The Doll at State Fair

Susan Davis
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.