

Market Day

There's a shortcut under the railway arches, but it's risky.
You must stay alert to the flurry, coo and squawk of pigeons
coupling in the iron pediments above your head; dance your way
in girder-dim light, around, between and over piles of guano,
to the crack-boom beat of trains rumbling from somewhere to
somewhere and back again. But get through this and it's not far
to a place where those with plenty, those with not much,
and those with nothing at all have gathered for a thousand years
to buy, sell, barter and beg; a place where minstrels still play,
and jesters can fool you into laughing at another you, slumped
in a shop doorway, your sleek dog now a mongrel marotte
with bell-sewn neckerchief, its front paw on your upturned hat.
There's all the fun of the fair here, and before you go home
I can guarantee the town soothsayer in rain-stained Stetson
will foretell the end of the world for you; his booze-fed body
a wiry proof of plagues and pestilence to come, and acrobat boys
on electric wheels will conjugate the verb to fuck for you,
while they weave between shoppers sipping chocolate, al fresco.

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