

# THE EPIPHANIES

20 POEMS  
AND  
PHOTOS

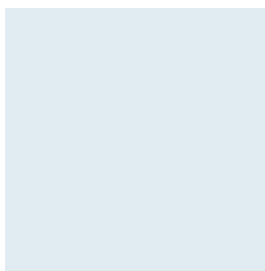
COLIN GALE

# THE EPIPHANIES

20 POEMS

BY

COLIN GALE



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# The Poems

The Road to Salvation

The Epiphanies

Light on the Sea, Fire in the Sky

The Glory

Green Slip

Taipei Night

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Trying

## The Road to Salvation

The aged road has no rhythm and stays unrhymed  
it leads to the avuncular, patrician and often rotten  
Breathe fresh, hold bright rays, seek light

The turned phrase has no hill, sharp slope or fall  
it speaks of days gone, board and committee errors  
Breathe fresh, hold flowers, seek your voice

The wise counsel has no poignancy or measure  
it warns of sticky choice and bungled malice  
Breathe fresh, hold your cards, seek magic

In stories simple paths and dirty hands make romantics  
their struggles find chords, antics and strings in our hearts  
Breathe freshly, hold true, find love

The day of anger has fast flowing reason and flickering choices  
it leads to horrors and decisions unspoken, unannounced, terminal  
Breathe slowly, hold faint thoughts, seek inaction

Garbled furies have no grammar and choke and splutter  
Spit it out with fitting hands that jerk, clench and conduct  
Breathe lavender, find balm and touch







## **The Epiphanies**

One book or two, she couldn't remember  
perhaps she had read the second back in December  
It was time to read another  
perhaps the one that was a gift from her brother

Looking over the page she saw the view  
it was very fine and her mind filled  
with thoughts of everything she had bought  
the shorts, the bikini, the games, all sorts

The sun was high and the page was turned  
Valerie's shoulder was a little burned  
She sipped mint tea and ate Turkish Delight  
and wished the world well with all her might

That evening she dreamt of many books  
their stories and their meanings  
She dreamt of time and mystic form  
and all she had enjoyed since she had been born

If dreams were always this  
always full of love and kisses  
of wisdom and play, of endless days  
where no trying ever misses

If quiet moments ever count for much  
the world and we might have some luck  
For each of us there are many special books  
but we won't find them unless we stop to look

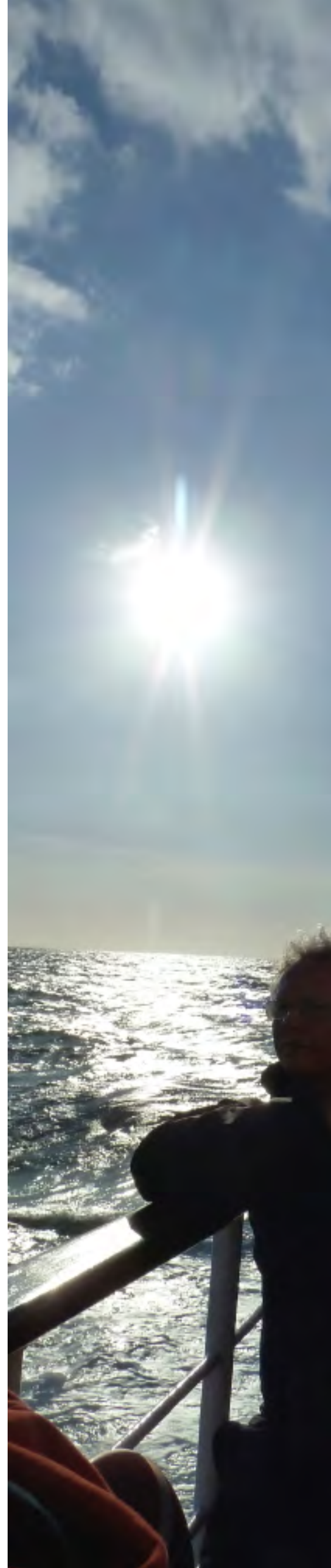


### **Light on the Sea, Fire in the Sky**

The wildfire, charring lips and singeing hearts  
Morning water carries the dust and ash away  
Nameless contrives alchemy, casts spells,  
and gifts us eyes to witness time and world,  
to watch the stark, blinking, glittering curve  
The light on the sea, the fire in the sky

Stars spin and turn our shapes, our platform and orbit  
From dark to light and back, from black and white  
Sugared crisp and sweet, rain kissed, honeyed look  
Morpheus and Hypnos lay down scented sheets and cushions  
on yellow flowered balconies. We rest and watch  
where heaven and water meet.

