

A Small Town in Germany: Leah Goldberg and German Orientalism in 1932

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THE NEED TO INTRODUCE Leah Goldberg in a scholarly article embodies a paradox: while Goldberg was and still is one of the best-known literary figures in Israel, she is virtually unknown beyond the boundaries of the Hebrew language, which she consciously chose as her creative language in her early teens. Goldberg is known mainly from her poetry. Her first anthology *Tab'e'ot ashan* (Smoke Rings) was published in Tel Aviv in 1935, just one month after her immigration to Palestine. Earlier, toward the end of the 1920s, Goldberg, whose mother tongue was Russian, had published some poems in Hebrew-language journals in her hometown of Kovno in Lithuania. During her lifetime she published some seven hundred poems, many of which were set to music, and these songs served to popularize her work among a wide audience. Goldberg's children's books are likewise very well known in Israel. The tens of her children's books and hundreds of poems and songs are to this day widely acclaimed in the local culture.

Less well known than her poetry and children's literature is Goldberg's prose, which displays clearly autobiographical strands. The epistolary novel *Mikhtavim mi-nes'itab medumab* (Letters from an Imaginary Journey), her farewell to Europe published in 1937 to which we will return below, received tepid reviews at the time and Goldberg sought to dispatch it into oblivion. In the late 1930s Goldberg set aside the draft for a novel set in Berlin at the end of the Weimar Republic. She published parts of this novel as short stories, alongside others. Her most mature work of prose is the novel *Ve-hu' ha-'or* (He Is the Light, 1946), yet it too was unenthusiastically received at the time. In addition to the two pub-

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lished and one unpublished novels, Goldberg published a memoir entitled *Pegisha im mesborer* (Meeting with a Poet), which traces the portrait of the Zionist poet and activist Avraham Sonne (Ben-Yitshak)—a key figure in Goldberg's life and work (to whom Elias Canetti also devotes considerable attention in his memoirs). Goldberg also wrote several plays, but apart from *Ba'alat ha-'armon* (Lady of the Manor) she failed to elicit favorable reviews and eventually abandoned this field altogether.

Apart from her literary output Goldberg was a key figure in Israel's burgeoning Hebraic culture. She published hundreds of articles dealing with current affairs as well as literary and theater reviews in the dailies *Davar* and *Al ha-mishmar*, the journals of Israel's socialist Hebrew-reading intelligentsia with which she made her living. In these pieces she stamped her authority upon local cultural taste and played a part in shaping it. A further channel through which Goldberg influenced local culture was her numerous translations into Hebrew from the many European languages she commanded. Among these were the works of Heinrich Mann, Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison to Sophie Liebknecht*, Gorky's *My Childhood*, stories by Chekhov, Tolstoy's *Ordeal: a Trilogy*, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.¹ Like others of her generation she invested much effort in translating European literature into Hebrew but did nothing to promote the translation of her own work into European languages. Her artistic commitment was primarily to Hebrew culture and her influence in this sphere increased when in 1952 she began teaching at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where she was among the founders of the Department of Comparative Literature, which she headed from 1962 until her death on January 15, 1970. During this period she wrote extensively on literary topics such as Russian literature, the history of the European short story, and Italian Renaissance literature.²

In addition to a collection of articles devoted to her work, Goldberg is the subject of four biographies and monographs that survey various aspects of her life and work.³ Among other topics, this biographical research traces the manner in which Goldberg, the girl steeped in Russian culture from Kovno in Lithuania, became the agent of central-western

1. For a comprehensive list, see Ziva Shamir, "The Books of Leah Goldberg—Original Writing and Translations," in Tuvia Ruebner, *Leah Goldberg: Monografiyah* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1980), 230–40.

2. For further reading, see Giddon Ticotsky, "Leah Goldberg," *Lexicon of Israeli Writers* (Hebrew; Heksherim Center, Ben-Gurion University, forthcoming).

3. A. B. Yoffe, *Pegishot im Leah Goldberg* (Tel Aviv, 1984); idem, *Lea Goldberg: Tave demut li-yetsiratah shel Leah Goldberg* (Tel Aviv, 1994); Amia Lieblich, *El Lea* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1995); Ruebner, *Leah Goldberg*.

European (including German) literature and culture in Israel. It is indeed clear to all Goldberg scholars that a good part of her German cultural roots can be traced to the three years from 1930 to 1933 that she spent studying in Germany. Since these years do not constitute an important period in her creative career, they have received scant scholarly attention. Moreover, during the years she spent studying in Germany she specialized in Semitic philology, a field she abandoned totally upon immigrating to Palestine.

This article seeks to shed light on the traces these German years left in Leah Goldberg's work and to reveal in particular the stamp of Semitic philology on her creative writing. I will focus primarily on works written in the 1930s. A focus on the first decade of Goldberg's writing seeks to illuminate the origins of Goldberg's dissident, individualistic approach—the "fruits of her solitude," as Tamar Hess termed it—within the collectivist discourse of contemporary Hebrew literature.⁴ I will suggest that representations of her experiences at the Oriental Seminar in Goldberg's writing are a test case of the issue of German Orientalism in general and of its Jewish context in particular. Just as the article examines Goldberg's creative writing from the sidelines—filtered through her brief experience at the Oriental Seminar in Bonn—so too it examines German Orientalism from the margins—through the experiences of a Jewish doctoral student from Lithuania.

It would appear that every single aspect of Goldberg's study experience in Germany has some relevance to contemporary discourse of Orientalism, which was sparked by the appearance of Edward Said's book in 1978 and has continued to this day. Goldberg's presence in the Oriental Seminar at Bonn University turned her into a direct observer of, and active participant in, a branch neglected by Said in his study, namely, *German Orientalism*. Moreover, her participation in the Semitic wing of the seminar on the one hand, and her close social ties with the students of the other wing—Indian and Sanskrit studies—on the other hand, create a contact between two very different experiences of the Orient, the boundaries of which have been blurred in the discussion that followed the publication of Said's book. As an Eastern European Jewish Semitic philologist in Germany, Goldberg is certainly no ordinary representative of the study of German Orientalism. John Efron has recently shown that the location of European Jews within the Orientalization proc-

4. See Tamar Hess, "Pri bediduta, Fruits of Solitude: Lea Goldberg's *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*," in *Meetings with a Poet*, ed. R. Kartun-Blum and A. Weisman (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2000), 152–66.

esses influenced their scientific perception producing what he calls an “inner neocolonialism.”⁵ His insight is also useful with regard to Goldberg, who in her writing of the 1930s “borrowed” the colonial experience of her Asian friends and through it discussed, in an indirect and mediated manner, her experience as a Jewess. She seems to express her own feelings of foreignness, loneliness, and alienation in her shelved novel, whose protagonist is the figure of Elchanan Kron, a Jewish-Russian Semitic philology doctoral student in Berlin toward the end of the Weimar Republic. Her own felt foreignness reinforced her awareness of the other, a topic addressed at length below.

What distinguishes Goldberg’s experience in Germany, however, is not merely her different cultural, ethnic, geographic, and national identity but also the particular point in history: the final days of Weimar and the rise of Nazism. Most of the secondary literature dealing with the relation between German Orientalism and the Jews focuses on the period of the Enlightenment and the birth of Jewish studies within the framework of German Orientalist scholarship.⁶ These studies focus on the creation of ascriptive, scientific categories and the challenge that these presented to Jewish identity and sense of belonging. Goldberg’s sojourn at the Oriental Seminar in the final days of the Weimar Republic locates her in the long chain of the tradition of German and Jewish enlightenment, and yet at the same time at the point of its rupture. Because of this timing, which falls outside the period addressed by existing studies, her experience undermines the accepted position that views the Said’s East-West classification as the basis of and analogous to other repressive classifications such as Semites and Aryans.⁷ Indeed, the tendency to mention the one binary model (West-East) and the other (Aryans-Semites) in the same breath is at times driven by the wish to suppress tendencies toward presenting the Jewish case as exceptional. But the tendency to elide these

5. John M. Efron, “From Mitteleuropa to the Middle East: Orientalism through a Jewish Lens,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 94.3 (2004): 490–520; idem, “Orientalism and the Jewish Historical Case,” in *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. I. D. Kalmar and D. J. Penslar (Waltham, Mass., 2005), 80–93.

6. See, for instance, Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago, 1998); idem, “Jewish Studies as Counter History,” in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. D. Biale, M. Golchinsky, and S. Heschel (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 101–15; James Pasto, “Islam’s ‘Strange Secret Sharer’: Orientalism, Judaism, and the Jewish Question,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40.3 (1998): 437–74; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Orientalism, Jewish Studies, and Israeli Society: A Few Comments” (Hebrew), *Jamaa* 3 (1998): 34–61.

