

INTRODUCING THE *SRPR* ILLINOIS POET:

RACHEL GALVIN



Rachel Galvin is a poet, translator, and scholar. Her third book of poems, *Uterotopia*, was published by Persea Books in January 2023. Galvin is the author of *Elevated Threat Level* (Green Lantern Press, 2018), a finalist for the National Poetry Series; and *Pulleys & Locomotion* (Black Lawrence Press, 2009). She is the translator of Raymond Queneau's *Hitting the Streets* (Carcenet Press, 2013), winner of the Scott Moncrieff Prize for French Translation; and cotranslator of Oliverio Girondo's *Decals: Complete Early Poems* (Open Letter, 2018), a finalist for the National Translation Award. Her writing appears in journals and anthologies including *Best American Experimental Writing 2020*, *Best American Poetry 2020*, *Boston Review*, *Fence*, *Gulf Coast*, *Harvard Review*, *McSweeney's*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, and *Ploughshares*. She is a cofounder of Outranspo, a creative translation collective, and is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature studies at the University of Chicago, where she also directs Translation Studies.

Super Market

1.

You didn't have grocery stores
when you were a kid
you had super markets
Super Duper one chain was called
The abundance
the gleam the gloss the glisten the glow
the glimmer the glitter the glare
the glint the glitz the glamour
the gasp-high aisles
towers of canned soup
pillars of pasta
giddy cereal box vertigo
The super market makes you desire
The super market makes you believe

You can't deny the allure
of its bakery
the aroma of semolina loaves
baguettes and sesame challah
ciabatta and focaccia
the golden egg
-washed glisten
of rolls in bins
and bagels in bins
ready for your hand
sheathed in wax paper

You are compelled by coffee beans
their scent of all that is good on this earth

Coffee promotes
confidence
jacks up
your optimism
gives it jet fuel
the super market makes you believe in America
the super market makes you believe

You grew up in the glow of a mega super market
140,000 square feet of merchandise for sale
the Wegmans mother ship has owned the town
and its fervent loyalty
for over a century
a pair of pushcart peddler brothers
turned local family company
turned brand turned franchise
spread their wings over the Finger Lakes
carried their love down the East Coast
to Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York
Pennsylvania, Virginia, even North Carolina
like the expansion of a nation
but commanding more devotion
Free chocolate chip cookies for kiddos
and coffee for exhausted parents
Health insurance and college tuition
for high school kids bagging groceries

These are but small tokens
of the super market's love for us

In the 1950s
the super market had its own TV show
called Dollar Derby

where patrons bid on items
with fake money

The Super Market inspired a musical
at Algonquin Regional High School
about two brothers working at rival markets
One sends spies to sabotage the other
but in the end, he is seduced by the bigger super market
and becomes an employee at the mother ship

The real super market donated shirts, chef hats, shopping carts
with logos to the high school actors as costumes and props
for the dramedy about consumption and filial loyalty

Some call it a passion some call it a cult
Second City does a skit about obsessed residents
actually living inside Wegmans
why wouldn't they?
it has it all
it is the all
it is the source of life

*we were halfway home, only eight minutes
from Wegmans, writes Chen Chen
remember when we measured distance
in terms of Wegmans, like it was a lighthouse
or pyramid or sacred tree*

A man once staged a marriage proposal
at this site of religious and cultural significance
while thirty friends and relatives hid
between the bakery and the sandwich counter
This really happened

When people come to visit
from other countries
we like to take them on a tour
of the mega super market
It's one of the world's greatest natural wonders
along with nearby Niagara Falls

We laugh and shake our heads
at the mad abundance
the dizzying towers of comestibles
the pure products of America going crazy

We sing we see it we want it we eat it

The market births a catering service
a restaurant, a café
always with the nation's best customer service
rated each year by shiny magazines
that also say it's the very best place to work
in the whole nation
with full benefits for half-time work
and more

*i felt terror of that gloss, of the waxed fruit,
of propaganda so refined it could dilute
the existence of the strange things before my eyes*

writes Reina María Rodríguez about her first time
in a North American grocery store
with a woman named Phillis
in the mid-1980s
just before Cuba's special period

*everything wanting to be used up, immediately,
licked, tasted, eaten, packaged, mastered
my nose began to bleed and Phillis said it was the cold;
i knew that wasn't the problem*

2.

Back in the olden days
on March 8th, 2020
when we still say *shut down* instead of *lockdown*
when we say *bleach wipes*, when we say *shortage*

when we say *rush on supplies*
when we say *shelter in place*
we say *hunker down*
we say *batten the hatches*

there's a rumor
the mayor will impose a curfew at 5pm
a false alarm
though the mayor does announce
that Chicago Public Schools
will be closed for a month
a whole month yes one month
and my stepson texts me WOOOEWW!

I dash to the super market
along with everyone else, everyone, everyone else

the super market is a ruined cathedral
it is a bus station