Light on the sea, fire in the sky  
Drifting wood and stellar clouds mark time  
No place to go, nor home that lasts  
Life remains unwritten, our plot untold and stopped in  
sun-fuelled visions, sugared light, passion's fires  
keep back the dark, hold us fixed.





## **The Glory**

Ideas fly from mind to body  
laying chest felt emotions  
We all look upward

Mrs Went fell over because she was so shocked  
The Glory was so bright  
the glistening starred embrace  
stole her breath  
tightened her throat  
brought her rest

*Short thoughts compare to endless  
Endless compares to nothing  
The chair invited sitting  
the table makes us eat*

Finding spot and time to think  
She said "...it cannot change  
nor will it move, it will not go  
it is just so. The Glory is everything  
and all I want to know"

Looking downward there was not much to see  
Mr Went consoled himself with kicking  
Penumbra, the dimmed aura of his presence  
the pebbles, hardened cold spots of resistance  
Still the Glory pinched his eyes and shook his feet

*Sight compares to light  
Bright compares to dark  
The prose invites your mind  
the glass invites a lark*

In evenings  
in the darkened edge lies the unseen  
and hollowed thought  
The Wents hid under the table  
discussing incantations and harmonies  
so they might sleep and shut it out  
the day that Glory might meet Nothing  
the day of their Invisible

*Long dead stars cross time  
as line and sphere  
X marks the spot while we are here*





## Green Slip

Green spirits dance in sight of Horus  
sun, mud, water, their fuel, bed, coffin  
Pushing through earth and air  
lifting soil and water, they raise elixirs and rot

In circadian spin and sun-warmed moments  
swathed in soft and occasional breeze  
sugar-opened flowers, petals engorged, show their faces in abandon  
spinning our eyes toward them, putting memories away  
Fingers yearn to own the slips of life  
the rambling sensuous green, in this rife and orgied garden

The chance to grow, to sprout, to root  
A heart can learn from this  
Speech can temper early thoughts  
and make them leafy  
Gambol, play, trip then wonder  
the bud, the branch, the axil  
A leafy crotch where life begins  
The passion always pushes  
and forces. Angel green. Devil brown

Far above blue heavens fill with pearls  
herd winds and squalls  
Beyond unseen lie stars and dreams  
destroying realms and giving birth  
and all of this is but a moment's worth



## Taipei Night

The slumbering metal rooms of absent owners  
are caught in sodium light and gently stew in the warmth of the night  
Air con off, doors and windows shut tight  
tightly parked in boxed lines and back to back  
their bulging black wheels press on the yellowed tarmac

Two hundred metres away  
a taxi, gold and red, crawls the humid street  
in search of sweating clubbers or rejected lovers  
Stopping for lights not cars or buses  
it waits as the phantom Taipei traffic passes

Turning left into a wide deserted avenue  
it's hailed by young Zhang who's had too much baijiu  
Flopping in the back he drops his bag  
gives directions and ponders on his recent rejections  
while the taxi carries on across the city sections

In the Seven Eleven Miss Chen watches the till  
and then the TV, waiting for night workers and insomniacs  
She decides to put the green tea candy back  
and sweeps the dust between the racks  
and dreams of heavenly holidays and being fussed

Tumbling out on corner kerb young Zhang  
finds his change and pays enough, then sees  
his chance to buy some snacks, checks his money  
and then walks back to the little store  
where Miss Chen has begun to softly snore

She wakes with a start to see Zhang there  
with his doeful eyes and and wistful stare  
and she feels in her heart their destiny sealed  
and her true love found, right there right now  
without a doubt. At the till, before they part  
Hu and Kuan-Chu agree to go out









## **Even in Dreams**

Now, while the water drops and the sun  
is stopped behind running clouds  
jump the pooling water and leave your print.  
Wind written sky rocks and rolls crashing trees  
We always walk forward, even in dreams

Then, windows darkened  
smiles not shared nor eyes stuck  
damp patches in old books hung limp  
Everything flat collected dust and air took on smells  
Well, Death had arrived on beds and chairs and toilets

