classics. These works, as well as her diaries, are replete with references to Dante, Petrarch, Dostoevsky, and Rilke, and to art from European museums; the umbilical connection between these exemplars of classical humanism and Christianity is clear in her work, while not always explicitly drawn.

It may come as a surprise to some that a Hebrew poet such as Goldberg would note the discovery of her recent disenchantment with Jesus. What is more remarkable: the sudden self-awareness, revealed as if in passing, that she has "stopped loving" him? Or the logical inference that she had loved him in the first place? Certainly the figure of Jesus played an essential role for modernist Jewish artists—from the more well-known work of Marc Chagall to the ubiquitous fictional and poetic renderings of Jesus in both Hebrew and Yiddish writing, such as the poem by Uri Zvi Greenberg, "*Uri tsvi farn tselem*" (Uri Zvi on the Cross; 1919), which appeared typographically in the shape of a cross. Greenberg's poem-*tselem* is an *iconic* text in both senses of the term: its visual form capitalizes on the substantive taboo regarding Christianity that still existed within both traditional and newly emergent secular Jewish cultures, and its content references how tropes of martyrdom could be productively motivated within the Jewish national setting.

Indeed, what has been called "the Jewish reclamation of Jesus" surfaced in numerous circumstances.² These modernists built on the groundwork laid by Moses Mendelsohn's early invocation of Jesus as connected to Jewish teachings, as well as nineteenth-century distinctions between the historical Jesus who was closely identified as a Jew versus the theological Jesus, a Christian invention. In this context, therefore, Goldberg's fascination, and subsequent

disappointment, with Jesus is part-and-parcel of the modern Jewish renaissance, and anchors her aesthetic enterprise within other contemporaneous movements and trends.

However, in her early poems, it is not Jesus who plays a leading role in the poetic rendering of the Christian-European landscape. Rather, this position is occupied, in multiple and evolving fashion, by the figures of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. Goldberg's variation on the Jesus theme may be understood not only as an exemplary instance of the modern Jewish "reclamation" of Jesus, but more essentially within the broader domain of the relation between literature and the fine arts.³

The relation between text and image was one of modernism's abiding tensions. Historically, the tension between text and image, between the concrete and the abstract, found expression in myriad forms, with each medium seeking to borrow or mimic salient traits from the other. For example, modernist painting often contained bits of text and letters, while linguistic forms, such as cover art featuring the names of Yiddish literary journals, attempted to acquire the iconic qualities of pictures. An ongoing creative synergy was common among writers and painters living in the same geographic area or cultural moment; for example, Tsiona Tagger, a painter of the Tel Aviv School produced portraits of the poets Greenberg and Avraham Shlonsky in the 1920s. Furthermore, modernist literature often mimicked contemporaneous artistic trends such as impressionism or cubism in an attempt to produce the concrete materiality of painting in language, conventionally considered a temporal medium. International trends such as imagism and acmeism placed a premium on the poetic word as such, and on stylistic practices that somehow produced the effects of the plastic arts.⁴

Goldberg does not seem to have been interested in the possibilities of language as paint *per se*, but she was a lifelong sketcher: the archival collection of her visual work includes six thousand catalogued items,⁵ and several meters of archival boxes with unnumbered items. The collection includes more substantial works, as well as numerous simple sketches in a variety of techniques—watercolor, pastel, crayon, charcoal, and collage. Though many of these date from the 1960s, the last decade or so of her life, the possible relations between painting and poetry seems to have been a lifelong concern, from her early fascination with the art of the Italian renaissance during her student years in Berlin, through her edited series of pocket-sized books for *Sifriat Ha-po'alim* devoted to painters such as Chagall in the 1940s, until the final years, when a flurry of intensely-wrought collages and paintings seems to have replaced, almost entirely, the work of poetry. In remarks from 1969, Goldberg says she came to painting out of "the temptation to do something with one's hands, to make figures and not describe them in words." She envies the painter's precise vision: "[t]he writer says: blue, and every reader sees a different blue. But when I see Picasso's blue, from the blue period, I know it is that blue and no other." Within these remarks about painting and poetry we may also note the presence of Goldberg-the-critic, the keen voice of judgment and appraisal that characterized her scholarship: "When you say to a writer: your language

is painterly, your style is painterly, it's always a compliment. When you say to a painter: your drawing is literary, it's almost always an insult."⁶

In this essay, I will compare the meaning of visual motifs in Goldberg's early work with the belated reiteration of the visual in the collage and painting of her final years. Any evaluation of Goldberg as both poet and painter, and the connections between these two branches of her work, should also take into account the broader meaning of the historical tension between text and image, especially within the context of Jewish culture and its normative prohibition on iconic forms.⁷ Therefore, we will also pay attention to the presence of another interlocutor, an intervening force which often mediated and shaped the meaning of the visual in Goldberg's work—this third party is Christianity, especially its potent visual imagery and its elevation of the iconic. As we shall see, visual references in Goldberg's work are often mediated by Christian imagery and certain features of the New Testament, especially in her first book of poems, *Taba'ot Ashan* (Smoke Rings). Published in Tel Aviv in 1935, the same year the poet immigrated to Palestine, these poems were written while Goldberg was a student in Berlin and Bonn, newly arrived in the metropolis from the pastoral and petit bourgeois provinces of Jewish-Lithuanian Kovno. While completing her doctoral degree in Semitic languages in Berlin, Goldberg attended courses in art history; it is in these classes, and within the wider setting of the city's museum culture, that Goldberg seems to have been exposed to artistic depictions of Christianity and its icons. The book's title refers to the cigarette-smoke-laden cafés in which many of the poems are set. In the poems, the relation between painting and sculpture, on the one hand, and certain icons of the Christian Church, on the other, is embedded within broader cultural topographies that constitute the poet's native landscape.⁸ By "native landscape" I mean those physical and spatial terrains that are in some way tagged as "home" in Goldberg's work, as well as the less tangible domain of culture that, for Goldberg, found its highest expression in European art and literature. Thus, the leave-taking of the European landscape is also imagined as a leave-taking of European culture, including its representative Christian institutions, for better and for worse.

Critics such as Tuvia Ruebner have largely followed what seems to have been Goldberg's own assessment of the poems in *Taba'ot Ashan* as a kind of immature and unripe stage.⁹ In his major article on the volume, Dan Miron argues that Goldberg's early poetics are more properly understood within contemporaneous Hebrew poetry in Europe and the United States, a kind of "diasporic modernism"¹⁰ which shirked the transcendental narratives of nation and territory and focused instead on the mundane details of everyday life. In Miron's view, the "promise" of *Taba'ot Ashan*—despite the poet's later success and central role in Israeli Hebrew letters—actually went unfulfilled, to a large degree, after Goldberg's immigration to Palestine, lost in the poet's own need to survive within the normative poetic trends of the day. It could be that Goldberg herself internalized these norms and modified her work accordingly. However, the poet revisited the Christian themes of the early poems in compelling fashion in a series of collages in the last years of her life.

