

## The Library

An Asian lady moans and moans  
as she clears her throat  
at her study desk, and a pervert  
across from her grins as wide  
as the distance between his knees—  
his legs open like a world atlas book.

The old on powered wheel chairs,  
on malfunctioning legs,  
on canes and walkers, check  
out books on baby names, cooking,  
and coping with death.  
As they clear their coughing throats

the teenagers kiss between aisles—  
backs against fiction books and  
teenage romance novels. Youth  
full of wet life, lips, and language;  
always in their digitized world; a stream  
of cyber sex and text messages; turning  
their concrete world into plastic.

The children learn to read, read  
to learn, chase each other down rows,  
and up rows of chapter books and picture  
books. They turn the aisles into jungles,  
rocket ships, and canvases for their imaginations  
to paint pink moons, plum suns, and powder  
blue skies. Their world, like a pop-up  
book, never gets old, no matter how often  
they turn the pages.

And I wake the old when they nod off,  
their bookmark finger trapped between worn pages.  
I silence the teens on their cell phones,  
their eyes roll as they thumb out messages.  
“Don’t run”, I tell the children, so they don’t fall.  
They shy away and wander between an aisle of forest trees.

The Asian lady moans and moans.  
She eyes the grinning pervert who  
snaps his legs shut. I put the books back  
on the shelf, and the noise level never  
rises above a loud whisper.

