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Notebook

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The last great Fair

by [Jeffrey Hart](#)

On the 1939 New York World's Fair.

In the Spring of 1939, standing on the roof of our apartment house at night and gazing due east, you could see in the distance the glow of the New York World's Fair. Sometimes you saw the colors change, from blue to green to rose and sometimes there were sky-rockets and star-bursts. You could not hear the music at that distance, but you could imagine it—and the crowds, and the fountains reaching toward the sky. “It’s a thing like a fair,” says a character in Scott Fitzgerald’s story “Absolution”—

Go to one at night and stand a little way off from it in a dark place—under dark trees. You’ll see a big wheel made of lights turning in the air, and a long slide shooting boats down into the water. A band playing somewhere and a smell of peanuts—and everything will twinkle.

The New York World’s Fair continues to be a subject for reflect ...

Jeffrey Hart's most recent book is *The Making of the American Conservative Mind* (ISI).

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