

Change of Domicile

By Clive James (1939-)

Installed in my last house, I face the thought
That fairly soon there will be one house more,
Lacking the pictures and the books that here
Surround me with abundant evidence
I spent a lifetime pampering my mind.
The new place will be of a different sort,
Dark and austere, and I will have to find
My way along its unforthcoming walls.
Help is at hand here should I fall, but there
There will be no-one to turn on the lights
For me, and I will know I am not blind
Only by glimpses when the empty halls
Lead me to empty rooms, in which the nights
Succeed each other with no day between.

I may not see my tattered Chinese screen
Again, but I shall have time to reflect
That what I miss was just the bric-a-brac
I kept with me to blunt my solitude,
Part of my brave face when my life was wrecked
By my gift for deceit. Truth clears away
So many souvenirs. The shelves come clean.
In the last, the truly last house there will be
No treasured smithereens to take me back
To when things hung together. I'll conclude
The way that I began so long ago:
With nothingness, but know it fit for me
This time around, now I am brought so low,
Yet ready to move soon. When, I can't say.



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