

Ekphrasis as Encryption: Lea Goldberg in Berlin

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The years spent in Berlin by Hebrew poet Lea Goldberg (1911–1970) on the eve of the Nazis' rise to power were a formative period in her creative and personal life. Nevertheless, she rarely mentions Berlin explicitly in her poetry. In this article, I argue that ekphrasis (in this case, poems on paintings) served Goldberg as she worked through her Berlin experience, as an act of transmutation, translation, interpretation, and identity-building. Poems written during her stay in Germany recently discovered in the poet's archive shed new light on the role ekphrasis played in her poetry, on her affinity with woodcut artist Frans Masereel, and on her approach to primitivist and modernist visual arts. Ekphrasis is revealed here as a mechanism of encryption in poetry that turned Berlin in the Götterdämmerung of the Weimar Republic into the Berlin of European and Jewish enlightenment, modernism into classicism, and the male gaze into female expression.

I'm in Berlin—it's been a month already that I'm in Berlin. This says so much, namely, I left Kovno; namely, no longer the gray boredom; namely, it is possible to believe that life does change and one can breathe with ease. With ease—for years I've been praying for some ease, for some simple joy, for days when one can smile for no reason at all, and such days have finally arrived.¹

These are the first words that nineteen-year-old Lea Goldberg wrote in her diary after arriving in Berlin in October 1930. Her move from parochial Kovno to metropolitan Berlin in her pursuit of higher education was indeed evidence that life does change, to the point of bringing about a total transformation—from a

stressful family environment to relative anonymity and autonomy in a strange city, from an East European town of 200,000 people to a Central European metropolis of four million, from a place of (perceived) spiritual scarcity to one of the world's most vibrant cultural capitals, if not to the contemporary hub of Western civilization.

Goldberg stayed in Berlin for eighteen months, mostly in an apartment in the rear building on 99 Motzstraße in Wilmersdorf.² (Else Lasker-Schüler lived in house number 7—did the two cross paths by chance before meeting in Jerusalem?) Goldberg completed her master's studies at Friedrich-Wilhelms (today, Humboldt) University in March 1932, and then started doctoral work at the University of Bonn.³ It seems that the months spent in the capital of the Weimar Republic were among the most thrilling in her life. They certainly included many peak moments in which the young East European Jew believed she could refashion herself as a bona fide European intellectual if only she would follow—along those very same Berlin streets—in the footsteps of the founding fathers of Jewish Haskalah who had flourished there some 150 years earlier. At the same time, she experienced difficult disappointments and was forced to contend with external and internal obstacles on her way to realizing her aspirations (“Will I truly have to conclude that even the big city won't rescue me from myself? That I am all—sorrow? . . . Is this you, Lea—in Berlin?”).⁴

Goldberg did not write much in her diary during those months, a point that perhaps attests to her generally good mood (she tended to write in her journal at difficult hours), or at least to the intensity of her life at that time. Extant letters that she wrote from Berlin are few, so direct biographic documentation of this formative period in her life might be in inverse relation to its importance and central role in both her life and writing. By contrast, she gave Berlin relatively extensive artistic representation in her early prose, written only a few years after she completed her studies there—in her epistolary novel *Mikhtavim mi-nsi'a meduma* (Letters from an Imaginary Journey) and her contemporaneously unpublished novel *Avedot* (Losses), published on the fortieth anniversary of her death, whose plot unfolds mostly in Berlin.⁵ Her prose testifies indirectly to changes that occurred in her life in the big city, even seemingly minor and prosaic ones, such as the fact that she started smoking. In truth, this habit signaled a major change: smoking signified modernity, showing that she was liberated and a coquette, and

pointing to a certain deviation from the conservative social order. In her novel *Vehu ha'or* (And This Is the Light) (1946), her fictional doppelgänger Nora Krieger vacations at home in Lithuania in the summer of 1931, after her first academic year in Berlin. Esther, Nora's mother, had recently divorced her husband due to his mental illness, but still keeps in close touch with her former sister-in-law Lisa, a spinster who is the family's black sheep. A visit by Albert Arin, who is, like Nora, also vacationing in Lithuania and is a boyhood friend of both Esther and her ex-husband, disturbs the three women's peace, as they all consider Arin—even if they do not admit this to themselves—a potential partner. In one scene, smoking is associated with sexual promiscuity, or at least with sexual allure:

Arin took out his cigarette case and offered it to the women. The mother refused with a smile and a shake of her hand. Lisa took one and immediately started smoking, hastily and nervously, hurried like her walking. After some hesitation, Nora also reached out, took a cigarette, brought her face close to the flame and started smoking, glancing sideways at the mother, who hadn't yet seen her doing that.

The mother said, "That's something new. From when?"
"About a year ago."⁶

Thus Nora Krieger, and apparently Lea Goldberg too, started smoking in Berlin. In that period, smoking was feminized; no longer reserved for men, the habit became popular among women, as evidenced, for example, by the fact that the first cigarette advertisements addressed to women appeared in Western newspapers in the late 1920s.⁷ Penny Tinkler writes that "in the interwar period smoking became a signifier of women's modernity. . . . Smoking was, however, more than just a sign of modernity; the practice of smoking actually contributed to the making of modern women." Tinkler also emphasizes how smoking came to connote feminine sexuality: a "sexual promise" was embodied in cigarettes, after having been a distinct signifier of manhood.⁸ Nevertheless, women smoking in public were often considered masculine or indecent,⁹ which explains Nora's hesitation to smoke in her mother's presence. In *Avedot*, a young German Jew's smoking in her father's presence signifies the open-mindedness of both, and was an act akin to sitting



Fig. 1. Lea Goldberg, 1946. Photo by David Anderman. *Courtesy of the Ganzim Institute, Tel Aviv, and Yair Landau.*

together in a café or having a woman drive.¹⁰ The freethinking associated with smoking was essentially inconsistent with the Jewish petit-bourgeois attitudes so loathed by Goldberg. When she worked as a teacher in the Tarbut school system in the provincial town of Raseiniai, Lithuania—after her time in Germany and before she immigrated to Mandatory Palestine—she wrote to a friend in Berlin: “I do smoke here, *spitefully*, to exasperate the petit-bourgeois [*ba-balebatim*], and even they are no longer astounded by such things. Indeed, ‘we are progressive.’”¹¹

Goldberg translated the social values associated with smoking into her writing, and created her early literary persona from smoke rings, as her first book, *Taba’ot ashan* (Smoke Rings), is titled.¹² The ostensible matter-of-factness in which cigarettes appear in that book conceals her daring and defiance (or at least her desire to dare and defy), which were used as a means of differentiating herself from Rahel, Elisheva, Yocheved Bat-Miriam, and other female Hebrew poets of her time. Thus, the contemporary smoking-woman’s multi-connotative identity helped characterize the speaker in her poems who, albeit heartbroken, is evidently sophisticated enough to soberly observe her tainted loves; indeed, she is an urbane woman,



Fig. 2. Lea Goldberg, unknown year. Photo by Anna Riwkin-Brick. *Courtesy of the Ganzim Institute, Tel Aviv, and Yair Landau.*

romantic and post-romantic at the same time. In *Taba'ot ashan*, cigarette smoke became an almost existential signifier of emptiness and transience;¹³ smoke protects the speaker from the outside world, in the poem and outside it: “A tiger-striped screen— / separating word from heart” (A, 85). In *Taba'ot ashan*, as in life, smoking brings lovers closer together while simultaneously creating distance between them.¹⁴ Thus, Goldberg took advantage of a range of potentials embodied in smoking, both in her writing and in her personal life. Smoking quickly became her trademark, occupying a key position in various representations of her—in critiques about her, in interviews with her, and in her visual images, in which she tended to appear holding a smoking cigarette (see Figures 1–2).

As a modernist artist, and a smoker to boot, Goldberg was something of a *neue Frau*—“new woman,” who sought self-realization, equality, and independence, often at the expense of matrimony, and who was educated and opinionated.¹⁵ According to Israeli historian of the Weimar Republic Boaz Neumann, the *neue Frau* alternated “between the young and sporty, dance-loving, sexy girl who shows off her legs, and the boyish, self-aware, extroverted *garçonne* with her somewhat masculine attire.”¹⁶

The reader may also be familiar with the witticism attributed to English parodist and caricaturist Max Beerbohm (1872–1956): “The new woman sprang fully armed from Ibsen’s head” (alluding to Athena, goddess of Wisdom and War, who was born fully formed and fully armed from Zeus’ forehead). Apparently it is no coincidence that the protagonist of *Vehu ha-or* who decided to take control of her own destiny is named after the female hero in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*.¹⁷

Indeed, through her poems Goldberg introduced into contemporary Hebrew literature a new feminine subject largely made in the likeness of the city of Berlin’s modernist ethos. However, Berlin as such is not mentioned in *Taba’ot ashan*, except in the epigraph of one poem to which I will refer below and in the text of another, where the city is mentioned parenthetically as one of many places where the poem’s “plot” could have unfolded.¹⁸ The book’s poems do not feature descriptions of the city, perhaps because the drama of modern urbanity is encapsulated in the speaker’s room and becomes a chamber camera: the room’s various items are animated, echoing her reflections—the hands of the clock become eyebrows raised askance (A, 13), the lamp mourns the speaker and expects her to cry (A, 15), and so on. As astutely observed by Shimon Gens, this chamber drama is often reminiscent of a silent film: “These poems were not born in the *sound film* era; indeed, it seems as though the poet was inspired by the *silent film*, as revealed in its archetypal images and as dreamed. Most devotedly, she remarks on every gesture, shade of feeling and picturesque insight (the elements of film).”¹⁹

Does the omission of Berlin from *Taba’ot ashan* follow the symbolist ethos that informed Goldberg’s poetry, to the point that her poems rarely refer to concrete locations? Or perhaps it has to do with the fact that her life in the city was limited to relatively narrow circles that blocked or screened many of the influences of the outside world?²⁰ Allison Schachter’s interpretation of *Vehu ha-or* offers another explanation for this omission: “Women’s marginality amplified their modernist expression of alienation and displacement, which then gave rise to new literary strategies.”²¹ Certainly Goldberg was marginal in the Berlin cityscape: an East European Jewish woman, a Hebrew writer of Russian descent who was also a *poeta doctus*—a poet with an academic degree (a combination quite rare at the time).

In the following pages, I argue that one of the most significant literary strategies that served Goldberg in working through her Berlin experience in her poetry

(as opposed to her prose) was ekphrasis. Ekphrasis as an act of transmutation, translation, and interpretation, although highly dependent on its source, is also highly personal and subjective; perhaps it gave her the only way to both filter and assimilate the effects of the metropolis on her personality and poetry. The city that promised personal metamorphosis, that “life does change,” was represented in her poems by way of a particular type of artistic metamorphosis.