Rediscovering the poems, both on their own and in relation to this late body of visual work, which has until now gone largely unnoticed,¹¹ will shed light on Goldberg's poetics and her treatment of landscape both local and abroad.¹² For Goldberg, the diverse figuration of Mary in these early poems was one way of defining herself as a poet—a European woman, and a Jew, writing in Hebrew—against both her native Lithuanian landscape and the broader cultural landscape of European art and tradition, to which she was passionately devoted. The reemergence of these themes in her late work, and in relation to her adopted native landscape—the Palestinian Yishuv and later the State of Israel—points to modern Hebrew writing's ongoing engagement with nativeness and landscape, and its indebtedness to diasporic forms, even in a new, territorialized condition.

I consider here a series of poems that offer two distinct versions of Christianity—in the impoverished landscape of Eastern Europe and the elaborate, ornate world of the Italian Renaissance as represented in museum collections of fine art¹³—each of which in some sense informed Goldberg's poetic-psychological world. Throughout, the poems draw on diverse bits of the New Testament related to female figures; we will track the evolution of these references to Mary and Mary Magdalene, to wooden Madonnas, and finally to nuns, and a version of the poet herself in a sacrificial setting. The speaker in these poems is both drawn to and repelled by these figures, using them to distinguish herself as a kind of local stranger, an ambivalence captured in Goldberg's description of Lithuania as "that abandoned homeland which does not mourn for me."¹⁴ The poems represent an attempt to inhabit the world of the other, and to appropriate it for aesthetic purposes; in this case, a twenty-something Jewish woman poet, whose early languages were Russian and then German, chooses to write in Hebrew from the relative center of European culture, and adopts Christianity as funneled through its iconic female figures, in order to *become* a poet. As a group, the "success" of these poems turns on a kind of subject-object reversal that marks the *self* in new and "other" ways.

The first poem is called "Pietà."¹⁵ It draws on two familiar cultural motifs: the Pietà, an artistic depiction often in sculptural form of the Virgin Mary cradling Christ's dead body, and the idea of autumn as a season of transition and paradox, marked by both abundance (the harvest) and decay (the approach of winter.) Goldberg's poem overlays these two themes to produce a landscape that is at once both familiar and strange:

Pietà

Once again paths... the autumn's blood
 On the earth's wounds.
 A boney pine branch [hand] stretches
 Toward the blind sky.

Once again the weeping sadness of heaven
 over the corpse of the autumn earth.
 Like Madonna kneeling
 Over the body of the crucified.

Pietà — whispers the forest.
 Pietà — answers the autumn.
 And silence opens a gate
 To the calm of the Father's Kingdom.

Only the wind howls —
 Judah weeping for his sin,
 Kissing the feet of his friend,
 Asking forgiveness from the dead.

The measured trochaic rhythms and regular repeating rhyme scheme locate the poem within a European tradition of autumnal verse addressing the paradoxical beauty of a vibrant, yet decaying, landscape. Goldberg's poem presents Mary in doubly figurative fashion: on one level, Mary is depicted in the Pietà, an iconic rendering of her care for Christ, on a second level, the Pietà itself serves as an image for the autumn landscape. The substance of seasonal change is rendered in martyrological terms: the fall foliage's sacrifice is mourned by the heavens, whose "weeping" suggests the movement of rain and wind. The forest and the autumn collude in the poem's brief, enigmatic dialogue in the first two lines of stanza 3, prefiguring a silence—*dmama*—that is itself a condition for opening the gates of the "Father's Kingdom." In the final stanza, against the Pietà's traditional silence, emerges the voice of a Jewish presence in the land—"Judah weeping for his sin"—a presence both meteorological and metaphorical, "wandering" like a wind, seeking redemption and forgiveness.

The main formal device indicating an intimate connection between the season of both life and death, and the Christian narrative of resurrection, is the repeated rhyme of *stav* and *tslav* (autumn and cross), in this poem and in the poem immediately following, "*Madonot al parshat drachim*" (Madonnas at the Crossroads.)

However, whereas in "Pietà," Mary is imagined at a remove—both in the iconic image of the Pietà, and as a metaphor for the landscape—this distance is diminished in "Madonnas at the Crossroads,"¹⁶ as the first-person speaker expressly compares herself, forsaken in love, to a group of wooden icons at a frozen crossroad.¹⁷

Madonnas at the Crossroads

I became accustomed to waiting in vain,
 And to remembering, without agony, blessed days.
 Wooden Madonnas at the crossroads
 Are calm like me in the ice of autumn light.

Worn and silent wooden Madonnas
 Know: he will not rise and come to life,
 He won't come to wipe away a tear in silence
 at the frozen wasted crossroads.

They won't get to kiss the blood on his feet,
 Did they hear the laughter of the boy from Nazareth?

And what if they saw him on the cross
 And on his lips they read another woman's name?

But they remember blessed days
 And are accustomed to vain expectation —
 So too am I: at the crossroads
 Cold and so quiet in the ice of autumn light.

The poverty of the Roman Catholic Church is underscored in the poem by the simplicity of the icon's handiwork, made of wood to withstand the elements of a blighted site that is itself neither here nor there, but on the way, at the crossroads.¹⁸ The poem's lonely congregation waits in vain, one for her beloved, the others for the resurrection. Their distance from redemption—they will neither kiss the blood on Christ's feet nor hear his laughter—is absolute, and their devotion is further undercut at the end of the third stanza by the fact that he spoke the name of another woman: *shma shel ha-acheret*. Within Jewish cultures, the term *acher* is strongly connected to non-Jewish practices: *davar acher* (literally, "an other thing") is a synonym for both pig, an unkosher animal, and idol worship. Its use here seems also to draw on diverse accounts from the New Testament: the naming of "*ha-acheret*" could refer to the report of Christ speaking the name of Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, an act that surprised his disciples. According to diverse accounts of the Gospels, Mary Magdalene was the first witness to Christ's resurrection. Matthew also mentions "the other Mary" who was present with Mary Magdalene at the resurrection,¹⁹ a reference to one of Lazarus's sisters, also called Mary.²⁰ In the Gospel of John, this Mary is referred to by the Greek *Mariam*, which is a translation used in the Septuagint of the Hebrew *Miriam*, Moses's sister; some scholars have noted the prophetic or visionary qualities shared by these two figures. Goldberg seems less interested in the potential overlap between Judaic and Christian sources and more drawn to the mutability of Mary herself, her ability to be both passive and active, both silent and voiced. The working through of the multiple Marys engenders both empathy and an awareness of difference.²¹

"*Ikarit mitpalelet*"²² (Peasant Woman Praying) also offers a pastoral scene involving a woman praying to a divine female presence.

Peasant Woman Praying

Colorful kerchief on wrinkled forehead,
 Broad hand, palm grasping a basket.
 A deep bitter line at lips' edge,
 Downcast gaze facing a statue of Mary Magdalene.