Now, while the water drops  
don't stop but run, fly, see  
rainbow, speckled leaves and velvet twigs  
the Eden land and sunny Paradise  
Move quickly for life is nice



## **The Soldier's Holiday**

In brackened valley and blackened hill  
daylight gives birth to unholy dark  
Each step treads down a past  
that wriggles and squirms, harming  
Crawling up legs it strangles and burns  
and cuts and fits with barb and hook  
the awful past, the unclosed book

In plain view and empty waste  
stars stand still in nibbled eyes  
of children fed to war and lately  
the compass points no longer turn  
For cindered flesh  
with waxy fat and bloodied juice  
is bed for fly and maggots meat  
The land is lost to guns and drones  
and mothers cry amongst the bones

From safe to scared and back  
the soldier sees no white or black  
but redded grey and fearful mist  
shrouded roads and rubble rooms  
and dead with open skulls and shattered wrist  
The soldier wakes in sweat soaked bed  
the nightmare swapped for daytime dread

How long the many wars soak our kind  
in violent, angry, sickened minds  
leaking blood, religion and ancient hate  
on soldiers' ground, the soldier's fate  
to deal with loss and pain and yet to harm  
and fight again, until we tire and all are frayed  
money made yet fortune lost  
the soldier then turns home of course  
and sleeps in day for fear of night  
as well we might when bombs fall





## Living in the Orbit

The orbit contains, perhaps restrains  
governs admission, gives permissions  
Your choices are few and the limits are clear  
Your role goes so far while the tasks remain near

The breath of hope and the glance at rest  
suggest the balance of work can be redressed  
The schedule is empty, the schedule is full  
You look at the keys and select a new tool

By hand and mind our bodies are trapped  
tapping the clerical, mapping hysterical  
to unwanted soliciting and vitriolic hostility  
such is the orbit of network mobility

From lap to top and back to desk  
to rest and wrist and steeled trackpad  
the freedom is false, the great hope is quashed  
the computer's gift is a life of remorse

Code and coder, cold and colder  
redundant legs and eyes all glazed  
torpid, fish-like, de-evolving  
we slip to a corner of the evolutionary maze  
we are tinned meat and bio-pap  
in preparation for a robot phase