Ekphrasis is the practice whereby one work of art, mostly literary, is inspired by and significantly refers to another concrete, musical, or plastic artwork, such as a sonata, painting, statue, or building (in Greek, *ek* means “fully” and *phrasis* means “explicate.” The original meaning of the term is “accurate description”). Ekphrastic writing typically challenges authors, as they attempt to displace a certain experience from one medium to another, usually from the visual to the written, from sensory input to its intellectual processing. Apparently, any such attempt is destined to fail since no “accurate” transition between media is possible; nevertheless, many ekphrastic writings manage to capture something significant of the works to which they refer, if only to a fragment of feeling, a mood—and this is a major achievement. Ekphrastic writing is challenging also in that it requires writers to formulate their position and perspective vis-à-vis the artists whose art they “describe,” and this is also no mean feat.

Barbara Mann, Avner Holtzman, and other scholars have addressed the complex status of ekphrasis in modern and particularly early Hebrew poetry, given Judaism’s aversion to visual arts following the biblical injunction against graven images. Consequently, ekphrastic Hebrew poems are relatively few, compared to their quantity in European poetry, and their writers often felt a need bordering on didacticism to mediate the artwork—of non-Jewish origin, by definition—for their Jewish readers.²²

The two ekphrastic poems in *Taba’ot ashan* are actually the only ones ever published as such by Goldberg: “Khalom na’ara” (A Young Girl’s Dream, A, 71), inspired by *Saint Mary Magdalene* by the fifteenth-century Italian painter Carlo Crivelli; and “Isha tzo’edet” (“Walking Woman,” A, 73), inspired by the eponymous porcelain statue by the early twentieth-century German artist Ernst Barlach. As Mann argues in her article about Goldberg’s collage, “A Young Girl’s Dream” is one of Goldberg’s most provocative poems, as it blends together gender and

Judeo-Christian categories. In the poet's own words, 'After one of the crises I experienced at the time, my poetry began flourishing again upon encountering and being impressed by Crivelli's *Magdalene*.'"²³ Goldberg became acquainted with this poem in a course at Friedrich-Wilhelms University by Jewish art historian Oskar Fischel (1870–1939), whose lectures were given at the Kaiser Friedrich (today, Bode) Museum. As she described it later,

In Berlin I received a yearlong guided tour by the superb art historian Professor Fischel at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum: Romanesque and Gothic Art. He taught me things I still remember today. After his lectures I would stay by myself in the museum and go up mainly to the halls of Italian and Spanish artists. I specialized in medieval and renaissance history, and got to know the Italian art of Dante's days only later. At that time, I was drawn to Mannerist Renaissance painters such as Carlo Crivelli and Bronzino, and I loved Ribera the Spaniard.²⁴

Evidently, at the heart of the Weimar Republic and its political and cultural turmoil, Goldberg preferred to hearken back to the grand medieval and renaissance masters, and to Italy, the cradle of Western humanism, in a move that may also be interpreted as regression or withdrawal in the face of the ominous present (Goldberg would revert to this pattern at the outbreak of World War II, when she refused to write war poems and referred repeatedly to the classics of Western civilization).²⁵ However, the appealing identity-switching fantasy in the opening of "Khalom na'ara" ("I dreamt that I am—you") and the animation of Magdalene as painted by Crivelli turn out to be a nightmare entrapping the speaker: "And there was no escape from the horror of the night / no refuge from Magdalene."

Alternatively, this poem may be seen as expressing a theme that often preoccupied Goldberg and found its expression in her prose about Berlin: prostitution. Ever since Pope Gregory the Great (540–641) identified Mary Magdalene—the first to lay eyes on the resurrected Jesus (John 20:14)—with the sinner who wiped Jesus' feet with her hair and anointed them with precious perfume (Luke 7:37–50), Western art has offered countless representations of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute and images of her as hierodule or *qedesha* (holy whore). Art historian Marsha Meskimmon

referred to the “near-obsession” of Weimar Modernist painters with prostitution that essentially implied “both the fears and pleasures of boundaries transgressed. The figure of the prostitute crossed social-inscribed parameters between men and women, social classes, the public and private spheres and, of course, sexual desire and fear of disease and death.”²⁶ Naturally, this theme was quite common in European paintings in general, but in the particular Weimarian context, representations of prostitutes were charged with additional socioeconomic and decadent connotations. Even if Goldberg did not see the prostitutes painted by Otto Dix, George Grosz, Franz Maria Jansen or others, she must have seen such women in the streets of Berlin.

At the KaDeWe [department store] the lights were still on, large and frantic they looked at the street. For some reason, the building loomed like a mountain towering in the heart of town. I would pass by it on my way back from the theater, from friends. At night. Near the store windows posh prostitutes pranced in furs and knee-high boots. Red, yellow, black. I remember how my nineteen-year-old mind was shocked to discover that each color indicated a certain “type” of prostitute. Black boots—for sadists, yellow—for masochists, and red—“normal.” This typology haunted me like a personal disgrace. I was not very forgiving of mankind at that moment.²⁷

Most interpretations of “Khalom na’ara” viewed it as expressing the poet’s low self-image as a sexual object, or alternatively her fascination with—and aversion to—Christianity as a religion,²⁸ and have apparently ignored the meanings of the ekphrastic move at the poem’s core. Thus it seems that in the poem, the ekphrasis represents an attempt to cling to a heroic past destined to crash on the rocks of present-day reality (Italian Renaissance vs. 1930s Germany), or, alternatively, the ekphrasis represents the displacement of a humiliating daily experience to its aesthetic and ostensibly attractive representation, which ultimately reveals itself to be menacing.²⁹

In Goldberg’s archive, the manuscript of “A Young Girl’s Dream” appears next to another poem unpublished in her life and hitherto almost unknown, a kind

of sonnet, if we judge it by the number of its lines. Here, the city is mediated through an intriguing ekphrastic move:

Berlin

A white seagull sat
 On the gray stone of Wilhelm's statue,
 While two children in rags threw crumbs
 And ducks sailed by on beauty's surface.

Silent and still was the museum,
 Its gates in unmoving stance,
 The morning was shrouded in mist,
 And as sad as your final glance.

Leaning against the bridge's railing
 I gazed at the water's carpet,

And from the river's darkness
 The wondrous face of Saint Sebastian
 Gazed back at me with
 Endless agony.³⁰

As in many of the love poems in *Taba'ot ashan*, this early poem also expresses sorrow over parting from a loved one. However, here a certain substitute is found for the beloved: Saint Sebastian, as immortalized in the eponymous painting by the Italian artist of Spanish descent Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652). Goldberg admired this painting, and was to describe in one of her journalistic essays her frequent “pilgrimages” to see it at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum:

To this day I remember well that very special sensation when as a nineteen-year-old I would run on Saturdays to the Museum to see Ribera's *Saint Sebastian* once more. I would rush to it with the same excited joy as if I were about to meet a loved man. And I always felt satisfied and almost surprised to

see it still in its place on the wall, waiting for me unchanging. That unique sense of sharing in the “aesthetic misery” before me—the swept-back head, the dark golden shade of the flesh on a very dark background, had by then become part of my life, something special “between us”—between me and the painting. At the time I already knew that in that same museum there were masterpieces that the art reviews with their “ample proofs” preferred over my *Sebastian*, and I already knew that this Spaniard’s style of painting was inferior to the lucid and aesthetic expressiveness of the geniuses of the early and high Renaissance period, but I was hopelessly devoted to it, despite its pathos and although others were superior to him—he was more “my own,” and therefore enriched me more than the others—just like the poems of a beloved poet, that though we may be aware of their faults, we nevertheless love them as a wholeness surging within us.³¹

The sublimity of the Italian masterpiece is juxtaposed in “Berlin” with the German monument of Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm, gray in both color and sensibility. In *Avedot*, Christian German student Antonia tells Kron, Goldberg’s fictional doppelgänger:

Sometimes . . . there’s this kind of madness . . . such hours, as if it is no longer bearable. If only this city had an Eiffel Tower to jump from . . . or an ocean . . . but go drown yourself in the Spree—let’s say . . . near the museum, and have that stupid Friedrich statue stand and stare at you all night long. This is very silly.³²

As in “Khalom Na’ara,” here, too, the Italian work of art is a kind of transitional object that facilitates a symbolic relationship with an adopted and lost mother-culture. Perhaps this is why in her essay Goldberg emphasized her aesthetic pleasure upon discovering each time anew that the painting remains on the wall, “waiting for me unchanging”—so essentially unlike the political upheavals she must have felt one way or another as an inhabitant of Berlin.³³ In view of the concrete presence of the locked museum (it is difficult not to attribute symbolic meaning to it), of Wilhelm’s lusterless statue, whose motionlessness is highlighted

by the life teeming around it—the seagull sitting on it, the poor kids hanging about but indifferent to it—the speaker prefers the imagined view in her mind’s eye, reflected from the “water’s carpet / And from the river’s darkness.” The magnificent face of Sebastian, the third-century Roman soldier executed with a volley of arrows for his Christian beliefs, thus turns into the face of Narcissus (and her own?) gazing at the speaker “with / Endless agony.” This may be considered ekphrasis once removed; that is, two concrete works of art (the statue and the museum) that remind the speaker of a third (the painting), whose imagined existence is more significant than the others’ physical presence.³⁴

In “Isha tzo’edet” (Walking Woman), the other explicitly ekphrastic poem published by Goldberg, ekphrasis has a different function:

Walking Woman

(after the *Walking Woman* porcelain by Ernst Barlach)

A pregnant woman is walking along a wall as hot as the day,
 Beneath her feet the red sand burns in the heat.
 She is walking along the wall, serene and slow
 Her eyes know futures but reveal no hopes.
 In her hand there’s no flower, on her forehead no star.
 Passers-by will not smile at her from near or from far.
 Behind the wall—a cemetery sits,
 Were she to turn her head, she could see it,
 But she’s immersed in life unfolding, the rustle of love and disease,
 And Death, bowing before her, makes way and lets her be.

The statuette by Ernst Barlach (1870–1938; Figure 3) presents a pregnant woman, in a headscarf and dress, but it is obvious that the poem’s “plot” is entirely a figment of Goldberg’s imagination: she places the expectant mother near a graveyard, thus contrasting the “budding” life (in the figure’s womb, and in general) with death. The figure in the poem is decidedly not Mary: “In her hand there’s no flower, on her forehead no star.” Thus, Goldberg emphasizes the figure’s omni-woman, omni-human status (as opposed to the Christian atmosphere dominating “Khalom na’ara”).



Fig. 3. *Walking Woman (Schreitende Frau, Schreitende Nonne)* by Ernst Barlach, 1909 © Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

It seems that here ekphrasis is combined with literary allusion; that is to say, a different text had interpreted the sculpture for Goldberg, and her poem was inspired by both. I believe the other text is the opening of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge) by her favorite poet, Rilke:

I saw a pregnant woman. She dragged herself heavily along a high, warm wall, now and again groping for it as if to assure herself it was still there. Yes, it was still there; and behind it—? I looked for it on my map of the city: *Maison d'accouchement* [Maternity Hospital]. Right. They will deliver her; they can do that.³⁵

Goldberg returned to explore that moment in later works—an indication of its fundamental importance for her—as in the following excerpt from *Vehu ha-or*:

“It’s very simple,” said Nora. “Or maybe I think so, since I’ve always felt that. Here, for example, if I walk on a beautiful street and there’s a high garden wall there, I always think that behind that wall is the most

beautiful thing. I always think that if I could peep in, I'd see something wonderful there. More wonderful than anything I'd seen so far."

