

Giddon Ticotsky\*

## A German Island in Israel: Lea Goldberg and Tuvia Rübner's Republic of Letters

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on the intellectual relationship between two leading Hebrew-European poets as revealed in their recently discovered extensive correspondence. Beyond the significant biographical revelations offered by their letters – among which is Tuvia Rübner's transition from writing in German to Hebrew – their correspondence (mainly during the years 1949–1969) sheds light on the complexities of the two poets' position as European artists in nascent Israeli culture. It raises questions of cultural homeland and exile, of the idealization of pre-war Central-Western European culture, and of the agency of the periphery in preserving the values of a declining cultural center. Lea Goldberg and Tuvia Rübner were migrants from the relatively close periphery of German culture who sought to reconstruct something of its intellectual center in the temporally and spatially distant periphery of postwar Israel. In their literary works, the two built bridges between the two cultures at a time when contacts between them were largely considered taboo. Among other aspects, Goldberg and Rübner's correspondence reveals their nuanced attitudes toward German culture amid the complex multicultural milieu of the State of Israel's formative years.

**Keywords:** Twentieth Century Jewish, Hebrew and Israeli Literature, European Cultural Centers, Literary Archives, Kulturkreisen, Translation, Periphery and Center

In March 1949, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion convened the country's finest authors and poets in order to consult them on the spiritual character of the newly formed State of Israel and the role intellectuals would play in it. "I hope this meeting will be just the beginning of ongoing contacts between members of the government, the elected people's representatives, and the citizens of the free republic of Jewish intellect, literature and science," he told participants. In a typically biblical style that identifies the intellectual as the man of God, Ben-

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\*Corresponding author: Giddon Ticotsky, Department of Comparative Literature, DLCL, Stanford University, Pigott Hall, Building 260, Room 302B, 450 Serra Mall, Stanford, CA 94305, USA, E-mail: giddont@stanford.edu

Gurion then handed the floor to the distinguished participants by saying, “Whoever carries the word of God in his mouth – pray let him share it with us.”<sup>1</sup>

The poet Lea Goldberg (1911–1970) took part in this meeting. Although one can assume that the Prime Minister’s style of address did not appeal to her – as she tended to avoid pathos, – she did not comment on it. Instead, she dedicated her comments at the meeting to the need she saw for “initiating a kind of movement of “going to the people,” or *хождение в народ* as they say in Russian.”<sup>2</sup> She argued that the more often Israeli authors and poets meet with newly arrived Jewish immigrants, the easier it would be to introduce them to Israeli culture, thereby broadening the potential impact of the authors’ and poets’ work, and increasing their readership by tens of thousands.

At the next meeting of Israeli intellectuals with Ben-Gurion – held some six months later – Goldberg’s tone, however, was more sober. She realized that the gap between Israel’s cultural elites and the broader public had grown tremendously following the mass immigration from the east – both Eastern Europe and the Middle East. This influx quickly transformed the character of Israel’s Jewish population, and it was now rather the elite who would have to adjust to the new majority.<sup>3</sup> Describing this change, Goldberg said:

Uncharacteristically, I went to the Tel Aviv beach on Saturday evening to stroll and look at people. I saw masses of people whose faces imparted to me that they have never read a book, that it may take a long while before they do; a strange nation, that is as yet unfamiliar to us; most of them are new immigrants. Some of them have been in Israel for a while now, but have not yet been included in this circle that we live in. In other words, we tend to forget that the kibbutz is the elite, and that the moshav is the pick of the crop, and we are cultivating within us this sense that they represent the people, whereas in fact we are far removed from the people.

If we fail to somehow reach out to those whom I’ve seen on Saturday evening on the beach of Tel Aviv – and they were a great many – we will remain an intellectual circle within an

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<sup>1</sup> *Divrei soferim: Bi-pegishah she-zimen rosh ha-memshalah* [Writers’ Words: A Meeting Summoned by the Prime Minister], Tel Aviv, March 27, 1949, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. The Russian expression means literally “going to the people,” and is borrowed from the history of the Narodniks who, in 1874, dressed up as peasants and agitated in Russian villages against the Czarist rule, believing that this way, the villagers would be exposed directly to the ideas of the educated class. It is reasonable to assume that Goldberg adopted this point of view from Tolstoy’s writings.

<sup>3</sup> The Jewish population of the young State of Israel doubled within three years, from some 650,000 in 1948 to about 1.3 million in the early 1950s, thanks to massive immigration mainly from Arab and Eastern European countries. See, e. g., Dvora Hacoen, *Olim Bis’ara* [Immigrants in Turmoil: The Great Wave of Immigration to Israel and its Absorption, 1948–1953] (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1994).

intellectual circle, and literature will atrophy for lack of contact with the masses. And these masses keep coming. They're coming in the thousands and we must reach out to them.<sup>4</sup>

The minutes of the meetings between Ben-Gurion and the young nation's writers – including Martin Buber and Shmuel Hugo Bergman – provide an exceptional record of the intimate reflections of major Israeli intellectuals on the radical demographic and cultural transformation of Jewish society in Israel upon its transition from pre-statehood to statehood. A review of these minutes suggests that Goldberg's words were more prophetic than those of other meeting participants; unlike other words, Goldberg pointed to the collapse of the founding group's cultural hegemony.

In the same year these meetings were held, Goldberg began corresponding with a young immigrant poet, Tuvia Rübner. Their correspondence, meetings and literary dialogue created what may be seen as a tiny "German island" in the mainstream of Israeli culture – an intellectual circle within an intellectual circle – at a time when this culture was undergoing drastic changes.

The two poets had corresponded extensively. The National Library of Israel recently obtained a collection of approximately eighty letters sent by Goldberg to Rübner, mainly between 1949–1969. These letters add to a collection of about thirty sent by Rübner to Goldberg during the same period, which are maintained by the "Gnazim" Bibliographic Institute in Tel Aviv.

The letters Goldberg and Rübner exchanged – all of which were written in Hebrew – are replete with references to the German culture the two shared. Beyond the significant biographical revelations offered by the letters, they shed light on the complexities of the two prominent poets' positions as European artists in a young Israeli culture.

Born in 1924 to a German-speaking Jewish family in Bratislava, Rübner immigrated to Palestine in 1941 without his family and settled in Kibbutz Merchavia in the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel. At that time, this kibbutz represented the cutting edge of agricultural settlement and was home to a number of Jewish society's socialistic elite. Among other distinctions, it housed the headquarters of *Sifriat Poalim* – the National Kibbutz Movement's publication. Young Rübner arrived at the kibbutz by virtue of his membership in the movement's branch in Slovakia. Arguably, Rübner owes his life to the movement, which facilitated his departure from Europe in 1941; in 1942, his mother, father, sister and many members of his extended family were exterminated in Auschwitz.