Facing a worn and stained wooden statue
 A brief, heavy, stubborn prayer:
 "If my sin is forgiven this time
 this will be yours, blessed and blessing one."

But in the barefoot calm,
 a certainty of the sin's naivete, that cannot be redeemed.
 And so very clear: they are innocent of sin
 Like the grain exposed
 To cold heaven's laughter from above.

Mary's figurative nature is complicated by actual speech: a peasant woman makes an offering to an icon of Mary Magdalene, thus transforming the name of the *acheret*—"the other woman"—into a statue. Magdalene's reputation as a penitent sinner makes her a logical site for the women's confession. Her depiction as foolish is reinforced through the third stanza's rhyme scheme, specifically, the aural assonance and consonance of "barefoot" (*yichafot*), "innocent" (*chapot*), and "exposed" (*chasufot*.) In the final line, the cold heavens merely laugh in response; the efficacy of prayer, the whole idea of faith, is mocked, even upended. Yet there is something solid and inviting about the landscape of peasant observance, a process tied to the seasons, and to a familiar landmark that has witnessed time's passage. The praying figure belongs to this place in a way that the speaker does not. Moreover, though the poem concludes by dismissing the devotional act, the woman herself seems transformed and comforted. The "bitter" set of her lips, her downcast face, and mumbled words of prayer are lightened by the poem's end; she may be barefoot, but she is also "at peace." While the speaker distances herself from what is perceived as a blind or ignorant act of faith, there is also a grudging recognition of the ease with which the woman seems relieved of the burden of her sin. The cruelty of the poem's final line recalls the impenetrability of the "Father's Kingdom" in "Pietà" but *only* from the point of view of the speaker, who stands outside the devotional act, with some amount of envy. While the speaker may admire these icons, she has no access to their comfort or power. However, it is within this very landscape that the poem's speaker and, inferentially, Goldberg herself, becomes a poet: the next poem, "A Walk around the Village," continues the autumnal, pastoral scene and concludes thus:

Poplar branches rustle,
 And the path wonders and smiles,
 Having dreamt once during the days of rain
 That a poet (f.) would pass by here.²³ (*she po ta'avor meshoreret*)

The woman poet, too, becomes a figure in the landscape, not permanent like the Madonnas, but transient, "passing." Her movement recalls the equally mobile voice of the wind in "Pietà," figured as a weeping Judah, a local iteration of a classical figure, the wandering Jew. Goldberg's first book might be considered an integral moment in European Hebrew literature, yet the volume also notes its short-lived nature and eventual demise: the emergence of a Jewish woman poet,²⁴ writing in Hebrew on Lithuanian soil, but ultimately just passing through.

As opposed to the pastoral poems, those poems containing indoor images relating to Mary are literally and figuratively much darker. "At the Monastery in Posczyzseli/Pažaislis"²⁵ depicts a speaker closer to the poet's own self,

entering the physical space of the Christian other, a space characterized by the sensual display of bells, icons, and strange rituals. Goldberg toured the monastery in 1929 while teaching in a nearby village and boarding with a local family; from the letters and journal of the period, we learn that it was likely her first extended period in a non-Jewish environment. The speaker in the poems observes these "forbidden" spaces with an almost ethnographic curiosity. In the first poem, "*Ba-veyt ha-tefila*" (In the Prayer House), she wavers between suspicion—she is fed a "poisonous goblet" and "strange stories"—and something approaching sympathy, as she gazes at what is likely a Pietà (a "mother's face," a "boy's eyes.") Yet her empathy gives way to reproach. In the poem's final stanza, the admonishing "voice of old" resembles the dismissal of naïve faith in "Praying Peasant Woman."²⁶ The following poem, "In the Cellar," records a gothic descent, away from the open spaces of the early poems, complete with bats in her hair, skull-and-bones, and flickering candles; the poem concludes with a reprimand: the nun's calm statement of universal truth resembles what the praying peasant woman would have said, if given the chance to speak.²⁷

We have traced how these poems grapple with the figure of Mary in all her diverse emanations, from a muted, metaphorical rendering in "Pietà," to wooden icons of Mary, to actual prayer by an individual woman facing a statue of Mary Magdalene, and finally to a first-person speaker resembling the poet, immersed in a Christian space, conversing with a nun, and pondering the female aspect of the divine. These figurations evolve one more time in the startling reversal of the final poem we will consider, "*Chalom na'ara*" (A Young Girl's Dream)²⁸ where the speaker imagines herself as Jesus, being served by Mary Magdalene.

A Young Girl's Dream

"Holy Madgalene" — painting by Carlo Crivelli
found in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin

I dreamed that I was — you,
And Crivelli's Magdalene
served me a boiling-hot drink, pure
In a gold-crueted crystal goblet,
And her curls — a spiraling soft snake —
On each side, touch my cheeks,
And my whole body is drunk with the scent of tuberose.

I dreamed that I was— you.
And the face of a pale young girl
Was forever wiped from my memory
And I am thirsty for Magdalena.

And there was no way out of the dream's terror,
And no escaping Magdalena.

The poem marks a distinct formal departure: it is ekphrastic, that is, it describes a painting, not an actual scene, though given the epigraph, we may

imagine the speaker standing in front of this particular painting in a specific location: the Italian Renaissance channeled through a museum in Berlin. In a sense, this physical scene represents an evolution of the encounter with other Christian icons in the monastery, and cements the connection between the church and high art. The poem presents a curated, museum-bound vision of Christianity that sharply contrasts the lived Christianity of the poems set in the Lithuanian landscape. Here and earlier, we find the Hebrew term “Magdalena” and not “*Maria hamigdalit*,” the proper form of reference to the historical figure. But this is precisely the point: Goldberg is less interested in the historical figure, and more in her artistic representation as a Christian icon, and the particular aesthetic origins of her Latinate roots. The speaker’s thirst for Magdalene reminds us of the goblet offered in the monastery and the poisonous temptation of “strange tales.” This desire destroys the memory of all else, including the “other woman,” “*ha-acheret*,” in this case the figure of a pale young girl. “No escaping Magdalena” points to a kind of erotic servitude, a cyclical condition of waiting and substitution that characterizes the volume’s poems of frustrated love.²⁹

The encounter with Christian icons (not the same as Christianity *per se*), specifically their depiction of emotional scenes involving devotion, passion, and sympathy provided a lifelong exemplar for Goldberg: a model of transcendent devotion and sympathy that was, in essence, the primary task and function of great art. Empathy, or the finding of common ground, of resemblance, lies at the core of metaphor—a fundamental poetic device. Metaphor grounds these early poems about Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene, with their evolving figuration of proximity and resemblance between the poetic speaker and the Christian icons. Indeed, the poems describe varying degrees of likeness, and depict modulating modes of empathy and identification between the poetic speaker as a stand-in for the Hebrew woman poet, and the different female emblems of Christian devotion and passion.

