

AMANDA WATTERS

Carnival

—for Robert Fanning

Once a year
— in a town

outside Calgary —
a carnival

occurs backward:
getting cleaner, a parking lot

unlitters: popcorn lifts
off the pavement,

ticket stubs uncrinkle.
Where there was nothing

but sticky parking lot lines —
egg-beater arms

scissor around each other
& ferris wheels

carry children
and lovers

counter clockwise.
Out of sugar and saliva

girls produce
cotton candy

onto sticks.
Balloons unpop,

bob on strings,
then deflate back

to empty sacs.
Patrons take tokens

after each ride.
Squeaky teens

hand over
stuffed bears

in bowties
so their boyfriends

can catch baseballs
pitched

from bottle pyramids.
And as the moon

goes down
& sunset

approaches,
children pile

back into minivans,
motion sickness
crawls

down throats
back to bellies,

headaches
evaporate,

eagerness spreads
from faces.

Amanda Watters is a graduate of Central Michigan University and Sarah Lawrence College. She loves the Mitten State but is currently living in North Carolina with her soon-to-be-husband and their dog, Lennon. She enjoys autumn, cooking, '90s sitcoms, and wine.