At the kibbutz, Rübner worked in agriculture, mainly as a shepherd. Shortly after his arrival, members of the kibbutz discovered that he wrote poems in German.

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<sup>4</sup> *Divrei soferim: Ba-pegishah ha-shnia she-zimen rosh ha-memshalah [Writers' Words: A Second Meeting Summoned by the Prime Minister]*, Tel Aviv, October 11, 1949, 12.

They introduced him to the leading Hebrew poet, Avraham Shlonsky, then an editor of *Sifriat Poalim*, who was residing on the kibbutz at the time for the purpose of rewriting his Hebrew translation of *Eugene Onegin*. Shlonsky, who had little knowledge of German, suggested that Rübner show his poems to Goldberg, then a colleague of Shlonsky in *Sifriat Poalim*. And this is how Goldberg and Rübner met.<sup>5</sup>

Goldberg was born in 1911 in Königsberg – at the time, on the northeastern edge of the Prussian Empire – to an assimilated Jewish family that had originated from Kovno (Kaunas), then part of the Russian Empire. During the First World War, her family was deported, along with tens of thousands of other Jews, from the Kovno area to the Russian hinterland. After the war, Goldberg returned to Kovno with her parents (she was their only daughter) and studied in a Hebrew school there. That was her first encounter with the Hebrew language. At age fifteen, Goldberg documented in her diary two significant decisions she had made: to be a writer and to write exclusively in Hebrew. In light of the fact that Goldberg's family home had not been Zionist, her decision to write in Hebrew was an interesting one.<sup>6</sup>

From an early age, Goldberg began preparing herself for philology studies, as a means of gaining proficiency in Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> In 1930, she started studying at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin. She completed her doctoral studies in the Oriental Seminar at Bonn University, which was then one of the leading institutes for Oriental Studies.<sup>8</sup>

Goldberg's years in Germany on the eve of the Nazis' rise to power were a time of self-fashioning as a central European intellectual and as a *poeta doctus* – a scholarly poet. While in Germany, Goldberg published her first mature poems in Hebrew newspapers – which were printed both in her homeland of Lithuania and in Palestine – and quickly won acclaim as the leading female Hebrew poet of her generation. Her poetics was basically neo-symbolist, i. e., she believed that the best way to represent the concrete reality is by symbols; she was

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5 Shlonsky and Goldberg had extensive ties. Among other things, Shlonsky arranged Goldberg's immigration to Mandatory Palestine and published her first book of poetry, *Smoke Rings* (1935).

6 *The Diaries of Lea Goldberg*, September 3, 1926, trans. Tsipi Keller, ed. Giddon Ticotsky and Tsipi Keller, originally edited in Hebrew by Arieh and Rachel Aharony (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 2005), 98.

7 A.B. Yaffe, interview with Lea Goldberg originally held in 1959, *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, literary supplement, January 28, 1977, 1.

8 Goldberg's doctoral dissertation was entitled *Das samaritanische Pentateuchtargum: eine Untersuchung seiner handschriftlichen Quellen* [*The Aramaic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch*], herausgegeben von P.E. Kahle und W. Kirfel, *Bonner orientalische Studienheft*, 11 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935). For more details about Goldberg's dissertation 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).

influenced by the Russian poet Alexander Block and the German poet Rilke, alongside Hebrew modernism.

In 1935, after earning her PhD, Goldberg immigrated to Palestine and quickly became one of the most influential women in the local Hebrew literary scene. She published theater reviews, literary criticism and children's books; translated scores of books into Hebrew; and, of course, wrote poems. Goldberg was the only member of the modernist group, *Yachdav* (Together), who was knowledgeable about and had close ties to German culture.<sup>9</sup>

At the time of their meeting, Goldberg and Rübner were thus at very different stages of their careers. She was an established and well-known poet and he was a beginner thirteen years her junior; she was a poet of high standing in the local literary milieu and he was an unfamiliar immigrant who wrote in a foreign language (Rübner wrote in German for some twelve years before he began writing in Hebrew). Their shared experiences and sentiments were, however, far greater than were the differences between them. They were both immigrants lucky enough to have been spared a direct experience of the Holocaust, but who were both haunted by its horrors and tormented with guilt for having left behind relatives who were less fortunate (Goldberg's mother immigrated to Palestine shortly after her daughter did, but her father remained and died in Lithuania).<sup>10</sup> Above all, it was an encounter between two creative writers, whose sense of marginality in European culture was precisely what compelled them to cling to it and to explore it intimately, while at the same time having emigrated from it. "And we will not forget you," Goldberg wrote in an essay published in August 1945, "the wounds of the lover and the wounds of the hater – we will not forget. Until the day we die we will carry it within us, this immense hurt whose name is Europe, 'your Europe,' 'their Europe,' but apparently... not 'our Europe,' even though we were hers, so very much hers."<sup>11</sup>

The two clung to the European culture of their shared imagination, even after it had been radically transformed due to historical events. It was precisely their geographical distance from Europe which allowed them – much like other émigré intellectuals in other times and places – to idealize its culture and to try to import its modalities into their host culture. It was, perhaps more than anything else, the collapse of "The World of Yesterday" that fueled the creation by Goldberg and Rübner of the "German island" in Israel.

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<sup>9</sup> This group transformed Hebrew poetry in the first half of the twentieth century, rejecting the poetic norms of Bialik's generation, and adopting instead the Mizrahi – over the Ashkenazi – accentuation system, which they viewed as more authentic.

<sup>10</sup> Weiss, *Lea Goldberg*, 55.

<sup>11</sup> Lea Goldberg, "Europa Shelachem" ["Your Europe"], *Mishmar*, April 30, 1945, 6.

## Goldberg's role in Rübner's early development as a poet

Goldberg and Rübner's relationship initially revolved around the latter's German poems. Goldberg was Rübner's mentor and critic; she helped him fine-tune his work. "I sometimes feel that you are slightly too verbose at the expense of conciseness, poetic brevity," she wrote to him in one of her early letters.<sup>12</sup> "Here and there you inject a little word, some kind of *nun*, or something of that sort to obey the rhythm's dictate; here and there you can even hear the sound of a Hebrew sentence structure. But the poem is very much a poem, and that's the most important thing."<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the aesthetic and prosodic direction Goldberg gave to Rübner, the two had theoretical conversations about literary topics, such as the social and historical role of poetry.<sup>14</sup> For Rübner at that time, poetry was a life-saver from the grueling daily routine on the kibbutz: "I clung to poetry like a heath in the desert."<sup>15</sup>

During this period, Rübner traveled to Tel Aviv regularly to meet with Goldberg. He also traveled to Jerusalem to meet with the German-Israeli poet and linguist Werner Kraft, to whom he was introduced by a superintendent of *Aliyat ha-no'ar* (the Youth Immigration Movement) during her visit to Merchavia. Kraft, who continued writing in German and never integrated into the local Israeli community of letters, in turn introduced Rübner to the poet Arie Ludwig Strauss, another German-Israeli. Through Kraft and Strauss, the young poet's social circles kept intersecting with Goldberg's (she had sailed to Palestine on the same ship as Strauss and would later replace him as a lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem). According to Rübner, as an immigrant who did not complete his secondary education in Germany, the patronage of Kraft and Strauss provided him with extensive knowledge about German culture.<sup>16</sup> In large part, Rübner's growth as a German intellectual began only *after* his emigration from Europe.