Goldberg’s poems do not highlight the Christian Marys’ foreign qualities in order to shore up her own Jewishness,³⁰ if anything the poems seem to want to make her more familiar, to appropriate her in order to motivate a poetic utterance. It is not the strangeness of Mary that appeals but her grudging proximity, her likeness to the poetic speaker and her situation. The proximity between the poetic speaker and Mary exists in situational terms that are emotional and affective, as well as broadly speaking, cultural.³¹ The poems adopt a set of tropes that are both alien to the poet *and* an integral part of her local landscape, in order to probe her relation to this environment and her emergence as a poet within it.

Indeed, the images of Mary in Goldberg’s poems are ultimately connected to the idea of a native landscape, both culturally and physically. The bond to the local—a terrain dotted with multiple Marys—is figured in relation to *ha-acheret*, the “other” woman, who is herself rooted in the landscape through its religious and cultural landmarks. This use of Mary as a vehicle of cultural reference, and for a poetic exploration of one’s European home, was a project that found little sympathy within the dominant national norms of Hebrew writing during this period. It is no coincidence, then, that such express and

multiple references to Christianity eventually disappear from Goldberg's work. One exception is of course the famous concluding image of her late lyric, published in 1964, "Tel Aviv 1935," a retrospective poem set during the year the poet arrived in Palestine. The poem catalogues the culture shock of



Figure 1. Untitled drawing, ink on paper, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

her new surroundings, and amidst the kaleidoscopic cacophony of the Tel Aviv boardwalk, the poet imagines a surreal, yet familiar, landmark:

And so it seemed — if you but turn your head — there in the sea
Floats your hometown church.

Goldberg deploys this almost Chagallian image in a poem expressly addressing the trauma of leaving one's homeland, and the difficult psychological work inhering in immigration.³² While the Christian references in her work become fewer and farther between, the collages and drawings created in the last decade or so of her life seem to indicate a continued devotion to these themes.

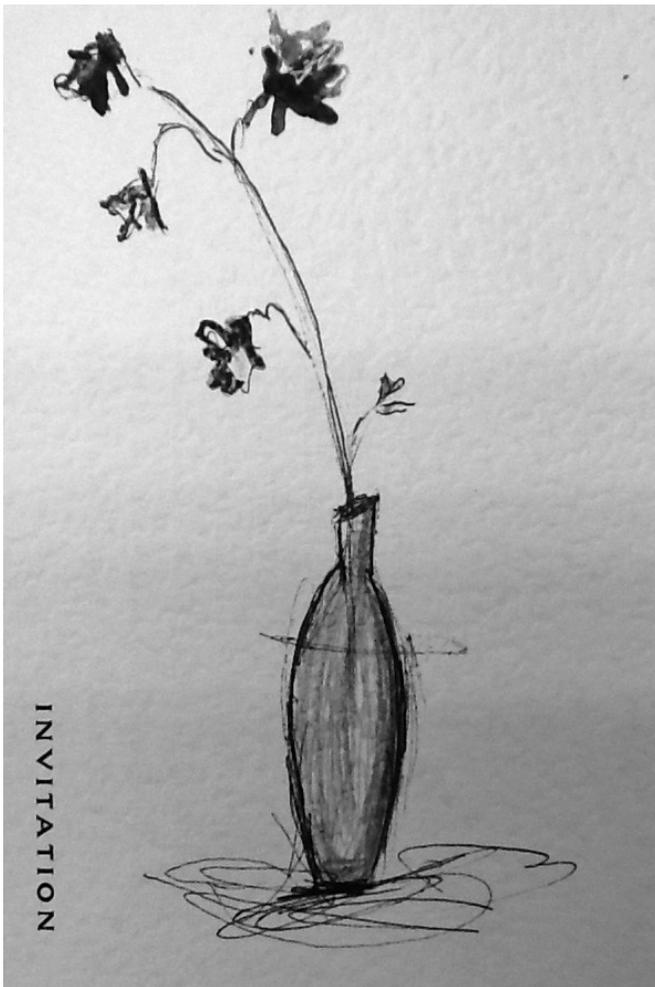


Figure 2. Ink and pastel drawing on invitation, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

The bulk of Goldberg's visual work consists of drawings, in sketchbooks and on loose sheets of paper (Figure 1). Most are undated and untitled. Some pictures are drawn on the very ends of pads of paper, themselves an indication of Goldberg's travels, or on the backs of the cultural and social invitations she received while living in Jerusalem and teaching at the Hebrew University (Figure 2). (Perhaps she realized that invitations come on quality card stock and saved them for this purpose). The drawings are mostly figurative, that is, some kind of object or scene is generally discernable, and many might be drafts of illustrations for her children's books. Goldberg exhibited some of the paintings in two exhibits in 1968,³³ and some of the images surfaced in connection with the year-long commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of her birth; otherwise no one has paid much attention to them, perhaps because Goldberg herself spoke of them in disparaging terms, hesitant and hedging about their worth as works of art. And yet they offer to my mind a compelling coda to some of the central themes in her work, and also allow us to think more critically—with the poet herself—about the possible relations between text and image.

Goldberg seems skeptical about formal similarities between the two media: "The rhythm of painting, the rhythm of music, the rhythm of language, these are different things...." The essential difference rests with a relation to abstraction: she admits to loving a good abstract—*mufshat tov*—but claims



Figure 3. Collage with mixed media and Dante, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

she herself cannot arrive at what she calls “absolute abstraction. Even my less material poems have something that is related to figurative art.”³⁴ And it is with this desire for abstraction—what she could not achieve in language—that the poet arrives at collage (*Figure 3*):

I don't view collage as the joining together of existing objects...With collage, I strive to take material and use it in another fashion. Material must be stripped of its prior functional significance, emptied of all prior meaning and given new meaning like *a stain of paint in a frame* that I created. It's true there is a game here, but the element of play exists in all art. I also enjoy the cutting and gluing of paper, and also the fact that I change its meaning. In collage, it's easier to arrive at the abstract.³⁵

As a conceptual mode, collage is probably *the* modernist technique par excellence. Juxtaposition, fragmentation, the baring of the device, the invitation to the viewer or reader to build the work, the dismantling of realistic modes of representation—all these are implicit in the work of collage, and central to any rendering of modernism. In some instances, Goldberg's collages do seem to reach for a kind of abstraction as she layers and juxtaposes different kinds of material and media, bits of color with passages of text in different languages. There are, for example, collages that are clearly landscapes but also seem to partake of the replenishment of meaning that she refers to (*Figure 4*): A collage



Figure 4. “Knight and Maiden,” Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

that Goldberg labeled "Knight and Maiden" refers to a motif from classical European painting. In this case, her knight and maiden are cut from pieces of maps, a transparent enough figure of travel though not, from what I have seen of the collages, a common choice of material for her. Readers familiar with the well-known Goldbergian refrain—"the pain of two homelands" (*ha-ke'ev shel sh'tey ha-moledot*)— will appreciate the fact that the knight's map is cut from the heart of Goldberg's Europe (Danube, Vienna, Frankfurt, Prague), while the maiden, a slight figure in red, is cut from a blurred Hebrew map.³⁶