"Yes," said Arin in his low, slow speech, whose hastiness had now vanished. "I do know that. And I even remember a summer day many years ago. I was walking alongside a red brick wall. There was a heat wave. The wall was high and long, maybe a kilometer long, and behind it treetops. And all the time I thought that behind that wall, *there had to be* something marvelously beautiful. Something magic as a legend. At last I climbed up on a pile of stones and peeped in." He fell silent.

"And what was there?" asked Nora.

Arin twisted his lips in an unhappy smile. "A cemetery."³⁶

Later in the dialogue, Arin nevertheless adopts the positive outlook of Nora and the speaker in "Walking Woman"—both clearly mirror images of the young Goldberg:

"But that story of mine isn't a moral lesson, Nora," he said after a short silence. "Not behind every wall is there a cemetery. I'm sure you'll peep in and see a beautiful garden. And I'm sure this life deserves to be lived, warts and all, in spite of all the cemeteries. I believe," he said warmly, "I believe that no ugliness and no suffering cancels the beauty and the joy. And in this life, Nora, there is beauty and joy. I'm not sixteen years old, Nora, and I say all these things to you as I would say them to myself."³⁷

Many medieval and renaissance poems, as well as paintings from that period (such as Botticelli's *The Annunciation*; 1481), represent *Hortus conclusus*, an enclosed garden, as a figure of Mary's virginity.³⁸ The secret hidden on the other side of the wall, in both Rilke and Goldberg's texts—be it a well-tended garden, a maternity hospital, or a cemetery—encapsulate, therefore, the enigma of life and death, the enigma of virginity, fertility and infertility, and, in general, femininity. Did Goldberg, when writing *Vehu ha-or* in the early 1940s, review her outlook as a young woman ten years earlier, as expressed in "Walking Woman," only to reaffirm it?³⁹

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Barlach's porcelain awakened such abstract contemplations about life and death in Goldberg's mind. Given the impressive

harmoniousness of *Walking Woman*, the purity of its white and the serenity and perfection of the noble character, it is tempting to crown it as classic. As such, it was an unusual piece not only in the latter-day German art world, but also in comparison with most of Barlach's other works. His porcelain statuettes have been and still are considered a secondary medium in his multidisciplinary oeuvre, which included not only visual art but also poetry and playwriting. The literature about him tends to emphasize his metal and wooden sculptures, with pacifist and socialist themes (many of which were inspired by his trip to Russia in 1906)—beggars, gypsies, old or religious people.

As indicated by the three plastic artworks that inspired the poems discussed above, Goldberg was attracted to relatively marginal works in the canon (as she herself admitted in the excerpt: "At the time I already knew that in that same museum there were masterpieces that the art reviews with their 'ample proofs' preferred"), as well as to works with classic elements. Her personal history explains this connection: her marginality in Berlin gave her the need to cling to something solid in the midst of chaos; and given her life as a foreign student in a relatively protected niche in the city, she was a passing guest not significantly affected by outside events in her daily life, so that Berlin remained an untainted cultural ideal for her. No matter what the reason, it seems that the poet's attachment to these paintings and sculptures was fundamentally emotional, in turn motivating her predominantly subjective ekphrastic representation, which is far removed from the artworks' surface meaning and, precisely on account of that, so close to their secrets.

Recently, eight hitherto unknown ekphrastic poems by Lea Goldberg were discovered at the National Library of Israel, in a book of woodcut prints by Belgian artist Frans Masereel (1889–1972); the poems were all inspired by his works. It is impossible to date these unpublished poems with precision, but it is reasonable to believe that they were written in the early 1930s, while Goldberg was studying in Germany. This dating is supported also by the somewhat angular handwriting typical of those years; later, mainly from the late 1930s onward, Goldberg's handwriting became curvier and softer. It is reasonable to assume that these poems were stimulated by the young poet's encounter with the big city, and that Masereel's artwork helped her "translate" her experiences for herself; the distinctly masculine woodcuts were

instrumental in conveying the masculine spirit of the metropolis to the young woman, and her dialogue with them necessarily carried a gender aspect as well.

Masereel's woodcuts, hugely popular in the interwar period, typically depict the urban experience in terms of the individual's humble struggle for warmth and humanity in an alien space. Particularly popular at the time was his collection *Passionate Journey* (titled *Mon livre d'heures* in the original French, 1919). In fact, this was one of the first graphic novels, if not the first: the book's completely captionless 167 tiny woodprints describe a young man's journey to and within the metropolis, his attempts to overcome its alienating environment, and his premature death. The book graphically describes a spiritual climate common in interwar Western and Central Europe using the time-honored woodcutting technique, but the precise and detailed lines typical of Rembrandt's woodcuts, and the gray shades developed and refined by Dürer, are replaced here by black-and-white surfaces that became Masereel's trademark. These surfaces were, in fact, the results of various practical constraints, such the speed in which the artist was required to typeset woodcuts for journals and newspapers at the time of his protest against World War I, his desire to express his views sharply and clearly, and the low-quality paper that led him to create basic designs with a thick brush and India ink.⁴⁰

This distinct style, both in form and in content, was quickly identified with Masereel and became fixed in contemporary consciousness as a succinct and faithful depiction of the *Zeitgeist*. "If nothing survived from our world," wrote Stefan Zweig,

No books, no monuments, no photographs or documents, nothing but the woodcuts created by Masereel in the course of a decade, anyone could faithfully reconstruct our life and times exclusively on the basis of his woodcuts: how people used to live around the 1920s, how we used to dress; anyone could experience all the horrors of war in the battle and home fronts, including all the diabolic weapons and their grotesque contours; anyone could experience the stock markets and the train and ship yards, the towers, the fashions, the people, even the characters themselves, and beyond all that—the quite dangerous spirit and the genius; the lifeblood of our times, only on the basis of his prints.⁴¹

Here, Zweig follows German historiosopher Oswald Spengler, who in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West; 1918–1922) conceived of culture in all its manifestations as an essentially organic entity that could be reconstructed even on the basis of meager fragments. Zweig may be exaggerating, but clearly Masereel’s work left a powerful impression, certainly in that era. Paris, where Masereel lived for many years, was often identified as Masereel’s city, and some went even further: “The real Paris is a prosaic impression of his Paris,” wrote Avraham Shlonsky some two years after visiting the City of Lights (presumably, he had been acquainted with Masereel’s work before that, in 1925, when he stayed in Paris for several months). “The real Paris is a blooming garden of lights—Masereel’s Paris is already Nineveh, Babylon, Pompeii in the light of flames spewing out of Vesuvius’s mouth. The color of the end—that is its color. Black over white. Black-and-white. Sheer horror. After all. And over the end [*me’al la’-kets*] hovers love as a psalm.”⁴²

Hagit Halperin has elucidated the intimate connection between the poems in Shlonsky’s *Avnei bobu* (Stones of Void; 1933) and Masereel’s work. This connection is particularly true of the poem cycle *Kraki’el* (City-el)⁴³ which revolves around and celebrates urban life in its various manifestations.⁴⁴ Shlonsky himself alludes to Masereel’s influence on his poems and at the same time expresses the belief that Masereel’s works are not visual but strictly literary, as if seeking to deny the writer’s ekphrastic move:

He [Masereel] publishes his drawings-woodcuts in book form. Not only in the external sense. These are poems—in their literary sense. His drawing is mute literature. . . . All the hallmarks, all the attributes of literature are evident in his works: plot, psychology, ideas. So you find yourself reading his drawings. . . . And each time I see (read!) his books-etchings, my Creator and my creative instincts [*yotsri ve-itsri*] incite me to give them lips so they may speak, verbalize them, write them a text with poetic rhymes. And now ringing in my ears are quotes from my *Kraki’el* days and nights, which have thrown the stones of void at me—

. . . And the city shudders from time to time. I have seen them in Masereel’s woodcuts as well—black over white—the ladder’s

acrobat—the cat—and the sinking alley. There he sits, Masereel (and perhaps it is I who am sitting there?)

Just as Shlonsky alluded to the influence of Masereel’s woodcuts on *Avnei bobu*, to the point at which he imagined himself sitting in the woodcutter’s place, so did Goldberg imagine that Shlonsky sang her own poems in *Avnei bobu*. At that time, she published an untitled poem dedicated “to Avraham Shlonsky, upon reading his *Avnei bobu*” (A, 82):

[Untitled]

To sink and sail in these rhymes—
 To remember the city’s dancing lights,
 And in a word-raft row to wonder’s shore,
 Toward lands where children’s tears shine bright.

I see: here I am on city streets
 Here I am in train-windows. . . . Bewildered:
 Strange, why does another sing of my past
 Pulling my soul from silence’s river? . . .

When reading *Avnei bobu* and reminiscing on these city sights and sites, the twenty-two-year-old poet was living in Raseiniai, the provincial Lithuanian town; and from that backwater town, the city lights of Shlonsky’s Paris or Goldberg’s Berlin must have seemed particularly glamorous. Beside Goldberg’s praise for a poet who managed to put her inner storm into words, we sense a terrible fear of identity theft: her past has been poetized by another—her soul sunk in the silence’s river has been pulled from the deep. On first reading, this metaphor may seem positive (the soul has been salvaged), but on second reading we feel a growing sense of foreign intervention in the world of silence. The water world here is both magical and threatening, just as is the opening verse “To sink and sail in these rhymes,” simultaneously echoing “sinking” [*lishko’a*] into a book and drowning at sea.

Both poets’ acknowledgment of their wellspring marks a chain of inspiration that begins with Masereel, runs through Shlonsky, and ends with Goldberg. Beside

the cultural sequence the trio outlines, we can sense the two Hebrew authors' fears for the autonomy of their creations amid foreign influences—Masereel's influence over Shlonsky, and the latter's over Goldberg. It is perhaps Goldberg's fear that prevented her from publishing her poems inspired by Masereel.

Goldberg's poems were written on the pages of Masereel's woodprint book *Landschaften und Stimmungen* (Landscapes and Moods), published in 1929 by Kurt Wolff in Munich (Wolff was Masereel's chief publisher in Germany at the time, and was known mostly as Kafka's first publisher)—on the opposite sides of the prints. *Landschaften* is not a graphic novel with a sequential plot, but rather a selection of the artist's best-known woodcuts. In contrast to his first books, it does not focus solely on the metropolis, but also offers a variety of pastoral landscapes, natural spaces, and domestic scenes. Interestingly, as in *Taba'ot ashan* the urban experience is not self-sufficient, but rather repeatedly confronts the countryside and its open spaces.