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Goldberg to Rübner, undated, National Library of Israel, Archives Department, Lea Goldberg Collection (hereafter, NLI, AD, LGC), Arc. 4\* 1655 01 076.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Tuvia Rübner, in the foreword to his correspondence with Lea Goldberg, in print. Rübner alludes to Jeremiah 17:6 to refer to the country's (cultural as well as climatic) aridity.

<sup>16</sup> Tuvia Rübner, *Ein langes kurzes Leben. Von Pressburg nach Merchavia* (Aachen: Rimbaud, 2004), 53–54.

The relationship between Rübner and Goldberg deepened after Rübner suffered a personal tragedy in February 1950. While returning from Tel Aviv to the remote kibbutz, a truck crashed into the bus he was riding with his 26-year old wife, Ada. It overturned twice and caught fire. Ada died instantly, leaving their seven-month old daughter behind. Tuvia was seriously injured and underwent a long rehabilitation process. According to Rübner, that was when he wrote his first Hebrew poem.<sup>17</sup> Goldberg visited him in the hospital and read the manuscript. She considered it publishable and sent it to the workers' newspaper, *Davar*, where it was printed in October 1950 under the pseudonym T. Ben Moshe:<sup>18</sup>

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I'm not the one I was.	אינני זה שהייתי.
I'm not the one I am.	אינני זה שהנני.
I'm neither here nor there.	אינני לא כאן ולא שם.
I live between the air and water.	חי בין אָויר ובין מים.
I live slowly in the fire.	לאטי חי באש.
My eyes are burnt.	עיני שרופות.
My hands are burnt.	ידי שרופות.
My lips are burnt.	שפתי שרופות.
Burnt are these words.	שרופות מלים אלה.
He who has whispered them	זה שלחשן
Lives in an open-lidded coffin	חי בארון־מת[ים], מכסהו פתוח
Watching the square sky	רואה שמים מרבעים
Go by.	עוברים. <sup>19</sup>

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Tempting as it is to read Rübner's poem against the backdrop of his injury and personal tragedy, it is open to other interpretations. The poem opens with a sort of rejection of the Exodus verse where Moses asks God how he should present Him before the Children of Israel, and God replies: "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:13-14) – a reply that is both tautological and laden with allusion. The poem is paradoxical in that it negates its existence and, by doing so, points to itself and to the fact that it is an artificial construct: "Burnt are these words." The personal

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>18</sup> "T." stands for Tuvia, and "Moshe" is Rübner's father, Manfred-Moritz's (1885–1942) Hebrew name.

<sup>19</sup> *Davar*, October 6, 1950. To the best of my knowledge, this poem has not been included in any of Rübner's Hebrew poetry books.

injury expressed in the poem can easily be related to the Holocaust, and at the same time to a common motif in the literature of the 1948 Generation<sup>20</sup> – that of the living dead, a theme whose roots are European but which attained a distinct local Hebrew character in those difficult years.<sup>21</sup> One of the most powerful illustrations of this motif is found in Haim Gouri's poem, "Here Lie Our Bodies" (published in January 1948, over two years before Rübner's poem), where it is also unclear whether the narrator is dead or alive: "Behold, here lie our bodies in a long, long row./Our faces are transformed. Death is reflected from our eyes. We do not breathe."<sup>22</sup>

As a dedication poem – that is, the first poem that a poet chooses to present to his readership – Rübner's would seem to be a particularly unusual one, because it is all negation. However, the poem does in fact conform to the norm for dedication poems; it attests to the source of its inspiration and authority and to the nature of its narrator as precisely located "neither here nor there." In many respects, being "neither here nor there" has remained the fountain of Rübner's poetic authority to this day.

Lea Goldberg's literary estate includes a German version of Rübner's poem, which was never published. Since Rübner had started translating some of his German poems into Hebrew – at Goldberg's encouragement several months before the accident<sup>23</sup> – it remains unclear whether the German version of the poem preceded the Hebrew, or vice versa, as was the case for large sections of Rübner's future oeuvre.<sup>24</sup> Here is the poem in German:

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**20** In Hebrew literature scholarship it is common to distinguish between the 1948 Generation (usually Israeli natives who fought in the 1948 Independence War) and the State Generation (who matured in the 1950s and 1960s). Biographically, Rübner does not belong to either generation, and this is probably one of the factors that impeded his acceptance: he was too young for and a stranger to the Israeli natives, and he was too old for and also a stranger for the younger writers, most of whom were also natives.

**21** See: Dan Miron, *Mul ha-aḥ ha-shotek: 'iyunim be-shirat Milḥemet ha-'atsma'ut* [Facing the Silent Brother: Essays on the Poetry of the War of Independence] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Keter and The Open University of Israel, 1992), 333–336; Hannan Hever, *Suddenly, the Sight of War: Violence and Nationalism in Hebrew Poetry in the 1940s*, trans. Lisa Katz (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2016), 37–43.

**22** Haim Gouri, *Pirḥey Esh* [Flowers of Fire] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1949), 78.

**23** Letter from Goldberg to Rübner, October 3, 1949, NLI, AD, LGC, Arc. 4\* 1655 01 076.

**24** This issue has yet to be studied in depth. In 1995, a collection of early poems by Rübner, written mainly from 1941–1951, was published (*Granatapfel: Frühe Gedichte*, Aachen: Rimbaud). In his afterword to that book, Hans Otto Horsch briefly mentions Rübner's transition between the two languages. Amir Eshel elaborated on these first poems, in his *Zeit der Zäsur: jüdische Dichter im Angesicht der Shoah* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 73–82. These poems were discussed also in a comprehensive collection of articles and essays about Rübner's



