

IN THREE LANDSCAPES: LEAH GOLDBERG'S EARLY WRITINGS, Natasha Gordinsky. Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 2016

Natasha Gordinsky's *In Three Landscapes* focuses on the first decade of Leah Goldberg's writings in Hebrew. Gordinsky selects the year 1935 as the starting point of her research; it is the year that Goldberg first came to Israel, as well as the year that her first poetry book in Hebrew, *Tabaot Ashan* (טבעות עשן), was published. Gordinsky examines Goldberg's writings throughout the subsequent years until the end of World War II. During this period, following her transition to life in Israel, Goldberg had to establish her poetic voice and create her unique poetic persona. Goldberg had to make ethical and aesthetic decisions in her writing, and Gordinsky shows this long and fascinating dialectic process through the reading of Goldberg's works. Gordinsky highlights the artistic choices Goldberg made, outlining their literal and cultural values.

Gordinsky's book is the first comprehensive study that thoroughly explores this period in Goldberg's writings and the issues that concerned her. In this book, Gordinsky deals with a number of texts which are considered to be Goldberg's most important and canonic pieces, giving them a new and fresh context and meaning. While confined to a relatively short period in Goldberg's writings, this research establishes the connection between Goldberg's different texts and pieces, giving the readers a broad and vivid picture of the formative first years of this important poet and writer. Gordinsky's book is, therefore, for scholars and readers, who are interested in Goldberg's struggle between the new and the old, between the homeland and culture she had to leave and the new homeland and language she was trying to create.

Gordinsky analyzes Goldberg's early writings relation to two literatures that Goldberg knew well and which greatly influenced her work, namely German and Russian. Gordinsky reveals the intertextual and cultural context of Goldberg's texts, which is critical to the understanding of her early writings. Most of Goldberg's first readers and critics failed to see this connection and the numerous references and links to a variety of other works. Without the ability to recognize Goldberg's cultural and literary background, the understanding of her writings is incomplete. Pointing out the texts that Goldberg relied upon, Gordinsky makes an important contribution to the study of Goldberg's work. By doing so, this research joins Yifaat Weiss's book: *Journey and Imagined Journey. Lea Goldberg in Germany, 1930-1933* (2014), that establishes the influence of German literature and culture on Goldberg's writings.

Throughout the book, Gordinsky exposes Goldberg's literary sources and shows the meaning and importance of these references to the development of her literary persona. Borrowing the term "cultural memory" from Alleida Assmann, Gordinsky demonstrates that Goldberg's early writings revolve around "cultural memory and cultural translation" (p. 1), as she was trying to combine and balance the aesthetic with the ethical. Gordinsky examines the variety of literary genres Goldberg used during those years – novels, poetry and essays – and presents the dialectical process of the formation of Goldberg's poetic persona in a compelling manner. Furthermore, Gordinsky analyzes two of Goldberg's pseudonyms, Log (לוג) and Ada Granat (עדה גרנט) from those years. Although the subject of Goldberg's pseudonyms was addressed before – for example, in Tuvia Rivner's monograph about Goldberg – this is the most extensive research that has been done so far on this topic.

In the first chapter, Gordinsky deals with Goldberg's first novel, *Michtavim Minesiaa Meduma* (מכתבים מנסיעה מדומה), pointing out the relations between this text and the writings of Viktor Shklovsky and Rainer Maria Rilke. This reading gives new meaning to Goldberg's novel, shifting the main theme from romantic love to literature itself. Gordinsky describes this novel as, what Gary Saul Morson called "threshold art." She thus shows how Goldberg's novel escapes a strict division of genres, as the text can be interpreted in two, sometimes contradictory, ways.

The second chapter deals with Goldberg's poetry and its development in 1938, after Natan Alterman published *Cohavim Bahutz* (כוכבים בחוץ), a poetry book that greatly influenced his generation of poets and writers. In this chapter, Gordinsky claims that through the "forgotten quote", one of the main poetical tools of the Acmeist Russian poetry, Goldberg was able to confront Alterman in her poetry and suggest a different concept of memory and temporality. This chapter also significantly offers an alternative view of the shifts in Goldberg's poetry to the one described in the famous essay by Dan Miron. Miron claimed that after Goldberg's first poetry book, *Tabaot Ashan* (טבעות עשן), Goldberg's writings changed for the worse. This chapter provides a new outlook, challenging this claim.

The third chapter deals with the two pseudonyms and literary personas that Goldberg created for herself: Log, who was more politically-oriented, in her essays, and Ada Granat, who was a more literary, sentimental and aesthetical writer. Gordinsky illustrates how the choice to write in these two different voices was itself a political and poetic act, by which Goldberg was able to present two different female writers in the literary sphere who took on two different cultural roles.

The fourth chapter deals with Goldberg's essayist writings, mainly with

the essay *Ha-ometz Lehulin* (האומץ לחולין), an important and canonic text that has already received a great deal of attention in studies of Goldberg's work. Gordinsky's innovation here is her examination of the use of genres in this essay and her description of it as "Diasporic", a term she borrowed from the theory of Theodor Adorno.

The fifth chapter focus on Goldberg's writings during World War II, a time when Goldberg was concerned about the future of humanistic culture and the values she held dear. She grappled with the role and responsibilities of the poet in times of war. Goldberg's refusal to write directly about the war has been discussed at length in different studies, and Gordinsky highlights how Goldberg turned to translation in those years, especially from Russian and German literature. Gordinsky shows that all the writers that Goldberg chose to translate in those years were writers who held similar humanistic values as her own.

The sixth and final chapter deals with the novels, *Ve-hu Ha-or* (והוא האור), published first in 1946 and was republished in 2005, and *Avedot* (אבות) – archived novel, which Goldberg did not publish in her lifetime, and was first published in 2010. This is one of the first discussions of them in current studies. Here, Gordinsky compares the novels and their modernist concept of time and temporality, as well as the literature of the European homeland lost in the war with the textual space of Hebrew Literature that developed in Israel during that time.

On the whole, Gordinsky's research as presented in this book is important not only for Goldberg's scholars, but for anyone interested in Goldberg's literary persona and how it developed in the first period of her writing in Israel. It is a fascinating discussion of Goldberg's coalescence as a Hebrew writer and as an intellectual, providing readers a glimpse into Goldberg's vast literary knowledge and background, of which the Hebrew and Israeli reader knows little about. This research completes previous examinations of Goldberg's writings and provides a significant refreshing interpretation that will be highly relevant to further studies of Goldberg's work.

Rina J. Baroukh,
Ben Gurion University of the Negev