The discovery of the eight ekphrastic poems written by Goldberg on the pages of *Landschaften* (henceforth, the *Masereel Poems*) sheds new light both on the role played by ekphrasis in the poet's oeuvre and on her affinity to Masereel's prints. Apparently, the artist's woodcuts left a deep impression on her, at least at the time when she wrote those poems. It is therefore quite remarkable that she rarely mentions him—not in published poems, nor in diaries, letters, journalistic essays, or articles. This silence may suggest that her psychological attachment to Masereel's works was highly limited to one period of time, so that the eight poems should be considered no more than "études" (which is why they were not published at the time). Alternatively, it may suggest that her attachment was so deep that she sought to conceal it—perhaps because she identified Masereel with Shlonsky and his *Avnei bobu* (an object of appreciation, as well as fear, as suggested above), and perhaps due to the artist's huge popularity, which was incompatible with the poet's exclusive taste through which she sought to distinguish herself in the contemporary Hebrew literary community. *Mikhtavim mi-nsi'a meduma* is emblematic of this taste and the attempt to translate it into aristocratic cultural capital, in the original Greek sense of aristocracy, meaning "government by the best"; such also are her choices in the three visual artworks discussed above, by Crivelli, Ribera, and Barlach.

Yet another explanation for the shelving of the Masereel poems and for the paucity of ekphrastic poems that Goldberg published in general has to do with the

clear boundary she drew between the visual and verbal arts. In 1942, she wrote in the foreword to an album of Israeli painter Aharon Gil'adi':

Literature and painting are not the same. This is because while all arts move in the same direction, each has its own mode of expression. And only one thing is essential in these: those same diverse modes of expression, those same different angles of viewing and hearing the world called many different names—music, architecture, literature or painting—always reflect the very same world, the very same time. In works large or small, if they are authentic, if they are not imitations, if they are enthused by true feeling, true sensation, we will always find the echo of our times.⁴⁵

Goldberg kept drawing that boundary in repeated references to the subject, particularly in the context of her first exhibition of plastic artworks at the Jerusalem Artists House in 1968. In a subsequent interview with Talma Alyagon, she stated, "Although it is true that the experience which inspires creation is the same experience and that my personality is the same in both cases, this is where the comparison ends. In any form of art you think with the medium you work with, and it is dangerous and even inaccurate to compare and borrow terms from one art to another."⁴⁶ Indeed, the wall that Goldberg erected between the two art forms was founded on personal experience, not only in her later years (when she wrote little but painted much), but already from the days of her youth; as a sixteen-year-old she thought to start a career as a painter and, according to her, it was only her family's material difficulties that prevented her from doing so. She apparently had a flair for painting from an early age, at the same time or even before her literary talent was discovered.⁴⁷

Ofra Yeglin wrote of Goldberg: "Her year of birth meant that she would miss the first heroic waves of European Modernism, and by the time she became a poet in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Modernist avant-garde had lost the momentum of its inventiveness and had become Classical Modernism."⁴⁸ Yeglin quotes a statement from an interview with Goldberg: "Already in my youth poetry had outgrown German expressionism, which had broken free of any yoke of shape or form."⁴⁹ Goldberg tended to underrate German expressionist poetry, referring to it in one of

her journalistic essays as “outbursts . . . mostly lacking in profound artistic value.”⁵⁰ Since she felt that way about *poetic* expressionism, how could Goldberg feel any affinity to those identified as expressionists in the visual arts (all with deep roots in German culture)—Paul Klee,⁵¹ Barlach, and particularly Masereel?

I believe the answer to that quandary is found in a single factor: Goldberg’s attitude toward the primitivist. In “primitivist” I do not mean the common connotation of the term *primitive*, tribalism or folklore, or even backwardness, but rather the meaning associated with the term in Western neo-romantic art. Ever since the late eighteenth century, when romanticism took hold in Europe, the figure of the noble savage was celebrated: he was man unspoiled by civilization, able to remain primal and close to the ancient and authentic roots of humanity and nature. As Europe became more modernized and industrialized, the number of intellectuals multiplied who were attracted to the primitive, and primitivism became a distinct artistic style, as represented in Gauguin’s sensual paintings from French Polynesia, Picasso’s early paintings, or the paintings of the Die Brücke group. Indeed, primitivism had a decisive impact on expressionism and other currents in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. The attraction to the primitive is one of the hallmarks of the modern in art (as is the ekphrastic tendency).⁵² Scientists were also interested in primitivists, such as the French sociologist and anthropologist of Jewish descent Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Upon Lévy-Bruhl’s death in 1939, Goldberg dedicated a fascinating essay to him, and I quote from it at length, as it illuminates the political context of primitivism in latter-day Germany, as well as the poet’s own approach:

I remember well Lévy-Bruhl’s *Primitive Mentality*. As an investigation of humanity’s childhood, and thanks to its vivid examples—this is certainly the most important book. I remember it. It rested on my desk in the early spring of 1933.⁵³ And at the time, it was more to me than a book: it was a mentor and a symbol. Its value was beyond doubt. This was after the demise of the Neue Sachlichkeit,⁵⁴ and art was looking for redemption in the primitive, the primal, the primeval—to be closer to nature. It was then that the age-old debate raged, how can this be achieved? Where are the sources? What do you draw from? What is the path to the great simplicity, the closeness to earth, to nature, to the

mentality of the first humanoids? And in response certain voices were heard, which were not artists' voices. The people of the political fist preached for a primordial, barbaric, mundane mentality. For the return to the Arian Primitive which could infuse new blood in the veins of the aging world. Against "verbosity," against "Jewish decadence," against "over-culturedness" which "distances man from a wholesome mentality." They knew how to scream those slogans. And they won. They beat the "Jewish intellect," which "destroys the primitive." And the results of their victory are now evident and clearly perceived by all.

And on my desk in those days, in those early days of these people's victory, rested a different book by an old Jew, a man who had no fear of excessive intellect, who knew full well that there is no *going back* to the primitive, but rather that we must *progress* toward it, because the road to the primitive is the longest and most difficult of all, as it involves stepping up all the ladders of culture and civilization, the highest, the vaguest. But Lévy-Bruhl's voice was not shrill. A civilized man is not vociferous. And they did not listen, they did not hearken. And the results—they are now evident. And they are clearly seen by all.⁵⁵

It is thus plainly evident that Goldberg appreciated works by such artists as Masereel, Klee, and Barlach because their expressionism was basically informed by what she considered to be proper primitivism: that which seeks universal abstraction and maintains a civilized quality ("stepping up all the ladders of culture and civilization, the highest, the vaguest"), and not that which leads to the "political fist," as in the "Arian primitive." We can sense her attraction to universal, stylized, and acculturated expressions of the popular spirit even in her own oeuvre: in the poems of her book *Shir ba-kfarim* (Songs in the Villages; 1942), which is composed entirely of sophisticated adaptations of popular songs from various localities, as well as in other poems, such as "Ha-karpol ve-ha-vered" (The Carnation and the Rose, B, 185–86), whose subtitle is "A Swedish Primitive"; in her "Legends," published in the Hebrew press in Lithuania when she was eighteen and nineteen years old, and which are in fact short stories;⁵⁶ and finally in her admiration of ancient Chinese poetry.

Of additional relevance is Goldberg's doctoral thesis on the Aramaic translation of the Samaritan Torah, in which she privileges the vernacular version that, according to her findings, played a decisive role in the formulation of the Samaritan Pentateuch.⁵⁷ At the time described in the extract above, "early spring of 1933," when Goldberg was studying in Bonn, and in the very days in which she completed her dissertation, Masereel's works were removed from German museums, and his books (together with most other titles by Wolff) were banned and burned in town squares in what Nazi propaganda labeled "an action against the un-German spirit." Germany's celebrated woodcut artist was thus made a pariah due to his anti-Fascist activism. Other modernist artists whom Goldberg admired suffered a similar fate: from 1937 on, works by Barlach and Klee were presented in the infamous "Degenerate Art" exhibition, and Barlach "died ostracized and excommunicated in a forsaken town in Mecklenburg. Nazi thugs would smash his windows, and the grocer dared not bring the sixty-eight-year-old man bread to eat. No German newspaper eulogized him."⁵⁸

Due to space limitations, I will offer only a few comments on the Masereel poems, which are reproduced in full in the appendix to this essay. It seems that Goldberg had originally intended to dedicate a poem to each of the book's sixty woodprints; accordingly, the first four were each awarded a poem. She then became more selective, and the fifth poem appears beside the thirteenth print.

Poem 1 centers on the romantic character of the wanderer. This is not the French *flâneur*, or urban stroller, but a person who has ventured from the metropolis into a natural landscape, from regimented space to the frontier that touches on infinity. The search for harmony lost in the city is replaced here by disharmony: "Under his feet the earth breathes / Like a scorpion spitefully stinging." Goldberg's poem thus turns its back on the traditional representation of the wanderer. It is interesting to see how the poet not only "describes" the woodcut but also weaves a complete plot around it, in which each detail is ascribed with emotion, as in the verse "The grasslands have hidden their night." This lets us refer to the Masereel poems, and perhaps to all of Goldberg's ekphrastic poems, as psychological projective tests, akin to Rorschach or TAT, in which subjects are presented with ambiguous stimuli whose interpretation sheds light on their personality.

The first half of **Poem 2** is dedicated to "depicting" the print's depth: the clouds and watercraft. The woodcut's portrayal of the great gathering storm and

the two tiny boats is translated in the poem into a scene of loss: the clouds sink in (rather than touch) the edge of the sea, and “The boat will die between sand and wind.” The natural scene in the woodcut is charged in the poem with Christian significance, and the landscape, which could have been pastoral, becomes menacing. The boat is likened to “an offended heart.” The poem’s second half is dedicated to the front image of the artwork: two wanderers on the beach (originally, this woodcut depicted the two monks in *Till Eulenspiegel* coming to Damme to sell indulgences). In the poem, the two characters became “we,” the speaker and her beloved, who take part in the wake for boat / “offended heart,” realizing in the process that their own parting is nigh (“Here tomorrow was forever rent”).⁵⁹

The opening verse of **Poem 3**, “And still,” contrasts the gloominess of the previous poem with the cautious optimism of those that follow. In a peaceful village, whose tiny houses crouch together in a snowy night, a miraculous event takes place: “A white God dancing around a church spire.” Perhaps this is a metaphor for the snowflakes (as in the beautiful metaphor appearing later in the stanza, “Soaring white stars that are gently poured / From heaven’s chalice into a cupped, silent choir”), but upon reading the *Taba’ot ashan* poems, it makes more sense to interpret the scene more literally. In that book and in Goldberg’s early writing in general, God repeatedly appears as fallen from grace, to the point of having to ask man for help (A, 24): “I saw my God in the café. / He was revealed in the cigarette smoke. / Depressed, sorry and slack / He hinted: “One can live still!” // He was nothing like the one I love: / Nearer than he—and downcast, / Like the transparent shadow of starlight / He did not fill the emptiness. // By the light of a pale and reddish dusk, / Like one confessing his sins before death, / He knelt down to kiss man’s feet / And to beg his forgiveness.”⁶⁰

This conception of God necessarily relies on Nietzsche’s thought and its offshoots in poems by Rilke, “my poet,” as Goldberg called him.⁶¹ For example, her verses from *Taba’ot ashan*: “The town fell silent. Only the church clock kept praying / To its deaf God, fallen asleep on His stove” (A, 23), clearly echo Rilke’s on God: “You are the whispering sooty one; / Outstretched on every stove you lie.”⁶² In her poem “R. M. Rilke,” Goldberg writes: “He walks and ventures to the city as the organ sings at mass, / Untying the sandal of his tall and all-too-human God” (A, 154).