Ich bin nicht der, der ich war.  
 Ich bin nicht der, der ich bin.  
 Ich lebe nicht hier und nicht dort.  
 Ich lebe zwischen Luft und Wasser.  
 Langsam lebe ich im Feuer.  
 Meine Augen sind verbrannt.  
 Meine Hände sind verbrannt.  
 Meine Lippen sind verbrannt.  
 Verbrannt sind diese Worte.  
 Vergisst den, der sie stammelt.  
 Er lebt ohne Ort und ohne Zeit.  
 Er lebt in einem Sarg, sein Deckel ist offen  
 Und er sieht den viereckigen Himmel  
 Weiterzieh.<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to the norm in Hebrew literature at the time, Rübner did not completely abandon his writing in his mother tongue for the sake of his Hebrew work. Goldberg, on the other hand, began writing poems in Russian in early childhood and, following a conscious decision to do so (mentioned earlier), switched completely to Hebrew at the age of fifteen.<sup>26</sup> Apart from one attempt to write German prose during her years as a student in Germany, Goldberg never again tried to create in a language other than Hebrew.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that Goldberg was the driving force behind the publication of Rübner's first Hebrew poem is significant, both symbolically and practically. Goldberg was largely responsible for connecting Rübner to the modern Hebrew literary scene and its power centers. She opened doors for him to its main platforms, including *Orlogin*, the journal edited by Shlonsky, and the socialist newspaper, *Al Ha-mishmar*. She also contributed to his development as a poet by connecting him and other young poets and authors, including Rübner's

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work, but without mentioning their Hebrew versions. Gundula Schiffer's article is the only one there that compares between Rübner's German and Hebrew poems, but only regarding his later writing. See: "Herz, stirb oder singe.' Der Dichter Tuvia Rübner im Lichte seiner Selbstübersetzungen aus dem Hebräischen ins Deutsche," in: Jürgen Nelles (Hrsg.), *Tuvia Rübner lesen: Erfahrungen mit seinen Büchern* (Aachen: Rimbaud, 2015).

**25** Early German poems, typewritten stencil, "Gnazim," Lea Goldberg Collection (274), K-32250. To the best of my knowledge, this poem has not been included in any of Rübner's German poetry books.

**26** Yfaat Weiss and Giddon Ticotsky (eds.), *Ne'arot Ivriot: Mikhtavey Lea Goldberg me-ha-Privintzia, 1923–1935* [*Hebrew Youth: Lea Goldberg's Letters from the Province, 1923–1935*] (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 2009), 220.

**27** Giddon Ticotsky, "Boker a'fel ba-bira" (Dark morning in the capital), afterward, in: Lea Goldberg, *Avedot: Mukdash le-Antonia* [*Losses, a previously unpublished novel*], edited with an afterword by G.T. (Bnei Brak: Sifriat Poalim, 2010), 329, 348.

friends Ozer Rabin and Dan Pagis, who also had some background in German culture, with older writers.<sup>28</sup> One may even hypothesize that, had Rübner not met Goldberg, he would have found it difficult to make a literary home for himself in Hebrew. His other literary relationships – mainly with Strauss and Kraft – had led him away from Hebrew literature. Goldberg’s contribution to Rübner’s work was, therefore, threefold: she mentored him first as a poet, then as a Hebrew poet, and also introduced him to the literary elites in Israel.

Rübner published his first Hebrew poems in the publications to which Goldberg introduced him. He also published various treatises and articles on German culture in those same publications – for example, a treatise on the poet Avraham Ben Yitzhak (Sonne), written about two years after his death (Goldberg almost managed to introduce the two of them, but Rübner was not so fortunate), and an essay on *Faust*.<sup>29</sup>

Rübner’s involvement in the Hebrew literary scene continued to expand. After Ludwig Strauss’s death in 1953, Rübner took steps to preserve his literary legacy. His letters to Goldberg reveal the huge contribution he made to compile Strauss’s book, *Hebrew Studies in Literature*, which would later become central to teaching literature in secondary and tertiary education in Israel. Moreover, the letters reveal the extent to which Rübner almost created the book from scratch, assembling bits and pieces written by his late friend into complete chapters. Strauss’s close acquaintances feared that Rübner’s editing would come at the expense of fidelity to Strauss’s actual writings: “Eva spoke to me yesterday about the book,” Goldberg reported to Rübner about her conversation with Strauss’s widow, “and said that both she and Buber were in favor of ‘less’ and incomplete, so long as Ludwig’s words remain. It’s obvious to me that this textual material is impossible, distorted, broken and fragmented, and I would have done it much worse than you have. Nevertheless, it is better to wait a bit and try something one more time.”<sup>30</sup>

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**28** Goldberg headed a social circle, subsequently called “The Poets’ Club,” many of whose young members later became famous, including such luminaries as Yehuda Amichai and Dahlia Ravikovitch. In their monthly meetings, which took place first in a Jerusalem culture club and later in Goldberg’s home, the participants would discuss a poem they had read in advance. They did not present their own poems to her in this forum, but rather in one-on-one meetings. Many of the young poets she cultivated owe their first publication to Goldberg. Rübner told me that he only attended one or two meetings of the Poets’ Club due to the distance from his kibbutz to Jerusalem (Interview with Rübner at Merchavia, May 2015).

**29** Tuvia Rübner, “A Poem and its Analysis: ‘Blessed Are They Who Sow and Do Not Reap,’ by Avraham Ben Yitzhak,” *Al Ha-mishmar*, “Literary Page,” August 5, 1955, 5; “Faust and His Demon (Key Issues in the ‘Faustian Problem’),” Part I, *Orlogin*, 8 (May 1953), 167–180; Part II, *Ibid.*, 10 (May 1954), 183–196.

**30** Letter from Goldberg to Rübner, February 10, 1957, NLI, AD, LGC, Arc. 4\* 1655 01 078.

This was Rübner's first significant editing job; it would lead him to later edit a collection of Strauss's aphorisms in Hebrew and, eventually, to the ambitious project of editing Strauss' entire collection of writing, together with Hans Otto Horch. Rübner's work as an editor and translator in Israel placed masterpieces, mainly from German culture, on the Hebrew bookshelf. His translations included *Fragments* by Friedrich Schlegel (1982),<sup>31</sup> an anthology of Goethe's writings (1984), and a selection of Jean Paul's *An Introduction to Aesthetics* (1985). In addition, he initiated and edited the translation of many other works, including Friedrich Schiller's *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1985), *Of the Sublime* (1985) and *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (1986); Gustav Janouch's *Conversations with Kafka* (1987); Paul Klee's *On Modern Art* (1987); *Selected Poems of Paul Celan* (1987); and Walter Benjamin's essay on Baudelaire. These books and others were published in *Sifriat Poalim*'s "Te'amim" (Flavors) series, of which Rübner was chief editor – a unique and pioneering project in the Israeli publishing scene dedicated exclusively to reflections on aesthetics, with an emphasis on German thinkers. Perhaps it is no coincidence that these books were published in Hebrew only from the 1980s, once the taboo against translating works from German had weakened, a process that began in the 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

Rübner's relationship with *Sifriat Poalim* was formed to a large extent thanks to his acquaintance with Goldberg. As "one of the major women translators of her time,"<sup>33</sup> the large majority of Goldberg's German-Hebrew translations were published there.<sup>34</sup>

While Rübner's translation work was motivated by aesthetic considerations, Goldberg's projects were often dictated by economic constraints and, early on in her translation career, also by a socialist orientation. Rübner's translations were directed at the academic community and a small circle of intellectual cognoscenti, while Goldberg's were directed at the general public,

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**31** The years indicated here and below refer to the Hebrew publication.