Despite her declared preference for a good abstract—a *mufshat tov*— most of the collages are resoundingly figurative, and even compulsive in their repetition of one motif in particular: women's faces, with lots of accessories, including hats, crowns, and necklaces (*Figures 5 and 6*). Some faces constitute the entirety of the image; sometimes they are miniature and constructed from the slightest of stains, shadows, or shapes. Various kinds of paper, including pieces of magazines, adorn these faces that are heavily treated with mixed media. There is intensive attention to their eyes, many of which are cut back to reveal a kind of layering of materials and texts in different languages, in this case a Hebrew newspaper over a German article about Beethoven's sonatas—a reference to both Goldberg's own multi-layered persona as well as, perhaps, the German cultural underpinnings of modern Hebrew literature (*Figure 7*). This repeated working of the eyes, with the allusion to multiple frames of cultural reference, brings me to a line from Goldberg's poem "From My Mother's House" (1956),³⁷ where the adult speaker gazes into her grandmother's mirror and declares that she "does not resemble her at all." The poem concludes by citing the "family tradition: that she was very beautiful": thus the lack of resem-



Figure 5, left. Mixed media collage of woman's head, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

Figure 6, center. Mixed media collage of woman's head with crown of thorns, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

Figure 7, right. Collage detail with German text underlay, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

blance is both physical as well as sociological; the adult granddaughter living a secular life in Tel Aviv has little in common with her maternal ancestor.

Who are these women and what do they represent for the poet? Given my reading of the early poems, I am of course tempted to wonder if Goldberg continued to be interested in some version of these multiple and interchangeable female Christian icons.³⁸ The image of the crown of thorns, a symbol of suffering and compassion, brings us I think more certainly into the domain of Marys and Magdalenas (*Figure 6*). In a pastel and crayon image of three female faces, the middle figure appears to be wearing a crown, and her partners, perhaps halos (*Figure 8*). Against the magazine-page background of little glowing dots, it almost feels like a mosaic. The work may allude to the “three Marys” motif, an artistic rendering of three women, all of whom bear some version of the name Mary or Marie, and who according to the Gospels accompanied Mary to Jesus in his tomb; one of the earliest known rendering of this theme was part of the Dura Europos synagogue, dating from the third century, a site whose frescos contain a dense set of Jewish and Christian motifs alongside Greco-Roman themes. This drawing is also unique in the collection in that instead of using a page from a pad of drawing paper, Goldberg painted directly on the back of a magazine page (*Figure 9*). Here is the reverse side: a black-and-white photograph of a nurse cradling an emaciated child, standing in an outdoor yard with other figures evident in the background, and a sign indicat-



Figure 8. Pastel and crayon of three women, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

ing the Red Cross.³⁹ The photograph casts an otherwise anonymous scene of suffering and female compassion in Christian terms—a kind of modern-day Pietà—a frame of reference which was certainly widespread after the war. In an article from 1945, “*Europa shelechem*” (Your Europe) Goldberg seems to bid a final farewell to her native landscape:

“I saw you today, Europe in pain.... like a beaten and wounded child.... And I wanted to kiss your wounds. You were again in my Jewish eyes like Jesus on the cross.... You were meant to atone for the sins of your sons, but there is no atonement for blood... there has never been atonement for the blood and for all we have suffered, that we have caused our fellow man.”⁴⁰

She asks: “What was *europa shelanu* [our Europe]: Dante, Michaelangelo, Goethe, Flaubert, Mozart, Stendahl, Verlaine, Rilke, Rodin, Cezanne, Stravinksi and James Joyce,”⁴¹ and concludes: “the enormous pain whose name is Europe—‘*Europa shelechem*,’ ‘*Europa shelanu*,’ ...it seems Europe is no longer ours, though we were very much hers.”⁴²



Figure 9. Reverse side of three women, magazine image, Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

Goldberg sums up here the enduring and often ambivalent relation between modern Jewish cultures and their European hosts, a dense nexus of belonging and exclusion that continued to echo in the poet's work long after she had chosen a new language and a new home. This same quandry is famously voiced in Yankev Glatshiteyn's 1938 Yiddish poem "Good Night, World," published in New York after the poet had visited, for the last time, his hometown of Lublin. Glatshiteyn's farewell to European culture is framed as a return to *dalet amos*, the four walls of traditional Jewish learning. Here, in a move akin to her rescue of the liberal tradition represented by Beethoven, still intact and untainted by Nazism, peeking through the Hebrew eyes in the abovementioned collage, Goldberg attempts to wrest from Europe some bit of humanity from the bloodshed.⁴³

Finally, Goldberg's drawings offer us the opportunity to consider the value and meaning of comparisons between literature and the fine arts (*Figure 10*). It is one thing to note that Goldberg was envious of Picasso's blue; it's another entirely to ask, even tentatively, what kinds of connections might be drawn, say, between the practice of collage and Goldberg's poetics. As noted above, fragment and juxtaposition—the central act of collage—is at the heart of twentieth-century modernism, and Goldberg's experimentation with it here seems relatively belated, and also stands apart from the more expository,



Figure 10. Mixed media collage with "Lea," Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.

free-verse style of her later poetry. That is, she does not seem to move towards the abstract, neither in her poetry nor, one might argue, in the collages themselves, which as we have seen generally beg a more literal, figurative reading. Certainly there are other contemporaneous poets, working in Hebrew and in Yiddish, whose work more easily fits the bill: the poetry of Anna Margolin, for example, shares some of Goldberg's classicism, though in her sole published volume *Lider* from 1929, there is at least a stated commitment to the art of the fragment.⁴⁴ The early poetry of Esther Raab, Goldberg's Hebrew contemporary in Tel Aviv, with its short, compressed lyrics and elliptical, often opaque syntax seems a more likely candidate for a poetics that mimics a "stain of paint in a frame created" (as Goldberg characterized collage). What we find here, therefore, seems more a statement of admiration than of actual practice.⁴⁵

Perhaps, however, we may consider the act of collage in relation to the abruptness and somewhat arbitrary nature of the creative process⁴⁶—a mode in which connections are often oblique and indicate a kind of rupture or breakage. On one hand, it would be difficult to read breakage in any literal way in Goldberg's work; if anything the resolute formalism of her work in the middle decades, especially her devotion to the sonnet form—connected, as it surely was, for Goldberg, to a certain vision of European high culture—seems to work against any normative notion of rupture.⁴⁷ On the other hand, she would not be the first poet to turn to form in the face of catastrophe, a gesture that of course has a long tradition in Hebrew writing. Ariel Hirschfeld has argued that the massive appeal of Goldberg's poetry stems from its record of the *psychic* break engendered in leaving Europe, as well as its intimations of the approaching physical destruction of these landscapes.⁴⁸ This insistence on writing about "there"—the visions of childhood and Europe persist in her subsequent volumes, pointedly in the volume entitled "*Me beyti ha-yashan*" (From My Old Home; 1944) -- could well account for Goldberg's lifelong popularity among readers, and especially her reputation as a nature poet. Indeed, one logical evolution of the idea of the poet as a figure passing through the landscape—"she-po ta'avor meshoreret"—is a kind of sensitivity to the new landscape's local forms: not necessarily its ancient or biblical history, but its present-tense landmarks. Some of Goldberg's best-known and most-beloved poems are simple, ballad-like lyrics in which inanimate parts of nature sing to one another: the river sings to the stone, the tree sings to the river, the moon sings to the river. In "the river sings to the stone," *ha-nachal shar la-even*, the river announces: "I am the transient, the changeable" (*ani ha-cholef*), while the stone is the *kayam*, what continues to exist. The poem's final line reveals the river as a stand-in for the poet—*ani ha-meshoreret*—*ve-hi ha-olam* (I am the poet and it is the world)—a reiteration of the Goldbergian notion of the poet as a passing figure in the field.⁴⁹