In time, Goldberg was to rewrite the poem and remove the divine character. The quasi-festive and energetic atmosphere that characterizes the early version would be replaced by a more “average” and ordinary presentation. In many senses, this alteration encapsulates the overall stylistic change in the poet’s writing between her years in Europe and Palestine, between the early and late 1930s.⁶³

God plays a dominant role also in **Poem 4**, in the legend the sky tells the lovers (seen in the woodcut’s front facing an open vista with clouds). The legend in the poem tells of God who created the world with all its good and evil, and who above all loved the lovers and love. Just as the snake in Genesis promised the woman that “ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (3:5; King James Version), in the poem the lover says, “Behold, I’ll be like a God!” But he takes nothing from God; on the contrary, with his love he intends to return the azure to skies turned grey by the city’s smoke and soot. The lovers settle for this naïve legend, but the line “and there are also those” may indicate eccentricity: indeed, even in the modern warlike world there are those excited by every sunset and panorama, who believe that “Once upon a time there was a God, honest and good.” According to this interpretation, the poem challenges not only the lovers’ naïveté, but also their naïve representation in the woodprint. Of the eight poems in *Landscapes*, this is the only one published in Goldberg’s lifetime: she included it in her book *Shibolet yerukat ha’in* (Green-Eyed Stalk) published on the eve of World War II (A, 150).

The cat woodcut that inspired **Poem 5** (see appendix) was also admired by Shlonsky, who wrote about it in an essay devoted to Masereel: “I recall a spiral staircase in a Parisian hostel. A cat treads gracefully on stairs draped with a faded carpet. It also seems that its highly elongated body is twisted and arched like the limbs of a domesticated panther.”⁶⁴ As if unrelated to the poem’s first four stanzas, which focus on the cat as a kind awe-inspiring deity, the final stanza reads: “And an old woman with a dried tear on her cheek / Alone in the attic room and bed / Understood suddenly a letter written a decade before: / *Your son is dead.*” Clearly, the son was killed in World War I, a piece of information that thus dates the poem (and the woodcut’s “plot” as imagined by the poet) to about a year before Masereel’s book was printed, or 1928 at the latest (since the letter was written “a decade before”).

The bereavement and other losses of the war, both physical and psychological, were clearly evident in the daily life of Germany in Goldberg’s years there. At the

same time, leisure culture flourished in the Weimar Republic, with the café serving as a sociocultural center par excellence. Indeed, the unpublished novel *Avedot*, whose plot unfolds in 1932–1933 Germany, opens with an episode in a Berlin café: “This solid city suspending over nothing, the city of peace and freedom over the precipice of blood—it alone is home to four million. Have some respect, gentlemen! Four million people! Each with a pair of legs, a pair of hands, a pair of eyes, ears—for heaven’s sake, how many are these altogether?”⁶⁵ And these words are also related to the opening of **Poem 6**, “At the Café”: “Tufted hair, forelocks, hats, caps, / And hands, hands, and hands . . . / The city in the window not knowing if / The coming hours will die here unplanned.” The unpublished novel may have grown out of a short story called “Ore’akh” (Guest), the first prose text published by Goldberg after she immigrated to Palestine in April 1935 (that is, three months after she arrived).⁶⁶ The protagonist comes to the town for several hours and decides to visit a room where he used to live. The basic situation is the same in both the short story and the novel—both are about returning to a metropolis that is both foreign and familiar at the same time. Interestingly, in “At the Café” the man visiting the café “wants only to be friend and guest” and he, too, has “*that* room,” but we later find out that at the café he seeks a vacation from his home; at home he faces a weary wife waiting without hope, with his child and his woes. In the woodcut, we see a group of people engaged in lively conversation, and a couple looking at them from behind; thus, the poem seeks to penetrate through the façade of joy and liveliness, inquiring into the heavy load carried by one of the pretending partiers. Unlike the woodcut’s group character, Goldberg focuses on an individual situation and story, adding a child and a weary wife that are nowhere present in Masereel’s print. She looks upon the poem’s protagonist with the eyes of one sitting in front of him (it is naturally impossible to identify him in the woodcut), who despises his attempt to flee his wife and child—and who may be the protagonist’s alter-ego.

In **Poem 7**, the “oppositional” stance of some of the poems reaches its peak, a stance evident through the deliberate distance from a sugary interpretation of certain woodcuts, as in that depicting two lovers gazing at the open vista (which inspired Poem 4), and here of a mother putting her child to sleep. In “Shir eres le-yeled zar” (Lullaby to a Foreign Child), the speaker presents herself as a nanny, perhaps a Jewish one (her mother is expecting her letter on the Sabbath), hungry for a man’s

love. Most of the “Masereel poems” are written in iambic meter, but Poem 7 follows the trochaic meter typical of nursery rhymes. In terms of its form and certainly in view of its title, it could be considered a lullaby, although it is far removed from one in its content. Conversely, in the time-honored lullaby tradition, we find quite a few miseries and catastrophes that would make it is hard to fall asleep; thus, in the final analysis, this poem does indeed comply with genre conventions.

The final example—**Poem 8**—also deals with the difficulty of finding love in the big city, and implies that love can only be found at the edge of town, “In the outskirts, near a rickety fence,” perhaps only for money, and even then this involves ignoring the poor and destitute, “The homeless restlessly passing by, / Those exposed to the bared four walls / Who go out to the streets to die.” The “homeless” here may be reminiscent of those in Rilke’s “Herbsttag” (Autumn Day): “Whoever has no house now, will never have one. / Whoever is alone will stay alone.”⁶⁷

These eight recently discovered poems are the fruit of Goldberg’s encounter with Masereel’s work, but in the background are two additional artists: Shlonsky and Rilke, who significantly influenced Masereel himself (thus, for example, the latter’s *Mein Stundebuch* (Book of Hours) is named after the former’s, which in turn is named after the Christian devotional book). “Masereel’s woodcuts were therefore Goldberg’s dreamland,” wrote Erez Schweitzer,

without which she could not bear the real world. However, her choice of this art as a symbol and theme for her poems is not self-evident, but rather distinctly anachronistic. At the time of her writing, the art of visual representation had already undergone the greatest revolution in its history, with the advent of photography and film. In comparison, the woodcut was and still is poor in detail, colorless, apparently pre-industrial, associated with memory and with the past, even when it does refer to the near present. The woodcut is modern in its deliberate two-dimensionality, in the representation which reveals itself as such, and yet it still seems archaic, primeval and almost magic.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

Inasmuch as the ekphrastic poem foregrounds something of the artwork inspiring it, it also erases it, seeking to replace or at least to rewrite it out of recognition. The poet's focal lens tends to distort the proportions of the plastic artwork behind the poem, often emphasizing marginal details and mainly giving it a subjective interpretation. In the particular case of Lea Goldberg, the erasure inherent in any ekphrastic move is also joined by additional erasure, as she shelved most of her ekphrastic poems, publishing only three, and even these were not included in her representative anthology *Mukdam u-me'ubar* (Early and Late), published in 1959. In doing so, Goldberg abandoned a European, Christian, and highly elitist current in her writing that must have been very dear to her but which could have alienated Israeli readers. Perhaps these poems were destined for deletion in the first place, due to their double foreignness to Jewish culture—both in their Christian evocations and in their forbidden attraction to graven images.

Goldberg's ekphrastic poems are thus a brilliant exercise in writing, erasure, and, above all, encryption. They have translated her historically charged Berlin experience into an aesthetic cultural one supposedly oblivious to the gathering storm already blowing through the city streets, erasing the city's presence at the *Götterdämmerung* of the Weimar Republic and substituting it with Berlin in its full glory, the capital of both the European Enlightenment and the Jewish Haskalah. The modernism of most visual artworks—Barlach's and Masereel's—is translated in her poems into classicism, using among other things the Christian envelopment to shroud them. The masculine expression at their foundation has turned, through Goldberg's penmanship, into a feminine gaze.⁶⁹ As I have shown, the poems refer directly to a certain work of art, while also often having a dialogue with certain poems behind its proverbial back; and above all, these poems seek to translate, in all senses of the word, the general European visual artwork into an individual Hebrew textual work. Just as Goldberg sought to recreate herself in Berlin, perhaps her ekphrastic poems represented an attempt at creating a new cultural and personal identity, an attempt at Jewish emancipation in European culture and an expansion of the Hebrew culture's horizons.

It appears that in this context, encryption, translation, and erasure are distinctly symbolic mechanisms. When asked to explain to her readers how a poem is written, Goldberg answered thus, paraphrasing Rilke: “One must see many cities, men and things, and then forget them, all of them, and then maybe one is able to write poems.”⁷⁰ At the same time, ekphrasis has psychological qualities in Goldberg’s poems—displacement, regression, repression, and so on, as are evident from the examples offered here. Perhaps, in the final analysis, ekphrasis is no more than an external stimulation for something deeply psychological, and as such, its inherent erasure mechanism is destined to be erased itself: the work of art—and the metropolis—are mental constructs whose echo in reality is weak in comparison with their existence in the mind. Thus wrote the poet in the foreword to *Mikhtavim mi-nsi’a meduma*:

In every soul there is a collection of ancient woodcuts, stored there since childhood—pictures of dream-cities, distant and precious. And it makes no difference whether man has actually seen all these cities after having collected the woodcuts in the pouch of his soul—the picture doesn’t change at all: it has nothing to do with reality. As a matter of fact, the whole world is to us a primitive and rather small wood engraving—a depiction of an imaginary city—for otherwise, how could we bear within us “the whole world,” with its multifarious details?⁷¹