**32** Na'ama Sheffi, *Germanit be-Ivrit [German in Hebrew: Translations from German into Hebrew in Jewish Palestine, 1882–1948]* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and Leo Baeck Institute, 1998), 210.

**33** *Ibid.*, 169.

**34** These translations included Martha Hoffman's *The Young Herzl* (1941); Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison* (1942); the correspondence between Ferdinand Lassalle and Sofia Solutsev (1944); Heinrich Mann's *Young Henry of Navarre* (1945) and five essays on French literature (1941); Theodor Plievier's *The Great Adventure* (1946); Carl Zuckmayer's *Barbara Blomberg* (1949); Friedrich Lobe's (as Jan de Vries) plays *A Tale of a Tailor* (1947) and *Silk and Bread* (1949); Fritz Hochwälder's *Hotel du commerce* (1951); and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's *The Jew's Beech* (which appeared posthumously in 1971).

including children and youth,<sup>35</sup> and many had a particular affinity for Israel or Judaism.

*Sifriat Poalim* was Rübner's home both as an editor and as a writer. He published all of his books of poetry there over a period of three decades, starting with *The Fire in the Stone* (1957), when he was 33. Rübner dedicated his book to Strauss. In one of Goldberg's letters to Rübner, she commended him for having waited a relatively long time before publishing his first book, rather than rushing it as she had, having published *Smoke Rings* (1935) at the tender age of 23.<sup>36</sup> She must have noticed, although she did not refer to it in her letter, that Rübner dedicated a poem to her ("L.G.") in his book, a poem that clearly resonates with her poetry.<sup>37</sup> It is no coincidence that it is written as a Petrarchan sonnet. Goldberg is considered to be the master of the modern Hebrew sonnet. In both quantitative and qualitative terms, she composed the most significant corpus of sonnets after Saul Tschernichowski (1875–1943).

## From mentor to friend and colleague

The letters Goldberg and Rübner exchanged from the mid-1950s onward reflect a gradual shift from a relationship between mentor and mentee to a relationship between friends and colleagues. Although as colleagues the two were not on an entirely equal footing, the knowledge transfer between them was no longer one-directional. Rübner would often enlighten Goldberg, as for example when he introduced her to Walter Benjamin's writings,<sup>38</sup> a selection of which had been published in German that year. This is one of many indications that Rübner remained attentive to developments in the literary and academic scene in Germany, despite his physical distance.

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**35** Examples include the aforementioned book by Plievier as well as her translations of books by Tzila Cohen (who wrote in German in Israel).

**36** Letter from Goldberg to Rübner, September 17, 1957, NLI, AD, LGC, Arc. 4\* 1655 01 078.

**37** Untitled poem, starting with the words "I know, those who die," *The Fire in the Stone* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1957), 146. The poem has clear references to the stone motif common in Goldberg's poems, particularly Poem A in "In the Jerusalem Mountains" (B 104–105) and at the end of Poem J in the sonnet cycle "The Love of Teresa di Mon" (B 65): "How the boulders budded in the dew,/how the stones of the hills bloomed!" *Lea Goldberg: Selected Poetry and Drama*, trans. Rachel Tzvia Back (London: Toby Press, 2005), 103. Hereafter, all references to Goldberg's poems indicate volume and page numbers in her three-volume collection, edited by Rübner (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, new & revised edition, 2000).

**38** Letter from Goldberg to Rübner, May 20, 1955, NLI, AD, LGC, Arc. 4\* 1655 01 077.

The relationship between the two poets also expanded to include their families: namely, Goldberg's mother; Rübner's second wife, Galila Jizreeli (they married in September 1953); and his children, Miriam, Idan and Moran. Rübner became part of the Goldberg family, and vice versa. On several occasions, Rübner mentioned that it was his relationship with Galila, who initially had little command of German, that finally pushed him to write poetry in Hebrew.<sup>39</sup>

During those years, Goldberg received a tenured position as a lecturer at the Hebrew University and, consequently, moved with her mother from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. There she became even more closely associated with the circle of intellectuals who had emigrated from Germany or were immersed in its culture, including Martin Buber and S.Y. Agnon. Around the same time, Rübner was commissioned to translate Agnon's novella, "The Oath," for Fischer Verlag<sup>40</sup> at Gershom Scholem's recommendation, and became a frequent guest in the author's house. Agnon is frequently mentioned in the poets' correspondence (see appendix). At a party held at the Israeli President's residence to celebrate Agnon's winning of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1966, Scholem said in his speech congratulating Agnon that the prize was being awarded, in part, thanks to Rübner's translation: "I think it is time to applaud, together with the greatness and genius of Shmuel Yosef Agnon, the magnificent efforts of the new translators [who followed Scholem himself, who had once translated some of Agnon's works] – above all Karl Steinschneider and Tuvia Rübner – whose superb work has ultimately enabled this happy occasion by no small measure."<sup>41</sup>

Rübner completed the translation during his stay in Switzerland with his family as a Jewish Agency emissary from 1963–1966. For him, this was a welcome first return to Europe after more than two decades, now as a grown man, and a welcome reprieve from the social pressures of the close-knit kibbutz community. In his letters to Goldberg, he shared his excitement upon returning to the landscapes that reminded both of their childhood, and to his grandfather's

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<sup>39</sup> Tuvia Rübner, in the foreword to his correspondence with Lea Goldberg, in print; and in Omri Lior's documentary about Rübner, *Poetry from the Depth of Field*. In that film, the poet suggests that German was used for him as a kind of buffer against the Israeli daily life. For more on the language issue, see Rachel Tzvia Back, "Introduction," *In the Illuminated Dark: Selected Poems of Tuvia Ruebner*, trans. Rachel Tzvia Back (Pittsburgh: Hebrew Union College Press, 2014), xx–xi.

<sup>40</sup> Shemu'el Joseph Agnon, *Der Treueschwur: Erzählung*, aus dem Hebräischen von Tobias Rübner (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1965).

