

From the Fairy Tale “Die”:
Poems by Gena Gruz
Translated from the Russian by Aaron Poochigian



National Translation Month continues today with some dazzling new translations of contemporary Russian poetry. We're thrilled to share a **selection of poems by Gena Gruz translated by Aaron Poochigian**. These short stanzas will take you on a surreal journey away from barking feral dreams to dusty slums where charred flowers open, to urban abandoned gardens where the Minotaur awaits. They will surprise and delight you, hopefully becoming your new favorites.

We'd love to hear from you! Follow us on Twitter [@TranslateMonth](#), share using [#TranslationMonth](#), join our mailing list, submit a translation month event, or like our [Facebook](#) page. Celebrate with us your favorite translations of poetry and women poets from all over the world in September and beyond.

—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

Gena Gruz translated by Aaron Poochigian

From the Book "NONAME"

тело дивана и темя подушки
лай дворовых снов
сушатся на батарее слова
запутанных фраз

The chassis of a couch the crown of a pillow
The barking of feral dreams
Utterances drying on the radiator
Muttered phrases

Цветок обугленный в пыльном квартале
Протянул лепестки к обугленной луне
Приклеенной к плакату неба
Звёзды молчат в молочных слезах
И цветные фигурки мерещатся
В созвездии забытых руин

A charred flower in a dusty slum
Pleads with the petals to reach toward the charred moon
Glued to the billboard of the sky
Stars are silent in galaxies weeping milk
And vivid forms flash in in the constellations
Of forgotten ruins.

Смотрят исподлобья
Трущобы дряхлых домов
Смотрят дряхлые трубы в ночь
Кавалеры поднявшиеся по лестнице
Находят девочек на лестничной клетке
Ни слова о любви
Говори когда ты уходишь
Грудная клетка бессердечия

A look from beneath the brow
A rundown sagging tenement
Sagging pipes look into the night
Gentlemen going up the stairs
Find girls at the top of the stairs
Not a word about love
Say goodbye when you leave
Your ribcage has no heart

Вся как стрекоза лучезарная
Круглые глаза и зубки торчат
Детство тебя не покинет
Стрекочут нежно слова
Кувырок и натянула носок
Праздник детства

A dragonfly shimmering
Round eyes and buck teeth
Childhood will not leave you
You buzz sweet nothings
Summersault into a sock
Cheerleading childhood

В одиночестве пустой квартиры
Что-то стучит за окном
Шмотки по углам заснули
И сверкает полированный пол
За окном клокочет металл
И кусочки неба в пыли
За три месяца я прожила тридцать лет
Это из сказки «Умри»

Alone in an empty apartment
There is clacking outside the window
Clothes fell asleep in the corners
The floor is spick and span
The metal keeps on clacking
Parts of the sky are slightly dusty
In three months I lived thirty years
This from the fairy tale “Die”

Приоткрытый рот цветка впитывает свет
По стебельку текут капли пота
Ветер вдохнул пыльцу в чрево цветка
Лепестки сжались и распахнулись
Стонут ласки дождя поцелуями
На городской грядке

The flower's open mouth absorbs the light
Droplets of sweat run down the stem
The wind breathes pollen into the flower's belly
The petals clench and open outward
The rain's caresses groan with kisses
In an urban garden

золотые сапоги на шпильках
серьги на ёлке в ушах
юбка чешуёй на русалке
не выпускает телефон из длинных ногтей
и ещё вокруг призраки разноцветные
циркулируют как радужные круги в ночной луже

She is in golden high-heel boots
Earrings like on a Christmas tree
Skirt like the scales of a mermaid named Lenore
She does not let her phone out of her manicured hands
All around her colorful phantoms circling
Like gasoline in a midnight puddle

В какой-то момент чтения ты начал раскачиваться
Как жёлтые дюны которые дышат ветром
Хлынулоприливом синим в глаза море
И глаза в зеркале
И соль на щеке серебрится и рот бормочет тишину грусти
Вдруг ты увидел лампочку в сорок ватт
Музыку темноты

Right then while you were reading cursive chatter
Like yellow dunes that breathe the tumult
Vagaries of blue break on your eyes
Reflected in the mirror
The crystalline soul on your cheeks drips your mouth whispers the silence of the sorrow
Witness of a sudden the forty-watt lamp
The music of darkness

Кто-то бормочет мне о красоте лабиринта
Минотавр потерял нити в объятьях Ариадны
Она его рьяную животно-мужскую голову
Приласкала на острых коленях и произносит
— Ты весь шерстяной как пряди белого золота в тёмных тонах
Он впившись в тело нежности воет
— Я ментор мифа как миндаль времени когда мозг ещё не орех