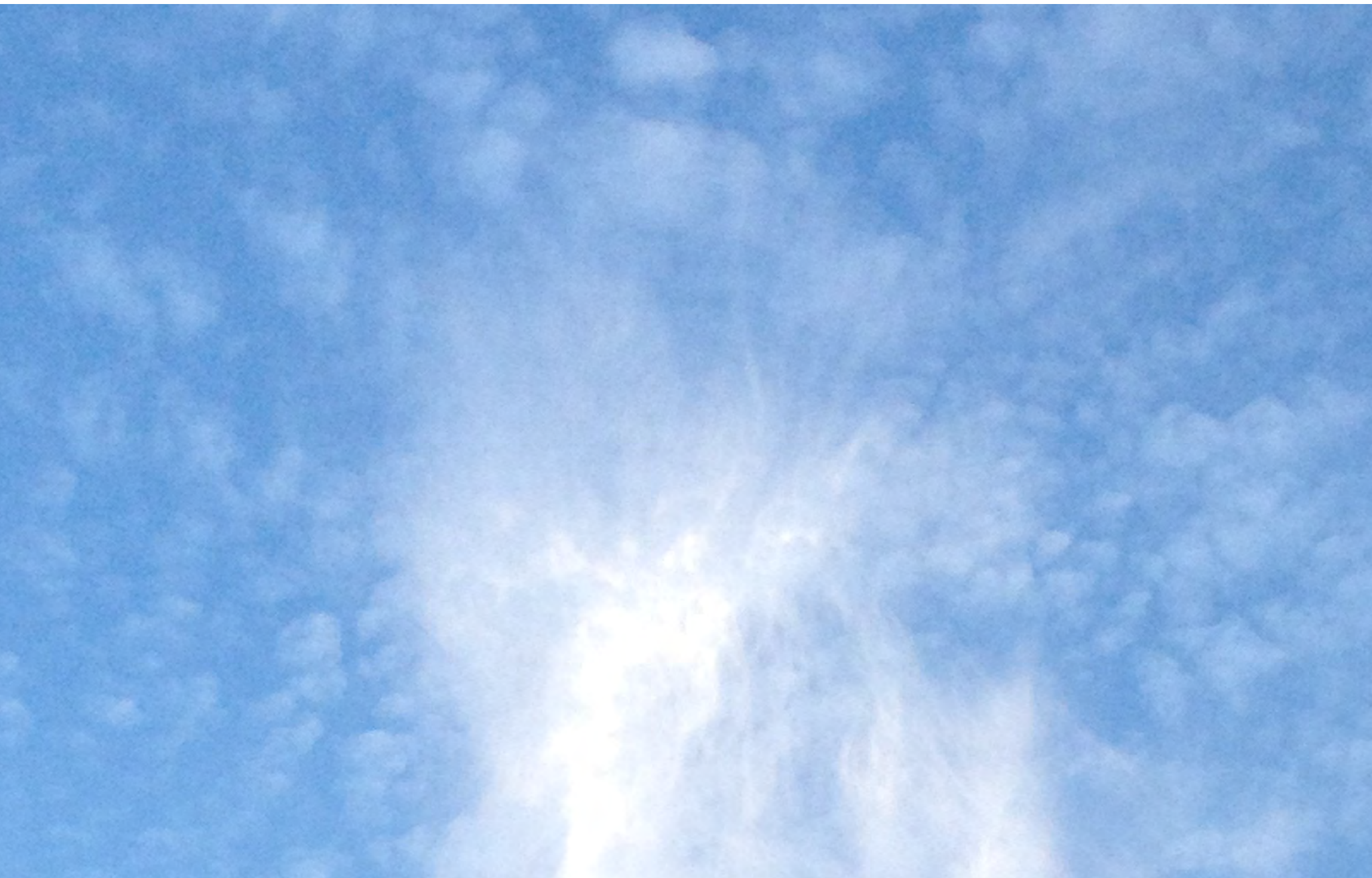


## **The Boiling**

That seethe and mess that seeks  
redress for an unpardonable past  
The last sane thought before fingers taut  
and trembling seek the path of paradise  
through tumbling lumpen bodies  
and goaded hate gilded with heaven's gifts

No windcatcher, courtyard or shade  
cools the boiling mind or stops the tears of rage  
pricked by alien thoughts and blighted hopes  
Longing for god in lands of spectred light  
and hollowed walls of family homes  
these saints are born and washed in blood

The moving finger writes and leaves no time  
to cancel what is done and each rhyme  
will not erase or stop the line or foil  
the trap and shock, the sharp recoil  
the timbred blast, the shuddered world  
the shards of past fall in and hearts and minds are soiled







## **The Crying Snow**

Fluffed and drifting it settles sticking  
then running down warmed glass dripping  
like big wet tears falling, falling, falling

Driven and torn, pulled and blown  
swirling, twisting it finds no rest  
in windracked air and cold, cold blast

Restless in dark, glimpsed then gone then glimpsed  
moaning and shifting with flurrying heart  
Whisper, falter, crying, crying, crying

At midnight ice reclaims the water lost  
and your patterned crystals capture lights  
in burning air and cracking, cracking earth

Dawn will come and daylight too  
The snow is gone, the puddles wet  
and atoms will carry what souls regret



## Poor Dog

The dog sat lost  
No-one came  
The glass was steel  
the door chains  
the kitchen hum, insane  
Pain and stress  
killed the dog

Mary came home  
The mess was clear  
The scratches  
oh dear  
Her big tears fell  
Auntie May said "Oh well  
another dead dog"

Mother returned  
shopping and bags to show  
"What's up what's wrong?"  
Mary cried  
"Mitzy has died"  
"I guess it wasn't going to be long"  
She washed the dog's dishes  
the dog was gone







### **Angels Do Not Speak**

Angels do not speak  
and trees rarely bend  
but they twist and sway  
At the very end  
and at the beginning of one day  
only you will find the time to pray  
We are our company  
and while we dance  
we see our fortune and our chance  
The rhythm of pulsing blood, the wandering eye  
Your world of meetings will pass  
and silence will vie for heavens word again  
Then the moody angels will show their face  
and take you to hell, despond, blankness or grace





## Breaking

Nick liked no choice, Mary thought he was a ball and chain  
They talked a lot at first but then it was just now and again  
Mary quit her job to move away while Nick stayed behind  
It was in the evenings that Nick began to lose his mind

Nick began to obsess, his life slowly unraveled and frankly became a mess  
His bed began to smell, at work they noticed the stains and fetid breath  
Mary had a splendid view from her condo rooftop balcony  
and found in a colleague called Greg some new kind of alchemy