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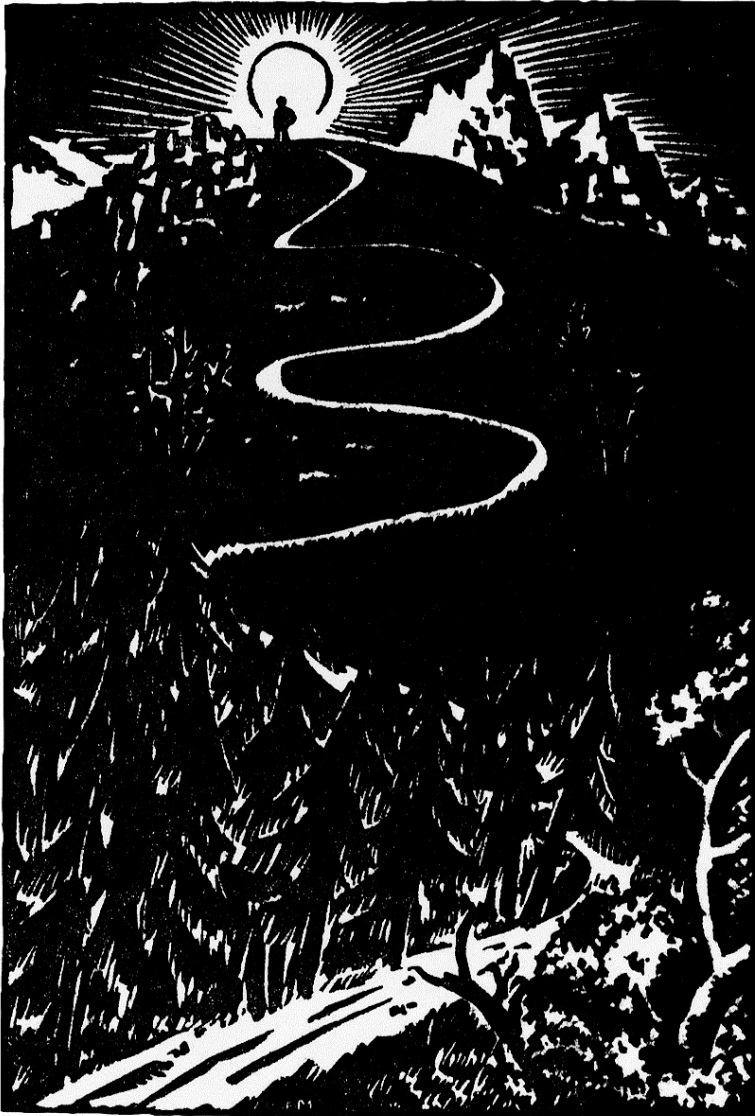
Appendix

*CITY POEMS BY LEA GOLDBERG**Translated by Rachel Tzvia Back*

Images courtesy of Frans Masereel, untitled © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

1

וְהוּא הוֹלֵךְ לְהִתְאַרֵךְ אֶל הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ. הַדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׁלֵכָה מֵאַחֲוָרָיו, מִתַּחַת לְרַגְלָיו הָאֲדָמָה נוֹשְׁמֶת בְּמִשְׁטָמָה עוֹקֶצֶת כְּמוֹ עֶקְרָב.	And he wanders off to visit with the sun. The road is discarded behind him, Under his feet the earth breathes Like a scorpion spitefully stinging.
הָאֵילָנוֹת דּוֹקְרִים אֶת הַרְקִיעַ וְהַדְּשָׁאִים הִחְבִּיאוּ אֶת לַיְלָם. וּמִנְפֶשׁוֹ רוּצָה הוּא לְהִשְׁכִּיחַ שֶׁהֵיָא הֵיטָה כְּבִדָּה כְּמוֹ הָעוֹלָם.	The tall trees pierce the skies The grasslands have hidden their night. Memory of his soul's worldly weight He wants to banish from sight.
כִּי יֵשׁ עַל הַפְּסָגוֹת קִלּוֹת אַחֲרָת וְהֵיא כְּמוֹ אֶהְבָּה תּוֹסֶסֶת בּוֹ. וְהֵיא בּוֹ אֲמִלְלָה וּמְאֻשְׁרָת, כְּמוֹ שֶׁמֶשׁ הַנִּשְׂרָף בְּאוֹר לְבוֹ.	For on the hilltops a different lightness lives And it's like love within him taking flight. And it's unhappy and joyful within him, Like a sun ablaze in the heart's light.



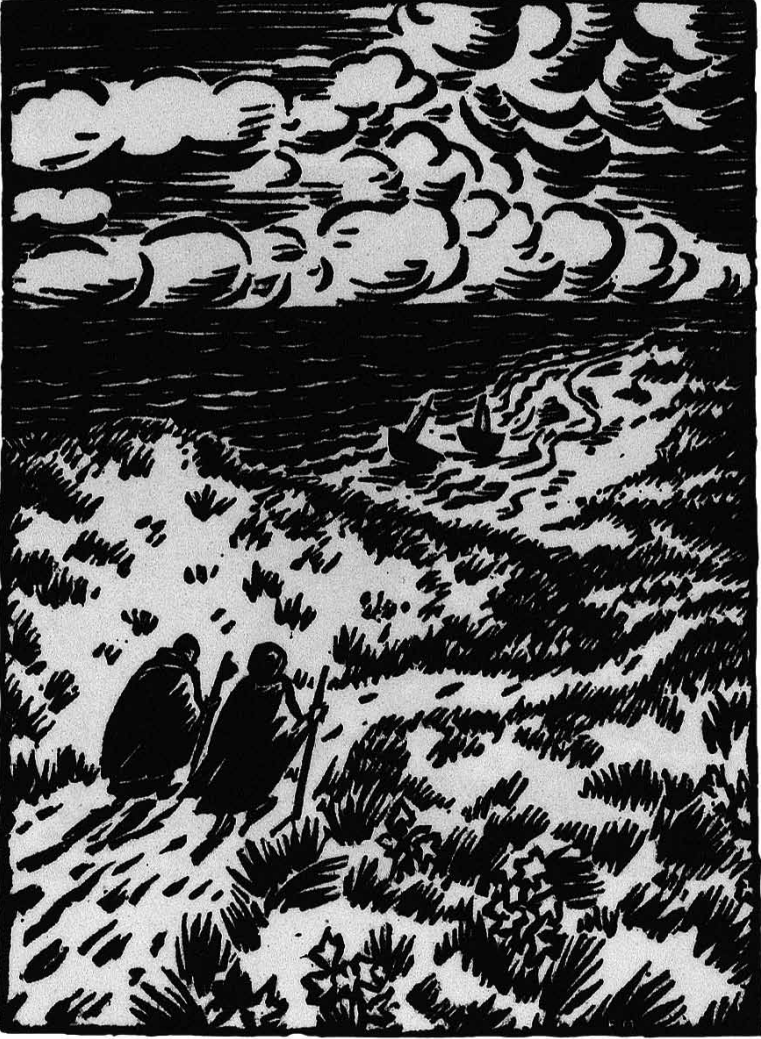
2

העננים טובעים בקצה הים The clouds are drowning at the sea's edge
 והספינה תמות בין חול ורוח, The boat will die between sand and wind,
 דמעת ישוע ותפלת מרים The tears of Jesus and Mary's prayer
 מפליון לא ישמרוה. Its ruin cannot rescind.

ומה אם יש לתרן דמות הצלב? So what if the mast looks like a cross?
 הלילה לא יפתח לו את השער Night will not open for it the gate
 והספינה כלב שנעלב And the boat, like an offended heart,
 תשוט משלוחתה אל תוך הצער. Will sail from its peace into pain.

ואנו ההולכים אל הלאן, And we who walk toward the where,
 ואנו הזוכרים את המאין, And we who remember the from where,
 נביא אל חוף-הליל יגון קטן We'll bring toward night's shore a small grief
 ואפר הברכה על הידים. Ash of blessing in our arms, and prayer.

וכשתגוע למולנו הספינה And when the boat perishes before us
 והדממה תשיר את קינתה לה, And silence sings for it her lament,
 תדע שגם אני כבר מבינה, You'll know I too now understand—
 שפה נתק לעולמים ההלאה. It was here tomorrow was forever rent.



3

- ובכל זאת And still
 יש על הארץ לילות משלגים There are snowy nights on the land
 ואלהים לבן רוקד סביב צריח כנסייה. And a white God dancing around a church
 spire.
 וכוכבי לבן העפים נמזגים And soaring white stars that are gently
 poured
 מגביע השחק אל כוס הדומיה – From heaven's chalice into a cupped, silent
 choir—
 ובכפר מתעורר פתאום החלום In the village the dream suddenly wakes and
 gazes
 ומביט בעד כפור הצהר אל לבן הליל, Through the window's frost into night's
 whiteness,
 אל האלהים הרוקד מסביב למגדלו Toward God dancing around his tower
 על מרבד השתיקה האפל. On the darkened carpet of silence.
 אז מעיר החלום את הילד הנם Then the dream awakens the slumbering boy
 ופוקח עיניו ומראה לו, Opens his eyes and shows him
 שהכפר הנרדם בחיק העולם How the village asleep in the lap of the world
 כל כך דומה לפלא... Resembles a miracle brimming over . . .
 על כן יש על הארץ זכרונות משלגים מאד Thus there are snowy memories on the land
 ואלהים לבן רוקד סביב צריח הנשמה. And a white God dancing around the soul's
 spire.
 וצהר הלב הסגור מחכה לחלום ולאות And the heart's closed window waiting for
 dream and sign
 ואוהב לפרקם את מרחב הדממה. And loving, sometimes, the expanse of
 silence.





5

בלילה ירד החתול על בהונות רגליו
 מסלם גבוה ונפתל כנתיב-הר.
 על החלון היה הכרך מצלב
 והפנס כמו אילן שונעקה.

At night on the tips of his paws the cat
 padded
 Down steps tall like a mountain-trail and
 winding.
 On the window the teeming city was
 crucified
 And the streetlamp was like an uprooted
 tree.

גוף החתול היה מארך
 כגעגוע אל פחד לא נודע,
 אולי הוא יצא לטרף את הכרך
 הנועץ בו עיני חלדה.

The cat's body was stretched and long,
 Like longings for a fear unspied,
 Maybe he's left to prey on the city
 That stares at him with rat eyes.

הסלם הקשיב לפסיעות החתול
 ונדמה היה שמייד
 יצא עוד אחד מן הדלת שממול
 ואחריו יבואו עוד מאה.

The stairway listened to the cat's steps
 And it seemed as though very soon
 Another would exit through the door
 from across
 And a hundred more would follow too.

הדממה חכתה שהוא יילל
 כמו רוח סתיו בעולם,
 אך הוא רק תקע את גופו הלבן בליל
 ומפחד חרד הסלם.

Silence waited for him to start wailing
 Like an autumn wind in the wide world,
 But he only thrust his body white into
 night
 And the stairway shuddered with dread.

ואשה אחת זקנה עם דמעה יבש על פנים,
 בחדר שמתחת לגג,

And an old woman with a dried tear on
 her cheek
 Alone in the attic room and bed

הבינה פתאום מכתב שנכתב לפני עשר שנים:
 "בןך נהרג."

Understood suddenly a letter written a
 decade before:
 "Your son is dead."