In some sense, we may view these poems, in which inanimate bits of the landscape sing, as descendants of Esther Raab's nature poems from *Kimshonim* (Thistles; 1930); her early work depicts a landscape whose volatile and unruly sensuality produces an entirely self-centered fertility, with no need for human intervention.⁵⁰ Also of importance here is Goldberg's essay from 1939, "On

That Very Topic," regarding the task of the poet during wartime: to uphold poetry's "universal" values as an aesthetic practice, and write about beautiful weather.⁵¹ Nature is not necessarily an apolitical arena; rather a sensitivity to its forms, itself an enunciation of sympathy, becomes also a path toward commonality and resemblance.

Goldberg's cycle "*Mi-shirey tsion*" (From the Songs of Zion; 1956) treats the native voices of the poet's new landscape. These poems combine pastoral elements, including a "destroyed village," with an extended reference to one of Hebrew literature's more abiding formulations of the lyric, Psalm 137, in which the Babylonian exiles lament their fate, as well as their inability to sing: "Our captors asked us there for songs.... Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?"⁵² Goldberg's poem embeds the original declaration of fidelity to the memory of the land within a contemporary homecoming, a transformation that has deafened the Jews, stripping them of both song and sympathy: "How can we sing a song of Zion, in the land of Zion, if we haven't yet begun to listen?" This auditory expertise is emblematic of precisely the type of empathy necessary to truly encounter the land on its own terms, including the voices of those modern-day exiles, the Palestinians in their midst.⁵³ Another poem cycle, "*Illuminations*," published in September of that same year alludes to a similar defect; instead of deafness, this time the poet lacks the fundamentals of language:

On one of the hilltops
 flies an orange bird
 Whose name I do not know.
 But the olive trees know her,
 And the wind chases after her, singing:
 Here is your home.

In the eyes of an Arab girl,
 At the entrance to a destroyed village
 Flutters an orange bird,
 Whose name I do not know.⁵⁴

The first verse references a well-known passage in the first modern Hebrew novella written in Palestine, Y. Ch. Brenner's *Nerves* (1908), in which the anti-heroic protagonist looks out across the newly-forming Jewish settlements and also notices a bird, whose name he does not know in Hebrew.⁵⁵ Brenner's iconic story depicts the difficulties encountered by European Jews within the Palestinian landscape, and also delineates the role that Hebrew literature will have in domesticating it. Nearly fifty years later, Goldberg's poem introduces the presence of an Arab girl, standing by the ruin of her village, who almost certainly knows the name of the bird, and appears to be as rooted as both the olive trees and the wind that urges, obliquely, "here is your home." The act of observing the bird's reflection is implicit, and the poet speaker is effaced throughout the poem, except through the annunciation (twice) of her lack of knowledge. This imagined act of reflection, of seeing the landscape through

the Arab girl's eyes, brings the reader back to the domain of empathy for the other and identification threaded throughout the landscape poems of *Taba'ot Ashan*. Whereas in the early poems, images of local Christian icons appeared as a vehicle for articulating the emergence of a female Hebrew poetic subject, here the speaker is stymied: no longer a figure passing through, and at best a passive observer of the landscape's true agents—the olive trees, the wind, the bird, the girl. The example of Magdalena's suffering, and the poet's growing, reluctant estrangement from the Lithuanian-European landscape forms the core of the earlier poems; here, the empathy is for the suffering of a figure found delicately embedded in modern Hebrew poetry: the dispossessed Palestinian other.⁵⁶

Indeed, this figure also appears in a much later poem by a writer whose admiration for Goldberg was clear. In Dahlia Ravikovitch's "A Jewish Portrait," a female figure wanders through a landscape that is simultaneously European and Middle Eastern.

She
 Is not your sort.
 She's a Diaspora kind of Jew whose eyes dart around
 In fear.
 Wears an old-fashioned dress,
 Her hair pulled back without a bit of grace.
 Doesn't undo her bundles.
 Why should she undo her bundles....
 On the road.
 Caravans pass her by,
 Ukrainian peasants in their carts
 And dark-skinned refugees, screaming...
 Her eyes are the blue eyes of Khazars,
 Her face a broad face,
 Her body the heavy body of a native woman,
 Third generation in the Land of Israel.⁵⁷

The poem is part of a series published in response to events during the First Lebanon War in June, 1982. The woman's movement toward her home—she is neither a part of nor apart from the caravan of refugees—is marked by a steady determination, despite her weariness. In spite of her ambiguous identity—diasporic Jew, Khazar and, geographically speaking, of the Land of Israel—she is emphatically of the place: a "heavy body of a native woman." Ravikovitch's poem "blur[s] the distinction between Diaspora Jew and Palestinian refugee."⁵⁸ Though clearly written in a radically different era and political climate, I am tempted to read this figure as a distant cousin of Goldberg's praying peasant. This association is strengthened by an image of the woman's weariness—"Only the soles of her feet will she bathe"—that recalls the New Testament scene of a "sinful" woman, some iteration of Mary, washing Jesus' feet.⁵⁹ Both Goldberg's and Ravikovitch's poems use identificatory images of women to code references to diasporic life. Like the woman in Ravikovitch's

poem, Goldberg's Gentile peasant, kneeling in prayer, is irreducibly native. Both also serve as figures of empathy: empathy, what Ravikovitch called "true love," lays at the heart of the poetic process—in the mechanics of metaphor, of noticing and announcing similarity, which is not sameness, but commonality. Goldberg's praying peasant is one link in an interdependent chain of female figures: the chain begins in Europe, in the Lithuanian pastoral landscape and the museums of Berlin, and moves, in almost subterranean fashion, to her newly adopted home, surfacing in the landscape poems, and again in the late visual work. Ravikovitch's "Jewish portrait" provides another latter-day link, a woman who is at once native and refugee, Jew and Palestinian; like Goldberg, she is indisputably at home, but irrevocably in exile.