When things split one part must die  
Half a worm, broken branch or rotted leaf  
cut from the source one must cease to be  
Finally there is either relief in death or new found sanity

After Greg Mary could not stop and dated 'til she dropped  
Nick found peace at last, her name was Kathy  
she liked tea and practiced clinical homeopathy.  
So breaking sometimes ends in healing  
and for some its in a cup of Darjeeling



## Robert Maggit

Old eyes stare down at the garden's dark cold mud  
seeing death and yesterday. Robert Maggit thinks of lunch  
Harsh skies and wet clouds race above him  
The cold wind bites his neck and he turns the burning handle  
to enter the worn, tired greasy kitchen

Old eyes stare down at reptile skin and dirt stained fingers  
The earth lingers in his body, the world calls in his sleep  
What friends he had are dead, what life he had is gone  
No visit from his son, his daughter's child is one  
The television on, he rummages his phone

No Facebook left, email or tunes, the wife and family photos  
gather dust in the upstairs rooms  
The crows stare in at his shortening world  
and silverfish run by bath and cupboard  
he had forgotten the weekly shopping  
but could remember when someone called him a bastard

Some people can do no more than rot  
That seems to be Robert Maggit's lot  
Soon the hospice then the grave, no one will mourn  
Within his friendless life a friendless death will be born  
The corners of each room darken, the floors and stairs contract  
His breath begins to shorten but perhaps it's the bacon fat





## Estuary

Spreading wide and low, blue lines cross the yellow sand  
Hands to brows we block the sun  
walking far into the watery squashable mouth  
Above is heaven and the bright arch of midday  
We are in the sea but on the land  
no path, boat or house about

In new pools family toes brush black-bubbled weed  
and small glassy fish dart and try to feed  
as the levels drop and the tide recedes.

Birds lie flat on air, flung by endless breezes  
lifted by burning dunes and dying sea-borne storms  
We take our time here where the world is worn  
Worries leave, are swiftly gone, and the waders' calls  
taunt souls about yesterday or destiny  
The restless spinning moon pulls  
and the social world slips swiftly back  
as the sea quietly wipes out our tracks.

Evening comes and orange banks are gone from sight  
turned to browning floors for fish and crab  
The smells of salts and weeds pass through herbs  
and twisted trees and the red moon rises  
For now God's clay reclaims its fancies and vices  
but we'll come again when the sea invites us







