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The Doll at State Fair

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THE DOLL AT STATE FAIR

First the animals, the prize
stock they'll never afford.
The dense air of crowded barns

with no damp whip of field air
to control this pungence.
The girl holds me by her to peer

through rough slats
at hogs like she says they owned
too, before the cholera year.

And next the carnival: O'Riley's
hired man takes us
on the Ferris Wheel. Suspended

over Sacramento, he works his hand
in under her clothes. Some little
girls get scared real easy, he says.

You're different. Pressed in the corner
of the swaying cart, the girl
can't get away, but one hand works up
my body to press the stitched-on heart.