7. Raz-Krakotzkin, “Orientalism,” 35, 40.

discourses is not reflected in the historical experiences of Goldberg and her Oriental companions in Bonn; in Nazi Germany, as Goldberg documents, Jews were clearly not one among other Orientals.

The article will look at contemporary research on German Orientalism through the singular case of Leah Goldberg's time in Bonn and its reflection in her writing. Not unrelated to this is her decision to migrate to Palestine upon completion of her studies—a decision that crystallized during her year of study in Bonn. Goldberg perceived the question of migration in terms of a return. Fully aware of the tension between West and East, she deliberated upon this issue alongside and *vis-à-vis* her fellow foreign students, that is, alongside other dilemmas of return. Goldberg at once anticipates, reinforces, and unsettles Said's themes and often too-easy binaries.

"MOST ORIENTAL AND EXOTIC"

In the autumn of 1930 Leah Goldberg set out from her childhood town of Kovno to Berlin. From there she continued some year and a half later to Bonn. She arrived in Bonn at the end of April 1932, close to her twenty-first birthday. Two weeks previously she had completed her studies toward the *magister* degree at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Berlin and was on the point of commencing upon a new chapter in her life.⁸ After spending approximately a year and a half in the capital, a European metropolis, she now found herself in a small university town. At first, Bonn did not generate any particular interest from her. For someone arriving from Protestant and secular Berlin there was something distasteful about its provincial ambience. Its Catholicism and conservatism were clearly discernible. At first sight, Bonn's alleys seemed full of Catholic priests and the scar-faced members of the "students' associations."⁹

The impression of parochialism she had received from Bonn during the initial days was soon dispelled. Perhaps because it was such a small place, Bonn was a welcome departure from the anonymity of the large city. In

8. Universitätsarchiv der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Verzeichnis der Studierenden, Sommer-Semester 1930; Verzeichnis der Studierenden, Winter-Semester 1930–1931; Verzeichnis der Studierenden, Sommer-Semester 1931; Verzeichnis der Studierenden, Sommer-Semester 1932; Verzeichnis der Studierenden, Winter-Semester 1932–1933; Rektorat 120 October 16, 1930–October 14, 1931; Rektorat 120 October 16, 1929–October 14, 1930; Rektorat 122 October 16, 1931–October 12, 1932; Rektorat und Senat, 1035 Übersicht über die eingegangenen Ausländer-Aufnahme-Gesuche WS 1930/31; Studentenkarteikarte.

9. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 5, 1932, *Gnazim* Archive of the Hebrew Writers Association in Israel [*Gnazim*], 274 66518/1.

the second half of the twenties a staff of some two hundred and fifty lecturers, including over a hundred full professors, served fewer than four thousand students.¹⁰ During the same period only 133 full professors taught at the Berlin University, whose student body was three-fold that of Bonn's. As a doctoral student in these conditions Goldberg received individual and devoted counseling. She was particularly impressed by the head of the seminar, Professor Paul Kahle. "My latest love," she wrote to her childhood friend Mina Goldberg, waxing lyrical over the combination of professional commitment and individual attention, "every student here truly utters his name with some reverence."¹¹

A graduate of the Hebrew-language high school of Kovno, Goldberg came to Bonn with a clear objective. She chose to study at the Oriental Seminar under Kahle's direction in order to train as a Semitic philologist. This was an institution with an international reputation that attracted a large number of Jewish students from Eastern Europe. Ever since its inauguration in 1818, Bonn University had taken pride in a rich tradition of study of Eastern languages.¹² The Oriental Seminar in its new format was established with generous public and private funding in 1913. In 1917 it moved to a new building, sufficiently spacious to accommodate its rare collections. In the summer of 1932 Goldberg spent many hours studying and reading on the verandah of this building, surrounded by a large garden.¹³ And in contrast to Kovno University, where she had commenced her studies, there was no shortage of books in Bonn. The two wings of the Orientalist Institute—the Semitic-Moslem and the Indologic—had inherited unique manuscripts and book collections.¹⁴ A private collection en-

10. Kurt Düwell, "Das Schul- und Hochschulwesen der Rheinlande," *Rheinische Geschichte in drei Bände. Bd. 5: Wirtschaft und Kultur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf, 1979), 519–25.

11. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 5, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66518/1. Leah Goldberg's letters to her friend Mina Goldberg provide the most extensive documentation of her sojourn in Bonn. See Yfaat Weiss and Giddon Ticotsky, eds., *Hebrew Youth: Lea Goldberg's Letters from the Province* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2009).

12. Paul Kahle, "Das Orientalische Seminar," *Geschichte der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität zu Bonn am Rhein, zweiter Band. Institute und Seminare 1818–1933* (Bonn, 1933), 173–77. See also Ludmila Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten: Deutschsprachige Erforschung des Vorderen Orients in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2003), 49–50.

13. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, June 21, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66521/1.

14. The wealth of sources at the disposal of the Institute would become particularly important when, in the course of time, without colonies and against the background of its murky relations with France and England following the First World War, German Oriental studies came to rely mainly on such rare collections. See Suzanne Marchand, "Nazism, 'Orientalism,' and Humanism," in *Nazi*

dowed by the Privy Councilor Eugen Prym provided the research library with the bulk of its ancient and valuable manuscripts. The institute had likewise inherited the private collection of the Indologist Theodor Aufracht.¹⁵ These important collections were augmented by manuscripts obtained by Kahle through his international connections. These included, for example, some four hundred rare Hebrew manuscripts loaned to him by the public Russian library of Leningrad and additional manuscripts from the city's Asiatic library, as well as manuscripts loaned by Oxford and Cambridge, New York, Paris, Leiden, and many other locations, all of which he placed at his students' disposal.¹⁶ As Kahle relentlessly inundated her with manuscripts, Goldberg, in one of her moments of desperation, described her condition as "a disaster." She felt herself to be "burning on the pyre of science" under his pedantic and devoted tutelage.¹⁷

The Rhine's magic very soon began to work on her and she made frequent excursions beyond the town.¹⁸ Already in the first month of her sojourn she traveled to nearby Koblenz, from which she hiked thirty-seven kilometers along the banks of the Rhine.¹⁹ Tanned and contented after the trip, she wrote to Mina, "I am altogether in a post-excursion state."²⁰ Acquaintances promised to include her on a car trip to Wiesbaden or to Frankfurt but failed to keep their word.²¹ With an acquaintance she went on foot to the warm baths near Bonn, returning with him by tramcar.²² With the "Association of Foreign Students" (Vereinigung ausländ. Stud.) she visited Cologne.²³ Among other excursions she joined her landlady Mrs. Winter and family on a trip to Heidelberg.²⁴ Professor Kahle, under whose supervision she would write her doctoral dissertation, invited her to join the family walks with his five small boys.²⁵ This arrangement soon became a tradition.

Germany and the Humanities, ed. A. Rabinbach and W. Bialas (Oxford, 2007), 267–305.

15. See Helga Fremerey-Dohna and Renate Schoene, eds., *Jüdisches Geistesleben in Bonn 1786–1945: Eine Biobibliographie* (Bonn, 1985), 3–6.

16. Paul E. Kahle, *Bonn University in Pre-Nazi and Nazi Times (1925–1959): Experiences of a German Professor* (Bonn, 1942), 27–28.

17. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, January 25, 1933, *Gnazim* 274 66526/1.

18. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, June 21, 1932.

19. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 17, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66517/1.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, June 21, 1932.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, April 13, 1933, *Gnazim* 274 66527/1.

25. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, July 1, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66522/1; January 29, 1933, *Gnazim* 274 66526/1; 4.6.1933, *Gnazim* 274 66530/1.

