

A Small Church in the Drakensberg

If you're out driving through the foothills of the Drakensberg
don't miss the signs that edge your road in sun and rain.
One leads to what looks like a shed made out of planks of wood
whose knots and cracks are weathered in the grain.

One calm bright day in spring I parked my car beside its fence
and sat a while to take in what was there.
It was I think as you'd expect - a rusted gate, a tangled path,
a dove that flew up into a forest's sun-streamed air.

The small arched windows in the sides were boarded up,
the graves were lost in grass below dark cypress trees,
but brooding on the path I shut my eyes and prayed a while,
and praying heard the steadfast hum of bees.

It was as if they thrived within a country in full bloom.
Beside the porch, a pew stood in the knee-high grass,
among warped fascia boards, old hymn-books in a box,
discarded chairs and shards of dusty window glass.

The porch door was ajar. I peered into a gloom and glimpsed
stacked pews, half-sanded walls and altar rails,
an altar like a workbench where a carpenter had left his tools,
wrapped panes of glass, new sanding discs and nails.

The scent of sanded yellowwood hung in the hot still air.
It shaped my wintered faith's fresh wakening.
The dark gold gathered light inside that small dim church
was Christ stored in a honeycomb of spring.