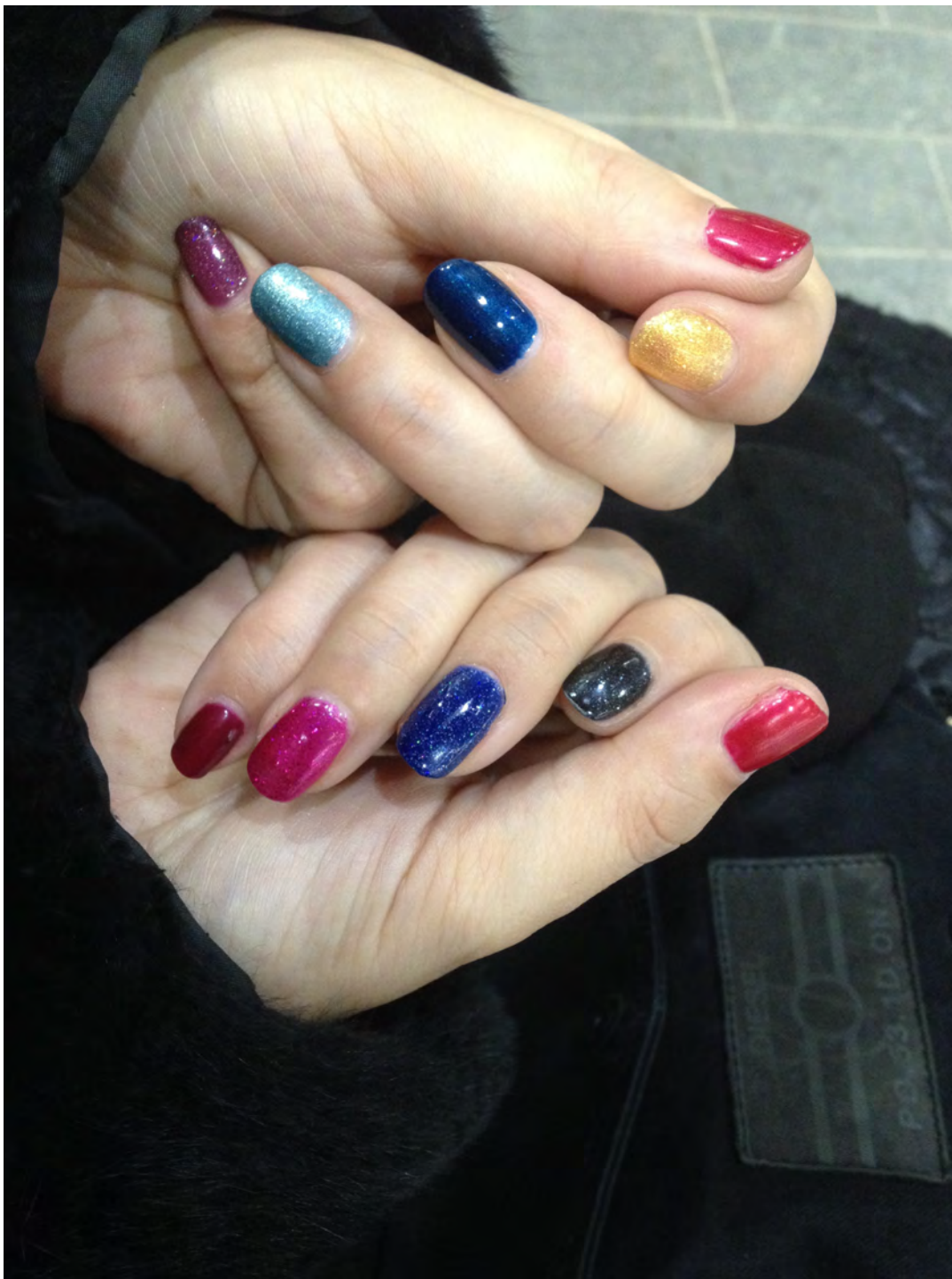
## **The Rain and Work**

Rain connects here to there, a damp cloak spread through air  
at any time of night or day it rains somewhere  
Rain is usually relaxed and it follows no great rules  
It was always a restful soundtrack when I was at school

Now, when I am at work, I often pray the rains will come  
and wash away the mud of mails and the numskull plans  
and paper trails, and all those dull meetings held on bucket seating  
When I leave that place, I do welcome rain's wet greeting

Useful and useless, purposeful and fruitless  
work's reflections proffer no great directions  
but the pitter patter splash and murmur of rain  
calm spirits and make it bearable to try again

A wet coat on a plastic chair and I am back by the window  
back behaving, worklike, and trying not to stare  
through the glass at the rain. Hearing the gentle tapping on the pane  
I am back at school or on a train or flying somewhere  
or on a very high hill, far away, in rain's soft care



## Trying

Am I nice? Do I look good?  
Is it to your taste? Have I understood?  
I have tried every colour and used every trick  
but I am still unsure and it worries me sick

My eyes look smokey and hot  
How could you not?  
My skin is perfect and glowing  
My attitude is naughty and knowing

He looked at his watch and he looked at his drink  
He didn't know quite what to think of  
her crystals, colours, scent and shiny elements  
He felt flattered and attracted and became quite distracted

The courting went on and they managed to flirt  
with a joke here and there about her dress or his shirt  
So will they get married? Will they gel?  
Only the Fates would be able to tell.