Something that could neither socially nor culturally be recreated in Bonn was the experience of Jewish life that Goldberg had known in Berlin. The local Jewish community was very small, numbering some one thousand souls.²⁶ In any case, as in Berlin, she had reservations about the Jews of Bonn.²⁷ The local brand of Zionism likewise appeared to her to be “a strange creation.”²⁸ While Goldberg did not find a solution to this aspect of cultural deprivation in Bonn, her social life soon began to develop in unexpected ways. At the reception ball for foreign students, the lector in Arabic, an Egyptian by the name of Mustapha, introduced her to “all kinds of people from Asia.” With two of these, “a certain Persian” and “a little Indian,” she arranged to “tour Bonn’s exceedingly beautiful surroundings” that same evening. “This semester my acquaintances are likely to be most oriental and exotic,” she summed up her impressions of the evening,²⁹ and in the same letter added, “this semester I shall probably venture farther East than Bialystok or Tel Aviv.”³⁰

The Indian very soon made the transition from fellow student to “acquaintance.” Two weeks after his first mention, Goldberg reported to her friend Mina on the experience of a joint excursion. “He is most knowledgeable in philosophy and literature, even though he is a mathematician. Most ebullient, wise and merry. We shall most likely go on many more excursions.”³¹ On her twenty-first birthday, less than a month since they had first met, she already referred to him in her letter as a friend. His poetic birthday greetings were, incidentally, couched in the third person, as was the custom.³² In the same letter she notes that her new Jewish acquaintances were “very remote.” “The only one who is at all close to me is neither a Jew nor a European, but an Indian ‘of all people.’ Our camaraderie is built mostly on our mutual banter, both intended and unintended—but this is no bad thing. . . . But most of our conversations are about psychological, philosophical and literary topics, during which I listen and learn more than I speak.”³³

And indeed, while Goldberg found it difficult to make friends among the Jewish students of Semitic philology, she did find some in the other wing of the Oriental Seminar. This wing flourished under the manage-

26. Statistik des Deutschen Reiches, Band 451, 5, Berlin 1936.

27. Leah Goldberg to Shiltofer, July 2, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 2932/6.

28. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 17, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66517/1.

29. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 5, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66518/1.

30. Ibid.

31. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 17, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66517/1.

32. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 29, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66526/1.

33. Ibid.

ment of Kahle, since he felt that the growing importance of the Far East was not adequately expressed in university education.³⁴ By contrast to Kahle's interest in Chinese and Japanese studies, Indology had occupied a leading position in the Oriental Seminar of Bonn University for many years. Bonn was the first German university in which this field had gained recognition as a scientific discipline.³⁵ The father of German Indology, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, had made the study of Sanskrit and Indology an integral part of the curriculum since its inauguration. He had recognized the necessity of working with original texts and had therefore developed a Sanskrit printing press in Bonn, which was later emulated by Berlin and Paris. This invention laid the foundation for the flowering of this area of research in Germany, thereby buttressing Bonn University's leading status in the field, a status preserved for many years by his successors.³⁶ Bonn was a magnet for those with an interest in Indology and Sanskrit.

It would appear that Goldberg's circle of Indian friends grew during the academic year. In the autumn of 1932 it was complemented by "a young boy who has studied with Gandhi and Tagore. He has arrived fresh from India and does not yet speak German well. But we manage, with him speaking to me in English while I reply in German, to our mutual benefit—I am indeed beginning to learn to understand English conversation."³⁷ Aware of the comic dimension of her social life, Goldberg writes to her friend Mina: "It seems that next week it will be my turn to invite this 'saintly flock.' I am only afraid that my landlady will faint upon seeing such a herd of young men coming to visit me. Even though she has by now become quite accustomed to *Einzelexemplare* (unique specimens) of this sort."³⁸ The letter was sent from Bonn to Berlin on January 25, 1933. Four days later, Goldberg describes in another letter an evening on which she was invited with the members of the Oriental Seminar to celebrate the end of the Ramadan fast in the home of a Muslim Indian

34. Kahle, *Bonn University in Pre-Nazi and Nazi Times*, 27–28.

35. Willibald Kirfel, "Die indische Philologie im Besonderen," *Geschichte der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität zu Bonn am Rhein, zweiter Band. Institute und Seminare 1818–1933* (Bonn, 1933), 177–85; Indra Sengupta, "Shibhyas of the Order: Students of Indology at the Universities of Bonn and Berlin," in *Sanskrit and "Orientalism": Indology and Comparative Linguistics in Germany, 1750–1958*, ed. D. T. McGetchin, P. K. J. Park, and D. SarDesai (New Delhi, 2004), 137–71.

36. On Schlegel's stature within Sanskrit studies in Germany, see Todd Konje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2004), 105–10.

37. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, November 20, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66523/1.

38. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, January 25, 1933, *Gnazim* 274 66526/1.

colleague. In the comradely ambience each of the participants sang a folk song that they knew. Goldberg chose to offer a song in Hebrew, a song in Russian, a song in Lithuanian, and a song in Ukrainian.³⁹ Her spirits, to judge by the letter, were high.

A circle of Indian friends was something out of the ordinary. The number of Indians in Germany in the early thirties was small. In the mid-twenties there had been a stirring of sorts, when a few Indians had begun to discover the German universities.⁴⁰ Some were attracted to Germany by the level of academic and scientific education, while others were politically motivated to find an alternative to England. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the “Indian National Congress” and the special committee it established to promote the studies of Indian students in Germany, their number remained small, with the majority congregating in Berlin. In Bonn their number was almost certainly negligible. Leah Goldberg’s experiences in Bonn were thus unusual in every respect. A stranger among strangers, a woman among men, an East European among Asians, a Jewess in the company of Moslems, Buddhists, and Christians, a white among those of dark skin—such was her experience of apprenticeship in the town.

Goldberg’s year of study at the Oriental Seminar in Bonn exposed her to the institute’s different areas: not only the ancient Near East that she studied under Kahle but also the world of India, of which she learned through her fellow students, and primarily from her good friend Padka. It is Padka to whom Goldberg refers by name in much of her personal writing at that time. He appears in her diary notes as well as in many letters to Mina and to her mother. Judging by the many references it appears that he was Goldberg’s closest friend there. The personal intimacy and direct contact within the framework of day-to-day study at the Oriental Seminar left a considerable impression on the young girl. It undermined her belief in the accepted conventions of the period and afforded her a different view of the Orient. The “orient” constituted a major part of her study experience in Germany. It was here that it became an element both of her interest in the outside world as well as of her introspection. Alongside the frequent references to them in personal communications and in her diary, Padka and the other Indian acquaintances found

39. This was, of course, the day preceding Hitler’s assumption of power. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, January 29, 1933, *Gnazim* 274 66528/1.

40. Joachim Oesterheld, “Zum Spektrum der indischen Präsenz in Deutschland von Beginn bis Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Fremde Erfahrungen: Asiaten und Afrikaner in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz bis 1945* (Berlin, 1996), 331–46.

a place in Goldberg's literary output. During the thirties, characters of Indian students appear in Goldberg's prose and essays: an Indian student named Sundhir is mentioned in the story "Be-simtat ha-'akhbarim" (In the Alley of the Mice), which appeared in the booklet *Petaḥ* (Opening), published in Kovno in 1932; a fellow student named Shanthilal appears in the epistolary novel *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* (1937). The name Shanthilal is again mentioned in the story "Nekhar" (Foreign Land), which first appeared in the monthly journal *Moznayim* in 1939, attached to the surname Shah, alongside another Indian acquaintance by the name of Datatria Padka.⁴¹ Goldberg clearly returned to the experiences of her Indian friendships and accorded them a special position in her writing during the thirties. Through them she reconstructed part of her life experience in Germany, examining her identity in relation to the identity of her new acquaintances. Eventually, once she had abandoned Europe and immigrated to Palestine, she processed some of the experiences of her adaptation to the new homeland through them.

THE EXOTIC SIDE OF THINGS

Leah Goldberg, the East European Jewish girl, encountered the "farther East" in Germany. This meeting took place in the German language within and on the sidelines of the Oriental Seminar at Bonn University. Goldberg's Oriental experience, to use Edward Said's terms, contained a combination of typical components: it occurred under the influence of academic teaching, leaned on and internalized the ontological and epistemological distinctions between "Orient" and "Occident," and engaged with the Orientalist discourse of her period.⁴² The Orient constituted a significant component of Goldberg's European experience in the early thirties. She would return to the impressions left by this experience upon abandoning Europe for Palestine, when she drew up an interim summary of her European era.

Leah Goldberg's parting from Europe found literary expression in *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, an epistolary novel published in 1937, two years after her immigration to Palestine. Goldberg sought to disguise the novel's auto-biographical element by employing certain distancing stratagems; and her protagonist, Ruth, is a composite character. This attempt to overcome the pitfall of sentimentality incumbent in a journey of parting was, however, only partially successful.

41. Leah Goldberg, "In the Alley of the Mice" (Hebrew), *Petaḥ* 1.8 (1932): 3; Leah Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1937); Leah Goldberg, "Foreign Land," (Hebrew) *Moznayim* 9 (1937/38): 296–306.

42. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

Ruth's journey of parting begins in the East European homeland. It moves from East to West, resting awhile in Berlin, Cologne, Brussels, Bruges, Ostend, Paris, and Marseilles. In an unpublished version, as I show below, the journey comes to an end in the East, but in the version Goldberg chose to publish it remains within the borders of Europe. Ruth seemingly takes leave of Europe but never in fact leaves it. The act of parting and separation paradoxically appears to be its opposite, namely, an affirmation of Europe's presence.⁴³ As part of the logic of the tension between holding on and letting go, Ruth's journey proceeds from one site to another and remains all but devoid of genuine, direct human contact. Favoring the place over its inhabitants, the work is perhaps an attempt to preserve for herself her own Europe. Ruth's encounters primarily involve inanimate nature: streets, coffee houses, museums. Human beings, if mentioned at all, constitute part of the general scenery, they are extras on a set. This is taken to its extreme in the depiction of Germany. Against a backdrop of utter alienation, of a strange Berlin that fails to reach and welcome Ruth, Shanthilal the Indian, the longstanding acquaintance who awaits her at Cologne station, presents a stark contrast. An entire chapter of the novel is devoted to this rendezvous.

"I gazed at Shanthilal," writes Ruth, "when I first met him he was someone exotic to me. At the time I would never have admitted as much. In those days I was wont to convince myself that I saw in someone no more than a person. But were Shanthilal not an Indian, he would no doubt have aroused less interest in me. At that time I was reading Romain Rolland! He sensed this with his fine sense of irony, but now all that appears somewhat ridiculous to me. Now he is someone who is close to me. Virtually a brother. And it was good to sit with him in this small cafe and make small talk, without saying anything important, knowing that this was perhaps the last conversation we would ever have together."⁴⁴ "Virtually a brother," Ruth declares, and repents the sin of exoticism that she had committed before learning her lesson at the Oriental Seminar. The seeming stranger turns out to be familiar; the far-away appears close at hand.

It would appear that the sense of the exotic aroused in her by the East, which she had felt before meeting her Indian friends, remained a somewhat painful memory that returned to Goldberg from the distance of time and place. The East had certainly occupied her before she had

43. Giddon Ticotsky, Afterword, "Ha-nishkaḥot—she-'i-efshar lishkoḥ," in Leah Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 2007), 152.

44. Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, 43–44.

met her new acquaintances. In the summer of 1930 she reported to Mina that she had read Phineas Istre, whose exoticism left a “tremendous impression” on her.⁴⁵ A month later, still in Kovno, she told her friend that she was reading *The Life of Ramakrishni* by Romain Rolland, adding that this was a “very good” book.⁴⁶ After getting to know her Indian acquaintances, she appears to have felt a certain unease regarding the impressions of her past reading, which she processed by means of a discussion of the concept “exoticism.” Goldberg initially expressed this experience in a short piece titled “Ḥalon mi-merḥakim: Ha-ben ha-‘oved” (A Window from Afar: The Long-Lost Son), which she published in *Davar* in 1935, the year she arrived in Tel Aviv. This essay relates the impressions of an Indian acquaintance who has chosen to return to India from Europe and reports on his experiences in the homeland. Goldberg prefaces the description of the return with a number of general remarks which she couches in the plural:

We are accustomed to viewing the wide world through the eyes of a traveling tourist, of a journalist writer who visits large countries for a few days and relates his impressions, be they positive or negative, with exaggerated enthusiasm. The Far East is “exotic” to us in the same way that we are exotic to Europe, and we, who mock a talented and famous Russian author who told us that in Jaffa they drink mastic from cups, accept in good faith similar stories about Japan, China and India. There is no country about which Europeans have written so much as India. It is the land of mystery, the land of yogi, of hypnosis, of religious addiction, the land of widow immolation, the land of Tagore and Gandhi—for us Europeans.⁴⁷

On the face of it, the relation between “Orient” and “Occident” as hastily mapped by Goldberg in this short essay is a binary one, a relation of opposites. Yet the way in which the author positions countries along the East-West axis blurs the clarity of the poles. From the perspective of the Far East the author and her readers are typical Europeans, their world fed by typical Western representations. As a strategy of inclusion, Goldberg formulates her insights in the first-person plural, but she of course

45. In this letter Goldberg compares this book to the writing of Yehuda Burla, which impresses her, but not to the same extent. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 8, 1930, *Gnazim* 66513/1.

46. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, June 17, 1930, *Gnazim* 66515/1.

47. Leah Goldberg, “A Window from Afar: The Long-Lost Son” (Hebrew), *Davar*, December 8, 1935, 3.

has no intention of partaking in the prevalent romantic vision, seeking rather to expose it for her readers as a false view, unaware and undiscerning of the gap between social and political phenomena and their cultural representations. The tactic of inclusion by means of the plural form is complemented by employing changing perspectives. Goldberg reminds her *Davar* readers that their everyday world in Palestine is seen as exotic by the people of Europe. This information in itself is intended to arouse skepticism and induce care in making judgments on foreign cultural phenomena. In her first year in Tel Aviv Goldberg thus adopts an unusual position, very different from the prevailing trend, as articulated by Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin in his excellent essay on the topic, according to which “modern Jewish discourse was not based upon a rebuttal of the West-East dichotomy, but upon rejection of its attribution to Jews.”⁴⁸

Two years later, in *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, Goldberg revisited the gap between representation of the Orient and reality in a more mediated and complex manner. Here too, as in “A Window from Afar: The Long-Lost Son,” she relies on the Easterner as an authority. Now it is not an Indian acquaintance returning to his homeland but Shanthilal who complains of the European view of “the exotic nature of things” to Ruth and speaks of “the wish to know something beyond reality.” It is Shanthilal who strips naked the Western representation of the East and exposes Ruth to “a touch of hatred and a good measure of irony toward the descriptions of his homeland in European literature.” “The sweetness of the special ambience of the colonial novel” constitutes for him one of many proofs of the West’s failure to comprehend the East’s essence. *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* proves in this context, as in others, to be less immature and far more sophisticated than at first sight. On several occasions Goldberg expressed a wish to put aside the novel, but it would seem that she judged the book rather too harshly.⁴⁹ The writer may be young, but she is not naïve. She realizes full well that the path of Western man to the East will forever remain mediated, and that he thus has no way of learning about the authentic essence of phenomena. It is doubtful, incidentally, whether the man of the East has this ability either. Shanthilal, or “the long-lost son,” has lost it, since his exposure to Western culture has blotted out his direct relationship with the East from whence he has come. In such circumstances there is perhaps little point in protesting the limitations of literary representation and its lack of authenticity. The writer, in any case, prefers to present a worthy alternative to the bad “colonial

48. Raz-Krakotzkin, “Orientalism,” 42.

49. Ticotsky, Afterword, 135.

novel." As they sit in the Cologne café opposite the opera house, Shanthilal opens his briefcase and presents Ruth with a gift, the novel *Saiḍa and Adinda* in a French translation illustrated by Marcel Guillot. *Saiḍa and Adinda*, "with its genuine poetry and weight of bitterness," is the alternative that Shanthilal proposes, that Goldberg proposes, to "fake mysticism, however polished it may be by the knowledge of Romain Rolland."⁵⁰

Multatuli's book, the gift that Shanthilal gives to Ruth, would accompany her on her journey to Palestine. This is the present she will bear from Europe. This literary choice, now forgotten, was better known in its time.⁵¹ *Saiḍa and Adinda* was originally a chapter of the book *Max Havelaar, or The Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*, written by Eduard Douwes Dekker under the pseudonym Multatuli in 1860. Multatuli had recently returned in despair and anger to Amsterdam after several years during which he had occupied various posts in the colonial administration in Indonesia. The novel presents a scathing report on the injustice and folly of the Dutch colonialism of the time.⁵² The chapter was also printed as a separate publication. The innocent love between Saida and Adinda failed to materialize owing to the greed, obduracy, and cruelty of the Dutch rulers. Goldberg could have become acquainted with the book in various contexts and channels. Excerpts from another of Multatuli's books were published in a Hebrew translation between 1932 and 1935.⁵³ Goldberg perhaps made the acquaintance of Multatuli in this context, without knowing of this specific work. For ideological reasons, owing to

50. Goldberg mentions Romain Rolland on several occasions, in both "A Window from Afar: The Long-Lost Son" and in *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*. In these contexts Rolland appears as a key figure in the formation of romantic images of India. Goldberg is probably referring to the biography of Gandhi, which Rolland wrote in 1924. This book rapidly became a best-seller and through its great popularity established a portrait of India among the European intelligentsia. Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Man Who Became One with the Universal Being* (New York & London, 1924). For additional reading on Rolland's attitude toward and relations with Gandhi, see David James Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988), 112–44.

