



The Rural Sublime

the only sensible impression left is,
-Coleridge

"I am nothing!"

Farmwives conjure elaborate quilts.
Woodworkers busy themselves at their stations.
No shortage of craftspeople here, to be sure,
but however deft these artisans,
their work's no balm for my sudden unease.
Today I've sampled maple balls
and *poutine*, and from provisory bleachers,
heard the roars of the Tractor Pull,
and outside of airplanes I couldn't see,
the gunmetal clouds dropping ever downward.

I'm at the Tunbridge World's Fair,
set in a hamlet from picture postcards.
I've been awed by oxen with legs so long
and stout that if my eyes didn't wander
to mammoth heads (we're all so small)
I'd imagine black-and-white trunks of trees—
the Holsteins— and winey red— the Herefords.
There's a scattering too of paler breeds
like Brahma or Charolais. All wonders.

Wonders everywhere in fact:
100-pound Hubbard squashes and pumpkins,
Brobdignagian potbelly hogs—
"Kevin Bacon," "Spamela Anderson,"
"Tyrone the Terrible"— that plod through the final
Pig Race, intent on the cookie reward.
Though I feel the weather grow ever grimmer,
the announcer rattles his comic words
at the crowd, consisting mostly of parents
with enthusiastic sons and daughters.

Is any gripped by nameless fears
like me? I shuddered less when leaning
from a Ferris Wheel car or in the wild orbits
of the Tilt-a-Whirl and Whizzer Demon
than when standing right here. Pink cotton candy
cones look like torches, puny beacons
in evanescent afternoon.
The ozone scent of imminent lightning
fills the air like the whiff of corn dogs,
funnel cake, hush puppies frying.

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