

ABSTRACT

THE LOST GERMAN CITY: BERLIN OF LEAH GOLDBERG

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Between 1936 and 1939, Leah Goldberg drafted a novel entitled *Avedot* (Losses), revolving around the figure of Elhanan Yehuda Kron, a Jewish poet and scholar of Eastern European extraction who resides in Berlin. After publishing a couple of chapters and attempting to rewrite the novel, Goldberg ultimately decided not to publish this work. *Avedot* is set in Berlin on the eve of the Nazi takeover, and the city plays a major role in the novel as a crowded, ever-shifting site where unexpected encounters take place. My essay traces Goldberg's literary use of urban space, paying close attention to the different versions of the novel. In the first version, Goldberg employs confusing narrative devices (gaps in the plot, free indirect discourse) in order to represent the Jewish protagonist's sense of blindness, disorientation, and even loss of direction, as he traverses the city space. When comparing the revised version to this earlier one, I show that Goldberg avoided such devices in her rewriting, composing a more realistic text that also minimizes the role that Berlin plays in the novel. The essay locates these shifts in the context of two traditions of writing about the urban spaces of Berlin: the Hebrew one, which flourished in the early twentieth century, and German writing about the city and its Jewish immigrant population. I argue that Goldberg conceived of *Avedot* in the context of modernist European literature about the metropolis, written in both languages, while also recognizing the belatedness of her project, composed in Palestine of the late 1930s. Her revisions and decision not to publish *Avedot* demonstrate the impasses entailed in forging, through Hebrew prose, a renewed relationship to the Berlin's literary and historical past.