51. This is the most widely read work in modern Dutch literature.

52. For further reading on this work, see E. M. Beekman, *Troubled Pleasure: Dutch Colonial Literature from the East Indies, 1600–1950* (Oxford, 1996), 8–291; Anne-Marie Feenberg, "Max Havelaar: An Anti-Imperialist Novel," *MLN* 112.5 (1997): 817–35; Reinier Salverda, "The Case of the Missing Empire, or the Continuing Relevance of Multatuli's Novel *Max Havelaar* (1860)," *European Review* 13.1 (2005): 127–38.

53. My thanks to Ran Ha-cohen, who drew my attention to the publication of passages from Multatuli's *Ideen* translated by Mordehay Lipson in *Bustanay, The Palestine Farmers' Weekly* between 1932 and 1935.

their trenchant anticolonial criticism, *Max Havelaar, or The Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company* in general and *Saida and Adinda* in particular were enthusiastically received in the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ *Saida and Adinda* aroused interest in many varied circles, among them Jewish Marxists who translated it into Yiddish in the twenties.⁵⁵ Dekker himself found it hard to settle down in Holland upon his return from Indonesia and chose to move to Wiesbaden in Germany and from there to Nieder-Ingelheim on the Rhine. Goldberg could thus have come upon the book in various contexts: she may have been introduced to it through its Russian translation or perhaps came across it during her year of study in Bonn.

Goldberg chooses to place in Ruth's European baggage a singular work of literature, renowned to some extent but nevertheless marginal. The book's distinctiveness is not to be found at the level of plot and content but rather in its form, where, for example, Multatuli exposes his metapoetics to the reader. After enabling his protagonist Max Havelaar to recount at length his many travails in the labyrinthine, arbitrary, colonial bureaucracy, the author intervenes in his own voice to share with the reader his creative dilemma, which stems from the fact that "while the author who deals with European circumstances can assume that many things are understood, he whose tale unfolds in India must constantly ask himself: will the non-Indian reader correctly understand this or that matter?"⁵⁶ The difficulty in mediating the reality of India to the European reader, the "author" explains, results from the reader's unconscious exoticism. "House," for example, in the imagination of the European reader, is "a block of stone comprising rooms and chambers piled upon one another, with a road to the front, to the left and right neighbors whose household deities are supported by ours, and a garden with three redcurrant bushes at the back." But the Indian house, in a country where multi-story buildings are a rarity, is not like this. "This appears strange to the European reader, since this is the way of culture—or of that which passes itself off as culture—to attribute strangeness to every natural thing. The Indian houses are completely different to our houses, but it is not *they* that are strange: it is *our* houses that are strange."⁵⁷

The novel's hybrid structure and multiplicity of voices differentiate it from other European literature that is written against the background of

54. E. M. Beekman, afterword, in Multatuli, *Max Havelaar, or The Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company* (Amherst, Mass., 1982), 338.

55. Multatuli, *Said and Adinda* (Yiddish; Kiev, 1925).

56. Multatuli, *Max Havelaar, or The Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1998), 151.

57. *Ibid.*, 154.

the colonial experience.⁵⁸ Goldberg perhaps found inspiration in Multatuli's dual perspective of author and protagonist when she shaped the duality of the writer and her heroine Ruth in *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*. This was perhaps the point at which she began to give thought to the general difficulties attendant upon intercultural transition, and Dekker's deliberations echoed in this context her own deliberations as translator and mediator between cultures, a role that she took upon herself in the arena of Hebrew culture in Palestine. Be this as it may, in her choice of Multatuli as a gift from Europe Goldberg exposed the sources of her writing's metapoetry, displayed excellent literary taste, and demonstrated a tendency toward experimentalism of form. Her aesthetic choice, moreover, indicated a value-oriented decision. Aware of the limitations of literary representation, she chose the multivocal novel, that which continually confronts one version with another. Lacking an alternative to representation, she exchanged authoritative representation, and to a large measure also mobilized representation (as in Romain Rolland's popular version), for Multatuli's skeptic polyvocality.

The author's awareness of the impossibility of perceiving things as they truly are without recourse to mediation is valid in both the textual and visual sense. Goldberg was extremely interested in the plastic arts, to which she devoted a significant part of her leavetaking from the European cultural heritage in *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*. The copy of *Saida and Adinda* that Shanthilal presents to Ruth is an illustrated one. The illustrator Marcel Guillot, Shanthilal explains to Ruth, spent many years in Malaya and "told of a completely different Malaya than that described by all the Europeans." The illustrator "has a sharp eye, an eye that sees."⁵⁹ Shanthilal presents Ruth with the book in appreciation of her powers of discernment. As Shanthilal sees it, despite their European identity, Marcel Guillot and Ruth share a remarkable capacity for discerning the nature of the East.

In the chapter that Goldberg chose to set aside she returns to the topic of one's limited ability to see "the other." In this unpublished chapter Ruth meets the illustrator Marcel Guillot in the Parisian Coupole café.⁶⁰

58. Salverda, "The Case of the Missing Empire," 134. Multatuli's assertion that "what is fiction in particular is truth in general" has an almost postmodernist ring to the contemporary ear. Without commencing upon a detailed discussion of the book and its creator, Edward Said noted that it was a rare exception within the colonialist discourse of the nineteenth century. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993), 290.

59. Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, 47–48.

60. *Gnazim*, collection 274, 12916b, microfilm 52, slides 666–674. I thank Gidon Ticotsky for drawing my attention to this item.

The meeting is initiated by Shanthilal, who sends Marcel Guillot a photograph of Ruth, together with tips as to which cafés she is likely to frequent during her nights in Paris. The photo assists Guillot in identifying her, although in his view “the resemblance between the photo and you is quite marked, but is not conclusive.” During this ostensibly chance encounter the two strangers, Ruth and Marcel Guillot, converse as if they were old friends. As they walk side by side through the city streets, both engrossed in their own imaginings—Marcel in Adinda and Ruth in “someone who is not here”—Marcel Guillot gives vent to his innermost thoughts: “I think that we are all far simpler than we care to imagine, than the way things seem to us. We are far more uniform than we like to believe, and we have large windows that let the sun into us, and the sound, and doors that shut well against the outside world as well as some other straight lines. And we see all those around us in this way.” With these schematic sentences Goldberg clear-sightedly summed up man’s innate ability to comprehend the other. This time she does not confer upon the exotic a separate status, and these words apply to man’s relations with every other, be he a stranger or a familiar person. The windows and doors are at the same time apertures but also barriers to the outside world. Goldberg perhaps considered these sentiments excessively general or sweeping; for whatever reason, she preferred to set them aside.

“THIS WAS A BARRIER”

The representations of colonial reality in Western culture, to which Goldberg was exposed in her contacts with Indian acquaintances, were true of European culture in general. It was only by chance that Goldberg became aware of these themes in Bonn. There was nothing distinctively German about this, and Goldberg indeed understood this phenomenon to be European and took care to use the concept “European” in these contexts. Germany’s colonial enterprise was late in coming, restricted, and small scale; Germany’s presence in the Orient was minimal and indirect. It was against this background, as is well known, that Edward Said chose to ignore Germany in his book *Orientalism*. He justified his choice by asserting that “what German Orientalism scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas and languages almost literally gathered from the orient by imperial Britain and France.”⁶¹ Paradoxically, however, Said’s book in general and his disregard of Germany in particular created the opposite effect. Over the years a consensus has taken shape that Said’s choice to ignore German

61. Said, *Orientalism*, 19.

Orientalism was mistaken. The American Indologist Sheldon Pollock has concluded that Germany's relative share of the study of the Orient was greater than that of all other European and American countries put together, with regard to both the financial resources that the German state had invested in this area and Germany's scientific contribution, namely, the extent of German Orientalist knowledge.⁶²

In reviewing the development of German Indology from its beginnings in the nineteenth century to Nazi Germany, Pollock attempts to undermine several of the assumptions underlying Said's research. Pollock points out that Said's preoccupation with the relations between control, power, and knowledge blocked his view of other Orientalist phenomena, which were not direct products of colonial occupation.⁶³ Pollock's position thus accords with further studies that have noted the special circumstances under which representations of India had developed in German culture and in its science in particular. These studies assign great importance to the timing of German intellectuals' "discovery" of India, and mark the particular historical circumstances under which the study of India flowered in Germany as having dictated its nature. The beginnings of German Indology, as these scholars have shown, are planted firmly within German romanticism and were initially motivated by attempts at self-investigation, on both the personal and national levels.⁶⁴ In these conditions, as it discovered an unfamiliar antiquity, German Indology sought to transcend and free itself of the classical Greek and Roman contexts and of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition.⁶⁵ "The Oriental Renais-

62. Sheldon Pollock, "Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj," in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. C. A. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer (Philadelphia, 1993), 76–133, 82.