Goldberg hovers at the edges of Ravikovitch's work and she continues to be an important presence in the field of contemporary Israeli culture. She has become a touchstone for generations of younger poets⁶⁰ and a ubiquitous figure in Israeli public space and discourse. Plans to put Goldberg on the one hundred shekel note offer a serendipitous opportunity to consider the meaning of this broad cultural revolution—the replacement of S. Y. Agnon on the fifty for Goldberg on the one hundred. Agnon, perhaps the last Hebrew novelist for whom the entirety of the Judaic-Hebraic tradition stood before his eyes while he composed, standing upright, at his writing desk in Jerusalem, the man from Buczascz, an actual hometown, but also a near mythical space of lost fullness; for Goldberg, the Hebrew poet one most often hears on the radio, whose lyrics have been set to music by countless pop and jazz singers, and whose accessible language and transparent simplicity betray a unique sensitivity to the complexities of the local landscape, as well as a deep and abiding sympathy for what was left behind.

Endnotes

- 1 Leah Goldberg, *Yomaney Leah Goldberg* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Ha-poalim, 2005) 226, entry dated May 15, 1937. My appreciation and understanding of Leah Goldberg, and her life and work, has been immeasurably deepened through countless conversations with Sharon Kessler, who has shared her beautiful translations and wicked sense of humor with me over the years. I am also grateful to Adriana Jacobs, who visited my seminar at JTS on Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Women Poets, to Miki Gluzman for once providing me with an "emergency delivery" of Goldberg's three-volume set, and to the staff at the Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive in Tel Aviv for their support and steady access to Goldberg's papers. Finally, comments from audiences in New Haven and Tel Aviv helped shape this essay's presentation of Goldberg's visual work.
- 2 Matthew Hoffman, *From Rebel to Rabbi: Reclaiming Jesus and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.
- 3 For a reading of the importance of gender in relation to this theme, see Barbara Mann, "Of Madonnas and Magdalenes: Reading Mary in Modernist Hebrew and Yiddish Women's Poetry," in Marion Aptroot, Efrat Gal-Ed, Roland Gruschka and Simon Neuberger, eds. *Leket: Jiddistik heute | Yiddish Studies Today | yidishe shtudyeyes haynt* (Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf University Press, 2012), 43–62.
- 4 See Barbara Mann, "Framing the Native: Esther Raab's Visual Poetics," *Israel Studies* (Winter 1999): 234–257 and "Picturing Anna Margolin: Yiddish Poetry and Idolatry," *Modern Language Quarterly* 63:4 (December 2002): 501–536.
- 5 Genazim Modern Hebrew Writers Archive, archive collection number 174, Leah Goldberg, Visual Collection.
- 6 "Al ha-shira ve-ha-tsiur," (remarks by Leah Goldberg at Artists House, Jerusalem), *Kav: ktav et le-omanut* 10 (Summer 1969), 12–16.
- 7 For examples and introduction to this issue within modern Jewish culture, see Barbara Mann, "Toward an Understanding of Jewish Imagism," *Religion & Literature* 30:3 (Autumn 1998): 23–46; "Jewish Imagism and 'the Mosaic Negative,'" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11: 3 (2004): 282–291; and "Visions of Jewish Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 13:4 (Fall 2006): 1–27. For a study of the problem of the visual within modern Hebrew writing, see Avner Holtzman's *Melechet machshevet — tekhiyat ha-uma* (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan/Haifa University Press, 1999.)
- 8 For an introduction to how these cultural topographies evolved and figured in the poet's life and work, see Giddon Ticotsky, *Ha-or bi-shilhey he-anan: hekarut mekhudeshet im yetsirata shel lea goldberg* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz ha-meuchad/Sifriyat ha-poalim, 2011.)
- 9 Dan Miron, "Ha-ometz le-chulin ve-kri-sato: al taba'ot ashan me'et leah goldberg ke-tachan-at-tomet ba-hitpatchut ha-shira ha-ivrit ha-modernit," *Ha'adam eyno ela* (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan, 1999): 309–388, here 317–319, 383–384.
- 10 Miron, "Ha-ometz le-chulin ve-krisato," 330–338.
- 11 I am very grateful to Giddon Ticotsky for his generosity and feedback, and providing me with copies of the few published materials concerning Goldberg's visual work. See his enlightening afterword "Litsayer be-milim," *Shir/Tr Leah Goldberg, Tsvor shirim genuzim me'et leah goldberg la-khituchey ets me'et franz masereel*, edited by Ticotsky (Tel Aviv: Even Hoshan, 2012), 41–61.
- 12 Miron is actually one of the few critics who insists on a connection between the themes of *Taba'ot ashan* and the work of Goldberg's final years (320), especially *'Im ha-laila ha-zeh* (1964), a view consonant with my argument here about the relation between the Christian imagery of *Taba'ot ashan*, and the late collages.
- 13 See Ariel Hirschfeld, "Al mishmar ha-na'iviut," Ruth Kartun-Blum and Anat Weisman, eds., *Pegishot im meshoreret* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Ha-poalim, 2000), 135–151; and Ticotsky, *Ha-or bi-shilhey he-anan*.
- 14 Leah Goldberg, *Mikhtavim mi-nesi'ah medumah* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Ha-poalim, 2007 [1937]), 12.
- 15 Leah Goldberg, *Shirim* 1 (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1994 [1973]), 38.
- 16 Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 39.
- 17 The scene here resembles the famous pilgrimage site, Hill of Crosses: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill_of_Crosses, in Lithuania, north of where she lived, but nonetheless part of her landscape. I am grateful to David Shneer for bringing this site, and its possible connection to Goldberg, to my attention.

