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Magazine of the Yiddish Book Center

Oh, My Language

By Roshelle Weprinsky, translated by Rebecca Weingart

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Published: Summer 2022 / 5782
Part of issue number: Translation 2022

“*Oh, My Language*” is from Roshelle Weprinsky’s first book of poetry, *Ruf fun fligl* (Call of Wings; New York, 1926). Weprinsky’s intimate relationship with the natural world, which can be found in this poem and others, seems to provide a solace to the speaker’s loneliness. In the poem below, her language—which she compares to flower buds in a magical forest—is also held dear.

Oh, my language,
you are silvery blue—
you are illustrious gold.
And what do I do with you?—
I trifle with you
like little girls with their dolls,
with their playthings on the floor—
I reel in my play.
But often I cut my lips on you,
pull you from my soft cells,
and like invisible golden cords
cast you up to heaven.
I braid you in forms according to my likeness,
I pluck you like flower buds from a white forest;
from a silver forest.

Roshelle Weprinsky was born in Ukraine in 1895 and moved to the United States in 1907. In New York, she began working in a sweatshop at age 13 and, after attending evening school and reading Yiddish writers and poets, started writing poetry herself at age 15. She published five books of poetry and an autobiographical novel.

Rebecca Weingart is an educator and 2021 Yiddish Book Center translation fellow. She holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of Missouri–St. Louis, and her poems have appeared in *NonBinary Review* and *So It Goes Literary Journal*.

◀ Previous article: *From My Childhood*

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