Heaven

By Carrie Fountain

We spent months of our lives walking

from Sears to Penney’s, back when we were

vague, a couple of ideas forming ourselves

against the certainty of merchandise,

in the presence of strangers, when no one

knew us or wished to know us or could even

perceive us as we passed, two girls, unsmiling,

unwilling, not finished. When I think

of what we looked like then I think

of newborn horses: stunned and exhausted,

still slick with the cumbersome fluids of birth.

You were the leader. You’d stop

at the waterfall by the food court, dig a coin

from your pocket, and toss it over your shoulder

into the fiberglass river, then turn, press a coin

into my palm, and say, “Now you do it.”

We were hopeful. Our quarters slapped the water

and disappeared beneath it. The little river

went on, past the shoe store. And we followed it –

we followed it as long as we could, longing

toward this: the unseen, unwished-for present.