

My Grandmother-Tongue.

Oyser Moskve iz es zeyer grin,
klor'z der himl, un di luft iz frish.
Af der dache iz vi ba Shukshin,
ober fort Sholem-Aleychemish.
Yo, es hot zikh mir gefilt azoy
dort in yener alter guter tsayt,
ven in kiln sedl frisher toy
yedn in der fri hot vi banayt
undzer kleynem, sheynem gortn-yishev, -
ful mit lebm kh'bin geven farkisheft...
Yorn frier mit hatslokhe hobm
dort aleyn der zeyde mit der boben
ufgeboyt far zikh fun holts a hoyz
un im demolt oysgefarbt in roz.
Gikh nokh dem glyakh unter dakh dem festn,
lebm shildl mitn zeydns nomen,
zaynen shvalbm shvartsinke gekumen,
zikh bazetst in oysgeklepte nestn.
Un gants prost, togteglekh, nit magidish
hot geklungen af der dache yidish.
Davke dortn kh'hob gehert a sakh,
vi di bobezeyde flegn reydn
zeyer heymishe un libe shprakh:
ot aza min kleyninker Gan-Eydn.
Mayne zeyde Arn, bobez Rokhl,
mayne libe, zikhroynom-livrokhe,
mayne tayere, mayn glik un vey -
akh, vi s'vilt zikh hofn mir un gleybm,
vos atsind zey zeen dort fun oybm,
vi ikh shrayb af yidish vegn zey!
Ikh dermon zikh... s'tut in harts a rir...
Bobez Rokhl bet: "Farmakh di tir."
Oder, umtsufridene a bisl,
zogt: "A naye mayse..." - mit a ziftsl.
Un: "Emidem krikht er!" - afn zeydn broygez
zayendik... Lemaneshem,
zayt af mir nit broygez in Gan-Eydn,
vos atsind dertseyl ikh vegn dem!
Yedes yidish vort, derhert fun aykh,
iz af eybik in mayn harts geblibm,
un mit dem kh'bin mazldik un raykh,
un vi aykh, zey ale tu ikh libm.
Un say likht say gutskayt tu ikh garn,
un ikh fil i bren i tife ru...
Khoch geven a litvak, zeyde Arn
flegt oft zogn "zogt er" mit an "u".
Kh'hob gefregt: "A shto takoye "zugter"?"
Hot er shtil geentfert: "govorit".
... Un der ployt'z geshtanen nit-gerukter,
un getsvichet foygl hot a lid,
un se hot geklungen azoy eydl
zayn naiver, proster, reyner ruf...
Af kritik der bobes flegt der zeyde
oft mol makhn mit der hant: "Her uf!".

My Grandmother-Tongue

In the suburbs of Moscow it is very green;
the sky is clear and the air is fresh.
In the dacha, it's like in Shukshin's* place,
but it nevertheless feels Sholem Aleichem-ish.
Yes, that's the way I felt
in those good old days,
when the fresh dew in the cool, little garden
seemed to renew our beautiful little garden
settlement
every morning.
Full of life, I was enchanted.

Years before,
my grandfather and grandmother
themselves built a wooden house
and painted it in pink then.
Right after that,
black swallows came
to roost in their plastered nests
just beneath the strong roof,
next to the sign with my grandfather's name.
And quite simply,
in an everyday manner and not preachily,
Yiddish rang out in the dacha.
It was precisely there that I heard a lot of it,
as my grandparents spoke their homey, dear
language...
it was that sort of little Paradise.
My grandfather Aaron, my grandmother Rachel,
my dear ones, may their memories be for a blessing,
my dear ones, my happiness and woe...
Ah, how I want to hope and believe
that now they see there, from above,
how I write Yiddish about them!
I remember... my heart skips a beat...
grandma Rachel saying to me: "Farmakh di tir!"**
or, a bit annoyed,
saying: "A naye mayse!"; *** with a little sigh,
or, about my grandfather (getting angry):
"Emidem krikht er!"****
In the name of God—don't be angry at me in
Paradise
because I'm telling about that now!
Every Yiddish word I heard from you
has remained in my heart forever,
and for that I am lucky and rich,
and like you I love them all;
I long for both light and goodness
and I feel both excitement and deep calm.
Though my grandfather was a Litvak,
he would often say "zogt er" with a "u".
I would ask: "Shto takoye 'zugter'?"*****
and he would answer quietly: "gavarit."*****
And the wick wasn't pulled out