6

בקפה **At the Café**

בְּלוֹרִיּוֹת, כּוֹבְעִים, מְגַבְעוֹת, וְיָדִים, יָדִים, יָדִים . . . וְהַכָּרֶךְ בְּחַלּוֹן לֹא יָדַע אִם פֶּה מִתּוֹת הַשָּׁעוֹת הַבָּאוֹת.	Tufted hair, forelocks, hats, caps, And hands, hands, and hands . . . And the city in the window not knowing if The coming hours will die here unplanned.
וְהַכָּרֶךְ עוֹד אוֹהֵב וְנוֹצֵר יְגוֹנוֹ שֶׁל חֶדֶר אַחֵר: קָרַן אֹר אוֹר בּוֹ הַשְּׁלִיכָה חֶכְה עַל פְּלָגֵי חִלּוּמוֹ שֶׁל הַיֶּלֶד וְאִשָּׁה עֵיפָה מוֹל הַדְּלֵת מַחְכָּה, מַחְכָּה, מַחְכָּה . . .	And the city still loves and closely stores The grief of a different room: Where a light-beam cast a fishing rod Into the child's dreams, deep-ebbing waves, And a weary woman near the door Waits, and waits, and waits . . .
וּפֹה הוּא יוֹשֵׁב וְשׁוֹכֵחַ אֵת זוֹ שֶׁהוּא כֹּה זוֹכֵר, וְרוֹצֵה לִהְיוֹת אוֹרֵחַ שֶׁל עֲצָמוֹ וְשֶׁל כָּל אַחֵר.	And here he sits and forgets The one he so much remembers, And wants only to be friend and guest Of himself, and of any other.
אֲךְ אֶחָד מִמּוֹלוֹ יוֹדֵעַ מִמָּה נּוֹצֵר בְּלִילוֹת הַכָּרֶךְ וּבוֹזוֹ פֶּתֶר לְמַפְרָע, שֶׁהַחֶדֶר הַזֶּה לֹא נִשְׁכַּח.	But the one facing him knows What the city in its nights has begotten And he told in advance with his scorn How <i>that</i> room is never forgotten.



7

שיר ערש לילד זר

Lullaby to a Foreign Child

על הכתל המואר

On the illumined wall beside

מתנועע צל ידי,

My hand's moving shadow beguiles,

דע לך, ילדי הזר,

You must know, my foreign child,

שאתה אינך ילדי.

You are not at all my child.

אל תבכה והרדם,

Don't weep, you must now sleep,

אמא עוד מעט תשוב,

Your mother will soon return

לי גם כן, אי שם, יש אם.

I too have a mother somewhere,

זה פשוט ולא חשוב...

It's simple and of no concern.

לפנים גם היא נשקה

Sometimes she too kissed

דמעותיה של הבת

Tears of the daughter

ועכשו היא מחכה

But now she waits and waits

לאגרת בשבת.

For a single Sabbath letter.

ועכשו לה בית ריק

And now her house is empty

ולילות בו עצובים,

And nights in it forlorn,

על דלתה עכשו דופק

Only the postman still knocks

רק נושא המכתבים.

On her lonely door.

שמע לצעד בפרוזדור –

Listen to steps in the hallway—

אמא אחרה לשוב.

Your mother is late on return.

לי נתן הרבה לזכר

So much I now remember,

זה פשוט ולא חשוב.

It's simple and of no concern.

אבא בא היום עיף

Your father returned weary

אבל הוא צחק לך

But still he laughed with you,

הוא הביא לך כלבלב

He brought the puppy you wanted

ובבה מגחכה.

And a puppet in a cap of blue.

הוא הביא לאמא עוד

He brought your mother gifts,

נעלים ושמלה,

Shoes and a dress brand-new,

הוא אוהב אותה מאד

He loves her very much

בגללך ובגללה.

Because of her, because of you.

ואותי מזמן-מזמן	As for me, it's been many years
לא אהב אדם יקה	Since I've been loved and held,
בעולם סובב ורן	In a spinning and happy world
לי לא נוה קצת וקה	I'm unquiet and a little cold.



8

- בפרברים, על יד גדר רעוע,
 הם עוד יודעים לבכות ולאהב,
 הם עוד יודעים לשכח את הרחוב –
 את אפלת הכרך שפנסים כתרורה
 בזר היסורים, בזר קוצים צהב.
- In the outskirts, near a rickety fence,
 They still know how to cry and love,
 They still know how to forget the street—
 And darkness of the city that lamps have
 crowned
 With yellow thorns, agony's wreath.
- הם עוד יודעים לשתק ולא לראות
 את אלה בני-בלי-גג ובלי מרגוע
 הנקספים אל צל ארבעת הקירות
 והיוצאים אל הרחובות לגוע.
- They still know how to be quiet and not see
 The homeless restlessly passing by,
 Those exposed to the bared four walls
 Who go out to the streets to die.
- כי יש אחד עוד שמוצא שני,
 נוגה יותר מקצה הכרך בערב.
 ובו זכרון הצחוק הקדמוני
 נדלק כקרן אור על חד החרב.
- For there is still one who finds another,
 Sadder than the city's edge as day fades.
 In him is memory of the ancient laugh
 Emblazed like sunlight on the sword's blade.



NOTES

- I would like to thank Rachel Tzvia Back and Ami Asher for their attentive reading of this article and for their precious remarks. All of the poems cited here were translated by Rachel Tzvia Back.
- 1 *The Diaries of Lea Goldberg*, December 6, 1930, trans. Tsipi Keller, ed. Giddon Ticotsky and Tsipi Keller, originally edited in Hebrew by Arieh and Rachel Aharony. Rachel Tzvia Back's translations of Lea Goldberg's Masereel poems, and additional ekphrastic poems by Goldberg, are published here for the first time. All other citations in this article from Hebrew sources were translated by Giddon Ticotsky, unless stated otherwise.
 - 2 See Yfaat Weiss, *Lea Goldberg: Lehrjahre in Deutschland 1930–1933*, aus dem Hebräischen von Liliane Meilinger, Toldot, herausgegeben von Dan Diner, vol. 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 127.
 - 3 *Ibid.*, 31.
 - 4 *The Diaries of Lea Goldberg*, July 7, 1931, translated by Tsipi Keller.
 - 5 *Mikhtavim mi-nsi'a meduma* was written in the fall of 1934, as Goldberg was awaiting her immigration to Palestine from her mother's home in Kovno; *Avedot* was probably written sometime in the latter half of the 1930s.
 - 6 *And This Is the Light*, trans. Barbara Harshav (New Milford, Conn.: The Toby Press, 2011), 52.
 - 7 Lorraine Greaves, *Smoke Screen: Women's Smoking and Social Control* (London: Scarlet Press, 1996), 17–18.
 - 8 Penny Tinkler, *Smoke Signals: Women, Smoking and Visual Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 12, 30. Correspondingly, female smoking was also heterosexualized at the time. See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 157.
 - 9 Tinkler, 35. Only in the 1920s did the UK legislate women's legal right to smoke (*ibid.*, 43), while in Nazi Germany women were required to avoid the habit. See also *ibid.*, 52 et seq.
 - 10 Lea Goldberg, *Avedot: mukdash le-Antonia*, a previously unpublished novel edited with an afterword by Giddon Ticotsky (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Po'alim, 2010), 275, 277.

- 11 Yfaat Weiss and Giddon Ticotsky (eds.), *Ne'arot ivriot: mikhtavey Lea Goldberg me-ha-provintzia, 1923–1935* (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Po'alim, 2009), 142, letter of September 2, 1933 (emphasis in original).
- 12 Lea Goldberg, *Taba'ot ashan* (Tel Aviv: Yakhdav, 1935).
- 13 The phrase *the smoke of time* appears in the book's second poem (A, 14). Henceforth, references to the poems indicate the volume and page numbers in her three-volume collection, edited by Tuvia Ruebner (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim Press [new and revised edition, seventh printing, 2000]). In another poem, "the night has crumbled like cigarette ash" (A, 19).
- 14 "And a trembling match flame served to my lips" (A, 87); "To mention your name in casual conversation / and laugh into the smoke" (A, 85).
- 15 See Gail Finney, *Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism, and European Theater at the Turn of the Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 195–96.
- 16 Boaz Neumann, *Being in the Weimar Republic* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, Ofakim Library, 2007), 184. In her letters from Bonn, Goldberg told her friend Mina Landau about her frequent outings with fellow students and her passion for dancing: "We dance often, if truth be told!—In dances I have become adept" (*Ne'arot ivriot* 134, June 26, 1933; and see *ibid.*, e.g., 98). See also Shachar M. Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011), 237–70.
- 17 *And This Is the Light*, 48.
- 18 The opening of "Ballada kharsinit" (A, 74–75): "It was very far away— / In India or Cathay / (And perhaps 'twas in Berlin / In a café with the fading of lamps)." Berlin is also mentioned in the epigraph of the poem "Khalom na'ara" (A, 71).
- 19 Shimon Gens (Gan), "Sfarim, me'asfim, makhbarot: Lea Goldberg, *Taba'ot ashan*," *Davar* Saturday and Holiday Supplement, March 22, 1935, 2 (emphases in original). Goldberg and Gens got married out of convenience in late 1934 in order to obtain a marital immigration certificate, and divorced immediately after arriving in Palestine in early 1935.
- 20 Giddon Ticotsky and Yfaat Weiss, "Ha-tze'ivot min-ha-gvulot," *Ne'arot ivriot*, 234. I thank Yfaat Weiss for drawing my attention to this point.
- 21 Allison Shachter, *Diasporic Modernism: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 127.

- 22 See Barbara Mann, “Icons and Iconoclasts: Visual Poetics in Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1997); “Ut Pictura Poesis: Himmelreich and Modernist Poetry in the Yishuv,” *Alfons Himmelreich, Photographer on The Roof: Exhibition Catalogue*, edited by Vivienne Silver-Brody (Tel Hai: Tel Hai Museum of Photography, 2005); and “Visions of Jewish Modernism,” *Modernism/Modernity* 13, no. 4 (Fall 2006), 679–99. See also Avner Holtzman, *Melekhbet makhshevet–tkhi’yat ha-uma* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1999); *Sifrut ve-omanot plastit* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad and Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts, pre-printing editor: Varda Bechor, 1997), particularly 36; “Shirat ha-psalim ve-ha-tmunot—Ekphrasis ba-shira ha-ivrit ha-khadasha,” *Mekhkarey yerushala’im be-sifrut ivrit* 15 (1995): 247–78. See also Shahar Bram, *The Ambassadors of Death: The Sister Arts, Western Canon and the Silent Lines of a Hebrew Survivor*, trans. Batya Stein, poems co-translated by Lisa Katz and Shahar Bram (Brighton: Academic Press, 2011).
- 23 Barbara Mann, “Material Visions: The Poetry and Collage of Leah Goldberg’s Native Landscapes,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 7, no. 1 (2014). Goldberg’s citation comes from her “Toldot kha’im” (“Resume,” written probably for an exhibition of her paintings in The Jerusalem Artists House in December 1968), Gnazim Archive, Collection 274 (Lea Goldberg), Manuscript 5841/6-2. Text published by Giddon Ticotsky, *Haaretz* Culture and Literature Supplement, February 2, 2007, E1.
- 24 Goldberg, “Toldot Kha’im,” *ibid.*
- 25 *Avedot* also emphasizes the contrast between humanist Italy and the increasingly Nazi Germany; see Ticotsky’s afterword, 317–19.
- 26 Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren’t Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 28.
- 27 Goldberg, *Mikhtavim mi-nsi’a meduma*, 16. In subsequent sections she refers also to male prostitutes. Female prostitution is referred to again in *Avedot* (e.g., pp. 94, 152, 195–96, 198, and 202).
- 28 See Dan Miron, *Imahot meyasdot, akhayot kborgot* (Bnei Brak, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004), 356; Ruth Kartun-Blum, “Mu’akat ha-khiloniut: ha-di’alog im ha-brit ha-khadasha basifrut ha-israelit,” *Dimuy* 27 (2007): 10–11; Ruth Kartun-Blum, “Ha-mitpakhat shel Veronica,” *Rega shel buledet: mekhkarim be-sifrut ivrit u-ve-sifrut idish likhvod Dan Miron*, ed. Hannan Hever (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 2007), 200–201; and Hamutal Bar-Yosef, *Lea Goldberg* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2012), 99.