- 18 See the mention of wooden Madonnas also in *Mikhtavim mi-nesi'ah medumah*, 62.
- 19 Matthew 28:1. See also Dierdre Good, "The Miriamic Secret," in Dierdre Good, ed. *Mariam, the Magdalen and the Mother* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3–24.
- 20 Goldberg's, "I saw god in a coffeehouse" concludes with an image of *God* kissing *man's* feet, and asking for his forgiveness, an allusion to Luke 7:38, in which "a woman who was a sinner" washes Jesus' feet. Some interpret the identity of this woman as Mary Magdalene (Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 24.)
- 21 In between the two sections in which the Mary poems appear, there is an intermediary section entitled "*ha-acheret*" which deals with disappointed love; the term *acheret* links the Christian motifs to the book's overarching themes of urban ennui. Magdalene is imagined as the "*acheret*" — the other woman — who takes the speaker's love away, recalling a common theme in modern Jewish writing, for example in Y. L. Peretz's "*Monish*," where a Gentile woman represents the destructive temptations of secular culture.
- 22 Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 40.
- 23 Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 41.
- 24 In later years, Goldberg herself insisted on calling herself a *meshorer*, not a *meshoreret*, a poet not a poetess, and stressed the universal aspects of her poetry.
- 25 Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 69.
- 26 See the discussion of the poem's original concluding stanza in Yfaat Weiss and Giddon Ticotsky, eds., *Na'arot evriot: mikhtavey lea goldberg min ha-provintsia, 1923–1935* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Ha-poalim, 2009), 2226.
- 27 Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 70
- 28 Goldberg, *Shirim* 1, 71.
- 29 In Miron's reading of the poem, the speaker is interested in neither the painting's Christian content nor its connection to Renaissance art, but only its ability to represent something of her feeling of being forsaken: "When Goldberg treats works of art and culture in her poems she is interested in them (as a poet), only as a woman suffering for the sake of love and not as someone for whom culture and art are interesting in and of themselves," 340. For Miron, this limits the early volume to the "woman's poetry" of its day, unlike the poet's "mature" work in which, according to the critic, Goldberg succeeds in expressing her "extensive literary education." I argue here that something more complex emerges when examining these particular poems in a sequence, something that might be grounded in a certain emotional experience, but is also related to the emergence of Goldberg's poetic subjectivity.
- 30 Ruth Kartun-Blum places Goldberg on the early end of a continuum of Hebrew literature's engagement with Christianity, and its evolution in Israeli literature, in contradistinction to later Israeli writers, for whom the New Testament is unfamiliar and exotic. Ruth Kartun-Blum, "Mu'akat ha-chiloniyut: ha-diyolog im ha-brit ha-chadasha be-sifrut ha-yisraelit," *Dimui* 27 (Summer 2006): 7–32.
- 31 Miron links the references to Mary's suffering and passivity in these early poems to the other scenes of frustrated love in *Taba'ot ashan*. However, the relation between the speaker in Goldberg's poems and their depictions of Mary is neither monolithic nor static, but in fact evolves from poem to poem; this shifting relationship—the multiple Marys and Madonnas of Goldberg's work—in fact mirrors the diverse appearances of Mary in the gospels: the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the additional figure from Luke called "the other Mary" (Miryam ha-acheret.) Theologically, Mary is not a fixed figure; Christianity has many Marys; this fluidity also characterizes her treatment in Goldberg's work.
- 32 *Mikhtavim mi-nesi'ah medumah*, 117. Also refers to Columbus and an unpublished, alternate ending for that novel (from 1937) contains images of Tel Aviv that resemble this late poem.
- 33 For details see Giddon Ticotsky, *Ha-or bi-shilhey he-anan*, 145, and following.
- 34 "Al ha-shira ve-ha-tsiur," *Kav*.
- 35 Emphasis added.
- 36 Maps are generic figures for travel, and the use of them here brings to mind Goldberg's early novel in letters, *Mikhtavim mi-nesi'ah medumah* (1937), where travel is thematized in letters written across a variety of geographical locations, many of which the author herself had never visited; the novel was mostly written while the author was in her mother's house outside Kovno, waiting for her travel certificate to Palestine.
- 37 Goldberg *Shirim* 2: 256.

- 38 There are occasional examples in her verse of an interest in the historical landscape of Jesus and this is commensurate with other Israeli Hebrew writing (cf. Klausner's massive history and Kabak's novel *Ba-mishol ha-tsar*.)
- 39 The nurse also bears some physical resemblance to Goldberg herself.
- 40 Full quote: "I saw you today, Europe in pain, your wounds, your blood, your terrible/awful ugliness, you stood before my eyes, as you never had. As the most dear, like a beaten and wounded child drowning in its own blood. And I wanted to kiss your wounds. You were again in my Jewish eyes like Jesus on the cross, holy and tormented—and not a savior. No, not a savior, innocent and naïve, walking the path of torments. You were meant to atone for the sins of your sons, but there is no atonement for blood...there has never been atonement for the blood and all we have suffered, that we have caused to our fellow man. An awful, miserable world." "*Europa shelechem*," *Mishmar* 30.4.1945, p. 6, reprinted in Weiss and Ticsotsky, *Na'arot ivriot*, 292–293.
- 41 "*Europa shelechem*," 293.
- 42 "*Europa shelechem*," 293.
- 43 I am grateful to David Shneer for helping me unpack Goldberg's complex relation to European culture. A skeptical regard for the sublime animates even her early work. A desire for some sort of transcendence in the face of difficult material conditions, tied to a suspicion of extreme expressions of the sublime, is at the heart of Goldberg's insistence on the importance of what she called *ha-ometz le-chulin* (the courage for the mundane.) See Anat Weisman, "Leah Goldberg's Dialectics," *Dapim le-mekhar ba-sifrut* 18 (2012), 7–33. See, also, Nora's complex relation to German culture in Goldberg's 1946 novel *Ve-hu ha-or*.
- 44 For a comparative treatment of Goldberg's use of this figure with the contemporaneous work of Yiddish poet Anna Margolin, see note 3.
- 45 For a discussion of the meaning and influence of Raab's poetics, see Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California: 1996), 71–78.
- 46 Tony Hoagland, "Fragments, Juxtaposition and Completeness," *The Cortland Review* 33 (August 2006); http://www.cortlandreview.com/issue/33/hoagland_e.html.
- 47 See Ofra Yaglin, *Ulay mabat acher: clasiyut modernit ve-modernism clasi ba-shirat leah Goldberg* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz hameuchad, 2002).
- 48 Ariel Hirschfeld, "Al mishmar ha-na'iviut," *Pegisha im meshoreret*, 137.
- 49 Goldberg *Shirim* 2: 11–15.
- 50 I am indebted here to Chana Kronfeld's unpublished paper, "Subverting Gender: The Poetry of Esther Raab."
- 51 Goldberg, "Al oto ha-noseh atsmo," *Ha-shomer Ha-tsair* (8.9.1939): 9–10.
- 52 Psalms 137: 3–4.
- 53 Among the many commentaries on this poem, see Sidra Dekoven-Ezrahi, "Our Homeland, the Text... Our Text the Homeland: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 31 (Fall 1992): 463–497, and Michael Gluzman, "Modernism and Exile: A View from the Margins" *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, eds. David Biale, Susanna Heschel and Michael Galchinsky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 245–246.
- 54 Goldberg *Shirim* 2: 281.
- 55 Brenner, "Atsabim," *Kol kitvey y. ch. brenner* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz ha-meuchad, 1978.)
- 56 See Hanan Hever et al, eds. *Al tagidu ba-gat: The Palestinian Nakba in Hebrew Poetry, 1948–1958* (Tel Aviv: Sedek, 2011.)
- 57 Dahlia Ravikovitch, *Ahava Amitit* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibbutz ha-me'udchad, 1987), 57–59. Translated in Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld, *Hovering at Low Altitude: The Complete Poems of Dahlia Ravikovitch* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009), 189–191.
- 58 Kronfeld and Bloch's footnote in *Hovering at Low Altitude*, 189.
- 59 See note 20 above.
- 60 See the recent special issue of the literary journal *Ho!*, which includes a questionnaire consisting of thirty multiple choice questions based on the poet's life and work. If you answer all thirty questions correctly, "You are Leah Goldberg. Please immediately contact our editorial offices. Your poems will be gratefully accepted." See "How to know if you are Leah Goldberg," *Ho!*, Summer 2012: 78–85, 164–167.