

## THE SODA FOUNTAIN

One thing you could do, the druggist declares  
    is to move your road  
so it goes by my soda fountain.

He pushes the brush aside to reveal  
a counter hidden by the vegetation  
covering the back of his pharmacy.

Your road is the only aisle  
that doesn't lead to the row  
of mushroom-shaped stools.

The druggist peers at my sister and me,  
his face pink as bubblegum  
above his white whiskers,  
    his suit  
a perfume made from cloth.

My sister and I pick stools capped with red,  
    and sit . . .

A knot of grape vines twists around a tin  
as Ponce de Leon IV—for that is his name,  
snips it in two with a pair  
of shears taken from his belt.

This vegetation is worse  
than the water was, he proclaims.  
And since, obviously, the two of you  
    can't have children,  
you've got to settle some people here soon.

We already know that, we say.  
But none of our advertising  
seems to have worked.

A fan suspended from the ceiling  
by a long pipe  
slowly turns the air over  
as the druggist ponders our unspoken question.

I can't sell you time, he says finally.  
Somehow, you've got to turn this flood of vegetation  
to your advantage.  
He points to our seats—  
you see, these are real mushrooms.

### THE LIBRARY

We can't give her books away,  
I tell my sister.  
The library is all we have left of our mother.  
From it we should gain  
a deep and varied understanding of her mind.

As we wind among its shelves,  
I clean the plaster from a book at random.  
Inside—  
our mother's name and address inscribed  
in faded ink above a map of Pompeii.

Do you think we should even be here,  
my sister whispers.  
What if we find something we don't want to know.  
She stares at a shrine to Priapus.

I'm not sure what you mean, I reply  
rather stiffly.  
Oh stop it, she says. Here's one on gardens.

Where does this passage lead,  
my sister's voice booms from ahead—