63. A similar assertion is made by Susanne Marchand, who argues, "It was in this period (1780–1830) that what I will call German ethnographic historicism was born, that is, the Germans' long presumption, partly justified, that they were trying harder to get into the minds of 'the other' than those who expected utilitarian benefits from their learning of (especially modern) exotic languages." Susanne Marchand, "Nazis, 'Orientalism' and Humanism," in Rabinbach and Bialas, *Nazi Germany and the Humanities*.

64. Kontje, "German Orientalism"; Tuska Benes, "Comparative Linguistics as Ethnology: In Search of Indo-Germans in Central Asia, 1770–1830," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.2 (2004): 117–32.

65. Tzoref-Ashkenazi, "The Nationalist Aspect," 105–30; Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, "India and the Identity of Europe: The Case of Friedrich Schlegel," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67.4 (2006): 713–34; Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten*, 27–29; Kontje, "German Orientalism," 64; Marchand, "Nazis, 'Orientalism' and Humanism."

sance," as Raymond Schwab terms the flowering of this field, or the "The Second Renaissance," as Susanne Marchand refers to it following Schwab's research, flourished in Germany as the Western attachment was exchanged for a different one.⁶⁶ In the eyes of the German intelligentsia, Jewish antiquity had relinquished pride of place to Indian antiquity. These trends gathered momentum in the Weimar Republic period, when German research of the Orient had lost many of its international academic links as a consequence of Germany's defeat in the First World War, and retreated to neoromantic traditions. The repugnance and reservation that some of those engaged in the study of the Far East felt at the enforced affiliation with the Semitic branch of the discipline were at times institutionalized through the splitting of Oriental seminars into two separate departments—the Semitic and the Indological.⁶⁷

These ideological fluctuations were most apparent in the area of comparative philology. From the outset, the genealogical perspective underlying comparative philology made connections between linguistic, historical, and geographical perceptions regarding the origin of the Germans. The categories developed by comparative philology (Indo-European and Indo-German) and the discipline's borderline position in between the humanities and the natural sciences, symbolized the increasing tension between humanist perceptions and quasi-biological approaches, which began to make their mark on intellectual and public discourse as they replaced the neutral linguistic context in which the concepts "Aryan" and "Semite" had been created. Pollock has taken this process to its extreme in categorically asserting that

in the case of the Germans who continued, however subliminally, to hold the nineteenth-century conviction that the origin of European civilization was to be found in India (or at least that India constituted a genetically related sibling), and who at the same time had none of the requisite political needs, Orientalism as an ideological formation on the model of Said simply could not arise. On the contrary, their "othering" and orientalizations were played at home. At least this seems to me one way to understand Indology in the National Socialist (NS) State.⁶⁸

The assertion regarding the existence of a special path in comparative German linguistics that led to the Nazi theory of race as described by

66. See Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880* (New York, 1984); Marchand, "Nazis, 'Orientalism' and Humanism."

67. Marchand, "Nazis, 'Orientalism' and Humanism."

68. Pollock, "Deep Orientalism?" 77.

Pollock is controversial and is regarded by certain scholars as smacking of teleology,⁶⁹ as are general perceptions that link nineteenth-century romantic exoticism to Nazi racism. "Exoticism did not provide the impetus for racism and totalitarian revolution, but certain exotic themes and images, in their appeal to superordinate power and valorization of the irrational in human nature, were perfectly positioned to provide suitable décor for political and racial violence," writes Dorothy Figuera.⁷⁰ More widely accepted than Pollock's general claim regarding the distinctive path of German Orientalism is his particular assertion that German Indology was directed inward, from India toward Germany, and that it assumed a role as a tool of internal classification, categorization, and control.⁷¹ Owing to the lack of German colonies, runs the argument presented by Pollock and others, a different species of Orientalism developed in Germany, characterized by its orientation toward not the periphery but the center, toward Germany itself.

This inward looking Orientalism was echoed in the writing of Goldberg, whose identity crystallized in the no-man's land between the Oriental Seminar and the small town on the Rhine, and in the twilight between the final days of Weimar and the rise of the Nazis. Some would argue that identity is a concept devoid of content. Too general, abstract, and worn by overuse, it is of limited utility in correctly defining phenomena, tending to petrify dynamic processes into a static form. It can, and perhaps should, be replaced by other more precise and flexible concepts. Thus, one may distinguish between identification and categorization—external practices applied to the individual—and the individual's own

69. See for example Dietmar Rothmund, *The German Intellectual Quest for India* (Delhi, 1986), 17; Pascale Rabault, "From Language to Man? German Indology and Ethnology in the Epistemological Battlefield of the Nineteenth Century," in *Sanskrit and 'Orientalism'*, 337–60; Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (Oxford, 2001); Tzoref-Ashkenazi, "India and the Identity of Europe," 732–33.

70. Dorothy M. Figueira, *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (Albany, N.Y., 1994), 137–61; 139.

71. See for example Achim Rohde, "Der innere Orient: Orientalismus, Antisemitismus und Geschlecht im Deutschland des 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert," *Die Welt des Islams* 45.2 (2005): 370–411. This assertion, by the way, is compatible with accepted views on the link between German Orientalism and the Jews, which portray the Germans' attitude toward the German Jews as internal colonialism, that is, as Orientalism that has turned inward. See Yfaat Weiss, "The Racialisation of the Jews: Historical Anthropology of the Nuremberg Laws," *Yearbook of the Simon Dubnow Institute* 1 (2002): 201–15.

self-understanding and self-identification.⁷² And indeed, it is particularly useful to distinguish between external ascription and self-identification in order to appreciate the crossroads at which Goldberg stood in Germany. Two literary miniatures, one written and published toward the end of Weimar and the other in the mid-thirties, exemplify this tension.

In 1932 Goldberg published a short story titled “In the Alley of the Mice,” in the Kovno journal *Petab*. It is set on a summer’s evening in Bonn. As evening falls, Sundhir and Dita ascend side-by-side from the river bank, “He, small, nimble, a look of merry mockery shining in his clear eyes far more than in his face. She—slim, tall, somewhat stooping, weary.” They are immersed in a ruminating silence following an argument, “and it was very evident from Sundhir’s lips, which were pursed in a smile, that he had had the last word, while Dita’s wide-eyed, wistful look intimated that he had utterly failed to convince her.” Dita and Sundhir sit down to drink in a small wine tavern. Their external features are traced as a contrast between black and white: “two pairs of hands: Dita’s—white, anxious and narrow as the wings of a dying seagull, and Sundhir’s—dark, hard and nervous.” The two are served by a local girl by the name of Anmy, who shows an obvious interest in Sundhir, happily chatting with him in “a fluent Rhine dialect.” Dita, watching the two in silence, comprehends only a few words of their conversation. The flirtation between the local girl and the Indian visitor draws the attention of the tavern clients, drivers, sailors, and laborers. Anmy’s fiancé, the driver Hans Gärtner, sitting at one of the tables, is restless. He gets up, sits down and gets up once more, and then begins to argue with Anmy’s father. Dita also fails to understand the exchange of words between the father and the vexed fiancé, since it, too, is held in the local dialect. Sundhir, who speaks this dialect, translates for Dita, at her request: “Take note, this filthy black fox will throw you out too, just as he has thrown out this girl of his. Like her, you will sit and look into his face as he talks to another!” But Sundhir’s translation is selective. Dita discerns this: “He spoke another word that I understood and that you did not translate. Yes, he said: ‘his Jewess’—what of it?”⁷³

72. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” *Theory and Society* 29.1 (2000): 1–47.

73. The short story contains biographical components. Dita reminisces about her childhood in Russia. She contemplates Sundhir’s sister, somewhere in the vicinity of Bombay. The courtship scene played out in her presence also belongs to her friendship with Padka. “We meet often, and all his transient ‘sympathetic’ ladies are subjected to my stern critique. There are very many of them and they

“The filthy black fox” and “his Jewess” appear to place Dita and Sundhir on an equal plane, as strangers among Germans; an Indian and a Jewess among the people of the Rhine. Yet such an interpretation is incomplete. Sundhir is courted, the object of desire, while Dita is abandoned, betrayed, and rejected. Furthermore, he speaks the local dialect while Dita understands “only the odd, rare word.” Sundhir partakes of the local experience through the language, while Dita in no way belongs there. At the level of the plot, the end of the story intensifies Dita’s loneliness. When the frightened Dita begs to leave, rises and stands at the door “miserable and pale,” she sees to her amazement that Sundhir, yet to leave the place, “warmly shook hands with Hans Gärtner.” Was this an embarrassed, manly gesture on the part of the suitor to the fiancé, an act of apology and an attempt at reaffirming the owner relationship? This may be so, but in any case, with this Dita’s loneliness is likewise confirmed.