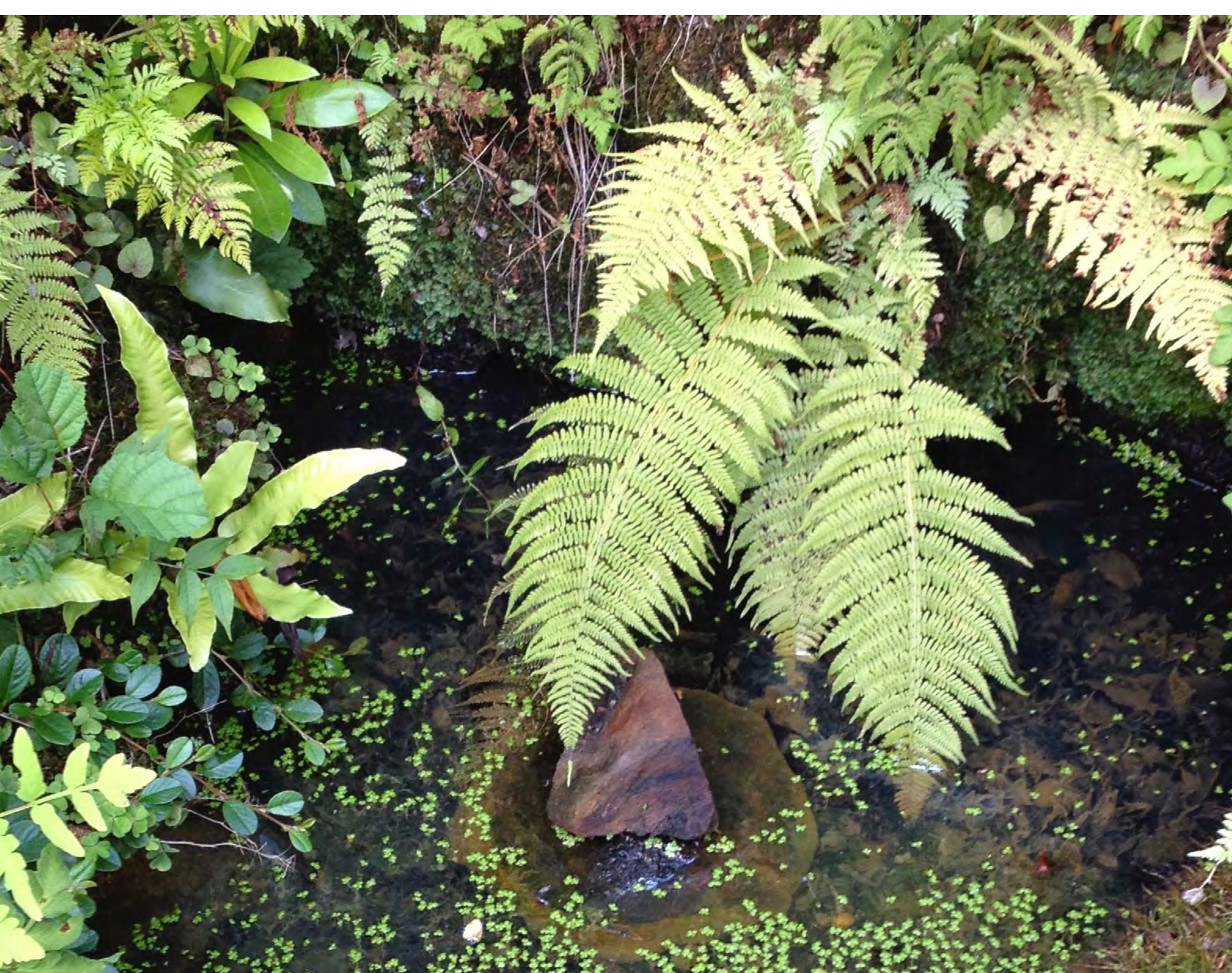


## **The Fairy Pond**

They built it long ago with ferns and weeds  
and nice stones and assorted reeds  
It was meant for people but in all that time no one has come  
So the little fairies have made it their pretty home

The fairies have weekly conferences about the pollution  
however up until now they can find no solution  
I think they are probably unaware  
that there are humans here, there and everywhere

The fairies have kept the pond quite well to date  
but the lumbering clods have sealed its fate  
Soon the pond will be no more and the fairies gone  
and nature will think what's done is done





## Night

The inking creeping spherical tide  
unstopped and chased far behind by dawn's convulsions  
It propels shadow, the vague and dimming light  
over raging seas, into trees and tops of mountains

In air I swear I can see the dark  
A brown and speckled, pinpricked look  
that fills unlit rooms and voided stairs  
in the blackened sleeping house

Outside the cap of stars holds silvered clouds  
and in ground and bush the unknown creep and slip  
The moon just floats and stares right back  
as leaves sway and swoon in its shining glare

Night, the sanctuary of worries or dreams  
the time of putting off day and tomorrow  
Soon we join with the spectral gods of night  
those stealers of joy and sorrow. Rest









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# About the Author



Colin Gale is an author, artist and educator living in the West Midlands, England. He is currently Professor of Fashion and Textiles and Head of the School of Fashion and Textiles at Birmingham City University. *The Epiphanies* is his second short collection of poems.





# **BIRMINGHAM SHANGHAI**

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