

Missing Interior

X is missing. I put up posters around the village that read ‘Lacking in character, responds to the name X’. They disintegrate in the face of the weather like a forecast. Days of sleet, the chill becoming sympathy: X in the cold, no longer shackled-up. How long must absence stew before becoming lack? Nightly after work I’d worry about shutting X in the oven or tumble dryer, or X’s languid hair catching amid my candles. Yes, I tell my therapist, I suppose it could mean something like burning, and I mention the dream where I’m an arsonist bringing my work home to help with the cooking. I cook for one, try to stay in the sumptuous moment, as advised, but my guts become the need to dig out the furred gestalt of a shower plughole – the need itself – while my hunger is heat applied inside the dryer. Then I scour, wipe and put away each thought.

Felt Interior

It was then she realised the something burning was him: almost writhing like a bundle of snakes undergoing cauterisation on a car bonnet, if not exactly issuing flames. *You're burning*, she said. *Don't tell me how I feel*, he smouldered. They trudged onwards through the forest of somewhat damaged utility vehicles, alternating between shaded areas, so overbearing was the cinder-box being shaken out above. *That's just how it seemed to me*, she said as if pulling on the arm of an inside-out jumper. *I was afraid you might be burning*. His face, pale and beginning to smoke, took on the sorrowful look of a lone white house on an island glimpsed from the mainland, gazing into water that refused to meet it. *Something's more pressing* was his weak joke, because screeching metal indicated the world's biggest vehicle compactor had just awoken.

Figured Interior

There is an intervening period in which we find ourselves put together from what will abandon us. Bodily flesh, structural bone, granular dust: these, so much themselves, hardly seem to speak of their transitions. But listen and you hear a voice that isn't theirs, as if in a radio play: snow as scrunched plastic bags, footprint no different than footstep... The fear is in being transformed entirely before making much imprint, like pencil lead driven once into a clean white page and broken. These metaphors rattled around in the box I was using to clear out my cubicle. A small metal container opened and spewed out its squabble of staples. *Hope you're taking anything not fixed down!* came a collegial voice into my ear which had already been and was continuing to be a birdbath, clogged with waste, waterless, and of course full of singing and sung.

Maintained Interior

Among their favourite pastimes: looking around houses up for sale. They, quite unalterably entrenched in one life, wanted nevertheless to inspect its shadow, and indeed felt its cool shroud slip about them as they went in under the farmhouse terracotta. It needed a lot of work, a cracked flowerpot that the seasonal plants within evidently had no thought of trying to fix. Even the plunging currency, the disappearings of local dissidents, seemed here somehow rustically charming. Then, when she juddered open a lead-framed window to release the wilting insect which had been unable to negotiate transparency and physicality – she began to sob. Each tear broke over its ordinary eye in a manner that was in danger of being like escape. He felt, increasingly, it was a full time task to break these connections whenever they risked arising.

Lone Interior

Left alone for too long, the mind becomes firewood in its grate, subsiding. Beneath a patch of roof tiles it takes shelter, a bright column that makes the slates huddle together and chatter like bathing birds; sound of rain. Now the window is open. An evening smell, like the tang that remains on a hand after grasping a bus rail, comes inside. Everywhere the chance of encounter lies restlessly, like the dull patterns the rain leaves (so the mind imagines) on the tiles – which hold fast to nothing (gutters where illicit mushrooms congregate and drink). There's no one anywhere to meet, except what coaxes itself inside, lights up the bellies of a few moths. Alive, impartial: the fingernail of a car alarm, coda of woodsmoke, and the strands of cloud woven over the moon. These, like flaws in glass or insects in amber, come out: into the light.

Displaced Interior

The network is fundamental – corridors leading to rooms never quite entered. When he thought of her it was as such a room, not yet painted, lying on a bed in a bedroom, her frame quivering, almost squeaking. In his hypothesis, desire is the most bewildered and therefore truest form of cognition. This year he has produced a series of abstracts necessarily suppressed by the state. Each depicts and fails to depict a rushing-inward revealed as outward – as if psychoanalysing a matryoshka doll. The title: *Displacements*. As the eye passes between each canvas it gathers a kind of detritus of momentum, a feeling one critic described as *the esterification of yearning itself*, later insisting this was the intended word. What's the word for entrance-and-exit? Stood in the exhibition's doorway he's unsure which way he'll turn, spring inside him tightening.

Unspontaneous Interior

wanting not so much	someone who bridges the space with
flowers	a kind of outcropping
but instead to be a receptacle	in which desire
for centred affection	arranged in an elaborate structure
resembling a surprised vase	is agreed-upon and acted
Inside of her already –	His thinking drills like rain into
a lack of forethought	the forecast of his actions
which feels itself	breathed into the moment
oxbowed and phantom	and filling a glass
limbed	with excuses
like a swallowed mirror	in which something blooms
which now holds her apart	and now holds them ajar

James Midgley has published in journals including *Blackbox Manifold*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Poetry Review*, *The Rialto*, *Shearsman Magazine* and in anthologies such as *The Salt Book of Younger Poets* and *Dear World and Everyone In It*. In 2008 he received an Eric Gregory. This year he was selected for the Evergreen Review's inaugural 'Promising Poet' grant.

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