Someone is mumbling the beauty of a labyrinth
The Minotaur has lost the thread in the embrace of Ariadne
Who is tousling his wild hair
Who is stroking him on her knobby knees
— You are all wooly like the spindle of a strawberry blonde
He is clenching her, wooing her
— I am the legend's mentor whose almond is not fully grown into a myth

Взволнованный голос пульсирует
Мы стоим врозь
Не зная друг друга головами киваем
Мигает фонарик
И над мусоркой фантик рыжий летает

A note is pulsating in agitation
We stand separate
We look nodding with no recognition
The streetlamp blinks
A freckled candy wrapper tumbling above the trash

Голый тротуар в ознобе укрыл тишину фонарей
Пешеход о чём-то бормочет
На витрине стоит женственный злодей
И я в холодном пальтишке
Нащупала руку твою
Нежные мифы

The naked shivering sidewalk receives the streetlamp
A walking mumbling man
In a store window the feminine villain
Dressed in a skimpy coat
I felt for your hand like
A gentlemyth

Жизнь запеленавший в длинное стихотворение Безлюдной белизной где под ногами
зимняя заря
В погонах идёт он и на шинели воротник приподнят
Нос высовывается из пустыря
И воздух резко-синий будто посторонний
Кидаёт фантики и кружит вальс рядом с бездной

Life swaddled in a poem with endless enjambments
Through the desert district where a winter-white sun is rising
He marches with chevrons on his greatcoat and collar turned up
His nose protrudes from the wasteland
The air spikey-sharp blue and like a stranger
Picks up candy wrappers and pirouettes beside the abyss

Translator's Note

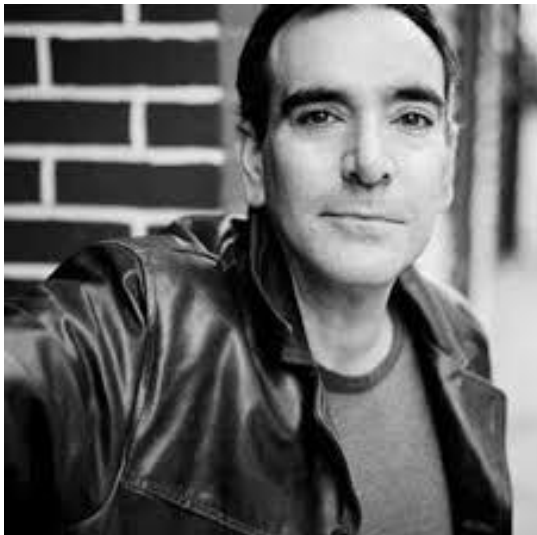
I worked closely with Ms. Gruz on these translations. We focused on replicating the sonic effects of the Russian (assonance, off-rhyme, etc.) in English. We also worked hard to preserve what Ms. Gruz calls “the geography of the poem”—that is, the relative line-lengths of the original. Though in the past I have always translated from languages in which I am proficient, I do not know Russian. I was so taken with Ms. Gruz’s poetry, however, that I decided to undertake translating her work with her close supervision and assistance. Her English is fluent, and she has been the one to decide when I have “gotten” the original in English.

— Aaron Poochigian, translator



About the author

Gena Gruz, a poet and an artist, has a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology from NYU. Born in the Soviet Union, she moved to the US in her early teens and now lives in New York City. Her artwork was part of a traveling exhibition “The Modernism and Post-Modernism of Russia at the End of the Millennium.” She is the author of two poetry books, *Radiant Solitude*, 2018 and *Earthly Entities*, 2019, both from Liberty Press.



About the translator

Aaron Poochigian earned a PhD in Classics from the University of Minnesota and an MFA in Poetry from Columbia University. His book of translations from Sappho, *Stung With Love*, was published by Penguin Classics in 2009, and his translation of Apollonius’ *Jason and the Argonauts* was released October 2014. For his work in translation he was awarded a 2010-2011 Grant by the National Endowment for the Arts. His first book of poetry, *The Cosmic Purr* (Able Muse Press), was published in 2012 and his second book *Manhattanite*, which won the 2016 Able Muse Poetry Prize, came out in December of 2017. His thriller in verse, *Mr.*

Either/Or, was released by Etruscan Press in the fall of 2017. His work has appeared in such publications as *Best American Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, and *POETRY*.