<sup>41</sup> Gershom Scholem, "Agnon's Days in Germany," *Davar*, December 9, 1966, 6–7 (Hebrew). Also compiled in Scholem's *Explications and Implications: Writings on Jewish Heritage and Renaissance* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), Part II, 470 (Hebrew). For Scholem's recommendation, see Rübner, *Ein langes kurzes Leben*, 100.

house, where he used to spend summer holidays. Rübner chose to visit that house only at the end of his mission to Europe. Of the visit, he wrote: “We were there for two hours, and came out depressed. The voyage to [one’s] childhood is the most impossible of all voyages.”<sup>42</sup>

Goldberg visited Rübner and his family in Switzerland twice – on the way to and from conferences she attended. On these occasions, the two ventured out on travels, which they later described in their work. Goldberg’s cycle of poems entitled “A Hike in the Hills,” published in 1965, and dedicated to Rübner (note that Goldberg rarely dedicated any of her poems), is an embodiment of this. The last poem in the cycle represents a dialogue between the two poets that has a measure of intimacy, despite the ever-present differences between them, both as individuals and as writers:

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My snow was light-blue	השלג שלי היה תכלת
and yours	ושלך
pale green.	ירקרק.
My part of the sky –	ופסת השמים שלי –
yellowish bottled-glass,	זכוכית בקבוקים צהבהבה,
and yours –	ושלך –
faded parchment of an ancient prayer.	קלף דהוי של פיוט עתיק.
In your lake – peaks.	ובאגם שלך – פסגות.
In mine – geese.	ובמים שלי – ארזים.
I will write one poem	ואני אכתב שיר אחד
and you another.	ואתה אחר.
But we will be silent together	אבל נשתק ביחד
on the same path. <sup>43</sup>	את אותה הדרך.

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The poem is largely dedicated to expressing the poetic gap between the two, though it does so in an egalitarian fashion, which recognizes and respects the other.<sup>44</sup> Silence – the ideal of symbolist poetry – turns out to be the factor that

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Rübner to Goldberg, April 18, 1966, “Gnazim,” Lea Goldberg Collection (274), A-9954.

<sup>43</sup> “Tiyul be-harim,” first published in *Ha’arets*, February 19, 1965, C 263–265; *Lea Goldberg: Selected Poetry and Drama*, trans. Rachel Tzvia Back, 175.

<sup>44</sup> Natasha Gordinsky, “‘We Will Be Silent Together On the Same Path’: On Ethics and Poetics in the Oeuvres of Marina Tzvetayeva and Lea Goldberg,” MA seminar paper (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 37.

binds the two wordsmiths. The poem concludes in the spirit of Goethe's famous aphorism about shared silence being the most profound expression of friendship.<sup>45</sup> More broadly, the entire scene depicted in the poem is firmly grounded in the German and German-Jewish literary tradition of the mountain hike and mountain talk, which alludes to an "I-Thou" dialogue. (See, for example, Buber's "Gespräch in den Bergen" and Paul Celan's "Gespräch im Gebirg").<sup>46</sup> The Hebrew poem describes the walking of two European-Israeli poets across landscapes that are partly familiar, partly foreign – however, they are more typically European and only occasionally "Judaized" (through reference to the faded parchment of an ancient prayer).

While the poem may be read as dealing with the obvious dichotomies between the older poet and her younger poet friend, between their divergent poetics, between Europe and Israel, and between speech and silence, it also hints at a transition from one artistic medium to another, from the visual to the verbal. The attempt to express the world's sights through words ends in silence; another poem from the same collection reads: "And my lips [...] were left wordless" – a passage which presages Goldberg's transition from poetry to painting. Indeed, Goldberg's journey to meet Rübner and his family in Switzerland in the summer of 1964, which inspired "A Hike in the Hills," their joint visits to Zürich's museums and their field hikes, are what gave her the last push, as she testifies in her letters, to resume painting intensively after a years-long hiatus.<sup>47</sup>

In those years, which would turn out to be Goldberg's last – she passed away in 1970 – she dedicated herself to painting and wrote few poems. This change provided Goldberg and Rübner with an additional topic for discussion in their conversations and letters: visual arts, in and of themselves and as they

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45 "Die Welt ist so leer, wenn man nur Berge, Flüsse und Städte darin denkt, aber hier und da jemand zu wissen, der mit uns übereinstimmt, mit dem wir auch stillschweigend fortleben, das macht uns dieses Erdenrund erst zu einem bewohnten Garten," *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, in: *Goethes Sämtliche Werke*, vol. VII (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1874), 520.

46 See James K. Lyon, "Paul Celan and Martin Buber: Poetry as Dialogue," *PMLA*, 86,1 (1971), 110–120. I thank Lina Barouch for having suggested this line of thought to me. Incidentally, an Aramaic expression commonly used in rabbinical writings says: "one mountain shall not meet another, one person shall meet another." In this case, the persons – each of whom was tantamount to a mountain – do indeed meet.

47 Letter from Goldberg to Rübner, NLI, AD, LGC, Arc. 4\* 1655 01 080. During her youth in Lithuania, Goldberg studied painting and in fact intended to pursue academic art studies, but her family's dearth of funds prevented her from fulfilling her ambitions in this area. Instead she focused on writing poetry and painted only occasionally.

relate to poetry. In addition to his other pursuits, Rübner had by then become a well-known photographer and had put together a photography exhibit to mark the occasion of Merchavia's fiftieth anniversary (1961), in the spirit of the exhibit *The Family of Man*.<sup>48</sup> He also photographed Goldberg on several occasions (Figures 1–3). For both Goldberg and Rübner, painting and photography were alternative media that focused their gaze outwards to their surroundings. The transition from their poetry to visual mediums somewhat parallels the transition that took place within their poetry: from German to Hebrew in Rübner's case, and from Russian to Hebrew in Goldberg's.



**Figure 1:** Lea Goldberg, probably at her apartment in Tel Aviv, the date is unknown. Photo by Tuvia Rübner. Courtesy of T. Rübner.

In Goldberg's case, and perhaps also in Rübner's, the transition to a non-verbal medium – which was thus no longer tied to a particular language – marked paradoxically an adjustment to their environment, an acclimatization to the

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<sup>48</sup> Letter from Rübner to Goldberg, summer 1960, "Gnazim," Lea Goldberg Collection (274), A-99553.





**Figure 2:** Lea Goldberg at her apartment in Jerusalem, the date is unknown. Photo by Tuvia Rübner. Courtesy of T. Rübner.