“In the Alley of the Mice” was written and published in 1932. In a different version of the story Goldberg returned to the experience of being identified as a Jewess while in the company of an Indian friend in the novel *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, that is, after her immigration to Palestine. This time too, the Jewish woman finds herself observing the Indian man and his German mistresses. In this case she is not actually present at the wooing but merely listens to his stories and experiences. Shanthilal and Ruth, the old friends, are talking in the cafe opposite the opera house in Cologne of Shanthilal’s unfailingly transient love affairs. It appears that he has matured. “The Josephines and Carolines no longer interest me,” he declares to the skeptical Ruth, who responds, “They will interest you once again in Bombay, when they won’t be around.” The conversation culminates in a silence, which is suddenly broken:

A group of S.A. passed by in the street, singing:

Hängt die Juden, stellt die Bonzen an die Wand . . .

I trembled. I must have turned pale. Shanthilal bowed his head. He always felt guilty at outbreaks of anti-Semitism when together with me. And nevertheless, this was a barrier.⁷⁴

provide much instructive material for my critical talents. I merely make do with the certainty that I *do not* pass (at least as far as I am aware and judging by his lack of initiative) under the chisel of their critique,” Leah Goldberg writes to Mina Goldberg on May 29, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66526/1.

74. Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, 46.

It would seem that in *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* Goldberg carried the observations to which she had given initial, hesitant expression in “In the Alley of the Mice” to a further extreme and remapped the relationships between the Indian, the Jewess, and the residents of the small German town on the Rhine. Times had changed. Now it was not those idly sitting in a tavern speaking in an incomprehensible local dialect, but an S.A. gang giving vent to a simple, unmistakable text. The new times no longer allowed for selective listening and left no room for ambivalence. In “In the Alley of the Mice” Goldberg had still left room for doubt, for a partial translation and selective hearing, but there was no longer any point to this. Goldberg took the uneasiness between the Indian and his Jewish friend one step further. She allowed him to feel ashamed, a sentiment that can be felt only by someone who has partaken in the shameful act. Yet the shame in itself, and here Goldberg adopted a most radical position, was not sufficient to cancel out the distance, marked out in the classifications of identity formally and rigidly encoded and defined in Nazi Germany. “This was a barrier.” The outside world had penetrated the inner, the external identification had gradually been absorbed and become self-identification, thereby placing a barrier between the erstwhile friends: they were no longer two strangers in a strange town. They were now also strangers to each other.

THE LONG-LOST SON

Leah Goldberg’s sojourn in Bonn was a temporary one. She was preparing for Palestine.⁷⁵ It was in Bonn that she had begun to believe that this wish would come true. Belief turned into certainty during the coming months, even though no practical developments in this direction had occurred.⁷⁶ She deeply longed for this. The residence of the Indian acquaintances in the town was likewise impermanent. It appears that this intense dual attraction toward European culture and toward the “homeland”—an actual homeland to the Indian friends and a land of choice for Goldberg—was an ongoing topic of conversation among the foreign students on the point of concluding their studies. Yet to take leave of Europe and return to their homes, they had already begun to long for it. In retrospect, after her immigration to Palestine, when Goldberg found time to discuss identity and belonging and when she was compelled to bridge the gap between the object of longing, Palestine, and the place to which she had come, the images of her Indian acquaintances in Bonn resurfaced.

75. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, May 29, 1932, *Gnazim* 274 66526/1.

76. Leah Goldberg to Mina Goldberg, June 4, 1933, *Gnazim* 274 66530/1.

Thus, for example, the character of Shanthilal is depicted as someone who is constantly torn between two worlds. It is Shanthilal who talks “with bitterness and depression of the need to return home to Bombay”; Shanthilal “the wanderer,” so estranged from any feeling for the homeland. In the past, Ruth recollects, he had declared that he would seclude himself in one of India’s forests and there find himself a god. The possibility that “Shanthilal, who wavers between physical experiments and parapsychological experiences, from chilling cynicism toward mankind to lyrical and delicate attention toward individual humans and all animals, that this pleasant, frivolous and profound Shanthilal”⁷⁷ would in his old age become a recluse in the forests of India induces in Ruth sorrow.

Goldberg undertook a more complex investigation of the question of belonging with regard to the Indian acquaintances in her short story “Nekhar” (Foreign Land), which she published in the journal *Moznayim* in 1939.⁷⁸ The story perpetuates a spring evening in the life of the student Lis, a reflection of Goldberg, in “a small German town.” Lis spends the evening in the company of her fellow students, Datatria Padka, born in Poona in India and studying in the department of physical mathematics, Shanthilal Shah, his compatriot, who spent two years under the wing of Mahatma Gandhi in Bombay, and their common friend, the polite American Marvin Dilky. Hovering in the background is the figure of Evelyn King, Oxford graduate and the English secretary of the Seminar, and that of Rosefield, an American Jew and friend of Marvin. The story “Foreign Land” examines the avenues open to the émigré soul through these six characters. All are occupied, in their own ways, with their identity, and in many respects they form twosomes: Lis and Rosefield together examine their Jewish identity, Marvin confirms his Anglo-Saxon identity vis-à-vis Evelyn King, while Lis examines her female identity together with King. Each of these characters is occupied by the question of its true place. Thus, for example, Shah and Datatria, who represent opposite poles regarding the tension between the homeland and Europe, between the congenital and chosen identities. While the former clings to his congenital identity, the latter shakes off its shackles. “Such an idiot this Shah!” Datatria exclaims, “Before he has got a taste of Europe he already clamors for this filthy homeland.”⁷⁹

77. Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, 44.

78. Leah Goldberg, “In a Foreign Land,” see n. 44, 296–306. The following quotes are from the later edition: Leah Goldberg, “In a Foreign Land,” in *Leah Goldberg, Stories* (Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1996), 43–56.

79. Goldberg, “In a Foreign Land,” 47. See also Goldberg, “A Window from Afar,” 3.

The tastes of Europe and of the homeland are translated in the short story into an actual culinary experience when Datatria offers Lis dried and very salty almonds prepared by his mother, which his younger brother has sent from India. "Pretty awful, don't you think?" Datatria says,⁸⁰ since he has apparently become accustomed to the delicate taste of European food. In a rapid associative transition Lis recollects a joint experience with Data (Datatria) some six months previously. Then Data had enthusiastically sought to translate some poems by the new Indian poets into German for her, but in the course of translation the words had withered on the foreign tongue and had transformed the poetry into "nationalistic calls for revolt from the daily press."⁸¹ Beyond Goldberg's general revisiting of the difficulties of cultural translation, an issue she had already addressed two years previously in *Letters From an Imaginary Journey*, in this specific context the new Indian poetry loses its charm because, when Data translates it into German, one hears echoes of the burgeoning German nationalism. Data's experience indicates that he is inextricably caught up between the impoverished and humble homeland with its foul taste on the one hand, and German falseness on the other. Data, whose soul, like that of Lis, is captivated by the West, is compelled to accept that it can offer no alternative.

It appears that Goldberg made use of her Indian friends in order to address indirectly the question of her own attitude toward the gap between the foreign and the homeland. These friends allowed her to express ambivalent, suppressed sentiments. By invoking India she was able to liberate feelings toward Palestine that she had preferred to set aside, as she does in a short piece in *Davar* written in 1935 about an acquaintance who returns to Bombay.⁸² The description of the homeland provided by the Indian acquaintance, who has absorbed the culture of Europe, and "has all but forgotten his Indian origin," is critical and incisive. "Bombay's suffocating air" depresses him morbidly. The experience of the renewed meeting is epitomized by congestion and filth, foulness, and apathy. Goldberg summarizes the article in her own words: "This is a portrait of India as seen by Indian eyes. It is not splendid as in Kipling's stories, nor does it provoke thought as do the books of Romain Rolland. It is not 'interesting,' just as life is not 'interesting'—and it is utterly devoid of 'exoticism.' But it is truthful. This is how the long-lost son returns to the homeland." Was she indeed speaking of India?

80. Goldberg, "In a Foreign Land," 48.

81. *Ibid.*, 49.

