

Ellen Goldberg

Lesbians at the Tillamook County Fair

We didn't belong at the pig auction,
where we couldn't translate
the farmers' subtle nods and twitches,
or on the Zipper ride—thinking of being
turned upside down made me sick—
and not at the cotton-candy-and-
wet-with-grease-curly-fries stand.

We didn't belong at the flex-your-muscles-
ring-the-bell stand.
Neither did we belong to that coterie
who come early and stay late
displaying mammoth turnips,
blue-ribbon blueberry pies, golden hives, exotic bunnies,
electronic shoe polishing devices for getting rich.

We skittered away like insects afraid of boots
until we came across the tent for wild animals
forced to reside with humans to survive.
In there she and I spoke to one another again
after a fair time not speaking. There was Remo,
a wolf stolen from the wild as a pup, then abandoned.
There was a blind skunk named Pepee
and a small owl who could not fly.

A woman in a purple satin spangled shirt explained
how each of the creatures had come to need refuge
while a delicate teenaged boy circled the tent slowly,
the brown blinking owl clasping his finger
hopping from one black talon to another as if on hot pavement.
We lingered there until closing because it seemed easy but
the woman told us what patience it takes
for a wild animal to feel safe among humans.