- 29 The poem's closing line, "And there was no escape from the horror of the night / no refuge from Magdalene," was to echo in *And This Is the Light*, after Nora's nightmare: "In the dark of the narrow little room, the smooth surface of the mirror gleamed, magician and foe, and there was no refuge from it. Nor was there any refuge from this wakefulness in the middle of the night, just as there had been no refuge from the dream before," 16.
- 30 Gnazim Archive of the Hebrew Writers Association in Israel, Collection 274, Lea Goldberg, Manuscript 8684-2. The text was published by Ticotsky, *Haaretz* Gallery Supplement, January 15, 2010, 4.
- 31 "Yoman sifrut: mi-takhat la-mitri'ya," *Mishmar*, December 15, 1944, 4 (as Ada Grant).
- 32 *Avedot*, 19.
- 33 This is also evident, for example, in an essay describing the violent tension between Nazis and socialists during May Day events in Berlin in 1931: "Ha-gader ha-prutza," *Davar*, April 30, 1940, 4 (also published in *Ne'arot ivriot*, 283–84).
- 34 Goldberg also referred to this painting by Ribera in *Mikhtavim mi-nsi'a meduma* (19–20) and in her diaries (June 26, 1937, 239; July 2, 1937, 248). Yfaat Weiss located the painting's details in the *Lost Art Internet Database*—<http://www.lostart.de/> (Item 405 B), where it is stated that the painting was lost after 1945. Other paintings of Saint Sebastian are detailed in <http://favsub.com/bookmarks/edit/12262-iconography-of-saint-sebastian-iconografia-di-san-sebastiano-iconographie-de-saint-s%C3%A9bastien> (both websites accessed on September 7, 2013).
- 35 Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*; trans. John Linton (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), 3.
- 36 *And This Is the Light*, trans. Barbara Harshav, 98–99 (emphasis in original).
- 37 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 38 The Latin term is borrowed from the Vulgate translation of the biblical verse "A Garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Songs 4:12, King James Version).
- 39 Another link in this intratextual chain is Poem D in the cycle "Shirei ahava mi-sefer atik," first printed in 1945 (B, 51). Here, again, are the hot day and the red bricks in the cemetery wall: "That day like the afternoon's heat / We walked slowly the wall's full length / The heatwave wafted from the red brick / And the air thirsted for

water. // And only you raised on high / Your forehead tall and fine, / Just as the sambuca trees dying / Lowered their heads in the sun's fire. // The heat thickened with the jasmine scent, / Beyond the wall our eyes saw / The cemetery's tamed mounds. // And if my heart believed in death / I knew that in you we both lived on / Humbly, beyond judgement's distorting bounds." Apparently, the hypothetical second person in the poem is Avraham Ben-Yitzhak, about whom Goldberg wrote, in a poem dedicated to him, "on your lofty, haughty forehead" (C, 232). Adi Zemach argued that Arin's character represents Ben-Yitzhak, and this is certainly conceivable (Adi Zemach, "El ha-metzi'ut: al ha-proza shel Lea Goldberg," *Pgishot im meshoreret*, ed. Ruth Kartun-Blum and Anat Weisman [Bnei Brak: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Sifriat Po'alim, 2000], 65–69.)

- 40 Joris van Parys, *Masereel: eine Biografie*, Herausgegeben in Zusammenarbeit mit der Frans-Masereel-Stiftung Saarbrücken und der Stiftung Studienbibliothek zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung Zürich (Zurich, 8th ed., 1999).
- 41 Arthur Holitscher and Stefan Zweig, *Franz Masereel* (Berlin: Axel Juncker, 1923), 14–15. Translated from the German by Giddon Ticotsky.
- 42 Avraham Shlonsky, "Frans Masereel," *Masot u-ma'amarim, ha-asor ha-rishon, 1922–1933*, ed. Hagit Halperin and Galia Sagiv (Bnei Brak and Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad and the Laura-Schwartz-Kipp Center, Tel Aviv University, 2011), 499–505.
- 43 This is a neologism by Shlonsky, a combination of *city* (*krakh*) and God (*El*), in the form of a biblical name.
- 44 Hagit Halperin, *Ha-ma'estro: khayav vi-itzirato shel Avraham Shlonsky* (Bnei Brak and Tel Aviv: Sifriat Po'alim—Hakibbutz Hameuchad and the Laura-Schwartz-Kipp Center, Tel Aviv University, 2011), esp. 430–31.
- 45 *Mem-khet rishumim: Aharon Gil'adi (Golodetz), Afikim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1942), n.p.
- 46 Talma Alyagon, "Pgisha im Lea Goldberg," *Ma'ariv* Days and Nights Supplement, January 24, 1969, 23.
- 47 Lea Goldberg, "Toldot kha'im" (see Note 23).
- 48 Ofra Yeglin, "Klassiut modernit u-modernism klassi be-shirat Lea Goldberg" (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1997), 8; and her book *Ulai mabat akher*, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics (Bnei Brak: Tel Aviv University and Hakibbutz Hameuchad).

- 49 Galya Yardeni, *Tet-za' in sikhot im sofrim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1961), 124.
- 50 Lea Goldberg, "Hamaskilim ha-germanim ve-germania ha-natzit," *Mishmar*, November 5, 1943, 5.
- 51 "At that same time [the Berlin years] I also discovered the modernists. I fell in love at first sight with Paul Klee's *Twittering Machine* and in sculpture with Ernst Barlach" ("Toldot kha'im"; see Note 23).
- 52 On the attraction to the primitive in German culture at that time, see August K. Wiedmann, "The German Quest for Primal Origins in Art, Culture, and Politics, 1900–1933: die 'Flucht in Urzustände,'" *Studies in German Thought and History* 16 (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995).
- 53 That is, during her studies in Bonn, shortly after the Nazis' rise to power.
- 54 The New Objectivity, a style that sought objectivity in artistic representation of daily real-life routine.
- 55 Lea Goldberg, "Reshimot agav kri'ah: Lévy-Bruhl, *Turim*, Year 2, ed. 49–50, March 30, 1939, 5 (as Ada Grant; emphases in original).
- 56 Lea Goldberg's "legends" were published together in *Kol ha-sipurim*, ed. Giddon Ticotsky and Hamutal Bar-Yosef (Bnei Brak, Israel: Sifriat Po'alim, 2009).
- 57 Lea Goldberg, *Das samaritanische Pentateuchtargum: eine Untersuchung seiner handschriftlichen Quellen*, herausgegeben von Paul Ernst Kahle und Wilibald Kirfel (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Bonner orientalische Studienheft), Heft 11, 1935.
- 58 Moshe Lifshitz, "Azkarot: le-zikhro shel Ernst Barlach," *Turim* 2, ed. 32, November 23, 1938, 3.
- 59 In a later poem ("Shirei ahava," D, 1948), two lovers gaze at a ship that signifies their love: "Somewhere, on a far-off and fading ship/ Already the lamps have been lit. // The evening is heavy. Don't go. Wait. / Look, our ship has sailed / And we on the shore with our sorrow / Cling like babies to the rails. // Our hearts have sailed like a driven leaf, / Gone with the waves on its wanderings, / There it shines on the curling crests." (B, 39). Translation cited from *Lea Goldberg: Selected Poetry and Drama*, trans. Rachel Tzvia Back (London: Toby Press, 2005), 71.
- 60 Translation cited from *Lea Goldberg: Selected Poetry and Drama*, 29.
- 61 *Mikhtavim mi-nsi'a meduma*, 34.

- 62 R. M. Rilke, "What will you do, God, when I'm dead?" *The Book of Hours: Prayers to a Lowly God*, trans. Annemarie S. Kidder (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 47.
- 63 Gnazim Archive, Collection 274 (Lea Goldberg), Manuscript 12914-2. This notebook contains poems, most of which were printed in the latter half of the 1930s.
- 64 Shlonsky, note 42, 504.
- 65 *Avedot*, 14.
- 66 Lea Goldberg, "Ore'akh," *Turim*, April 17, 1935, 4. Also included in her *Kol ha-sipurim*, 56–59. And see also *Avedot*, 330–31.
- 67 Translated by Stephen Mitchell, http://www.gratefulness.org/poetry/autumn_day.htm (accessed September 9, 2013). Goldberg's translation of the poem into Hebrew was first published in *Hashomer Hatsa'ir*, Year 8, ed. 48, December 14, 1939, 9–10 and later in her posthumous book *Voices Far and Near*, ed. Tuvia Ruebner (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1975), 130.
- 68 Erez Schweitzer, "Pitukhei ha'etz shel ha-neshama," *Haaretz* Books Supplement, December 5, 2012, 14.
- 69 She did so also in her Petrarchan sonnets, whose literary tradition is chiefly masculine. See Giddon Ticotsky, "Me-khaloni ve-gam me-khalonkha': hitkatvut dialectit im muskamot sifrutiyot be-makhzor ha-shirim shel Lea Goldberg 'Ahavata shel Teresa de Meun,'" *Alei Siach* 53 (Summer 2005), 69–83.
- 70 Lea Goldberg, "Khamisha prakim bi-ysodot ha-shira," *Ha-ometz la-khulin*, ed. A. B. Yaffe (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Po'alim, 1976). Originally, in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, Rilke enumerated a long list of things the poet must see: "For the sake of a few lines one must see many cities, men and things. One must know the animals, one must feel how the birds fly and know the gesture with which the small flowers open in the morning. One must be able to think back to roads in unknown regions, to unexpected meetings and to partings which one had long seen coming; to days of childhood that are still unexplained . . . not until then can it happen that in a most rare hour the first word of a verse arises in their midst and goes forth from them." (Translated by Herter Norton, New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).
- 71 *Mikhtavim mi-nsi'a meduma*, 8–9.

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