

Tim DeJong

Last Fare at the Carnival

Frosted sunlight like caked glaze
filters through chainlink haze.
A bored operator punches

holes in our tickets
and latches us in. Slow grind
of gears. We spin,

rise in reverse, till at the apex
we're lone witnesses of
the carnival's piecemeal detritus:

drink cartons' cuneiform scatter,
blown wrappers pinned to a fence.
Simulacra of the near escape.

Below us a child cries,
face smeared with cotton
candy residue. The heat

of an exhausted day drifts up
from the clearfill parking lot.
Parents tug kids bleary

with sugar and weary of
excitement back to twilit
minivans whose tires scud

on the dusty road, intent
on some version of home,
as we are intent

on inhabiting the mirage
felt on that last descent.
Why ride a ferris wheel?

To reach, perhaps, the height
of leaves still unreleased
by captor trees and blushing

with early autumn's pride,
nearly spent? Or simply
to tell ourselves how grand

and gladdening it is to be
high up and moving,
swinging strapped to rusty

seats of a scarred machine
whose paint is peeling.
Something about the world

seen from no great height,
seen from the middle distance,
the part of it we are.

Hard to tell just what I'm feeling
on that penultimate spin round.
Easy to see, from here, just how

we are pinned down
below the filmy latticework
of clouds, awaiting one last rise.