**Figure 3:** Lea Goldberg and Tuvia Rübner, April 29, 1963. Photo by Tuvia Rübner. Courtesy of T. Rübner.

Israeli landscape. Goldberg's diaries attest to the utter estrangement she first felt toward the arid desert landscape, so patently un-European. In 1942, for example, seven years after immigrating, she wrote the following about her vacation in the north of the country:

The extremely beautiful landscape is not very enchanting. Dry, scorched, severe. Excessive. I wished for a forest, real greenery, a softness, and the scent of pines. Here a copse of Casuarina trees, scentless. But wonderful birds. [...] I was hoping for some *Losgelöstheit* here. I don't know if I'll manage it. I don't "blend" in the landscape.<sup>49</sup>

But by the end of the same decade, she wrote:

I paint every day, mainly all sorts of shrubs and thistles. How attractive the forms one can discover in these plants when one observes them closely. The colors too are beautiful. That same, seemingly monotone, brown-yellow of our fields in summer is of so many hues! Every day I discover something new. And the double pleasure of observing and painting is very great.<sup>50</sup>

As described in his memoirs (in German), Rübner also seems to have experienced a similar, delayed process of acclimatization:

Dieses Land rettete mein Leben. Seine Landschaft, die mich begrüßte, war nicht die Landschaft meiner Seele. Meine Seelenlandschaft ist Wiese und Wald, Bäche, Berge, ein Fluss, karpatisch. [...] Was mir hier entgegenkam war Weissglut, ein Licht blendend bleich, wie ausgewungen, das alles in sich aufsaugt wie ein Schwarzes Loch, erst abends bekam es Farben und leuchtete gleichsam aus dem Boden hervor. [...] Die Landschaft grau, staubig. [...]

Ich erinnere mich, wie ich einmal auf den Milchkannen oben auf einem LKW sitzend mich überzeugen wollte: Diese Landschaft ist schön! Diese Landschaft ist schön! [...] Diese Landschaft ist schön, sogar wunderschön, heute selbst im Sommer und besonders am Abend [...].<sup>51</sup>

## Ambivalence toward Europe – and Israel

Rübner's later letters to Goldberg from Switzerland reveal his ambivalence toward Europe; he had come to view Europe as a site of *nostos*, or belated return

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<sup>49</sup> *The Diaries of Lea Goldberg*, August 17, 1942, trans. Tsipi Keller.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1949, trans. Tsipi Keller.

<sup>51</sup> "This country saved my life. Its landscape, which first had greeted me, was not the one of my soul. That one has in it meadows and a forest, streams, hills, a river, all as it is in the Carpathian region. What welcomed me here [in Mandatory Palestine] was a burning light, light blind out of whiteness, light that exhausted all the colors, as a Black Hole, which only by the evening were revealed again. That was a gray, dusty landscape. [...] And I remember when once I took a ride with a truck carrying milk containers [from the Kibbutz to Tel Aviv] and while sitting on these containers tried hard to convince myself: This landscape is beautiful! This landscape is beautiful! [...] and nowadays I know that indeed this landscape is beautiful, even in the summer, and especially during the evenings" (Tuvia Rübner, *Ein langes kurzes Leben*, 91–92, trans. Giddon Ticotsky).

that would never truly be a pure and simple “return.” It would therefore be wrong to portray Rübner, or Goldberg for that matter, as “exiled” in their new homeland, longing for their country of origin. (This may also be true of some other émigré intellectuals.) In addition to it, not only had Europe, as they remembered or wanted to remember it, changed, but the culture in their adoptive country also underwent significant transformation. Among the many changes that resulted from the mass immigration to Israel in the 1950s, the Israeli prose and poetry of that decade and the following one gave way to the rise of Anglo-Saxon culture at the expense of German, French and Russian. The cultural project of the two correspondents – each of whom was considered in their respective period to be an emissary of, in Rübner’s case, German culture, and in Goldberg’s case, German and Russian culture – gradually became the purview of a small “intellectual circle within an intellectual circle,”<sup>52</sup> just as Goldberg had predicted.

Nevertheless, mainly thanks to their translation projects and teaching activities,<sup>53</sup> the “German island” that Goldberg and Rübner created in the midst of Israeli culture was very much alive and had some impact on the surrounding culture – certainly more than did the work of the German Jews who wrote very little in Hebrew, such as Ludwig Strauss and Werner Kraft. Interestingly, the German island was created by two poets from the periphery of the German Kulturkreis.

It seems too little has been written about the passion of Jews from remote provinces to adopt the dominant culture of a country – or the culture that is considered to be higher, and to mediate it for others.<sup>54</sup> Na’ama Sheffi writes that from 1882, when the first Zionists settled in Palestine, to the establishment of the

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52 *Divrei soferim: Ba-pegishah ha-shnia she-zimen rosh ha-memshalah* [Writers Words: A Second Meeting Summoned by the Prime Minister], Tel Aviv, October 11, 1949, 12.

53 Upon his return from Switzerland in 1966, Rübner was appointed lecturer in Oranim Seminary (today Oranim Academic College), a prestigious teachers’ training college in northern Israel. In 1972, he was appointed lecturer in Haifa and Tel Aviv Universities. See Rachel Tzvia Back, “Introduction,” in: *In the Illuminated Dark*, xviii. Goldberg co-founded the Hebrew University’s Comparative Literature Department and headed it for about a decade. She also had the privilege of teaching the younger generation of Hebrew poets, including Yehuda Amichai, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Dan Pagis and, of course, Tuvia Rübner, and played an important role in starting off their careers.

54 Perhaps because they themselves have acquired this culture thanks to their own proactive efforts, rather than being born into it (such as the modern Jews in Germany). The very act of mediation contributed to adopting this acquired identity. One of the few works devoted to this important issue is Elke-Vera Kotowski (Hrsg.), *Das Kulturerbe deutschsprachiger Juden: eine Spurensuche in den Ursprungs-, Transit- und Emigrationsländern* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

State of Israel in 1948, most translators from German to Hebrew, as well as their publishers, were Eastern Europeans.<sup>55</sup> Extensive historical writing has been done on the immigration of Germany's Jews to pre- and post-statehood Israel and the unique challenges they faced. In contrast, hardly any attention has been paid to the unique case of those who could be considered "double immigrants": Eastern European Jews who had adopted Central-Western-European culture before immigrating to Palestine.

Although Goldberg cherished Germany in spirit, she avoided visiting it after the Second World War, not even to meet with old acquaintances. (In fact, she avoided meetings with Germans in any country).<sup>56</sup> Rübner, on the other hand, who lost his family in the Holocaust at a much younger age than Goldberg, acted differently. It seems that Goldberg's memories from her time in Germany on the eve of the Nazis' rise to power prevented her from renewing her attachment to Germany after the war; Rübner was less inhibited in this respect. A good example is the two poets' different attitudes toward Carl Gustav Jung. As a young man, Rübner showed an interest in Jung's theories, which were in academic vogue at the time. However, mentioning his name in one of his letters to Goldberg seems to have raised painful memories for her:

And as for Jung, here our paths diverge: *I can't stand him*. His writing, his fake esthetics, his resentment of Freud, [and] the monastic purity of his style and uncompromising seriousness, whether he was right or wrong, drive me out of my mind. I understand full well why so many "artistic" ladies would be attracted to him, and I do not believe him, when he relates his patients' dreams, all of which are for some reason "viel zu [much too beautiful]."