82. Goldberg, "A Window from Afar," 3.

An unpublished ending to *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* reveals both the emotional but primarily the public boundaries of her leeway regarding the portrayal of the relative merits of the foreign land and the homeland. In the printed version, Ruth's "imaginary journey" ends on the shore of Marseilles, on her way to Palestine. An unpublished chapter offers an entirely different ending on the shores of Palestine, where Goldberg separates the imaginary from the real journey:

I have just now returned from two journeys, a real and an imaginary one, and I must admit that the imaginary was more beautiful. I am in no way ashamed of this—how impoverished would life be were we unable to invent nonexistent beauty and unfound melancholy? At times I still think of my imaginary journey and of Ruth. I lost Ruth on the way, in the port of Marseilles. And I don't know what became of her. But at times it seems to me that she too is here, that she too is sitting by one of the windows and sees the white houses reaching to the heavens, and like me suddenly knows all the beautiful and sorrowful words. Because she is like that. Because she is very like me. Because she knows something about my soul, something that I myself do not know. Perhaps she knows that I shall one day go forth from here too, from this white town?⁸³

The imaginary journey was the more beautiful, and the doubt as to the final destination was profound.

Goldberg had been living in Tel Aviv for some two years before she published *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*. Many of the Indian students had likewise chosen to leave Germany after 1933. The new regime had placed no official legal obstacles before them, as it had for the East European Jewess Goldberg.⁸⁴ Yet, while they may have been Aryans according to the Nazis' picture of the world, it is doubtful whether they could have felt at ease in an environment so extremely preoccupied by color and race. From 1933 onward the number of Indians in Germany as a whole and among the student population in particular declined from year to year. It is difficult to point to the motives of those who remained. In 1940 the Foreign Ministry estimated their total number at only 107.⁸⁵

83. Goldberg, *Letters from an Imaginary Journey*, 130.

84. Rolf Peter Sieferle, "Indien und die Arier in der Rassentheorie," *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch* 37.3 (1987): 444–67.

85. Joachim Oesterheld, "Zum Spektrum der indischen Präsenz in Deutschland von Beginn bis Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Fremde Erfahrungen: Asiaten und Afrikaner in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz bis 1945*, ed. G. Höpp

Most apparently they did not sympathize with the Nazis and remained for various reasons. Attempts at coopting them to the system met with no real success.

And what became of Goldberg's Indian friends? One of them, in all probability Padka, apparently chose to return to India. If the Datatria Padka mentioned in the story *Foreign Land* is the name of a real person, and if he is the physics student Deltatraya Phadke born in Poona who appears in Bonn University's student register, his traces disappear from the archive in 1935.⁸⁶ We may well assume that he is "the long-lost son," the gist of whose letter Goldberg reveals to us in her piece in *Davar*. Here he is quoted after returning to India as recounting that "in this country where professors come so cheaply," he has attained the post of professor. The description of the return is exceedingly melancholy. Most regrettably, neither this letter, nor in fact any other letter from Padka, can be found in Goldberg's literary estate in the Genazim archive.

And what of Shanthilal? Who indeed is Shanthilal? In *Letters from an Imaginary Journey* it is Shanthilal who speaks with "bitterness and depression" of the compulsion to return to Bombay. In *Foreign Land*, however, the character that bears the name Shanthilal exhibits contrary characteristics. In this story Shanthilal Shah appears as someone who was taken under the wing of Gandhi in Bombay, and whose longing for India blinds him to the charms of Europe. A real student by the name of Shanthilal Shah, just like Deltatraya Phadke, did indeed study with Goldberg at the Oriental Seminar.⁸⁷ He began his studies in Bonn in the winter semester of 1932/1933 and was noted for the breadth of his learning. He studied Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, German philosophy, the philosophy of science, and general history. In the winter semester of 1933/1934, by which time Goldberg had already left Bonn for provincial Lithuania, where she was working as a teacher in the local Hebrew-language high school, Shanthilal took some ten courses. One of these differed in nature from those he had studied the previous year; this was the course "Race as a Biological and Philosophical Issue" given by Professor Alojs Müller. He completed his doctoral studies cum laude in July 1934. His dissertation, "The Traditional Chronology of the Jainas and an Outline of the Political Development of India from Ajatasatru to Kaniska," was published in a

(Berlin, 1996), 344. See also Diethelm Weidemann, "Spannungen und Interessenkämpfe unter indischen Emigranten in Deutschland während des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Erste Anmerkungen zur Problematik," *ibid.*, 240–41.

86. Universitätsarchiv Bonn, Verzeichnis der Studierenden an der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität zu Bonn.

87. Universität Bonn, Archiv.

series that included the doctoral dissertation of Leah Goldberg, who also completed her studies cum laude in February 1935. The registry of Bonn University's doctoral students, incidentally, ironically perpetuates the matter of the barrier. Alongside columns that register official details such as name and surname, year and date of birth, subjects studied and so forth, an original column that previously served to register address (*Wohnort*) was converted by means of a stamp to a new category—"non-Aryan" (*nicht-ariisch*). On the page that registers Goldberg together with others who completed their doctorate on the same day, she is the sole "non-Aryan" alongside "Aryans." On the page registering those who completed a doctorate together with Shanthilal Shah, both "Aryans" and "non-Aryans" appear. In this category a hyphen appears under Shanthilal's name. It would seem that the registrar in July 1934 could not decide how to categorize the Indian student. In the mid-1930s, then, the binary categories of East and West were neither parallel nor identical to the division between Aryans and non-Aryans. Immediately thereafter, Shanthilal reregistered as a medical student. In 1940 he received a scholarship from the Humboldt Foundation. In 1941 he successfully completed a doctoral dissertation in the field of insulin research, and the final registry of completion of the doctorate is to be found in the album of Bonn University in August 1944. In these tables, it goes without saying, it was no longer necessary to signify race.

Why, then, did Goldberg resort to her Indian acquaintances in her early writing? A reading of Goldberg's entire oeuvre indicates that these acquaintances became part of Goldberg's general tendency to expose Hebrew readers to foreign lands. In all the channels in which Goldberg operated within the field of Hebrew culture, she made a point of leading her readers and audiences beyond their immediate local milieu. The plots of her three novels, the two that she published and the one she set aside, are set in Europe, as are a number of her journal articles that inform the readers of events in the wide world, some of which are based on foreign press reports. Likewise, the great work of translation to which Goldberg devoted a considerable part of her time made its contribution toward bringing the outside world closer to Hebrew readers. Even in later years, when she began teaching at the Hebrew University in the early 1950s and founded the department of comparative literature, Goldberg invested most of her effort in familiarizing local students with European culture and literature. The presence of Goldberg's Indian acquaintances in Germany in her early work appears, from the heights of her overall oeuvre, as one of the European chapters that Goldberg chose to present to her readers.

The path of this article, however, offers a different interpretation, derived neither from Goldberg's entire opus nor from the communal Palestine experience. An analysis of the literary representations of the Orient in Goldberg's early creative writing from the perspective of German Orientalism reveals additional possibilities. To this end I will make use in my conclusion of the research of Figuera, who traces exoticism as a mode of self-definition.⁸⁸ India, as she shows, has served the West in general, and in this context the German scholarship of the past two hundred years in particular, not merely as a base for projection but for the purpose of self-projection.⁸⁹ This perspective, then, redirects the observation inward. At the same time, since it is reflexive in nature, it is able to shed light on Goldberg's experience at the Oriental Seminar in a more precise manner than do binary models that have taken hold on the strength of Said's studies. Goldberg was exposed to her Indian friends at the stage of self-formation and was helped by them during this process. She examined her otherness in the light of theirs, deliberated upon the deepening gap between external and self-identification, and allowed herself to make use of their ambivalent attitude toward the foreign land and the homeland to indulge in sacrilegious musings that she could not or would not explicitly express to herself. These were in all cases self-reflections. This process was partially, as I have shown, a conscious one. She was not speaking of India, and most probably not of Germany, as we may gather from the opening verse of her poem *Balada ħarsinit* (Porcelain Ballad), which was written in a foreign land and welcomed her in print in her anthology *Smoke Rings* upon her arrival to Palestine:

It was very far away —
 In India or Cathay
 (And perhaps 'twas in Berlin,
 In a café with the fading of lamps)⁹⁰

India and China are locations equally distant from Berlin. In any event, they can be exchanged and converted, since in Goldberg's world they are both but self-reflections.

88. Figueira, "The Exotic: A Decadent Quest," 2.

89. *Ibid.*, 10.

90. My thanks to Natasha Gordinsky who drew my attention to this poem.