**Death at the Mall**

Gene Twaronite

We walk there to escape the heat

or the pall of our

coffined lives.

We are a rag-tag lot,

from the lithe, pony-tailed woman

who waves as she whizzes past me,

to seniors with walkers and trekking poles,

stepping cautiously toward

whatever future awaits,

big families sprawled across the aisles,

briefly trying to hold it all together

against the forces spinning them apart,

couples strolling hand in hand

dreaming new lives

in reflected windows.

We regulars go with the flow, religiously

following the outlines of each corner,

as if our lives depended on it,

some moving slower each year,

then picking up the pace upon recalling

how fast we used to walk,

up and down the one set of stairs,

sometimes three or four times,

recording steps to what end,

or saving our strength on the escalator,

gazing up at blue sky

beyond the skylights.

There’s only one elevator,

though I’ve never seen it go

any other way but down.

With electric eye, the Tyrannosaurus sees all

and roars as we go by, reminding us that

we too will be eaten by time.

We pretend not to notice

the fountain’s gone dry,

or the vacant spaces,

and believe the empty promises

of new stores coming

*just for you*.

And we imagine it will

all still be here

tomorrow.