By the way, I also had the misfortune of hearing a Nazi lecture by Jung in January 1933 in Bonn. The handsome man stood on the university podium and made a speech about *Persönlichkeit* [Personality], which is the Führer. It was terrible. But, believe me, I would have reconciled even with that Nazi episode, had I not afterwards read his "scientific" writings – not many, but enough to suspect him and not stand him. His students – that's a different matter altogether. Apparently, some of them were prominent. And that is, of course, odd. But it is no surprise to me that [James] Joyce was so disappointed by him and that their meeting ended in hatred.

And now I have to get along with students [including] doctoral students who are unable to write one page about an ordinary comedy without relying on the Jungian "archetype."<sup>57</sup>

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55 Sheffi, *Germanit be-ivrit*, 213.

56 Weiss, *Lea Goldberg: Lehrjahre in Deutschland 1930–1933*, 155.

57 For more on Goldberg's aversion to Jung's personality, following his lecture at the University of Bonn during her time as a student there, see her essay "The Courage to Embrace the Mundane" in the eponymous Hebrew book *Ha-ometz la-ḥulin*, ed. A.B. Yaffe (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1976), 169–170. See also Yfaat Weiss, "Lea Goldberg's Insight into the 'Courage to Embrace the Mundane,'" *Trumah* 21 (2013), 53–58.

In subsequent letters, Goldberg told Rübner, who had by then returned to Kibbutz Merchavia, about the trying times she and her mother experienced in Jerusalem during the Six Day War (1967). The letters reveal that their house was hit by shrapnel from a Jordanian shell, but fortunately they were unscathed.

Two years later, Goldberg was diagnosed with cancer, which led to her death in 1970. Rübner dedicated a cycle of poems to her memory, which signals the end of both their actual and their poetic correspondence. At the end of the cycle, Goldberg's lines become Rübner's own: he imports a passage from a poem of hers about childhood in the European landscape into a description of his about her burial, and for a moment his narration switches from the masculine to the feminine voice (in the Hebrew): "I am/Green and replete like a song that has passed through the grass/I am from long ago, from a forest that taught me to breathe."<sup>58</sup> The above passage is followed immediately by Rübner's own words: "Later/The quake, later the earth/That crumbled, later."<sup>59</sup> The dialogue between Goldberg and Rübner, thus, eventually became a monologue.

As Goldberg's literary executor, Rübner published numerous works on Goldberg's behalf, including a selection of her poems in a popular edition (1970). He selected and edited poems from her estate in a truly outstanding book, *The Remains of Life* (1971); edited her entire collection of poetry in a canonic three-volume edition (1973) and a selection of it (also in 1973); compiled many of her translations in a book (1975); published two of her plays (1979); and wrote an exemplary monograph about her (1980).

Although the relationship between Goldberg and Rübner has been described as hierarchical, for example according to Harold Bloom's (basically oedipal) influence model, in retrospect, it is difficult to describe it as such.<sup>60</sup> Among other things, such a model tends to ignore the influence of the younger party on the older one. Thus, for example, Goldberg's relationship with Rübner almost certainly influenced her later poetry. Instead of a vertical and unidirectional model, one should rather adopt a horizontal, multidimensional and interconnected network model to describe the relationship between the two poets. In a similar vein, the "German island" that Goldberg and Rübner created in the Israeli literary sphere through their writing and other activities should not be

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<sup>58</sup> "Songs of a Foreign Woman," C 28, trans. Rachel Tzvia Back, 140.

<sup>59</sup> "Quake," also in the sense of earthquake. Rübner's poem is included in *And Hasteneth to His Place, 1953–1989* (Sifriat Poalim, 1990), 109–113 (Hebrew).

<sup>60</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

described as unidirectional; there was, necessarily, an interplay between their culture of origin and their adopted culture. This interplay can be seen, first, in the fact that the two poets adopted their culture of origin in a fairly deliberate manner; second, in that their relationship to that culture was quite complex and emotionally charged; and third, in Rübner's movement between his culture of origin and his adopted culture.

In another poem in the "Hike in the Hills" cycle, Goldberg wrote: "Our lovers are not many," a statement which may refer to the fact that the "Republic of Letters" that Goldberg and Rübner created was never intended for the masses; rather, it was, primarily, intended to be a "Republic" of their own letters, through which the two conducted a dialogue about their lives and their poetry. In writing about the translatability of cultures, Sanford Budick suggested that ultimately, while the act of translation necessarily involves the crossing of cultural and linguistic boundaries, it is also an act of creating space between the self and the other.<sup>61</sup> The "German Island" that Goldberg and Rübner created was an extraterritorial one, an extension of a different culture into the newly created State of Israel; but, above all, it formed a space for the relationship between the two of them. Just as Goldberg predicted the decline of the local cultural elite at the meeting with Ben-Gurion in 1949, she also accurately foresaw her readers' changing tastes and, implicitly, the shrinkage of the "German Island" in Israel – at least for many years to come. In an opinion piece published in the Israeli press in 1951, Goldberg wrote – without a hint of judgment – the following passage, which may stand as a conclusion:

It seems to me that the address of the reader – of those few who read us in those days, was known to us more that it is known to me today. [...] And it is not a matter of weeping and lamenting about "the good old days" that have passed never to return. No, those days were not at all better than ours. But then we could speak "to the people," because our people was – the intelligentsia, the Hebrew farmer was unlike his counterpart in any other country. The people – these were the kibbutzim, the moshavim, the kvutzot.<sup>62</sup> But now we have a different "people," all those thousands upon thousands who came here only yesteryear, who are not at all aware that in this language, which vexes them in the first endeavors of their new and difficult lives, their harsh, barrier-strewn lives, stories and poems must for some obscure reason be written...

I know: they will learn to speak that tongue and their sons and daughters will learn to sing in it and read in it. [...] It sometimes seems to me that this next generation will be educated on a different culture, and demand other values. That we, the "prewar

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<sup>61</sup> Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (eds.), *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>62</sup> These are all different types of collective communities in Israel.

generation,” the generation that perforce loves so many things, that will forever be alien to them, that holds dear values whose beauty, grace and morality perhaps tomorrow nobody will understand – perhaps we are completely ignorant of that language which can make sense to them.

[...] And if in that other world there would be no need for those things that had seemed to us to be the center of our lives, this does not mean that the center of our lives was better or worse. It means that it is *different*, and that is all.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Lea Goldberg, “Letters from a Fictitious Spring,” *Al Ha-Mishmar*, February 9, 1951, 3, emphasis in the original.