

The Lost House

A neighbour girl went with me near the creek,
entered the new house they were building there
with studs half-covered. Alone in summer dark,
we sat together on the plywood floor.

The shy way I contrived it, my right hand
slipped insinuatingly beneath her blouse
in new manoeuvres, further than I planned.
I thought we floated in that almost-house.

Afraid of what might happen or just afraid,
I stopped. She stood and brushed the sawdust off.
Fifteen that summer, we knew we could have strayed.
Now, if I saw it in a photograph

I couldn't tell you where that new house stood.
One night the timbered hillside thundered down
like a dozen freight trains, crashing in a flood
that splintered walls and made the owners run.

By then I had been married and divorced.
The girl I reached for in unfinished walls
had moved away as if by nature's course.
The house was gone. Under quiet hills

the creek had cut new banks, left silt in bars
that sprouted alder scrub. No-one would know,
cruising the dead-end road beneath the stars,
how we had trespassed there so long ago.

In the Borrowed House

While flowerbeds have gone to seed,
a book you didn't plan to read
offers the unexpected phrase
that occupies your mind for days.

You write with someone else's pen
of someone else's life. And when
light's absence leans across the town,
you lay another body down.